

BATTLETIDE

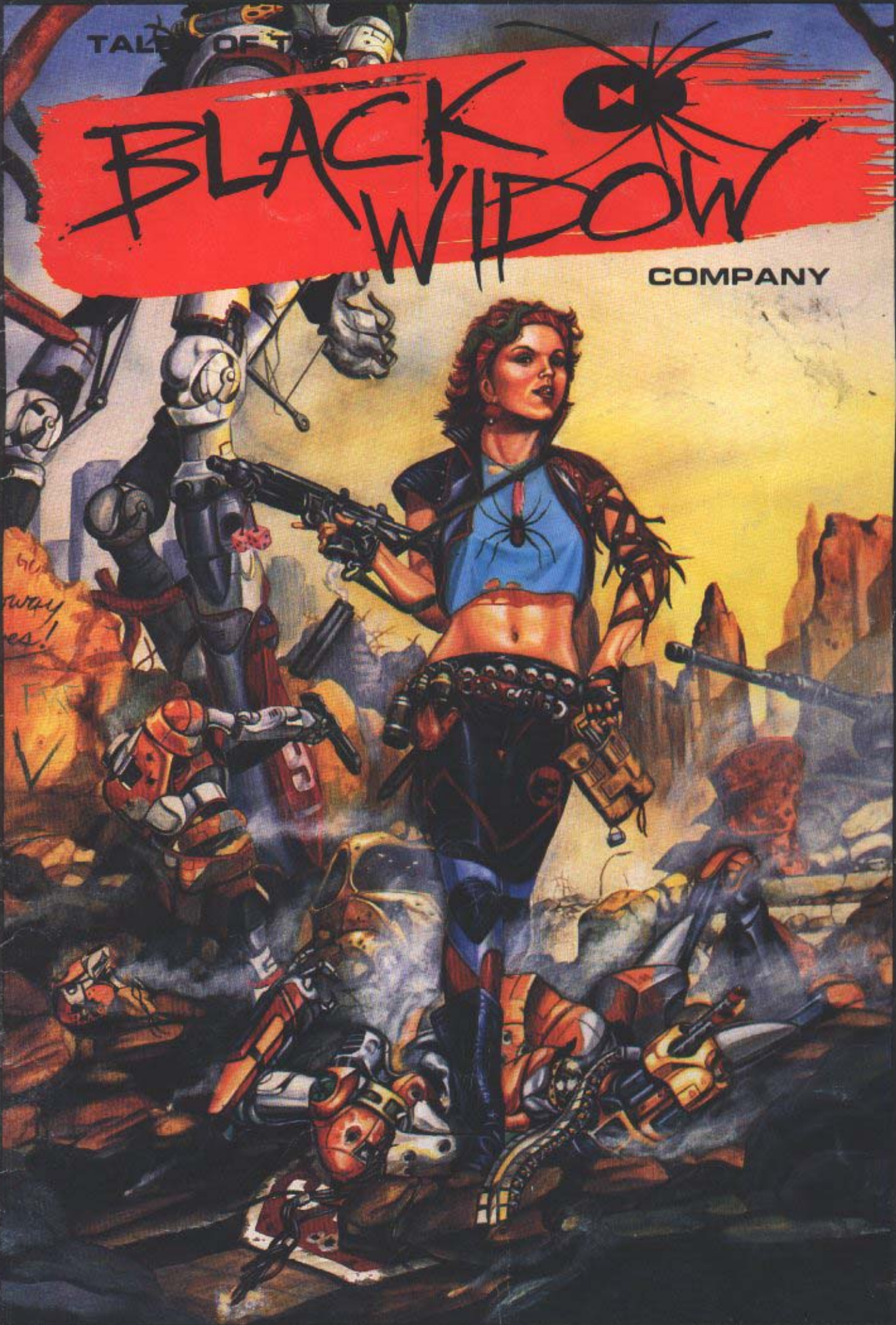


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TALE OF T

BLACK WIDOW

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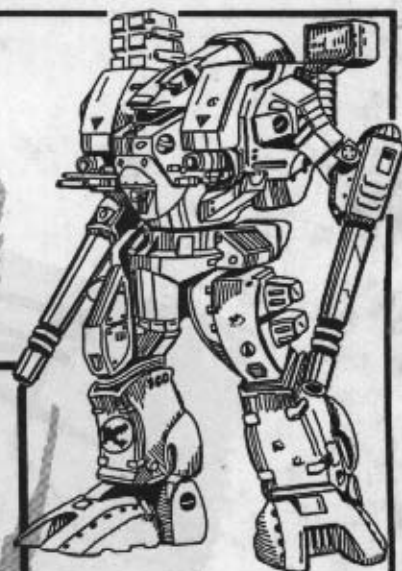


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
How To Use The Scenarios Presented	3
WOLF'S DRAGOONS	4
Brief Regimental History	4
Jaime Wolf, Brief Personal History	6
Kerensky's Black Widows: Brief History	7
Command Lance	8
Capt. Kerensky	8
Warrior Maclaren	8
Warrior Sheridan	9
Warrior Hayes	9
Ikeda's Fire Lance	10
Lt. Ikeda	10
Warrior Delius	10
Warrior Koniev	11
Warrior Ward	11
Clavell's Recon Lance	12
Lt. Clavell	12
Warrior Nichols	12
Warrior Fraser	13
Warrior Jahan	13
LADY SINGS THE BLUES	14
QUEEN'S GAMBIT	16
SCAVENGER HUNT	18
SPIDER TRAP	20
THE LADY AND THE TIGER	22
LEAVE NO SURVIVORS	24
DAWN PATROL	26
FOG OF WAR	28
THE BOUNTY HUNTER	30
LADY'S MAN	32
GHOST UNIT	34
THE BATTLE FOR HOFF	37
Scenario I	38
Scenario II	40
Scenario III	42
Scenario IV	46



INTRODUCTION

The Queen of Spades, The First Lady of Death, and The Black Widow are all names given to Natasha Kerensky, Captain of an Independent company of Wolf's Dragoons. This book details Kerensky and her Black Widow Company. It also gives some of the history behind the formation of Wolf's Dragoons and some of the battles and campaigns the mercenary regiment has fought. The rest of the book gives the historical and game details for 15 engagements in which Black Widows have been involved.

How To Use The Scenarios Presented In This Book

The following battle scenarios are unrelated except for the final four. Those four are part of a campaign fought on the planet Hoff, and they follow each other in time by a matter of weeks, days, or even hours. Those who wish to play the whole series may wish to keep track of battle damage from one engagement to the next, with their 'Mechs receiving either no repairs or only the limited repairs that might be possible under field conditions.

The scenarios include all the information needed to understand the game situation and play it out. Each one opens with a first-hand account by one of the warriors who actually took part in the engagement. This personal anecdote is followed by an account of the historical facts of the battle.

Next comes the Game Set-up section, which provides the special game information needed to play out the scenario.

There are directions for laying out the mapsheet, directions for any special terrain features the scenario requires, and suggestions for the appropriate set of BattleTech rules to use.

Both the Attacker and Defender for each scenario are then presented in detail. The Black Widow forces start each scenario in the condition described in the historical section on the Black Widow Company, but the Game Set-Up section will often note any special extra damage taken by the Widow 'Mechs. The Widow's Opponents are similarly described. In some cases, an extra dice roll must be made to determine whether a weapon is capable of fire. (This roll is made before any To-Hit roll is made.) If the first roll succeeds, then weapon fire proceeds normally. If the roll fails, the weapon does NOT fire and generates either the normal amount of heat or an extra amount of heat if that is how the weapon is damaged. The information on the Attacker and the Defender also includes how to deploy each of the opposing forces on the game map.

Next come the Victory Conditions that determine the outcome for each scenario. These usually vary for each side in the conflict and may include some special objectives. Finally, if there are rules for the scenario not covered by the general BattleTech rules, they are described under Special Rules.



BRIEF REGIMENTAL HISTORY



CONTRACT WITH DAVION

Wolf's Dragoons first appeared in the Inner Sphere just 20 years ago, in 3005. In that year, the regiment's Dropships, transports, and fighter escorts swung suddenly into orbit around Delios VI, one of Prince Andrew Davion's frontier worlds. Delios, a poor planet, was practically undefended, but the Dragoons made no attempt to attack. Instead, Colonel Jaime Wolf, the regiment's commander, sent a fast courier ship to New Avalon, offering the services of his troops to the House of Davion.

Though all of Davion's questions about the regiment's origins were politely but firmly rebuffed, the prince offered the Dragoons a five-year contract. Their BattleMechs were too valuable and their price too reasonable to refuse.

The contract between the House of Davion and Wolf's Dragoons later became a model for dealing with other Successor Warlords. Its main clause awarded the Dragoons the lands and resources of the prosperous planet New Valencia for the duration of the agreement. New Valencia served as a headquarters for the regiment and as a residence for its families. In addition, Davion agreed to pay combat bonuses for especially difficult missions. These payments usually consisted of a variety of rare minerals and luxury goods from across the Federated Suns.

THE CAPELLAN MARCH

During their service with the House of Davion, Wolf's Dragoons saw action all along the Capellan March. The March had been a relatively quiet frontier for more than ten years, and Prince Andrew had gradually shifted his best BattleMech regiments over to confront the House of Kurita. In 3005, however, Maximilian Liao's forces were growing ever more active, probing for weak points along the border and launching hit-and-run raids against poorly-garrisoned outposts. Hiring Wolf's Dragoons gave Davion a chance to strike back at Liao without weakening the armies fighting Kurita.

The Dragoons reached the Capellan March in early 3006, and quickly smashed two of Liao's regiments in the Battle of Halloran V. Wolf's intelligence service had learned that Liao's troops were using lightly-populated Halloran V as a base for their raids on Davion border worlds. While they were away on a raid, Wolf's Dropships arrived in the Halloran system and went into orbit around the planet's small moon. When Liao's regiments returned, battered and badly in need of rest and repair work, the Dragoons made a surprise assault landing just ten kilometers from their main camp. By the time Liao's troops managed to disengage and flee off-planet, the two regiments had been virtually wiped out. They lost more than three-quarters of their BattleMechs in a firefight that lasted just five days.

This slaughter broke the back of Liao's limited offensive along the Capellan March. Without the regiments annihilated on Halloran V, Liao's field commanders were forced to fight a defensive war. As the initiative shifted, Davion's forces went over to the attack, striking worlds deep inside the Capellan Confederation.

ASSAULT ON NEW ARAGON

In 3008, Duke Michael Hasek-Davion ordered Wolf's Dragoons to take New Aragon, a heavily-fortified industrial world. He placed another regiment, the 4th Deneb Light Cavalry, under Wolf's command, and launched raids on every major world around New Aragon. These raids successfully tied down Liao's reinforcements, but they alerted the defenders on new Aragon, which gave them time to prepare a number of unpleasant surprises for Wolf and his men.

The assault landing on New Aragon nearly foundered when a flight of Capellan aerospace fighters emerged from a hidden airbase and caught a battalion of the 4th Deneb Light Cavalry during its drop. In three quick passes, the fighters managed to destroy half the battalion's 'Mechs, and most of the rest were forced to make damaging hard landings. Though Wolf's aerospace fighters took swift revenge by downing the Capellans, the heavy losses sustained by the 4th Deneb removed it from battle for over a week, allowing the planetary garrison to retreat to a heavily-fortified defense zone.

This defense zone combined natural obstacles -- mountains, steep ridges, dense forests, and swamps -- with minefields, bunkers, and other fortifications. Secure inside their forts, Liao's BattleMechs, tanks, and infantry threw back five separate assaults by Wolf's Dragoons. At last, worried by reports that the strong Liao reinforcements were on the way, Wolf took a desperate gamble.

While a scratch force of the regiment's light BattleMechs landed inside the defense zone, Wolf's heavy 'Mech companies secretly assembled in the thick woods below El Diablo Pass. As Wolf had expected, the garrison's reserves were pulled back to deal with diversionary forces. After waiting a day, Wolf launched his attack. His heavy BattleMechs swarmed up out of the forest and into the pass. Though casualties were heavy, Wolf's forces managed to break through, spilling out of the mountains and down onto the plains below. After several more days of fierce fighting, Liao's commanders were forced to surrender. The loss of New Aragon cost the House of Liao control of the entire sector and led to an armistice on Davion's terms.

After New Aragon, Wolf asked for permission to rest his regiment. Combat losses had been heavy, and many of his 'Mechs needed complete overhaul. Davion agreed, and pulled the Dragoons off combat duty. In early 3009, Wolf assembled a strongly-escorted convoy of Dropships and other transports. Moving at high speed, the convoy reached the Periphery in mid-3009 and vanished into deep space. It returned late in the year, carrying a vast cargo of replacement BattleMechs and spare parts.



IN THE SERVICE OF LIAO

In 3010, Colonel Wolf notified Prince Andrew that he did not intend to renew his contract with the House of Davion. His emissaries had already negotiated a new agreement with Maximilian Liao. Like the old Davion contract, the new agreement provided the Dragoons with a temporary home planet and with bonus pay for combat assignments. It also included a clause prohibiting Liao from

ordering the Dagoon's into action against the House of Davion. Liao, under pressure from Janos Marik, Captain-General of the Free Worlds League, quickly accepted Wolf's offer.

The Dragoons arrived on the Confederation's border with Marik's Free Worlds League in early 3011. Liao's frontier armies had been badly battered in a series of recent engagements, and Wolf's regiment found itself fighting a number of desperate holding actions while Liao's troops got some needed rest and repair. After a bloody battle on Shiro III in 3012, the Free Worlds' offensive against the Confederation ground to a halt. Marik's casualties had been heavy, and his regimental commanders were increasingly unwilling to pit themselves against Wolf's Dragoons.

With his borders quiet, Liao saw little reason to pay combat bonuses to the Dragoons. As a result, the regiment found itself sitting in garrison all through 3013. Weary of this state of affairs, Wolf sent message after message to Sian, the Confederation capital, demanding new assignments worthy of his Dragoons.



PLEGDED TO DUKE MARIK

Finally in early 3014, Wolf found a new opportunity for his men. Duke Anton Marik, Janos Marik's brother, rose in revolt and declared himself Captain-General of the Free Worlds League. Though many of Marik's regiments went over to Anton, he desperately needed trained and battle-hardened troops. With Liao's secret approval, Wolf negotiated a new contract pledging the Dagoon's services to Duke Anton.

In mid-3014, the Dragoons slipped across the Free Worlds frontier into the region occupied by Anton's forces. For the rest of the year, the regiment moved from victory to victory as they routed Marik loyalists at Nova Roma, Emris IV, and Sophie's World. Duke Anton's regulars fared worse. A costly defeat at Calloway VI halted their advance and gave Marik's troops time to regroup. The results were catastrophic. Within six months, Anton's forces had been pushed back and hemmed into a small sphere of star systems.

In desperation, Duke Anton ordered Wolf to break up the Dragoons into small task forces that could be used to stiffen his own troops' resistance. When Wolf refused, the Duke arrested the man's younger brother, Captain Joshua Wolf. Joshua had been posted to New Delos, the Duke's homeworld, as the regiment's liaison officer. Anton ignored Wolf's warnings, tried Joshua by drumhead courtmartial, and had him shot.

In a lightning-quick reprisal raid, Wolf's Dragoons descended on New Delos, sowing fire and destruction. While the regiment's regular 'Mech companies ground Anton's troops into the dirt in a wild melee lasting three days and three nights, a special unit led by Captain Natasha Kerensky punched through the enemy lines, catching Anton's command center by surprise. Kerensky and her men gave no quarter. In a half-hour-long firefight, they killed Anton Marik and all his retainers.

BATTLING THE HOUSE OF STEINER

The Duke's death left his followers leaderless, and the revolt collapsed as quickly as fast courier ships could spread the news. Caught deep inside the Free Worlds, Wolf's Dragoons prepared for the worst, but the regiment's reputation as a crack fighting unit had long since spread throughout the Inner Sphere. In short order, Colonel Wolf and his men found themselves employed by Janos Marik against the House of Steiner and its Lyran Commonwealth.

From 3016 to 3018, Wolf's Dragoons were tied up in a series of minor border skirmishes and inconclusive campaigns. While most of Katrina Steiner's best BattleMech regiments were committed against the House of Kurita, Marik's forces had suffered





KATRINA STEINER'S OFFER

Greatly impressed by the skill and courage of Wolf's Dragoons, Katrina Steiner wasted no time in offering them a contract for service against her arch-rival, Takashi Kurita. Wolf accepted her offer in 3020.

Though the regiment needed another year to rest, re-equip, and replenish its stores, the Dragoons arrived on a world near Kurita's Draconis Combine in 3021. Kurita's armies, badly hurt by Hanse Davion's raid on their spare parts stockpiles at Halstead Station, had been unable to launch any full-scale attacks against the Commonwealth since 3019. Reliable intelligence sources, however, suggested that Kurita had been able to replace most of his losses, and that he was collecting forces for a new offensive against the House of Steiner.

Using the Dragoons as a spearhead, Katrina Steiner launched a spoiling attack designed to disrupt Kurita's plans. While Wolf's troops assaulted Dromini VI, a small industrial planet, three of her best BattleMech regiments remained hidden in high orbit. When Kurita's commanders sent reinforcements to aid the hard-pressed planetary garrison, they were ambushed and badly shot-up. Other raids and small skirmishes kept the Combine's forces off balance and on the defensive for more than two years.

In 3023, however, Colonel Wolf suddenly and inexplicably broke his contract with the House of Steiner. In its place, he signed a new agreement with Takashi Kurita and moved his regiment's BattleMechs across the border and into the Draconis Combine.

JAIME WOLF

Brief Personal History:

Colonel, Wolf's Dragoons
Awarded the Crucis Cross
Awarded the Star of Capella
Awarded the Order of Atreus
Awarded the Lyran Harp

Jaime Wolf's exact age and origins are unknown, as are those of most of his officers and men. Though middle-aged when he first appeared in the Inner Sphere, 20 years of stress and near-constant combat in the area do not seem to have taken a harsh toll on him. Wolf remains a vigorous and active soldier; a warrior as well as a leader, politician, and entrepreneur. He is a short man, distinguished by his firm jaw, graying hair, and cold, gray eyes.

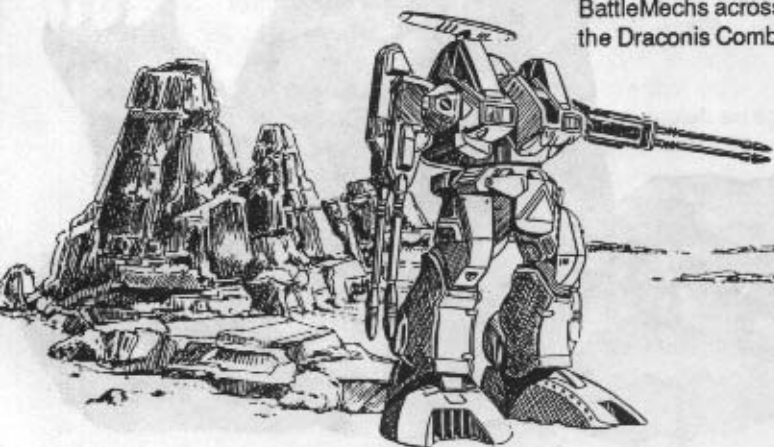
Wolf is a brilliant tactician and strategist. In 20 years of war across the Inner Sphere, he has compiled a record of victories unmatched by any living commander. He has fought for and against every major House in the Successor States, acquiring a deep knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Wolf is deeply aware that this knowledge has been purchased by the lives of his soldiers, and they are foremost in his thoughts. Every regimental family has grown wealthy on the combat bonuses and garrison pay that Wolf has won from the treasuries of the Successor Warlords. In turn, Wolf holds his MechWarriors to high standards of discipline. Strictly forbidden are the wanton murder, looting, and rape so common on the battlefields of the Succession Wars.

Over the years, Wolf and his Dragoons have become legends across the Inner Sphere. Every Warlord has reason to fear the regiment's striking power, at the same time coveting its services.

THE REGIMENTAL BANNER

Wolf's regimental banner portrays a fanged, night-black wolf's head against a scarlet background. The Wolf Banner has flown over a hundred fields on a hundred different worlds, always proud in victory and unwavering in defeat.



KERENSKY'S BLACK WIDOWS

Unit Name: Kerensky's Independent
Company, Wolf's Dragoons

BRIEF HISTORY

Formation Of The Unit

Kerensky's Independent Company was formed in 3014, during the regiment's participation in Duke Anton Marik's abortive revolt against his brother Janos, Captain-General of the Free Worlds League. Colonel Wolf assembled the company out of the rag-tag MechWarriors volunteered by his battalion commanders, who considered the company an ideal dumping ground for the undesirables in their units - chronic misfits, looters, and other disciplinary hardcases. Wolf named Captain Natasha Kerensky, "The Black Widow", as the commander of this motley collection. Kerensky, formerly a lieutenant in a line 'Mech company, welcomed the challenge.

Kerensky moved swiftly to whip her new command into shape. Within months, a combination of harsh, unrelenting discipline, intensive training, and indoctrination pounded Kerensky's company into a powerful fighting unit. Though scorned at first by other units in the regiment, the company's capabilities clearly impressed Colonel Wolf.

First Assignment

When Wolf attacked New Delos to avenge his brother's murder, he chose Kerensky's Company as his main striking force. While the rest of the regiment pinned down Duke Anton's Household Guard, Kerensky led her 'Mechs on a daring advance through the middle of a raging forest fire. Cloaked by the flames and dense smoke, the company broke through Anton's main line of defense without being detected.

Later that night, Kerensky's 'Mechs launched a surprise attack on Duke Anton's headquarters camp. In a vicious night battle, the Dragoons killed Anton and routed his elite guards. "The Black Widow" and her men hunted them down all through the next day. As word of Anton's death spread, resistance on New Delos collapsed. Their part in this battle earned Kerensky's Company a new name: The Black Widows.

From 3015 to 3018, The Black Widows were in the forefront of nearly every major battle and petty skirmish fought

by the regiment. Casualties were heavy, but a constant stream of new recruits, both voluntary and involuntary, kept the company up to strength.

Attack On Hesperus II

When Janos Marik ordered Wolf to attack Hesperus II, the Colonel chose The Black Widows as his spearhead. They punched through Katrina Steiner's border guards on Riesling's Planet, and travelled far ahead of the regiment's main body looking for lightly-garrisoned worlds that could be raided for food and water. During the six-month journey to Hesperus, Kerensky and her troops fought more than twelve actions against Steiner's 'Mechs, killing or crippling twice their number.

Though badly understrength when the Dragoons finally assaulted Hesperus, The Black Widows played a major role in the campaign. After some initial successes, Wolf's regular 'Mech companies quickly found themselves bogged down in Hesperus' razor-backed mountains and hills. As the terrain favored the defenders and the Dragoons were outnumbered more than two-to-one, their casualties mounted at an alarming rate.

Finally, after more than two weeks of non-stop fighting, the Dragoons reached the half-mile-wide, mud-bottomed Nerewhon River, just 100 kilometers from the old League Supply Depots. In two days, the regiment launched more than ten separate assaults across the river. Each was thrown back with heavy losses. At last, Wolf decided to commit The Black Widows.

Kerensky had been studying the terrain carefully, and believed she had found a weak point in the Steiner defenses at a place called Tanda's Crossing. While Wolf's line BattleMech companies maneuvered downriver, she assembled her Black Widows in a narrow gully opposite the Crossing. Their wild dash through the shallows carried the river line, and propelled the Dragoon advance to within 50 kilometers of its objectives. At last, however, Wolf was forced to acknowledge his defeat, and the regiment retreated off-planet with the remnants of The Black Widows as rear guard.

Hit-And-Run-Raids

After Hesperus II, Wolf signed on with the House of Steiner. Having moved the regiment into the Lyran Commonwealth, he pulled Kerensky and her surviving

'Mechs out of action for a well-deserved rest. They spent six months on Chukchi III, training, refitting, repairing battle damage, and carousing in every tavern on the planet. Though Wolf had authorized a year's leave for the Widows, Kerensky soon requested another combat assignment. Complaints from Chukchi's small farmers and noblemen were beginning to filter back to Tharkad, Steiner's capital, and The Black Widow wanted her troops off-planet and into battle as soon as possible.

While his line battalions went through their own cycle of rest and repair, Wolf used The Black Widows for a series of hit-and-run raids designed to keep Katrina Steiner happy and Kurita's troops off-balance. In early 3021, Kerensky and her 'Mechs made a secret landing on New Wessex, a forward base and staging area for several of Kurita's BattleMech regiments.

She established a camp deep inside Harlow Wood, a densely-forested region spreading over thousands of square kilometers. Operating from this hidden camp, The Black Widows began raiding storage areas, supply depots, and lightly-guarded aerospace fighter bases. Their attacks goaded Kurita's garrison commander into ordering one of his regiments, the 20th Draconis, into the forest after them. Kerensky had been hoping for this reaction, and she took swift advantage of it.

As the 20th Draconis advanced deeper into Harlow Wood, its battalions separated, each searching for Kerensky's camp. Using the woods to shield her movements, Kerensky was able to concentrate her troops against Kurita's widely-dispersed units, ambushing them one after the other, and retreating back into the forest before they could get to close grips. Using these tactics, The Black Widows managed to maul two of the 20th battalions in a running, week-long battle. While Kurita's battered forces regrouped, Kerensky loaded her surviving 'Mechs aboard their Dropships and vanished off-planet.

In the years since the Battle of Harlow Wood, Kerensky and her Black Widows have moved from victory to victory. In that time, stories of their courage, skill, and cold ferocity have spread throughout the Inner Sphere. The Black Widow and her men have paid heavily to prove those stories true, their glory bought with the blood of many soldiers.



Pilot: Captain Natasha Kerensky, "The Black Widow"

BattleMech: WHM-6R Warhammer

Skills: Piloting 4

Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Kerensky's Warhammer is in perfect fighting condition. It has taken heavy battle damage in the past, but The Black Widow gets the best of everything, including spare parts.

MechWarrior Data:

Natasha Kerensky is a beautiful, dark-haired woman. She is also a cold, highly professional soldier. Kerensky's skill and courage are well-known, and she is regarded as one of the regiment's most daring and resourceful officers. She rules her company with a firm hand and demands absolute loyalty from her troops, returning their loyalty one hundredfold. The Black Widow has no known emotional attachments outside her company, and little, if any, personal life. She is at home only on a battlefield, and her MechWarriors are her family.

Kerensky's exact age is unknown. She assumed command of the Black Widows eleven years ago, but she remains a youthful-looking woman. Most who have met her believe that she is in her early to mid-thirties, but those assessments are based solely on her physical appearance and not on physiological data.

Though Kerensky's past is mysterious, her military record speaks for itself. Over the last eleven years, friends and foes alike have awarded her names reflecting her murderous efficiency: "The Black Widow", "The First Lady of Death", and "The Queen of Spades".

Pilot: MechWarrior Colin Maclaren

BattleMech: MAD-3R Marauder

Skills: Piloting 4

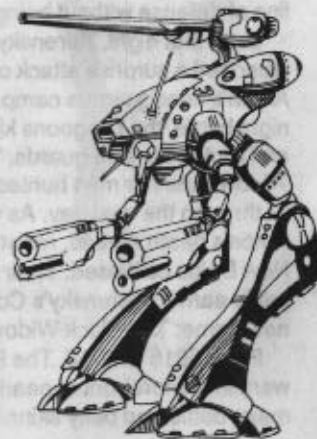
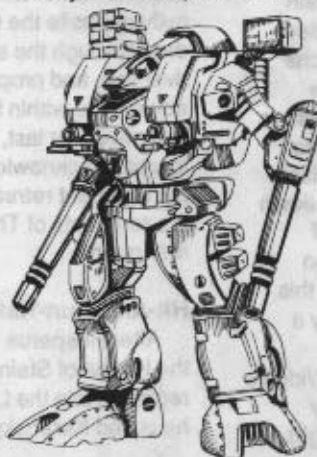
Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Maclaren's Marauder is also maintained in mint-condition.

MechWarrior Data:

Colin Maclaren is a brave soldier, and fiercely-devoted to Natasha Kerensky. He served in Kerensky's old lance and asked to be assigned to her new command. Though at first wary of his 'jailbird' comrades, eleven years of hard combat and shared victory have wiped away his prejudices. Maclaren always speaks to and of Kerensky in the third person. She is always "The Captain" or "The Lady".





Pilot: MechWarrior Lynn Sheridan

BattleMech: CRD-3R *Crusader*

Skills: Piloting 5

Gunnery 4

BattleMech Status Report:

Sheridan's *Crusader* was heavily-damaged at the Battle of Corridan IV. As a result, the 'Mech's fusion power plant functions inefficiently and produces an extra 2 points of heat every turn.

MechWarrior Data:

Lynn Sheridan is a compulsive gambler -- but with her life, not her money. She cannot resist taking chances in combat, and throws herself into any firefight, often without considering the odds or tactical situation. Before she joined The Black Widows, Sheridan's superiors had marked her down as "willfully insubordinate, recklessly brave, and costly". In one campaign, Sheridan's 'Mech required more repair work than all the rest of her lance combined.

The Black Widows' role as a heavy assault force suits Sheridan well, but even Kerensky finds it difficult to restrain her. For example, during the Battle of Corridan IV, Sheridan found herself face-to-face with three enemy 'Mechs. Kerensky ordered her to retreat -- without effect. Instead, Sheridan fought a slugging match that turned one enemy 'Mech into a pile of scrap metal, but left her *Crusader* a smoldering wreck. She escaped a field court-martial by claiming that her comm circuits had been knocked out.

Pilot: MechWarrior John Hayes

BattleMech: GRF-1N *Griffin*

Skills: Piloting 4

Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

The *Griffin*'s jump jets suffered heavy impact damage during an assault landing on Dromini VI. The 'Mech can now jump a maximum of three hexes, and each hex jumped adds 2 points of heat. The *Griffin*'s PPC fire control also functions erratically. It misfires and adds heat on any roll of 10+. This roll should be made before the To-Hit Roll.

MechWarrior Data:

John Hayes is a highly-competent MechWarrior with a decidedly mercenary streak. He joined The Black Widows after his former company commander had him arrested and charged with "unauthorized looting". Kerensky controls his light-fingered nature through a judicious combination of heavy fines for theft and sizeable rewards for gallantry in action.

Hayes came close to death during Wolf's assault on Dromini VI. An incompetent Dropship pilot launched Hayes' *Griffin* into the atmosphere at the wrong angle of attack. Buffeted by shock waves and supersonic winds, Hayes lost control during re-entry and had to use most of his reaction jet fuel to crashland hundreds of miles from the regiment's drop point. Kerensky avoided a murder by confiscating the Dropship pilot's wealth, giving it to Hayes as 'wergild', and demoting the pilot to Third Assistant Cook aboard a family transport.

IKEDA'S FIRE LANCE



Pilot: Lieutenant Takiro Ikeda

BattleMech: ARC-2R Archer

Skills: Piloting 4

Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Ikeda's Archer is in perfect condition.

MechWarrior Data:

Takiro Ikeda volunteered for duty with The Black Widows in order to win promotion. It was a calculated risk that paid off. Kerensky, faced with the task of whipping a collection of 'losers' into an elite strike force, needed every good soldier she could get. With a single transfer, Ikeda upped his rank from MechWarrior to Lieutenant.

Over the years, Ikeda has proven himself an aggressive, talented battlefield commander. The friction caused by his rapid promotion has vanished, worn away by his obvious competence. Though ambitious, Ikeda seems content to serve The Black Widow.



Pilot: MechWarrior Miklos Delius

BattleMech: ARC-2R Archer

Skills: Piloting 4

Gunnery 4

BattleMech Status Report:

Delius' Archer took heavy missile fire at the Battle of Tanda's Crossing. A direct hit shattered one heat sink beyond repair. Other hits inflicted so much structural damage that the Archer's left leg can only carry 10 armor points.

MechWarrior Data:

Miklos Delius is the only MechWarrior serving in Wolf's Dragons under a suspended death sentence. He was arrested after the Battle of Windgate Pass, accused of murdering unarmed civilians, court-martialled, found guilty, and sentenced to execution by a BattleMech firing squad. Fortunately for Miklos, his uncle, Major Ilya Delius, persuaded Colonel Wolf to suspend the sentence. Instead, Wolf transferred him to The Black Widows. Kerensky is authorized to carry out the court's death sentence for the slightest breach of discipline.

Though his family expected Delius to die quickly, either in or out of battle, he has disappointed them by surviving through nearly six years of grueling combat. Faced with certain death for failure or disobedience, Delius has become a letter-perfect soldier.



Pilot: MechWarrior Nikolai Koniev

Battlemech: WSP-1A Wasp

Skills: Piloting 4
Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Koniev's *Wasp* is in perfect working order, despite its battered appearance.

MechWarrior Data:

Nikolai Koniev served as an aide to Colonel Wolf, a position of high prestige and responsibility. After he was caught siphoning regimental funds into his own pocket, however, he was offered a choice: either volunteer for The Black Widows or face immediate exile from the Inner Sphere. Koniev chose Kerensky's command without hesitation. He is bitter about his fall from grace and determined to win back his old rank and position. This determination shows itself in a willingness to take desperate risks in battle - if there are witnesses to his heroism.



Pilot: MechWarrior Alex Ward

BattleMech: STG-3R Stinger

Skills: Piloting 5
Gunnery 4

BattleMech Status Report:

Ward's *Stinger* suffers from unreliable leg actuators. An untraceable electronic 'glitch' periodically reduces the efficiency of the actuators, leaving the *Stinger* just 5 MPs at walking speed and 8 MPs when running.

MechWarrior Data:

Alex Ward volunteered for Kerensky's Company in order to pay his debts. An inveterate gambler, Ward found himself owing a vast sum to his battalion commander, a sum he could not pay. Faced with disgrace and possible exile, he signed on with The Black Widows, an outfit famous for both its high casualty rate and high combat bonuses.

In the years since, Ward has earned a sizeable fortune, and gambled away an even larger one. Though he is still deeply in debt, Kerensky has been able to protect him from his creditors. Ward has repaid her with courage in battle - the only coin she respects.



Pilot: Lieutenant John ("Gentleman Johnny") Clavell

BattleMech: RFL-3N Rifleman

Skills: Piloting 4

Gunnery 3

Battlemech Status Report:

Clavell's Rifleman is in peak fighting condition.

MechWarrior Data:

"Gentleman Johnny" Clavell was transferred to The Black Widows after killing a brother officer in a duel. Clavell is a born fighter, a brilliant tactician, and a natural leader -- qualities that Wolf was reluctant to lose by executing him. The Black Widows gave the Colonel a means of saving Clavell for battle.

While commanding Kerensky's recon lance, Clavell has fought with distinction, but he has also been reprimanded for taking unnecessary risks. "Gentleman Johnny" often treats his lance more as a fast strike force than a reconnaissance unit. He has been lucky enough, and capable enough, to avoid disaster - so far.



Pilot: MechWarrior Piet Nichols

BattleMech: PXH-1K Phoenix Hawk

Skills: Piloting 5

Gunnery 4

Battlemech Status Report:

Nichols' Phoenix Hawk was heavily-damaged during the Battle of Harlow Wood. Its left-arm medium laser suffers from erratic power circuitry, and on any roll of 10+ made before the To-Hit Roll, a medium laser shot will produce 4 points of heat.

MechWarrior Data:

As a young Lieutenant, Piet Nichols disobeyed orders and led a glory raid against a Marik supply depot on Devil's Rock. The raid failed, and Nichols and his troops were cut off and surrounded. Two of his men were killed and another seriously wounded before a rescue party could reach them. Nichols was court-martialled, stripped of his rank, and summarily 'volunteered' to Natasha Kerensky.

After eleven years with the Black Widows, Nichols is a veteran. He has been wounded four times and had two 'Mechs shot out from under him. Over the years, it has also become clear that, although he is a brave MechWarrior, Nichols lacks any tactical sense.



Pilot: MechWarrior Simon Fraser

BattleMech: STG-3R *Stinger*

Skills: *Piloting* 4

Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Fraser's *Stinger* took a close-range PPC hit at Harlow Wood, and its right torso suffered so much structural damage that it can only carry 4 armor points.

MechWarrior Data:

Simon Fraser joined The Black Widows at his own request because service in his old outfit, the Dragoon reconnaissance battalion, was too tame. Fraser, a short-tempered man, enjoys the 'sting' of battle, the smell of smoke, and the harsh crackle of energy weapons. He guessed correctly that any unit commanded by Natasha Kerensky would be in the thick of almost every action.

Fraser's guts and luck are legendary, though his luck nearly deserted him during the Battle of Harlow Wood. While pursuing two enemy light 'Mechs through the Wood, Fraser's *Stinger* blundered head-on into an enemy *Warhammer*. A freak hit knocked out the *Warhammer's* sensors, allowing Fraser to escape, but not before its PPCs pounded his *Stinger* into a stumbling junkpile.

Pilot: Mohammad Jahan

BattleMech: STG-3R *Stinger*

Skills: *Piloting* 5

Gunnery 3

BattleMech Status Report:

Jahan's *Stinger* is in perfect condition.

MechWarrior Data:

Mohammad Jahan found himself assigned to The Black Widows just two years ago, shortly after he told his battalion commander, Major O'Donnell, that he wanted to marry O'Donnell's daughter. Incensed by Jahan's impertinence, O'Donnell shipped him out to Kerensky's Company. In doing so, he did not bother to conceal his hope that the transfer would prove fatal.

Jahan, though a brave soldier, is not the brightest Dragoon in the regiment. He believes that O'Donnell is testing his skill and courage, and he is determined to demonstrate them both to his prospective father-in-law.



LADY SINGS THE BLUES

THE BAIT

As the white sun of Kessel slowly dipped behind the western mountains, Captain Terrell Pilson surveyed with hate-filled eyes the remains of the carnage that had taken place below. In the field below Kelgar's Ridge lay the remains of three BattleMechs and two jeeps, torn apart by enemy fire. The fence that had once surrounded the supply depot was also destroyed, reduced to a mass of twisted, charred metal by the four 'Mechs who were now rapidly moving about the compound, filling their transport nets with the crates of spare parts that lay within.

"Good," Terrell thought, "they've taken the bait. The price has been high - higher than we thought - but now the Widow will pay."

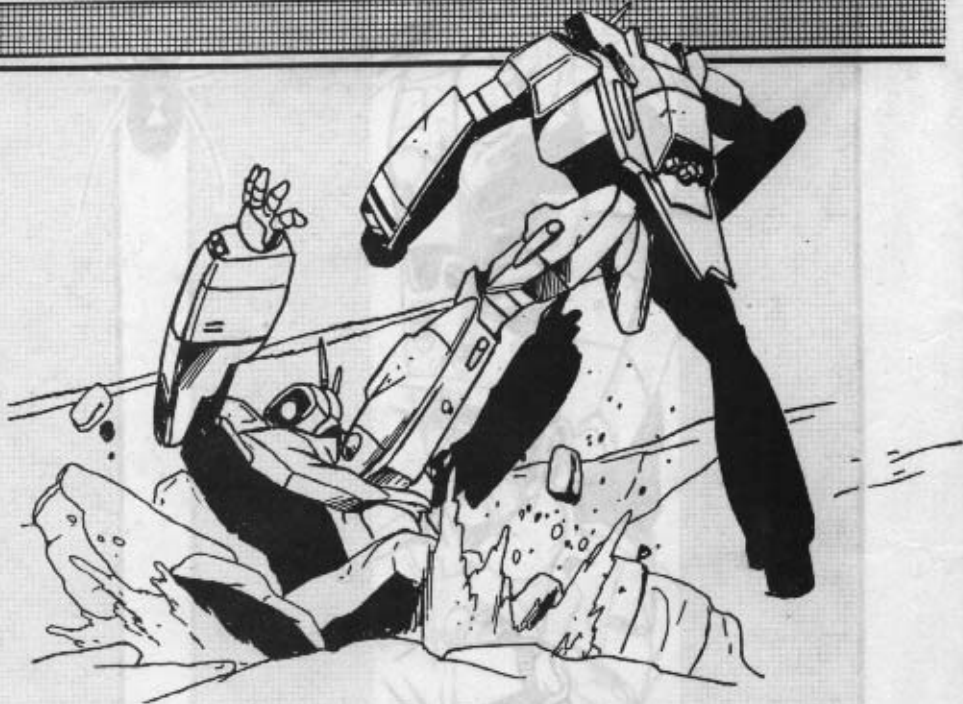
Pilson growled over the commlink, "Get ready, gentlemen. Stay low, but keep your weapons warm." The hum from the three 'Mechs standing beside him began to build.

Walters, the youngest MechWarrior in the Lance, broke in: "Are we going to go after them, sir?"

Pilson snarled grimly, "You bet your ass, Walters, but not just yet. GHQ's cooked up a little surprise to soften up these guys and even the odds. Just wait and watch - it ought to be starting any second now."

Down below, the long shadows of the Widow's 'Mechs could still be seen retreating to the west, right into Pilson's waiting ambush. Suddenly, the morning's stillness was shattered by an explosion right at the base of one of those shadows.

"That's our cue, men! Let's move out! Remember, try to avoid closing with them for as long as possible." As the 'Mechs began to clamber down the hillside toward their foes, several more explosions could be heard (and seen) below.



GAME SET-UP

The two BattleTech maps should be laid out so that the game logo is placed in the lower left corner of each map, as shown below. This scenario should be played using Expert BattleTech rules. The Defender deploys first, with all bomb damage (see **Special Rules** below) resolved before the beginning of the first game turn. There will be one round of fire after initial deployment before movement occurs.

Prepare BattleTech record sheets for each of the 'Mechs in this action, noting any damage already sustained (as indicated in the Order of Battle below).

Defender

The Black Widow's Fire Lance.

Deployment:

Defending units may deploy anywhere within the rectangle formed by hexes 0106, 0406, 0112, and 1412 on the east map.

Attacker

Pilson's Lance consists of the following units:

- 1 Rifleman (Right Arm Armor 12, Right Torso Armor 13/2)
- 1 Rifleman (Left Leg Armor 8 and 8 Heat Sinks remaining)
- 1 Marauder (Center Torso Armor 24/14)
- 1 Wasp (Head Armor 5, Right Arm 5, Center Torso 8/4)

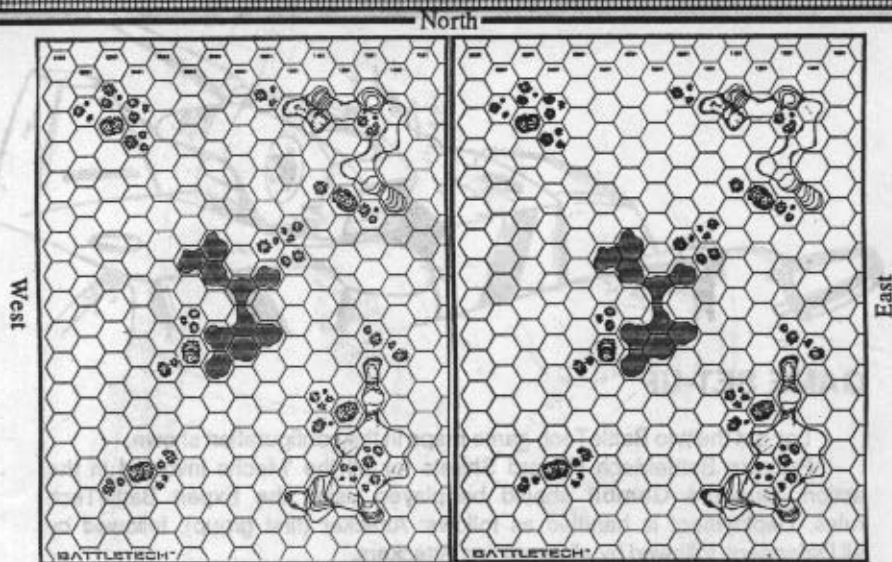
Deployment:

Attacking units may deploy anywhere on the ridge (elevation 1+ area) on the west map.

Victory Conditions

The attacker wins a Decisive Victory if he can destroy all the enemy units, and a Marginal Victory if he destroys three enemy 'Mechs while losing no more than two of his own units. The defender wins a Decisive Victory if he can retreat three units off the Western mapedge with his booty intact, or if he destroys all enemy units. He achieves a Marginal Victory if he can retreat at least two units off the Western mapedge with his booty intact and destroys at least two enemy 'Mechs.

SITUATION: 0850 HOURS (TST), PLANET KESSEL

**Special Rules****(1) Bombs**

There are seven bombs concealed among the crates at the supply cache. These devices will explode just prior to the first combat round of the scenario.

To determine which 'Mechs are carrying each bomb, roll a D10 (1-3 = Archer A, 4-6 = Archer B, 7-8 Stinger, 9-10 Wasp). Because the Archers are heavier units and can carry greater loads, they have more chance of carrying bombs. Each bomb will do damage to the 'Mech carrying it on a roll of 4+ (no movement or terrain modifiers applicable); a successful hit does the same range of damage as a six-pack of SRMs. Roll normally on the Missile Hit Table to determine the portion of the blast striking the 'Mech. To determine the location hit, roll two dice, and consult the Damage Location Table below (note that all Torso Hits will strike the 'Mech's rear armor).

DAMAGE LOCATION TABLE

- | | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 2 | Center Torso (Critical) |
| 3 | Left Leg |
| 4 | Right Arm |
| 5 | Right Leg |
| 6 | Left Torso |
| 8 | Center Torso |
| 8 | Right Torso |
| 9 | Left Leg |
| 10 | Left Arm |
| 11 | Right Leg |
| 12 | Center Torso |

(2) Nets

At the beginning of the scenario, each defending 'Mech is carrying booty from the supply cache in a large metallic net suspended from its Center Rear Torso. While carrying a net, a 'Mech's normal MP allowance is reduced by 1, and it cannot jump; Archers carrying nets cannot fire their rear Lasers. A 'Mech may jettison its net by stopping in any clear hex and expending two extra MP. Jettisoned nets are considered to remain in the hex in which they were dropped, and may later be picked up by any unit not already carrying a net (by stopping in the hex and expending the same 2 MP cost).

In the summer of 3022, under contract to the House of Steiner, one-and-a-half battalions of Wolf's Dragoons have been dispatched to Kessel to raid the supply stores of this House Kurita-held world. They are being opposed by elements of Smithson's Chinese Bandits, a once-renowned mercenary regiment that has fallen on increasingly hard times in recent years. During the first few days of the campaign, almost everything has gone Wolf's way. The Bandits have been able to put up very little effective resistance, and have already had almost a third of their total on-planet force destroyed or captured.

Desperate to find a way to halt the enemy advance and bolster their own flagging morale, the Bandits have hatched a plan to use guile rather than force to win the day. The supply cache that the Widow has just attacked is an elaborately-prepared trap, as several of the crates of "spare parts" present at this site have been rigged with delayed-action explosives.

Two Bandit Lances were assigned to this site. The original plan was for the first of these Lances to stand guard at the site, engage the enemy in a brief firefight to make things look good, and then withdraw, while the backup Lance maintained surveillance from a nearby ridge. After the bombs had done their work, both units were then to converge on the scene to 'clean up the area'. Unfortunately, the Widow has managed (as she so often does) to throw all these best-laid plans awry. The guard Lance's firepower was assembled under the assumption that the unit would be facing off against a light Recon Lance. When the Widow assigned the assault to her Fire Lance instead, the guards wound up badly-outgunned. Instead of trading a few rounds of fire and withdrawing to await developments, the unit was routed completely, with three of its four 'Mechs left badly disabled on the field.

It is now more essential than ever that Pilson's Lance follow up the advantage given them by the bombs, and wreak enough damage to drive the Widow from the field. Unfortunately, without the first Lance to back up their assault, the Bandit forces possess only a modest firepower edge, and there is much less certainty about the encounter's likely outcome. Much will depend on the amount of good fortune Pilson receives from the results of the bomb attacks, and the degree of success the Bandit commander has in exploiting his initial advantage of surprise.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT

FIRST LADY OF DEATH

Five more minutes! I swear to you, that's all we would have needed. Hell, I had the *Warhammer* in my sights when everything fell apart. A few more minutes, and Natasha Kerensky would have been just another BattleMech memory...

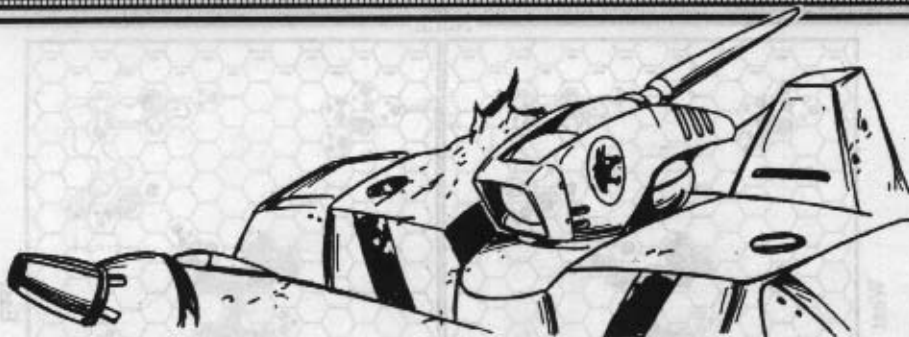
Idle boast, huh? Now, you listen to me, wiseguy. Jake Redmond doesn't boast. I was with the Eridani Light Horse, Stedman's Company, and I fought the Widow. We fought her five times on New Aberdeen, and we held our own pretty damn well, thank you very much! Yeah, I know, Davion pulled us out, but not 'cause the Light Horse couldn't take it - no way!

How'd I lose the arm? Well, y'can thank the Lady in Black for that. That was one fight where we didn't have much of a chance, thanks to that young know-it-all, Captain Stedman. Damn his glory-hunting! We held the Widow three different times around the Firth - three times, boy-o, and each one rougher 'en the time before. She was one mean lady, I'll tell you, and she never gave up. Always too cagey to fight when we had an advantage, though, so we were never able to fight it out to the end.

Third time was the biggest fight, and the Widows pulled out just like before. So, Captain Stedman decides the Lady ain't such a great fighter after all, the way she was backing down, and that was when things started going wrong. One day, we get an alarm, and it's a pair of 'Mechs scouting our lines - and one of them's the Black Queen's own damned *Warhammer*. So up runs Stedman's 'Mech, and he's shouting over the commline to go after the Widow and take her out, stop her, whatever it takes.

We all should've known better than to chase after her. Our company was mostly medium stuff, no match for some of the gear the Widow fields. But, like a bunch of fools, we go chasing after her...and those two 'Mechs led us right into her web!

I was so close that time...so close...and you know what? The last thing I noticed before the laser bolts started flying was that black *Warhammer's* cockpit in my sights - and her face, magnified on my scanners, smiling right at me.



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown.

Prepare BattleMech Record Sheets for all the 'Mechs involved in the action. *Queen's Gambit* should be played using the Expert BattleTech rules. Deployment is handled as follows: Attacker (first group), followed by all Defenders, followed by all remaining Attackers.

Defender:

Stedman's Company of Eridani Light Horse consists of the following forces:

Command Lance

1 *Griffin*

1 *Shadow Hawk*

1 *Stinger* (Head Armor, 8 points; Right Leg, 1 point; Medium Laser, +2 modifier to To-Hit roll)

1 *Wasp*

Moran's Lance

1 *Phoenix Hawk*

1 *Phoenix Hawk* (Center Torso Front Armor, 21 points; Right Arm Med Laser inoperable, Right Arm Laser +3 modifier to To-Hit roll)

1 *Stinger* (Left Torso Front Armor, 3 points; Right Leg Armor, 6 points)

1 *Wasp*

Schmidt's Lance

1 *Stinger* (8 Heat Sinks)

1 *Wasp* (no jump movement)

1 *Wasp* (Left Torso Front Armor, 1 point; Ammo 50-pk exhausted)

Deployment:

Schmidt's Lance sets up within three hexes of West Map hex 0608, but cannot deploy any unit within three hexes of an Attacker's unit (see below). Moran's Lance deploys within two hexes of East Map, hex 1307. The Command Lance deploys within two hexes of hex 0910.

Attacker

The Black Widows are divided into four groups as the scenario opens.

Force One consists of:

Kerensky's *Warhammer*
Hayes' *Griffin*

Force Two consists of:

Sheridan's *Crusader*
Ikeda's *Archer*
Ward's *Stinger*

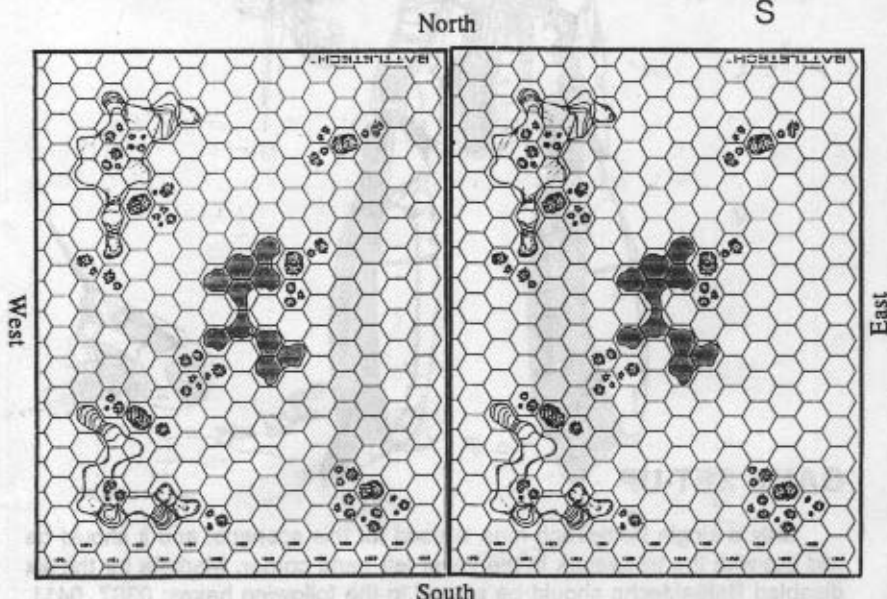
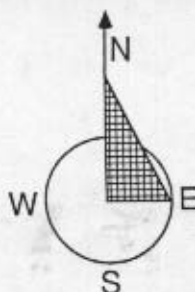
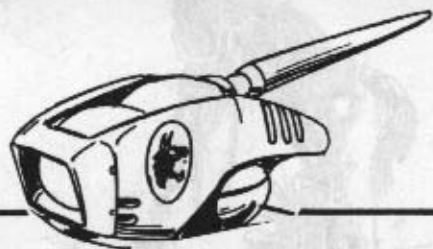
Force Three consists of:

Maclaren's *Marauder*
Miklos' *Archer*
Koniev's *Wasp*

Force Four consists of:

All units of the Recon Lance.

SITUATION: 0515 HOURS (TST), NEW ABERDEEN

**Deployment:**

- Force One deploys first, within three hexes of West Map, hex 0909.
- Force Two deploys (after Defender deployment) within three hexes of hex 1303.
- Force Three deploys (after Defender deployment) within three hexes of hex 1316.
- Force Four deploys (after Defender deployment) within four hexes of hex 0303.

Victory Conditions

The defending forces under Stedman receive 10 victory points for every unit exited from any one side of the map. They receive 5 victory points for every Widow 'Mech destroyed during the battle. They receive 50 victory points for destroying the attacker Warhammer if any of their 'Mechs escape from the board after the Warhammer (Kerensky's vehicle) is destroyed.

The attackers get 10 victory points for every defending 'Mech destroyed, and 10 victory points for every one of their own 'Mechs still on the board at the end of the game.

The side with the highest victory point total wins.

The game ends when all defending units have been destroyed or exited.

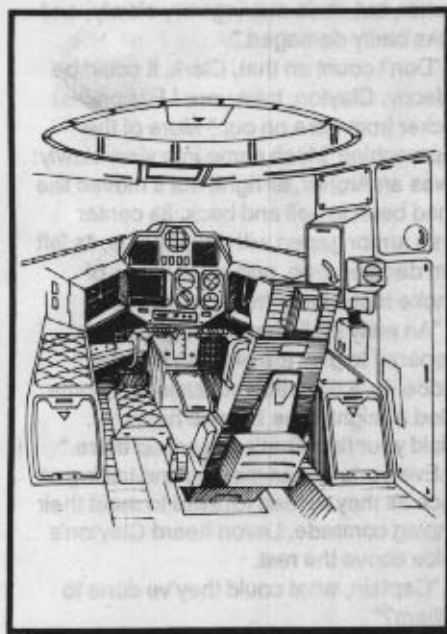
Special Rules

On the first turn of the game, no defending units may move. Defenders are allowed to fire only at the two 'Mechs in Attacker Force 1. After the end of Turn 1, all restrictions on movement and fire are lifted.

The Eridani Light Horse, responsible for perimeter security duty around the large, fresh-water lake known as The Firth on the Davion world of New Aberdeen in Bergman's Cluster, held the area against repeated assaults by Wolf's Dragoons and other Kurita forces. This series of actions resulted in a few casualties on either side, and little else in the way of strategic gains. Both sides found the duty galling, but neither was in a position to strike any kind of substantial blow without risking a major defeat.

In this war of nerves, the one significant victory won by Wolf's Dragoons in three months of almost constant skirmishing was achieved through the unorthodox tactics of Captain Natasha Kerensky. Her Black Widows arguably the best of the Kurita forces on New Aberdeen, maintained pressure on the Eridani Light Horse without exposing themselves to any real risk. After several indecisive engagements, Kerensky's measure of her opponents was such that she was able to draw a full company of the Light Horse, commanded by one Captain Anton Stedman, into a well-orchestrated ambush some 50 kilometers from Firthaven.

Although a small skirmish by anyone's standards, the ambush is still considered by many to be an example of the finest possible use of psychology in battle.



SCAVENGER HUNT

AN EASY KILL

Levon Grant, Captain, 21st Illician Rangers, scanned the horizon vainly for any sign of 'Mechs. It had been almost an hour since they had last had contact with Graham Gilliam's Recon Lance, which had reported enemy movement along these coordinates. It seemed likely that Gilliam had engaged that enemy force, despite Levon's orders to maintain distance and only conduct surveillance until his own unit could arrive to provide backup.

"Where are they now," he grumbled to himself, "and why don't they answer our homing signal?"

Grant's thoughts were interrupted by the crackle of the commlink in his ship.

"Sir, this is Clayton. I can see some movement up near the base of that ridge ahead -- some kind of shadow that's getting bigger."

"Confirmed, Clayton," Levon shot back, homing in his sensors on the ridge, and increasing magnification to 300x. "I see it, too. Looks like we've got company."

Switching to unit-wide link, he continued. "Go to yellow alert, mates, and energize weapons. Don't move up 'till we know how many there are."

Seconds passed as the shadow moved steadily closer, its approach covered by the brush that lined the ridge.

Suddenly, Bel Clark, a *Stinger* pilot, spoke up. "Sir, I've got a preliminary ID on the approaching unit. It appears to be an Archer, but she's moving very slowly, and looks badly damaged."

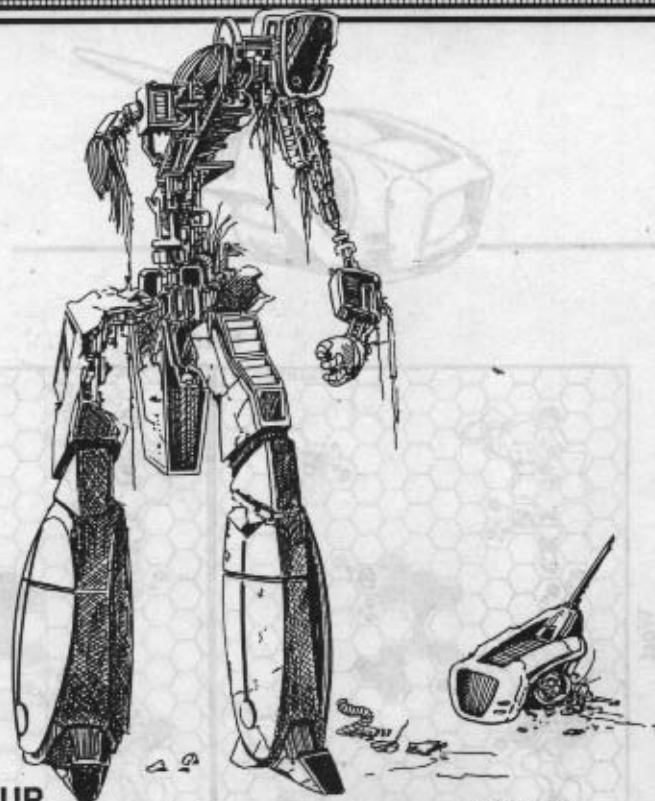
"Don't count on that, Clark. It could be a decoy. Clayton, train your LRM on that sucker from here on out." More of the approaching 'Mech came into view slowly: it was an Archer, all right, but it moved like it had been to hell and back. Its center torso armor gaped with huge holes, its left arm dangled limp, and small wisps of smoke rose slowly from the cockpit.

"An easy kill," Levon thought, as he prepared to give the order to fire; then, suddenly, a dreadful realization hit home. "God Almighty," he intoned hoarsely. "Hold your fire! That's Gilliam up there."

Everyone began moving and talking at once as they rushed forward to meet their limping comrade. Levon heard Clayton's voice above the rest.

"Captain, what could they've done to Gilliam?"

Grant sighed half to himself as he trudged on up the hill. "I don't know," he replied, "but I'm sure we'll find out soon."



GAME SET-UP

Only a single BattleTech map is used for this scenario, and it should be laid out with the trademark in the lower left hand corner. Markers for the six disabled BattleMechs should be placed in the following hexes: 0307, 0411, 0513, 0714, 0812, and 0908. Disabled 'Mechs may not move or fire, but they may be transported off the map to safety by active units (see **Special Rules** below).

Defender

Levon Grant's Lance consists of the following:

2 *Stingers*

1 *Griffin*

1 *Archer* (Gilliam's *Archer*, though badly damaged, may also participate in this engagement on a very limited basis.) The unit's movement rate is halved; its Right Arm LRM and rear Medium Lasers are useless; it has only eight 20-packs of LRM ammo remaining, and only ten Heat Sinks. Its current armor ratings are: Center Torso 14/2, Head 3, Right Arm 2, Right Leg 9.

Deployment:

Grant's *Lance* deploys anywhere along the southern (xx17) mapedge on Turn 1; Gilliam's *Archer* enters from the same mapedge on Turn 13.

Attacker

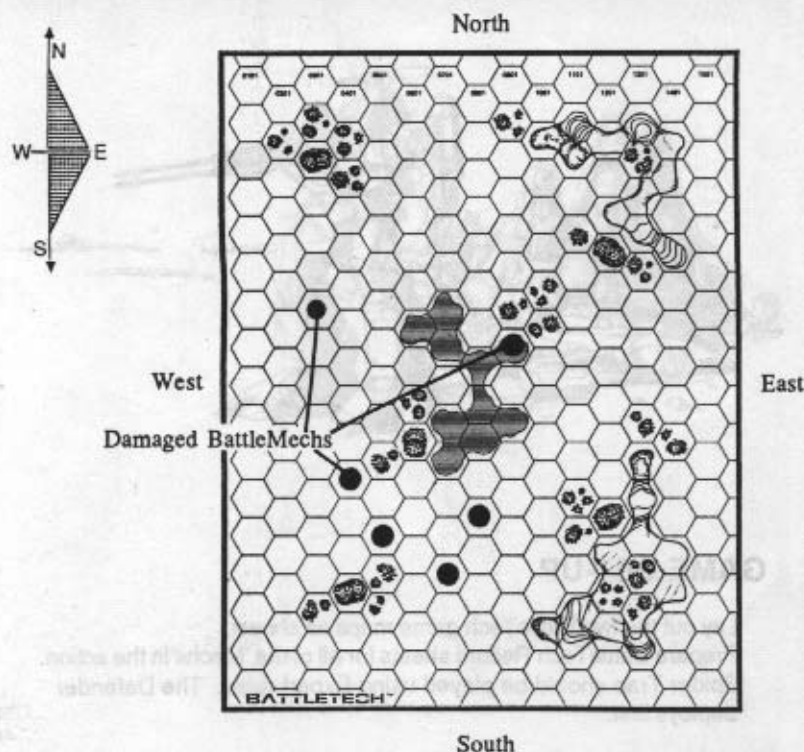
The Widow's Fire Lance.

(The surviving *Rifleman* was considered too damaged to be useful, and will not appear in this battle.)

Deployment:

These units may deploy anywhere along the eastern mapedge north of hex 1511.

SITUATION: 1500 HOURS (TST), GALTOR III



Victory Conditions

Either side wins a Decisive Victory if it can destroy three enemy 'Mechs without having two of its units disabled. Either side wins a Marginal Victory if it destroys three units, while losing two. Every disabled 'Mech successfully carried off the field to safety (see **Special Rules** below) subtracts one from the losses sustained by the transporting side. For instance, if the Widow's forces have lost two units, but have removed one disabled unit to safety, for Victory Condition purposes, they are only considered to have lost one unit. (Note: Gilliam's *Archer* does not count as a kill for these purposes, as the unit is already nearly dead.)

Both sides must begin to withdraw as soon as they have lost two units (regardless of recovery of disabled units). A withdrawing unit must move its full MA each turn, toward the mapedge from which it entered. Withdrawing units may, however, fire normally and may complete any salvage effort already underway.

Special Rules

Disabled Unit Recovery: Active 'Mechs may attempt to pick up and move disabled units in one of two ways. Any pair of jump-capable units may move adjacent to a disabled 'Mech and carry it off between them, moving at their normal jump movement allowance. *Archers* (other than Gilliam's *Archer*) may move adjacent to a disabled 'Mech and drag it from the field, at a maximum MA of 3 MP per turn. Units engaged in transporting disabled units may not fire, except for the *Archer's* rear lasers. While still on the game map, they may be attacked normally.

Units carrying disabled 'Mechs must exit the board by the same mapedge from which they entered, and spend four turns off-board. When they return, they may enter anywhere along the same mapedge.

Galtor III is an uninhabited, barren world, empty save for an outpost maintained by the House of Davion. Recently, however, Davion has begun to utilize the world as a major staging base for its assaults on neighboring Kurita star systems. Davion has hired two battalions of the Ilician Lancers to serve as a local garrison, and has begun to beef up the planetary defenses. This stepped-up activity has finally drawn the attention of Takashia Kurita's intelligence network, and Kurita has responded by dispatching two battalions of Wolf's Dragoons to conduct a punitive raid on the planet, with orders to inflict as much damage as possible on the Davion installations.

Unfortunately, this fight has not been the easy win Kurita originally envisioned. From the first fierce aerospace fighter battle in Galtor orbit, it has become increasingly apparent that the House of Davion is far more prepared and entrenched than was originally expected. Furthermore, the Ilician Lancers have proved to be skilled and resourceful opponents. Wolf's progress has been slow, and he has suffered several costly setbacks - for example, the engagement that occurred just before noon today.

This morning, Davion tracking equipment picked up signs of an enemy 'Mech force moving south. Grant and Gilliam's Lances were sent out to intercept that force. Gilliam's Lance and the Recon Lance of the Black Widow Company crossed paths near a small pond. The battle was short and brutal; when the smoke cleared, only one badly-battered 'Mech from each side was able to withdraw from the field, leaving six disabled 'Mechs behind.

As soon as the survivors make contact with friendly units, both sides will dispatch additional forces to the site. Each of the combatants will be attempting to drive off the enemy and gain possession of the 'prizes' that remain; failing that, each will attempt to retrieve as many 'Mechs as possible from the site. Yet, both forces in this engagement must be cautious, because neither can afford to throw away a second Lance ("good 'Mechs after bad", as it were) in an all-out firefight.

The two opposing forces in the engagement are fairly evenly-matched; the Widow's second healthy *Archer* gives her an edge in raw firepower, while the Ilicians, with three jump-capable 'Mechs, have the edge in mobility. Either commander will have to fight a tactically-superior battle to win a decisive victory.

SPIDER TRAP

TWO KINDS OF LUCK

You know what they say, don't you? About how us MechWarriors are the modern knights errant, how warfare has become civilized now that we have to abide by conventions and rules of war.

Don't believe it. Oh, we play by the rules... 'cause if we don't, neither will the other player, and a planet nuked into a blue-glowing cinder doesn't do anyone any good.

But we still play it just as dirty as we can get away with...and sometimes just a bit dirtier. Remember what they say about love and war? I hear all this talk about gallantry, about professional respect and honor among warriors even on opposite sides. Bah! What about the Kentares Massacre? What about Fellanin II, or...

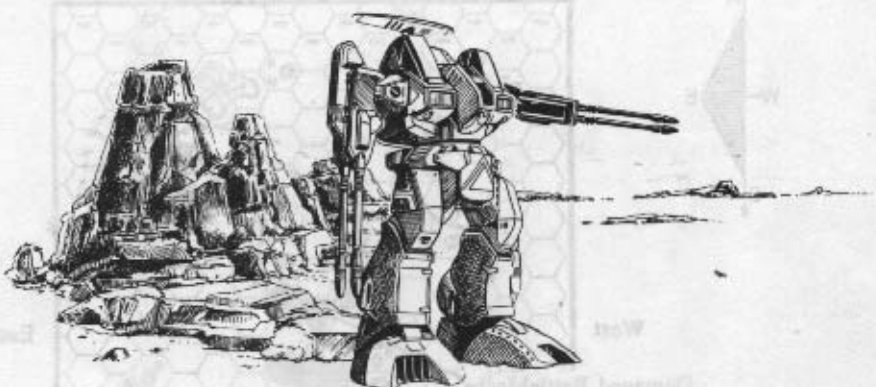
Case in point...the Black Widow... Queen of Spades. A brilliant commander, yeah, but cunning and cruel...maybe even a bit crazy. You'd have to be crazy to love combat the way they say she does.

And she's the point of my story. Gallantry? Yeah...when it's convenient. But sometimes a simple assassination can be a whole lot neater. At least in theory. The Widow, she was such a pain in the assorted tails of assorted brass-types of the Federated Suns Military Command that the decision was made to take the lady out, one way or the other. She'd cost us hundreds of promising young warriors, billions of credits' worth of machinery, and defeats too numerous to mention.

She was hard to track down, I gather, but the time came during the Battle for Coursadin when the brass learned she was in the area. Her unit, the Black Widows, had struck at an ammo dump, been beaten off, and retired to a certain valley to regroup and effect repairs. One of our scout 'Mechs spotted her and part of her command lance alone, and reported in. Our unit happened to be nearby, and we got the assignment.

Get her, they said, one way or the other.

I don't mind telling you, we were all scared and excited, both at once. The legendary Black Widow herself! I don't think there's a warrior anywhere in the Federated Suns or across half of known space who hasn't dreaded seeing her black *Warhammer* on his screen, or had



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps as shown. Prepare BattleTech Record sheets for all of the 'Mechs in the action. Spider Trap should be played using Expert rules. The Defender deploys first.

Defender

Kerensky's initial force consists of:

Kerensky's *Warhammer*
Maclaren's *Marauder*
Sheridan's *Griffin*

Turn 4, Black Widow Recon Lance:

Clavell's *Rifleman*
Nichol's *Phoenix Hawk*
Fraser's *Stinger*
Jahan's *Stinger*

Deployment:

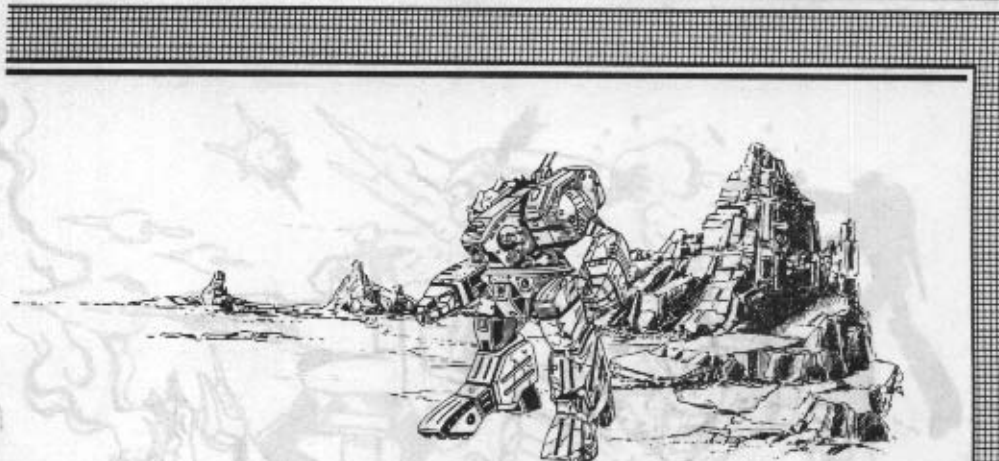
Set up initial defending forces anywhere in the center of the mapped area. The *Warhammer* must be within two hexes of hex 1509 on the east map. On turn 4, Black Widow reinforcements may arrive anywhere along the west end of the map.

Attacker

Reid's force consists of:

- 1 *Crusader* (Reid's Command 'Mech, Left Torso Armor 18, Left Leg Armor 17, Heat Sinks 9, Engine produces 5 points of heat per turn)
- 1 *Crusader* (Left Arm missing, Left Torso 12 Armor Points, Head 4 Armor Points, damage to Gyro adds a +3 modifier to maneuvers requiring Piloting skill)
- 1 *Shadow Hawk* (Auto Cannon Ammo down to 7 rounds, LRM Ammo down to 15 packs, SRM Ammo down to 28 packs, Left Torso Armor 15, Center Torso Armor 20)
- 1 *Archer* (Right Medium Laser out of action)
- 1 *Archer* (Left Arm missing, Critical Hit to Left Upper Leg Actuator, Left Leg Armor 12, Left Torso 19, Heat Sinks 7)
- 2 *Wasps*

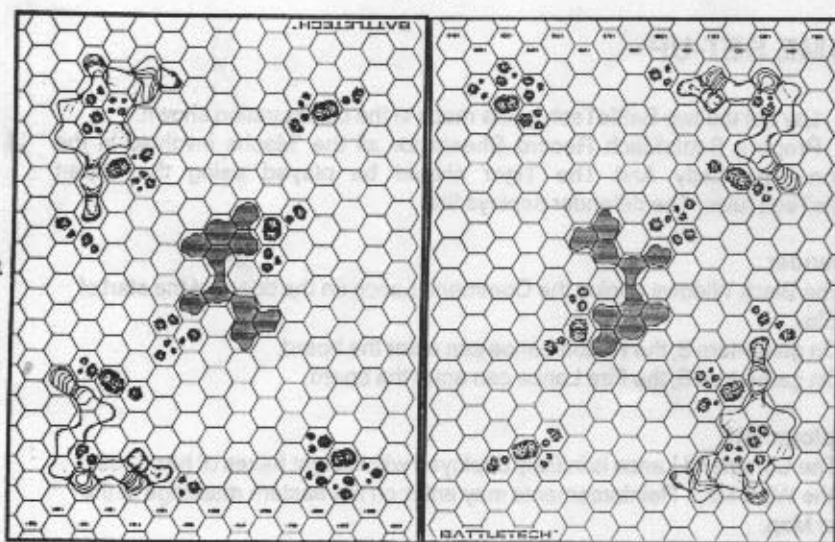
SITUATION: 1620 hours (STS), COURSADIN (REMIS III)



North



West



East

South

Victory Conditions

The Attacker wins if Natasha Kerensky is killed or captured. The defender wins if Kerensky escapes off the west edge of the map, and wins decisively if at least five Black Widow 'Mechs escape with her.

Attackers Deployment:

Reid's force enters the battlefield anywhere along the east edge of the board.

Special Rules:

A blank game counter may be used to represent Natasha Kerensky if she decides to abandon her *Warhammer*. This unit moves one hex per turn, it takes one hit to destroy it, and it cannot fire. She may be picked up by any 'Mech with working hands, friend or foe, and carried out of the area. She may also trade places with the pilot of another 'Mech to continue fighting or to escape.

The battle for Coursadin has been raging for the past week. Both Combine and Federated Suns forces are battered, and many units are running low on expendables such as missiles and ammunition.

The Federated Suns force involved in this action is a mix of Davionist forces from two companies, the Third Guards and Lindon's Company. Their orders are to kill or capture Natasha Kerensky, the infamous Black Widow.

The Black Widow forces have retreated to an isolated valley for repairs and to regroup; the Widow's Recon Lance is already on the way from the west where it was deployed as a screening force during the recent failed attack. In fact, Kerensky has anticipated some sort of Davionist counterstroke, and is hoping to lure Federated Suns forces into a rash attack that she can crush with the expected reinforcements.

Both sides are operating under limited intelligence, however. Reid doesn't know that Widow reinforcements are due to arrive at any moment now, and Kerensky does not realize that she is the prime target of this raid.

Two Kinds of Luck

(continued from page 20)

nightmares about tangling with her in combat. We'd all heard too many stories about her, and if even ten percent were true...

We hit the crest above the valley and knew we had her cold. There were just four Widow 'Mechs gathered around a couple of ponds on the valley floor, and five of us, and their ships looked as badly shot-up as ours.

"The *Warhammer*! That's the one we want!" I yelled over the commlines, and then the air was filled with missiles and beams and shrill death as we closed in to combat range. Other elements of her company were around somewhere, I knew, but the scout hadn't seen them and we certainly seemed to have caught the Widow Command Lance by surprise. What a stroke of luck!

At least, it seemed that way at the time. Maybe I forgot that there are two different kinds of luck.

THE LADY AND THE TIGER

THE CHILL OF WAR

Sven Larson was sweating; the smell of it was sharp in the cockpit of the BattleMech *Griffin*. Outside, it was cold under the feeble red light of Thule's ancient sun, but the 'Mech's heat sinks were not what they should be. And Sven Larsen was afraid.

His father had piloted a 'Mech...before the Battle of Mordred, the battle where the great fighting vehicle was crippled. Owen Larsen had never recovered from the shame of being one of the Dispossessed, and all his life thereafter had been dedicated to winning back his position. Now Owen was dead, and Sven had the BattleMech his father had sought for so long. A BattleMech painted with the black and silver symbols of the Bandit King, Helmar Valasek.

"How low we've fallen," Sven thought, struggling for calm. "Serving a water-stealing barbarian. It's not even a cause I'll die for...just a broken dream."

The snow lay heavy on the ground, and the clouds above were menacing with the promise of more to come. If the blizzard everyone expected kicked up, it would be damned mess for all the raiders. A blizzard was no kind of weather for fighting a battle.

But just beyond the next line of hills was the objective. A frozen-over lake was not the easiest place from which to steal water, but Valasek's informant was sure that there would be only a handful of guardian 'Mechs here. A lightning strike would do it; there was nothing to fear.

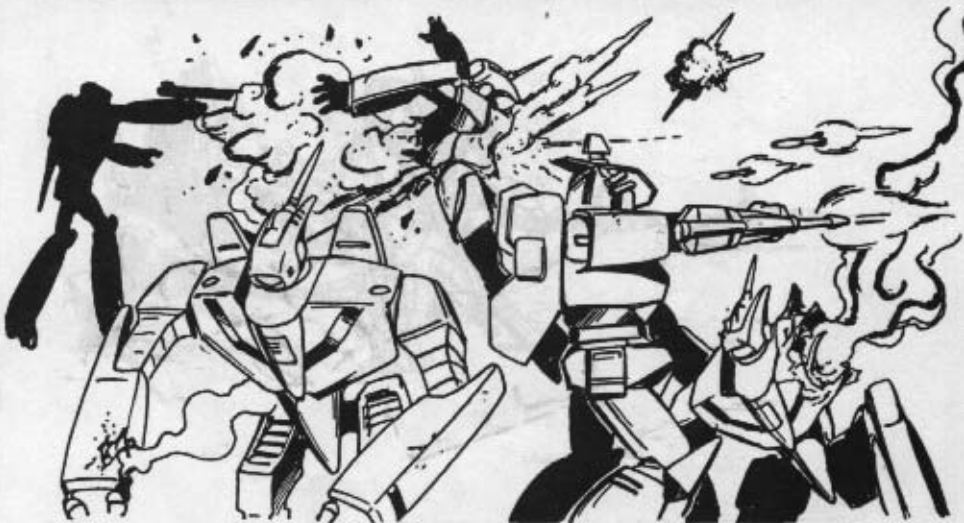
"Nothing to fear," he repeated to himself. A few flakes of snow began to fall as the *Griffin* followed the other 'Mechs toward the top of the ridge. The fight would have to be fast because the snow was starting already. A stabbing beam of light lanced out, catching one of the *Crusaders* in the torso. Then another, and another.

A voice crackled over the commlines. "Captain! That's no garrison force! Look at the insignia!"

Sven did not wait for the Captain to speak. Quick as thought, his own viewer magnified the view around the frozen lake. Through a worsening swirl of falling snow, he saw the insignia and gasped.

It was the sign of the Black Widow.

"It's a trap," Captain Tregarth announced grimly. "A star-jinxed trap! But we'll let them know they've got a fight on their hands!"



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown.

Prepare BattleMech Record Sheets for all the 'Mechs involved in the action. The Lady And The Tiger should be played using the expert BattleTech rules. The defender deploys first.

Defender

The Black Widows deploy the Command Lance on the board at the start of play.

On game-turn 3, the Recon Lance can enter the board.

On game-turn 5, the Fire Lance can enter the board.

Deployment:

The Command Lance is initially deployed within eight hexes of hex 0109 on the West Map. Reinforcements may enter on the eastern map edge of the East Map.

Attacker

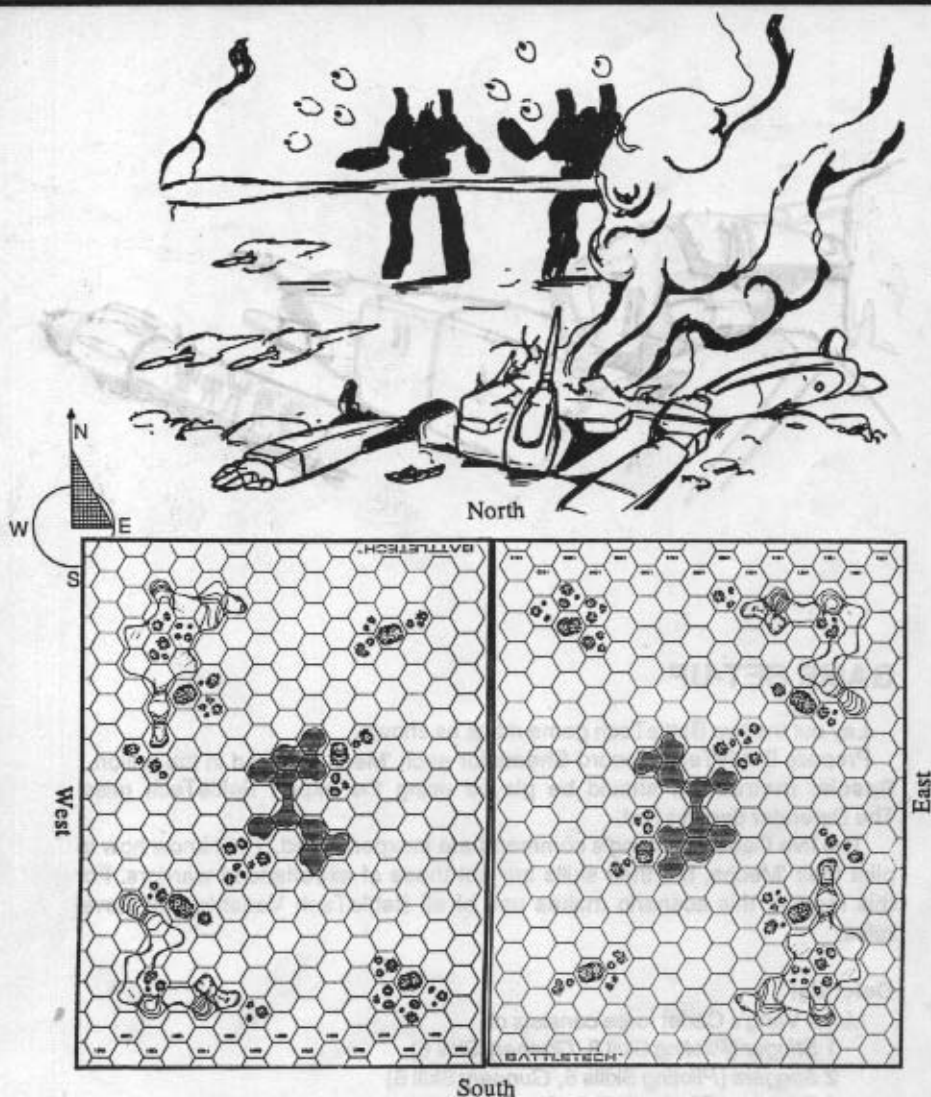
Tregarth's raiding force contains the following units:

- 1 Warhammer
- 1 Warhammer (15 Heat Sinks, Right Arm Armor, 14 points; Center Torso Rear Armor, 6 points)
- 1 Griffin (costs 2 MP per hexside to turn)
- 1 Griffin (Right Arm PPC inoperative, +3 modifier to all fire due to gyro malfunction)
- 1 Griffin (8 Heat Sinks, LRM Ammo, 5 10-packs left)
- 1 Phoenix Hawk (Engine heat doubled each turn; Head Armor, 5)
- 1 Phoenix Hawk (MG in Left Arm jams on a roll of 8+. This roll is made before the To-Hit Roll; Right Torso Front Armor, 11 points)
- 1 Stinger (8 Heat Sinks)
- 1 Stinger (+3 Modifier to all Piloting Saving Rolls)

Deployment:

Deploy within four hexes of West Map hex 1517.

SITUATION: 1740 HOURS (TST), THULE

**Victory Conditions**

The attacking forces under Tregarth win by eliminating all defending BattleMechs. The defending Widows win by eliminating all raider 'Mechs. Any other result is a draw.

The game ends when one side achieves its victory conditions, or when either side voluntarily withdraws from the board to create a draw situation.

Special Rules

1. **Blizzard Effects:** Each game turn, before any other action is performed, the Attacker rolls two 6-sided dice. The number produced is the turn's Blizzard Number. Visibility is restricted to the number of hexes given by this number; no weapon may fire further than the visibility allows. Moreover, a 'Mech cannot move into more hexes (regardless of movement point costs) than are given by the blizzard number each turn. If the blizzard number is 6 or less, all 'Mechs are considered to be "in the water" on that turn.

2. The Lake hexes on the board are frozen. 'Mechs in Lake hexes do not receive the water benefit, and receive a +2 Modifier on all *Piloting Skill* Rolls made.

The depredations of Valasek's pirates became serious enough to prompt the Draconis Combine to postpone operations against the Federated Suns for a time in order to deal with Valasek first. By discovering a troublesome informant in the Combine Military Coordination Office, the Duke of Luthien was able to stop the leakage of information about easy raiding targets. At the same time, the now-compromised bandit espionage network was put to good use by the Combine in baiting a trap.

Thule, a chilly world near the edge of Combine space, was the scene of Kurita's lure. An unimportant and almost uninhabited world, it was the ideal place to teach Valasek a lesson. False information brought a small but heavily-armed force of raiders to Thule, a raiding party commanded by Roger "The Tiger" Tregarth. Tregarth's forces were duped into committing themselves to an attack on what appeared to be a tiny garrison of BattleMechs.

In fact, the "garrison" was a force of mercenaries from Wolf's Dragoons, commanded in person by the legendary Captain Kerensky. The Black Widow's main force was held well out of range of raider reconnaissance, to be brought up only when the pirates were committed. By taking out Valasek's finest, it was hoped that the raiders would back off for a time.

No one realized, though, how close the battle would be, thanks to Thule's uncertain wintery weather...



LEAVE NO SURVIVORS

FINAL TEST

Kids...that's all we were. Kids who barely knew one end of a PPC from the other.

Oh, I know the propaganda that's put out, that Mech Warriors are raised to pilot 'Mechs from birth, that we're born in 'Mech waldo rigs, cutting center on a target with laser cannon before we cut our teeth.

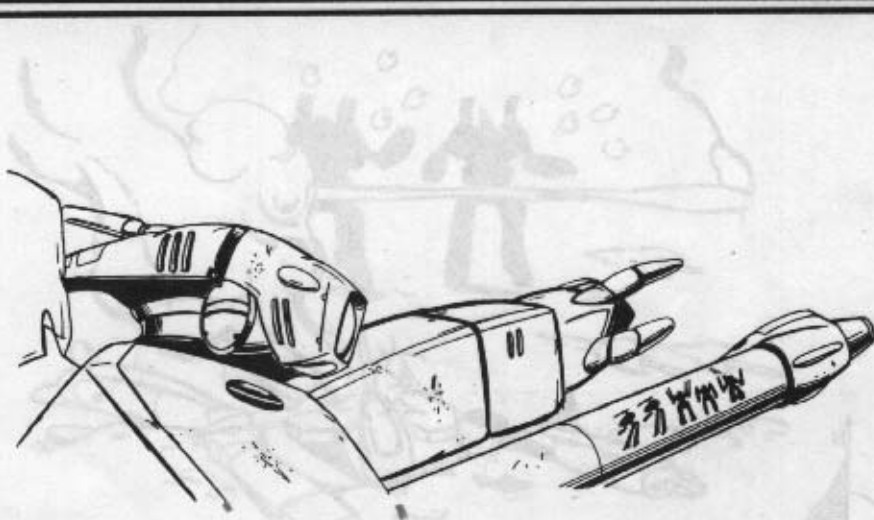
Swishgas. Oh, there's training from day one, that's for sure. It's tough, and lots of kids never make it to the exalted station of MechWarrior, but there's a hell of a big difference between just operating a 20-ton mountain of walking metal, and LIVING it. That's why they have 'Mech Academies, right? There are academies on a number of worlds, special units where MechWarrior kids come for that last four years or so to put the final polish on their skills, and to create that fusion of man and machine that is the essence of 'Mech warfare.

But there's an even bigger difference between learning your lessons and having them drilled into you in combat, where a passing grade is survival or where failure means a graduation that is very, very final.

We were on Doneval II, operating out of Meistmorn Academy in old "Death's Head" Vang's class. You've heard of Death's Head? Major Sergei Vang was his full name, but no one ever called him anything but "Major, Sir!" to his face, or even "Death's Head" behind his back. He was hairless, even to his eyebrows, with the skin so dry and taut across his face it looked like the face of a grinning skull. Rumor had it that although he'd been burned pretty badly at Sakhara V in an action against Wolf's Dragoons, he wouldn't accept retirement after that. And so, he was "promoted" to Instructor. Lots of cadets figured he was taking out his anger at the Combine on the students. I remember him always smiling, but it wasn't the sort of smile to inspire confidence in still-raw Cadets.

No, that naked-toothed smile just increased Vang's resemblance to a skull.

He had five of us out on patrol that morning. We were all pretty excited because of the flap over the Combine landings earlier that week. It was business-as-usual for old Death's Head, though. "They come this way, we stop 'em," he said. "That's what we're here for, right? I said *right*?"



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps as shown.

Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for each 'Mech involved in the action.

Special Instruction should be played using the expert BattleTech rules. The Defender deploys first.

The five Cadets in Vang's command are inexperienced. They know how to pilot their 'Mechs, but their skills are not those of experienced warriors. For this reason, this scenario makes use of all BattleTech Variable Skill Level rules.

Defender

Major Vang's Cadet force consists of:

- 1 *Stinger* (Piloting Skill 8, Gunnery Skill 6)
- 2 *Stingers* (Piloting Skills 6, Gunnery Skill 6)
- 2 *Stingers* (Piloting Skill 5, Gunnery Skill 4)
- 1 *Shadow Hawk* (Vang's 'Mech, Piloting Skill 4, Gunnery Skill 2)

Deployment:

Set up the defending 'Mechs anywhere near the center of the two game maps, travelling from west to east.

Attacker

Ikeda's raiding force consists of:

- Ikeda's *Archer*
- Delius' *Archer*
- Koniev's *Wasp*

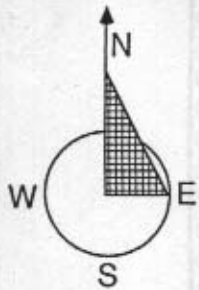
Deployment:

The attacker chooses whether to enter from the east, north, or south edge of the mapped area, and may divide his forces, if he desires.

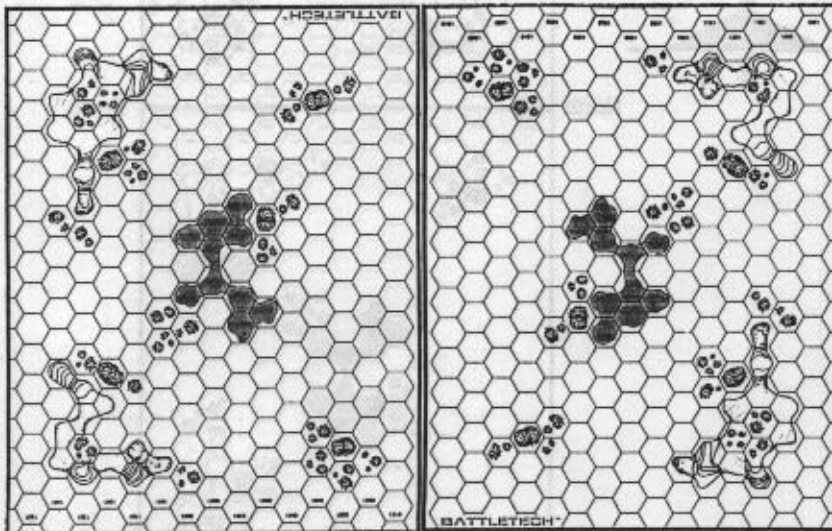
Victory Conditions

Ikeda's attacking force wins if the Cadet training unit is wiped out. Major Vang's force wins if one or more of the Cadet 'Mechs escape off the west edge of the map.

SITUATION: 1330 HOURS (TST), DONEVAL II



North



South

SITUATION: 1330 HOURS (TST), DONEVAL II

A hit-and-run raiding party consisting of elements of Wolf's dragoons has landed on Doneval II, a Federated Suns world with extensive BattleMech repair and servicing facilities, a world that also happens to be the location of a BattleMech training academy. Five untested Cadets and their instructor, an officer with a long and impressive combat record, have been ambushed by three units of the Black Widow Company's Fire Lance commanded by Lieutenant Takiro Ikeda.

The Widows were on a patrol sweep through the area, and were attracted by the Cadets' radio chatter. They have waited until the Cadet unit entered a broad valley, then staged an ambush from behind the surrounding hills. Their goal is to wipe out the Cadet unit, and six valuable BattleMechs, leaving no survivors to report their position and strength to the local command center. This would be a cheap and easy victory to soften up the local defenders before a planned offensive in the area within the next two days.

The cadets' goal is to survive.

Final Test

(continued from page 24)

And we all chimed back with the expected roar, "Sir, that's right, sir!"

He seemed to have an unshakeable confidence, the sort that no cadet would dare disagree with aloud. Some of the kids were spoiling for a fight, claiming they'd had enough of this play-warrior stuff, and that they were ready for the real thing. Most of us, though, down deep, were worried sick. What would happen, how would we react when the on-board painted the schematic of a Combine *Warhammer* on our screens? That was the question all of us were asking ourselves.

Still, the chance of our tangling with Combine forces looked nil. Their move seemed to be a smash-grab-and-run raid designed to keep our side off balance, and there certainly was no indication that any of Kurita's 'Mechs were anywhere within a thousand kilometers of Meistmorn.

Cadet Johannson, up on point, got a lot of good-natured ribbing when he reported movement on his scanners.

"Yeah, echoes from his own ship, most likely!" someone said.

Then Major Vang's flat voice cut in. "Cut the chatter! Johannson, report!"

The kid had picked up movement nearby where no movement should have been.

To his credit, Death's Head did not assume that Johannson was imagining things, as I guess the rest of us did. Well, you don't become a 20-year veteran MechWarrior with a list of kills as long as his by making too many false assumptions. "Kilgore! Adams!" he snapped. "Flank to the left! Johannson! Watch your..."

Then the first missile volley struck, and we were fighting for our lives. All I could see for a long and horrible moment was the image on my screen of one of the raiders, a great, black-painted and smoke-wreathed *Archer* perched up on the crest of a ridge not two kilometers away.

I'd heard about the Black Widows, the ones that had given Major Vang the wound that had gotten him promoted to Instructor. What was he thinking at that moment? Damned if I knew. All I could think of was just one thing.

We were in big trouble.

DAWN PATROL

RECON PARTY

So you want to hear about the fun and games on Marduk, do you? I lost some good friends on that hellhole, let me tell you. Best lance a guy ever served with. I'd have bought the farm, too, except Big John Daniels took a missile that had my name on it. There was a MechWarrior for you, not like these young punks we keep getting these days.

The Widow? Yeah, that was my lance she tried to chop up on Marduk, all right. A routine patrol, they said. Nothing's routine when you go up against the Lady, and that's no lie. Have a drink, and I'll tell you about it. That was back when the Lancers were still working for Davion, and Marduk had one of the last operating BattleMech factories in that part of the Federated Suns. Naturally, the place was popular with the other Houses. Let's see, wasn't the Seventeenth Battle for Marduk fought just last year? Well, ours was only the Twelfth, but it was a big one, let me tell you.

Wolf's Dragoons'd taken the factory and damn near kicked Davion's boys out. That's when the Lancers were called in to counterattack. They got us down without tipping off anybody that there were fresh mercenaries on the scene, and the Colonel made sure it stayed that way. He was grinning when he told us that he'd cut off his left hand if it should find out what he was up to.

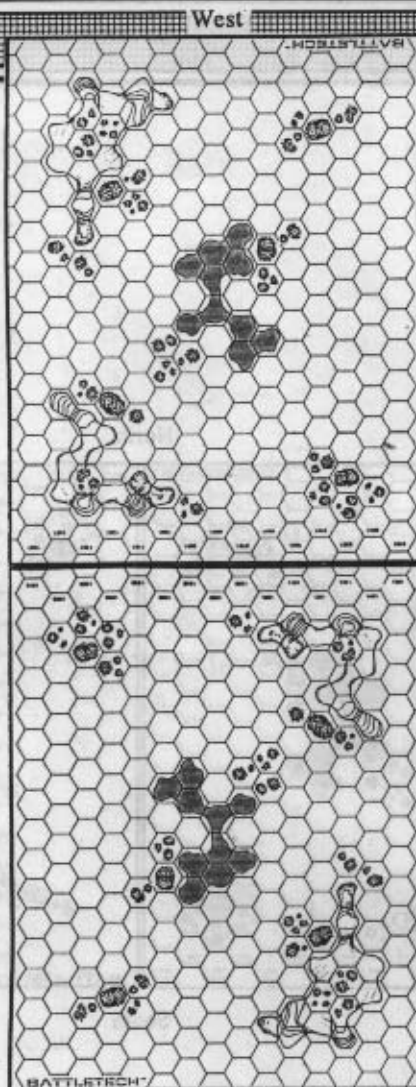
We had a new recruit, a native of Marduk who knew the terrain around the factory. He claimed there was a route to the factory area through some of the worst jungle on the planet - not easy, but passable in a 'Mech. So the Colonel ordered our Scout Lance to check out the route. It worked, too. We got within sight of the factory, and it looked like the Colonel was going to be able to slip in and occupy it right under Jaime Wolf's nose. Without the factory, the Dragoons would've had it rough.

We were already starting back when the Widows jumped us. Seems the Dark Lady knew all about the path, and was just waiting for some damn fool to try it. We pulled off the trail, and scattered through the jungle, but she was right on our tails. Yeah, that was a rough one; cost us dear, and the Colonel learned how NOT to take a factory. Me? I learned you don't tangle with the Black Widow unless you're willing to pay a damned high price.



North

South



East

GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown.

Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets of all the 'Mechs involved in the action. **Dawn Patrol** should be played using the expert BattleTech rules, with all optional rules, as well. The defender deploys first.

Defender

Captain Anton Razin's Scout Lance consists of the following:

- 1 *Shadow Hawk*
- 1 *Phoenix Hawk*
- 1 *Wasp* (Medium Laser inoperable, SRM has +3 Modifier To-Hit, and costs 2MP per hexside to turn)
- 1 *Stinger* (8 Heat Sinks: +2 Modifier on all *Piloting* Skill Rolls due to malfunctioning gyro)

Deployment:

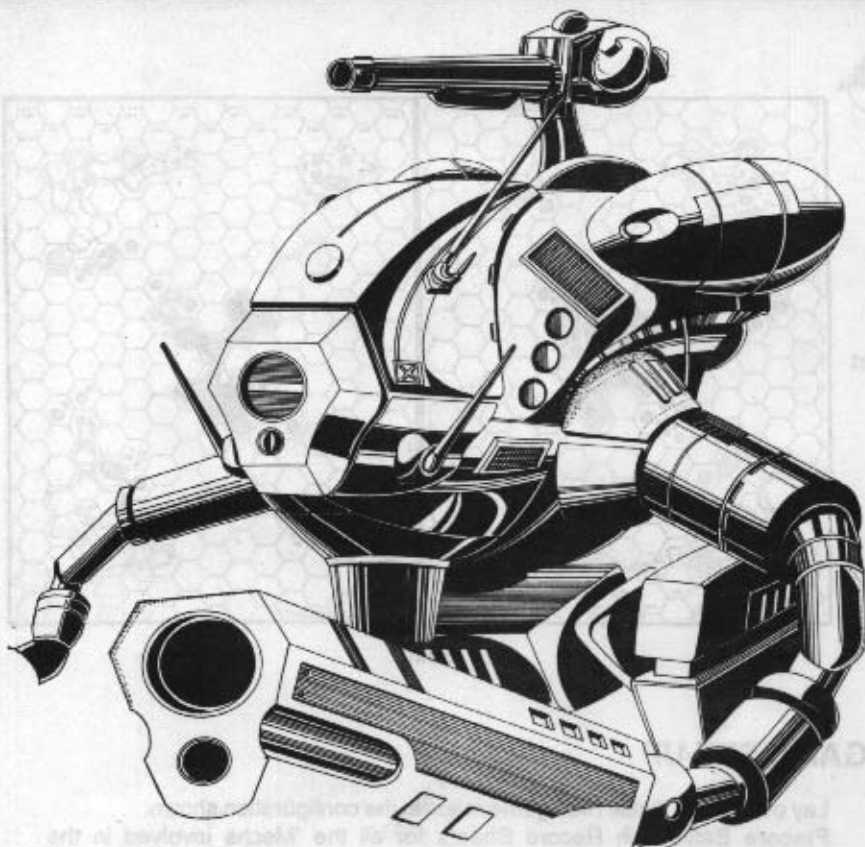
Deploy within 6 hexes of East Map hex 0817.

Attacker

The Black Widow Company's forces include all units of the Recon Lance, plus Kerensky's *Warhammer*.

Deploy by entering on any hex of the northern edge of the East Map on turn 1.

SITUATION: 0330 HOURS (TST), MARDUK



The battles for the BattleMech factory on Marduk were the undoing of more than one unit, regulars and mercenaries alike. Following the Twelfth Battle for Marduk, after forces of the House of Kurita secured the complex, the Federated Suns mounted a counterattack. Unable to attack directly without risking damage to the irreplaceable plant, Colonel Kusaka of the 21st Centauri Lancers evolved a plan hinging on an occupation of the factory center by way of a seemingly impassable route. Had it worked, the plan would have gone down in history beside those of Minqu Kurita and Hendrik Grimm of Oberon IV. But it was never executed, thanks to the defeat of a Lancers reconnaissance patrol at the hands of Natasha Kerensky's Black Widows.

**Victory Conditions****Defender:**

Exit at least two BattleMechs off the western edge of the Western Map. (Optional: Destroy 8 Black Widow BattleMechs.)

Attacker:

Prevent any defending BattleMechs from entering the Western Map, or, if the forces are brought in after the defender has entered his map, destroy all defending BattleMech optional reinforcements. (If no defender optional reinforcements are brought in, and the defender fails to exit two 'Mechs, the game is a draw.

Special Rules

1. All clear terrain hexes on the board are treated as Heavy Woods for all purposes.

2. All Light or Heavy Woods hexes are treated as Clear Terrain for all purposes.

3. All other terrain types remain unchanged. Noted that elevation hexes are covered by heavy woods unless other symbols appear in the hex. Note also that almost all combat must be fought from adjacent hexes only.

4. Jump movement, though allowed, can start fires. In any hex where a jump begins or ends, fire starts on a second roll of 9+.

5. Optional Reinforcements:

The defender may bring in 2 *Crusaders*, 2 *Warhammers*, and 4 *Griffins* (all undamaged) on any turn after any one 'Mech exits the western edge of the Western mapboard. If this is done, use the Optional Victory Conditions.

The attacking player may choose to bring in all remaining 'Mechs of the Black Widow Company at any time, but, if this is done, he uses the Optional Victory Conditions.

FOG OF WAR

NIGHTMARE COME TRUE

The battle for Klathandu IV had been going on for days, an endless series of skirmishes, brushes, and meeting engagements with the Combine forces that had scattered themselves across much of the Throthig Steppes. The patrol code-named Delta entered the Thelos Valley late in the day, casting long, double shadows before them from the fiercely-white suns at their backs.

Jeris Sabadesh checked his screens again, assuring himself that the 'Mech formation was properly spaced, that the flankers and point 'Mech were in their proper positions. Enemy 'Mechs had been reported in this area... Spiders, no less. The thought set his stomach to churning.

"Delta One, this is Delta Point." The radio voice punched through whispering traffic. Somewhere, and not far off, someone was jamming the high frequency bands, but it wasn't too bad... yet.

"Go, Point."

"Got something up here on IR, Sir. Something big."

"Feed me."

Sabadesh's screen flickered and snapped, then resolved with a view of Delta Point's transmitted infra-red scan. There WAS something out there, gray against gray among the boulders and scrub, the image eerily masked by the radiance of its own heat emissions. It COULD be debris radiating day-heat as the evening desert cooled. There'd been a skirmish with some of Kurita House's 'Mechs in this area just yesterday...

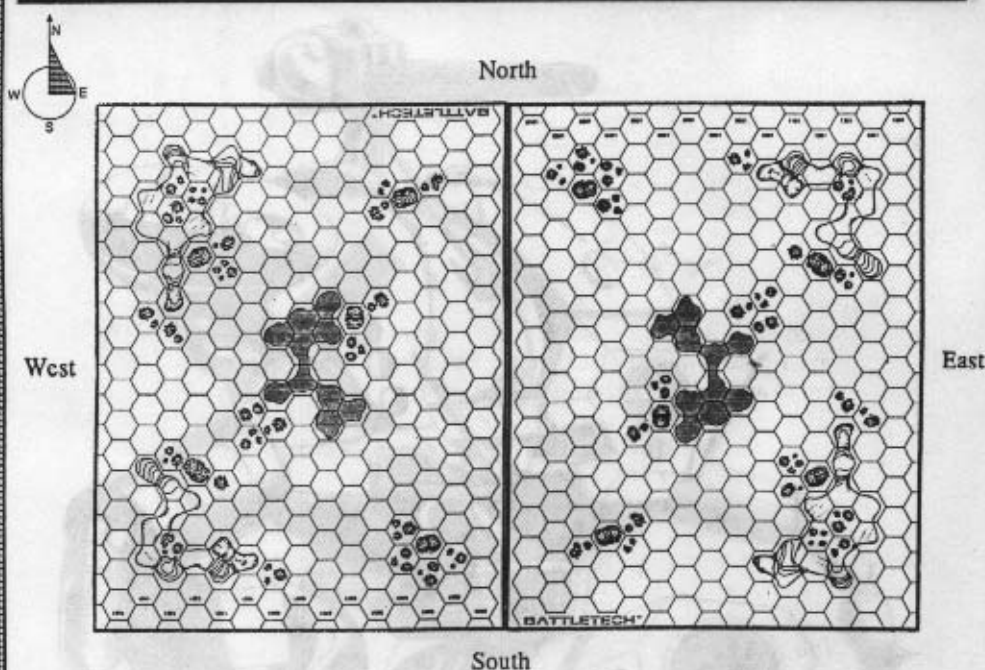
The shimmering something moved, a blur that left tracers of light fading across the screen.

"Bandits! Bandits!" The point 'Mech sounded the warning. "Bearing twelve-o'clock! They're Widows! Oh God, they're Widows..."

Then the missiles began exploding among Delta Patrol's 'Mechs.

Sabadesh swore bitterly. Widows! Nightmares were coming true. If that was the Black Widow Company closing on their front, he thought, they were in deep, deep trouble.

"Point, fall back!" he called. "Formation! Watch your flanks! Let's go!" His view forward was a swirl of geysering flame, dust, and smoke, pierced through by the stabbing trails of missiles, the sweep of beams. He stabbed at his controls, bringing up a broad-band radar image. There were moving objects beyond the



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown.

Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for all the 'Mechs involved in the action. **Fog of War** should be played using Advanced or Expert BattleTech rules. In this scenario, "attacker" and "defender" are purely arbitrary terms used for set-up.

The defender deploys first.

Defender

Lieutenant Jeris Sabadesh's Delta Patrol consists of:

- 1 *Griffin* (Lieutenant Sabadesh's Command 'Mech, Center Torso Armor 17, Total Heat Sinks 11)
- 1 *Shadow Hawk* (Point 'Mech; Left Torso Auto Cannon will jam on 10+, this roll is made before the To-Hit Roll)
- 2 *Wasps* (Flankers)

Deployment:

Shadow Hawk deploys within 5 hexes of the west edge of the map. The *Griffin* and 2 *Wasps* are kept off the map, and may enter at the player's discretion on any game turn.

Attacker

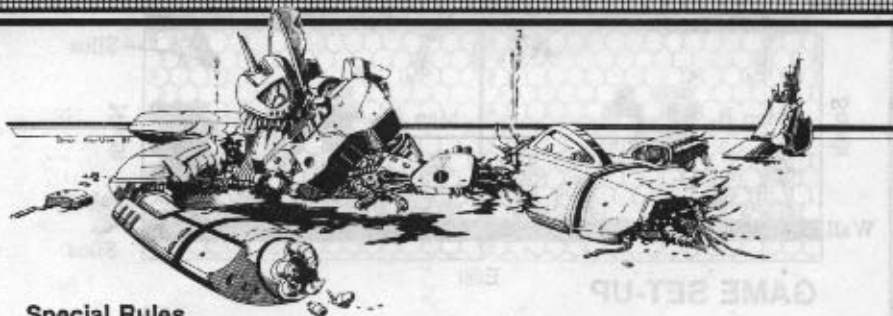
Lieutenant John Clavell's patrol consists of the Widow Recon Lance:

- Clavell's *Rifleman*
- Nichol's *Phoenix Hawk*
- Fraser's *Stinger*
- Jahan's *Stinger*

Deployment:

The two *Stingers* deploy within 5 hexes of the east edge of the map. The remaining two 'Mechs are kept off the map, and may enter at the player's discretion on any game turn.

SITUATION: 1850 HOURS (TST) KLATHANDU IV

**Special Rules**

Each side has its own set of goals for its mission, goals unknown to the enemy. The following list of seven mission orders may be used to simulate the "fog of war", allowing the opponents to try to guess the enemy's plans.

Each player should secretly choose any *TWO* of the following mission orders. If desired, 1D6 can be rolled to choose the missions randomly. After the first roll, the first mission result should be ignored for the second roll; so the players two missions can not be the same. The players should write their missions down for comparison at the end of the scenario. It is possible that both players will have the same missions, possible too that each is trying to accomplish something completely different from the other.

The first number rolled or chosen is the player's primary mission. The second rolled or chosen is the secondary mission.

Missions

1. Take and hold either one of the water holes on the map. (Reinforcements will be arriving soon and will need the water to refuel and for cooling.)
2. Exit three or more 'Mechs off the opposite map edge. (They are penetrating behind an enemy flank, probing the enemy's positions and searching for weakness.)
3. Have any 'Mech climb to any Level 3 terrain hex on the *OPPOSITE* side of the map from the entry edge, and remain there without fighting for three consecutive combat turns. (Observation of enemy positions.)
4. Disable one enemy 'Mech and capture the pilot. (A blank counter can be used to represent the pilot. He moves one hex per turn and may not fire.)
5. Force the enemy to abandon the map, or eliminate him. (The idea is to prevent him from gaining intelligence about friendly force dispositions.)
6. Eliminate the enemy leader. (A simple assassination to demoralize the enemy.)
7. Eliminate at least two of the enemy 'Mechs. (Inflict unacceptable damage on the enemy.)

The player determines how best to accomplish his objectives. He may (as frequently happens in war) decide that his two objectives conflict, and choose to concentrate on only one objective. He may also try to thwart the developing enemy plans, either because they interfere with *his* orders, or out of general meanness. An old, old saying from the pre-spaceflight times on Earth holds that no plan ever survives contact with the enemy.

Each player who accomplishes any *one* of his objectives has won. Any player who accomplishes *both* mission objectives has won a decisive victory. A player who accomplishes both of his mission objectives *AND* either wipes out the enemy force or prevents the enemy from accomplishing either of his objectives has won a spectacular victory.

It is possible that *both* players will retire from the field claiming victory. Such is often the case when engagements are cloaked in the fog of war.

One of the classic maxims of warfare is that combat is never so simple or clear-cut as training simulations make it seem. In reality, units in combat have (sometimes!) a set of goals or objectives -- frequently mutually contradictory -- but the goals of the enemy are completely unknown. This is especially true in a meeting engagement between two patrols, each of which has its own set of orders and no idea what the other guy is up to.

In such situations, it is distinctly possible that both sides will claim victory when they return to their own lines. Victory, like orders, is not always clearly defined in combat.

Wolf's Dragoons are among several BattleMech units in the employ of the House of Kurita that have landed on an arid, marginally-habitable planet in the Klathan system. Local facilities are widely-scattered, clustered about the hot little world's oases and shallow, land-locked seas. The battle has lacked any fixed front, but has been fought as a series of skirmishes between small detachments.

A Recon Lance patrol of BattleMechs of the 3rd Guards, McKendrick's Company, is completing a patrol sweep under the command of Lieutenant Sabadesh. It has just encountered the Recon Lance of the infamous Black Widow Company, also on patrol, and under the command of Lieutenant John Clavell.

The results of the engagement would depend on the mission plans being followed by each commander.

Nightmare Come True

(continued from page 28)

smoke, at least three...no, four of them, and closing fast. They were moving quickly, but not in any orthodox combat formation that Sabadesh knew. It looked like the two lighter 'Mechs in the enemy unit were screening the heavies as they lumbered forward. Their movements seemed senseless, unpredictable, and that worried Delta patrol's commander. They were closer now, and finding the range. Sabadesh had time for just one question before he was fighting for his life.

"What in the hell are they up to?"

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

MEETING WITH DAVION

The dawn was just breaking as we broke stride at the wall surrounding the estate.

"Any last words?" the Widow inquired cheerfully.

Someone - I think it was Alex - said, "Yeah, three little ones: gimme those repairmen."

For some reason, it broke us up: hooting and hollering on the commlink, we entered the estate.

I ride a *Stinger* in the Widow's recon Lance. She's old, but she's mine, and I love her like a mother loves a child. My tech and I keep her in the best shape we can. But a lot of the patch-up work we do is based on trial and error, or word-of-mouth descriptions from some other Warrior who has had a similar problem. Sometimes we don't even have a clue how long or how well a given repair will hold - a hell of a situation in our business, where any equipment failure could be your last.

Most of the others in the company are in the same boat. So, when we first heard that House Davion had approached the Widow about switching our allegiance from Kurita, THAT was interesting. But interest became something more when House Davion let it be known that the chief advantage in alliance would be access to 'Mech repairmen -- real, live, *trained* repairmen, and that they would be available for viewing at the parlay on LeBlanc.

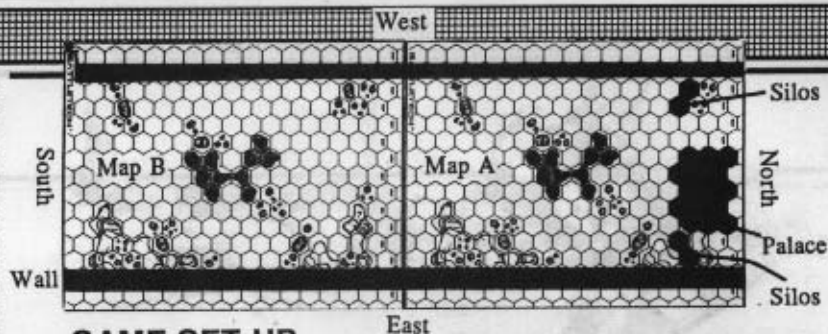
The Widow had stalked in with the Company at her back. And had stopped dead.

The man smiling at her from the large chair across the room was Michael Hasek-Davion. As those of us who had been around for awhile knew, Hasek-Davion was the main reason she'd left House Davion's employ, though it wasn't the only reason.

"My dear Natasha," he began, smiling, but it went unheard. The Widow's cold eyes had swept the room, noting the two emerald *Shadow Hawks* that stood motionless behind Hasek-Davion.

"Whatever the proposal, Michael, it's no deal," she replied icily. "As it is, I can't believe that you're out without your keeper."

Hasek-Davion's face had gone stiff, but before he could frame a reply, the sound of our Black Lady's boot heels already echoed down the corridor.



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two maps with the shorter edge touching, both in the same orientation. The hexsides between hexrows XX02 and XX03, and between XX13 and XX14, are considered wall hexsides; an extra MP is required to cross them, but they do NOT block line-of-sight, as they are only man-height.

Attacker

In the pool on Map A: 1 Wasp

1 Phoenix Hawk

In the pool on Map B: 1 Stinger

1 Phoenix Hawk

In the silos: 1 Warhammer

2 Riflemen

1 Crusader

In any hex ending in 17 on Map B, lying between the two walls:

1 Marauder

2 Shadow Hawks

(Note that the Bounty Hunter himself is in the Marauder.)

Defender: The Black Widow Company

Between hexes B0108 and A0116, the Fire Lance

Between hexes B1508 and A1516, the Recon Lance

Within the rectangle described by A0416, A1206, B0405, and B1205, the Command Lance

Turn 1 begins with the Combat Phase.

Special Rules

Terrain: Hexes A0303, A0403, A1204, and A1304 should be considered silo hexes, wherein certain attacking units are deployed. They do not affect movement or line-of-sight during the scenario. All hexes ending in 1, 2, or 3 between hexrows A07xx and A11xx inclusive comprise the palace. These hexes cost 2 MP to enter, and 3 MP to search. All woods on the map should be treated as Light Woods. Ignore all elevation hexes.

2. Searching the Palace: The two repairmen are inside the palace, and the Widow units must search hexes successively until they are found. A unit *searching* a palace hex must expend 3 MP to do so, and may only walk, not run or jump. While in the palace, units may only fire at each other across adjacent hexsides. For every hex the attacker searches, roll a six-sided die: on a 6, a repairman is found. Each 'Mech may carry one repairman as passenger. (Note: There are only two repairmen; once two are found, there can be no more. Furthermore, if the hex is the last available unsearched hex, all the remaining repairmen will be found. "It's always in the last place you look.")

SITUATION: DAWN (TST), CONTINENT ALPHA, LEBLANC

Victory Conditions

The scenario is played until one or both sides have completely withdrawn, and the level of victory is determined on the accomplishment of certain objectives, listed below.

For every repairman successfully exited off the xx17 edge of Map B, the Widow is given 1 level of victory.

For the destruction of the Marauder, i.e., the death of the Bounty Hunter, the Widow is given 1 level of victory.

For each unit the Widow loses above the losses incurred by the Hunter, the Hunter receives a level of victory.

For each unit carrying a repairman that the Hunter destroys without killing the crew and passengers, the Hunter receives a level of victory. (Note: For this purpose, any critical hit that kills the pilot is assumed also to kill the passenger.)

The following levels of victory are used: Decisive, Substantial, Marginal, Draw. Thus, if one side has three or more levels of victory more than the other, the victory is Decisive; if both sides have the same number, the battle is a Draw.

SITUATION: DAWN (TST), CONTINENT ALPHA, LEBLANC

In a raid on Sax a month earlier, the Eridani Light Horse discovered a secret parts depot, and captured a group of stragglers who had been hiding nearby. The group turned out to be a family; three of them died of injuries, but two survived. They were dispatched to House Davion on New Avalon post-haste. Once questioned, it was revealed that they were an illicit tech family, passing their technical knowledge down from parent to child. House Davion, quick to realize the gold-mine made available, put in a bid to shift the loyalty of 'Mech groups and lesser Houses allied with the enemy Houses of Kurita and Marik by offering loyal allies the chance to make use of the repair techs' services on a rotating basis.

Hanse Davion, "The Fox", head of the House of Davion, is absent when the techs arrive; it is his brother-in-law and rival, Michael Hasek-Davion, profiting by the Fox's absence, who has seized the chance to conduct the parlays on the neutral planet of LeBlanc. Michael is also trying to sway the Houses and units to swear loyalty to him personally rather than to the Fox. The Widow is on the list, even though the relationship between Davion and Wolf's Dragoons - and especially the Widow's Company - ended on an extremely sour note, due to one of Michael's earlier intrigues. But Michael realizes that it would be a singular coup to regain the services of such a renowned Warrior as Natasha Kerensky, either for House Davion, or as a part of his own personal ambitions.

Michael has taken precautions to protect his precious repairmen against those foolish enough to try and snatch them away. Beyond housing himself and his guests in a palace surrounded by a large, relatively flat estate with excellent visibility, and providing places - pools and silos - to hide his 'Mechs, he has hired the Bounty Hunter, an infamous but useful personality, away from his brother-in-law. This lowlife character, renowned for backstabbing, treachery, and theft, is well-hated by the mercenary units whose Warriors he has killed, and whose equipment he has stolen. Natasha Kerensky is among his long list of personal enemies.

Meeting With Davion

(continued from page 30)

Back at our billet, she had come as near rage as I had ever seen her. "How dare that scum-sucking dog sit and dangle a twentieth share in a repairman in front of me! He needs to be taught a lesson, and we need a repairman. A *whole* one."

And so, now we were pounding along outside the walls just before dawn, Fire Lance on one side, Recon to the other, while the Widow's Command Lance had battered through the wall and was advancing down the middle of the garden toward the house.

The garden, seen through the scanners, was divided into three paths by straight walls of rock and outcroppings of bush. On the middle path were two pools, shining gently in the first rays of sun. The Widow's *Warhammer* was nearly past the first one, its heavy steps making the pool dance, causing little heat shimmers to rise...

I flipped to infrared. *both* pools showed up as brilliant crimson, far beyond the cool blue they should have shown after a night of heat loss.

"Widow!" I shouted over the commlink. "The pools! Watch out for--"

But even as I hopped the wall, the surfaces of the pools were blasted from below, as four dripping BattleMechs jetted to the surface and onto dry land. The silos near the palace were split into ragged shreds as four more 'Mechs ripped their way to battle, while from behind us came an amplified shout:

"Hey, Web-Head!"

As one, the Widow 'Mechs froze for an instant as their pilots checked their 360-degree screens. Standing behind us, in the gap Natasha had kicked in the wall, was a bright emerald *Marauder*, with the credit-symbol painted at all four corners of his armor and square in the center of his chest. Behind him stood the two emerald *Shadow Hawks* we had seen on guard the previous day.

The static lasted only a moment. Then came bedlam. But through bedlam, I heard the Widow scream, her voice hoarsened by the amplifier: "It's you and me, Bounty Hunter! You robbed me, damn your hide! It's you and me!"

LADY'S MAN

LAST MISTAKE

Yeah. I tangled with her once. The Queen of Spades...By the stars, I sure wouldn't want to again!

You know, everybody always says the Black Widow's got the brain of a battlecomp and the heart of an ice lizard...no more human feelings than her *Warhammer* 'Mech. Fat lot THEY know! The ones who say that never saw her get angry. But I did, and so did the rest of my company. But a lot of those boys never came home to tell about it.

What does it take to get the Lady angry? Let me tell you about it, buddy. I was with the Fourth New Avalon Guards, during the campaign on Bergman's Planet. There we were, one company thrown out to cover an oasis 100 klicks from the rest of the regiment. Nothing but dust and sand as far as the eye could see. Nobody in his right mind would have taken a 'droid across that wasteland, so we dropped straight in. But they say where there's water, there's victory, and so the Colonel wanted the place watched.

All well and good, I guess. I said nobody'd be crazy enough to cross the desert, but it turned out I was wrong. The Widow tried it. She figured on topping off her water at the oasis, crossing the desert, and taking the Guards Brigade in the flank. First thing we knew, her Recon Lance was on top of us. Well, even the Widows didn't have much luck when it was a light-armed lance against a whole company. They broke it off, but not before we shot up one of their 'Mechs and took the pilot prisoner. Captain Rajhan couldn't get over it - one of the Black Widows taken prisoner! He treated it like the biggest victory since the end of the League.

It wasn't, though. It was a mistake. The Captain's last mistake, at that.

What you've got to understand about the Widow is the way she feels about her people. We had one of her men, and that was something the Lady wasn't about to ignore, not if it cost her the whole campaign.



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown.

Prepare BattleMech Record Sheets for all of the 'droids involved in the action. **Lady's Man** should be played using the Expert BattleTech rules. The Defender deploys first.

Defender

Captain Samir Rajhan's company consists of:

Command Lance:

1 *Marauder* (Center Torso Armor 25, Right Arm Laser produces 5 heat points per shot)

1 *Archer*

1 *Warhammer* (head armor, 8)

1 *Rifleman*

Flynn's Lance:

1 *Shadow Hawk*

1 *Shadow Hawk* (no jump movement allowed)

1 *Wasp*

1 *Stinger*

Deployment:

Set up all 'Mechs on the Western Map within six hexes of hex 0610. No 'Mech may be within three hexes of any other 'Mech. Deploy an additional *Stinger* 'Mech in hex 0709. This *Stinger* is damaged, unmanned, and inoperative, and does not go against the "no 'Mechs within three hexes" rule. See the **Special Rules** for more information.

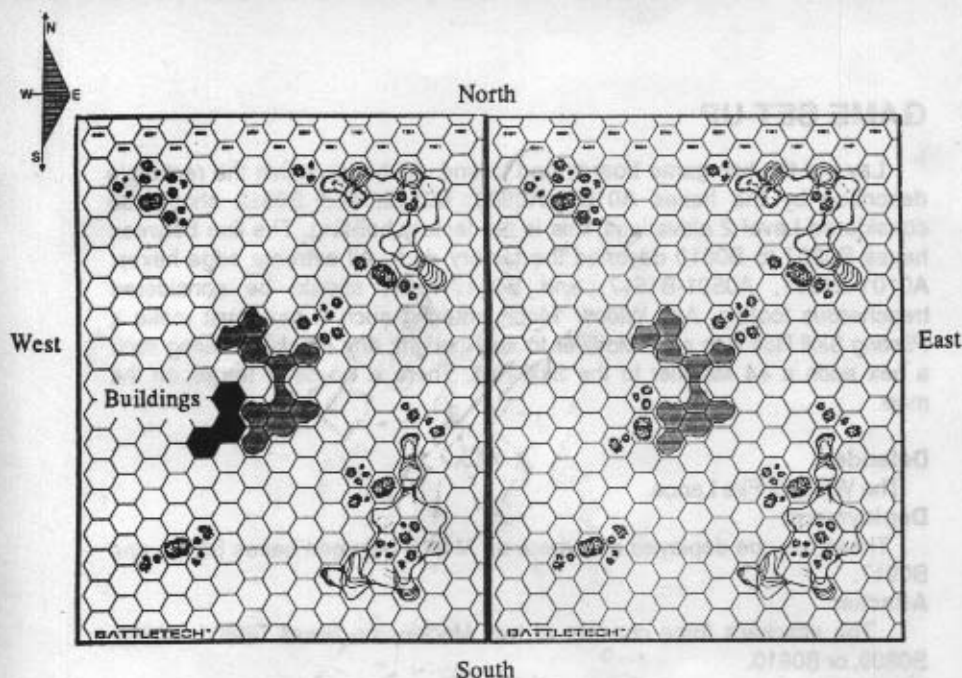
Attacker

The Black Widows deploy all 'Mechs except 1 *Stinger* from the Recon Lance (the captured *Stinger* deployed by the defender above). The Widow player can choose which *Stinger* is captured.

Deployment:

Enter anywhere on the east edge of the map on turn 1.

SITUATION: 1800 HOURS (TST), BERGMAN'S PLANET



Victory Conditions

Rajhan's company wins if they have at least six 'Mechs of any type left on the western edge of the board at the game's end.

The Widows (standard conditions) win if there are no forces of Rajhan's company within three hexes of hex W0610 at the end of the game. If both sides have "won", the Widows still win, if they also free the captured pilot.

If the Widows go berserk (Special Rule 4), the Widows win if they destroy at least eight enemy 'Mechs before the end of the game.

The game ends if the Widows are in possession of (occupy or were the last to occupy) hex W0610 for five turns in a row. If the Widows go berserk, however, the game ends only when all of Rajhan's 'Mechs have been destroyed or moved off the western edge of the board.

Special Rules

1. There are NO woods hexes on the map. Hexes 0511, 0609, and 0610 are BUILDINGS, and are treated as Light Woods hexes for movement purposes, and they block the line-of-sight. All other woods hexes are Soft Sand, costing 4 MP to enter, and an additional 2 MPs to leave. (In addition to costs for the next hex entered.)

2. The captured Widow Warrior is held in the building at hex 0610. On any turn that a Widow 'Mech occupies this hex, the prisoner is considered free.

3. The captured *Stinger* in hex W0709 can be activated on any turn after the captured pilot is set free, provided it has not already been destroyed. Until reactivated, the 'Mech cannot move or fire.

4. Use the optional rules for starting fires. If the buildings are burned for any reason before the captured pilot is released, use the "Berserk Widows" victory conditions.

The sixth campaign for Bergman's Planet was a major clash in the ongoing war between the House of Kurita and the House of Davion. Sometimes called the "gateway to the Federation," Bergman's Planet was and is one of the few strategically sound routes from the Draconis Combine into the Federated Suns, and so has been a favorite battleground, despite the fact that it holds little intrinsic value to anyone.

This particular campaign was noteworthy because of the part played by Davion's intelligence apparatus. For a change, many details of the Kurita battleplan were known in advance by the Davion forces, and steps were taken to avoid a repeat of the debacle at Novogrod the year before. Spearheaded by the Federation Guards Brigade, a large Davion garrison was placed in strategic positions on Bergman's Planet to defend the world's single spaceport and settlement from what Kurita hoped would be a surprise attack.

Wolf's Dragoons were to lead Kurita's forces into battle. His "secret plan" involved a turning maneuver through a desert region long considered impassable by 'droids. Wolf chose his most unorthodox commander, Natasha Kerensky, to do the impossible. But the whole plan hinged on control of an oasis guarded by a company of Heavy Guards 'droids, and things began to go awry for the Kurita forces when the Black Widows' recon lance was driven back, losing one prisoner. On the same afternoon, Kerensky attempted to salvage the campaign with an all-out attack, one noteworthy for the savagery of the fighting that ensued.



GHOST UNIT

THE EYES FROM THE HOUSE

I've only believed in ghosts once in my life - on a devastated planet called Proserpina. I was commanding an *Archer* in the Black Widow's Fire Lance at the time. Our current campaign had taken the company to Proserpina, once a prosperous way-station on the way out from Terra, now a scorched wasteland after being fought over for years. After we too swept through, it didn't seem like there could be a living thing left on the planet's surface.

We were combing the outskirts of the blasted wreckage that had once been the city of Ceres, following up rumors of a cache of heat sinks left behind by our opponents when they had retreated off-planet. Just before dusk, we plowed through a swath of rubble toward a long, low, almost untouched building at the city's southern edge. We were all pretty cranky after almost two full days of unproductive searching; spare parts may be the staff of life for our 'Mechs, and so to us, but there are a lot of places to hide them - even in a battle zone.

As we drew nearer, I could read the lettering on the side of the building, even without magnification: KARENA'S FIBER OPTICS. No wonder the building was untouched: only those dead to any hope would destroy factories. Someday, we'd learn to run them again.

Eyes watched from the interior of the heat-shielded building. They saw the four 'Mechs laboring over the field of rubble, casting about for the scents of metal and myomers. They saw the 'Mechs grow to giants as they approached the building.

Voices whispered, "Time for it, my brothers. Time for revenge, and for taking back what is ours."

The factory looked like an excellent hiding-place for spare parts and other salvage. No heat registered on our infrareds as we scanned the walls. It appeared to be as dead as everything else on this planet.

We were no more than 50 paces away from the building's narrow, blunt end when it suddenly opened. The entire end wall of the building rolled back like the domehead of a 'Mech, revealing nothing but an empty loading dock, stark and somehow ominous in the fast-fading light.

GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two game boards end to end. All hexes within the rectangle described by the hexes A0103, A0803, B0112, and B0812 should be considered Level 2 elevations; this is the factory building. The line between hexes B0807 to B0810 describe the factory door. All extreme edge hexes, A0101-A1501, A0501-B1517, and B0117-1517, should be considered treacherous footing. Any Widow 'Mech entering such a hex must make a *Piloting Skill Roll* with a +2 Modifier to stay upright; any *Mackie* entering such a hex adds a +4 Modifier to the Skill Roll. There is no other terrain on the map.

Defender

The Widow's Fire Lance.

Deployment:

These may be deployed anywhere on Map B between hexes B0901 and B0917.

Attacker

The attacker's force consists of two *Mackies* on hexes B0807, B0808, B0809, or B0810.

Deployment:

These may move and attack once before the first turn of the scenario, and have the Initiative for the first two turns.

Victory Conditions

The Widow force wins if the *Mackies* are both destroyed or permanently immobilized AND if at least one unit survives. The *Mackies* win if they can destroy the Widow Lance without losing their own two *Mackies*.

Special Rules

The Mackie: A Terran BattleMech prototype, the last two in existence are in the possession of the Karena brothers. Terrifically heavy, *Mackies* lack some of the agility of their later brethren, but make up for it in armor protection. Their superior weight suits them excellently for push'n'shove combat, during which they can inflict substantial damage on lighter 'Mechs and upset heavier ones. Their cockpit glass is one-way, producing the eerie effect of 'no one home' that upsets the Widow MechWarriors.

Type: MCK-5S Mackie		
Tonnage: 100		100
Internal Structure:		10
Engine: Hermes 360		33
Walking Movement: 4		
Running Movement: 6		
Jumping Movement: 0		
Total Heat Sinks: 20		10
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor: 320		20
Boxes:		
	Armor	Internal Structure
Head:	8	3
Center Torso:	F:46 R:16	31
Rt/Lt Torso:	F:30 R:12	21
Rt/Lt Arm:	28	7
Rt/Lt Leg:	42	21
Weapons/Ammo:		
Large Laser (Center Torso)	2CB, 5 tons	
PPC (Left Torso)	3CB, 7 Tons	
AutoCannon (Right Torso)	4CB, 8 tons	

SITUATION: 1800 HOURS (TST), PROSERPINA

The *Mackies'* weight advantage is offset by certain flaws. First, their age has unbalanced their heat expenditure rate, making it fluctuate wildly during exertion. Any turn that a *Mackie* takes an action producing heat, roll a six-sided die and consult the table below. If the *Mackie's* exertions normally would create more heat than its heat sinks would be able to dissipate, add 1 to the roll.

Second, the *Mackies* have a decayed myomer skeleton. Every time the *Mackie* attempts to move its full MA, roll a six-sided die. If a 6 is rolled, the *Mackie's* maximum movement allowance is reduced by 2 for running and 1 for walking; thus, four failures will reduce the *Mackie* to immobility.

HEAT EXPENDITURE TABLE	
Die Roll	Result
1-3	Normal Expenditure
4	Increase total heat generated by 5 points
5	Increase total heat generated by 3 points
6	Double total heat generated
7	Temporary reactor shutdown. When drive is to be restarted, roll D6. On a roll of 5 or 6, the engine explodes, destroying the 'Mech.

(Note: +1 Modifier if the total heat generated this turn would normally exceed the number of operative heat sinks.)

SITUATION: 1800 HOURS (TST), PROSERPINA

A detachment from Wolf's Dragoons, under contract to the House of Kurita, has been delegated the task of cleaning up Proserpina, a once-wealthy planet whose material, mineral, and technological assets have been targets for several centuries. The planet succeeded in protecting itself for 150 years, drawing on its resources with a liberal hand; then a concentrated assault drained the planet past its capability to resist, and it has since fallen prey to a series of conquerors, as House Steiner and House Kurita have battled over control of its steadily shrinking resource base. Its major cities have been levelled, its mines and stockpiles raided, until its decimated population now survives as little more than nomads, living on legends of better times and past glories, and little else.

Ikeda's Lance, the Fire Lance of the Black Widow Company, is quartering Ceres, one of the main cities levelled when Wolf's Dragoons overran Proserpina. They are seeking salvage in the form of technological caches, either hoarded by the indigenous population or by successive conquerors.

They are opposed by the Brothers Karena, the last survivors of Proserpina's Warrior House, now among the Dispossessed. They have vowed to recapture their lost status. Combing through the few remaining family documents and possessions, they have unearthed from a museum storeroom the only 'Mechs remaining on the planet: the first two 'Mechs ever built, the *Mackies*, kept only for historical interest. They have trained intensively against the day that they will face other 'Mechs and win back their birthright - or die trying.

The Eyes From The House
(continued from page 34)

We'd scattered at the first grinding movement and fanned out in a line along either side of the opening, out of range of any fire from within, alert to anything that moved. Suddenly, I wished that we had the rest of the Widow's company at our back, instead of having them off scouting other cities. From inside came the hum of fusion motors, louder and a bit more staccato than our own. Seconds later, two huge 'Mechs, each 60 tons or more, with heavy armor plating, rumbled out of the immense, dark doorway. There seemed to be a wind playing somewhere around them: its sighing was clear in my external audio, although the evening was still and hot. The units were old-fashioned and boxy-looking; their insignia was one I'd only seen in history books (a golden sun circled by nine planets, of which the third was colored vividly in blue and green).

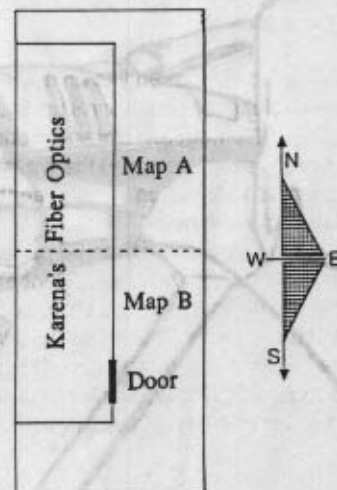
"Holy Mother," I heard Alex mutter behind me. My *Archer* tensed in reaction to my own involuntarily shivering muscles.

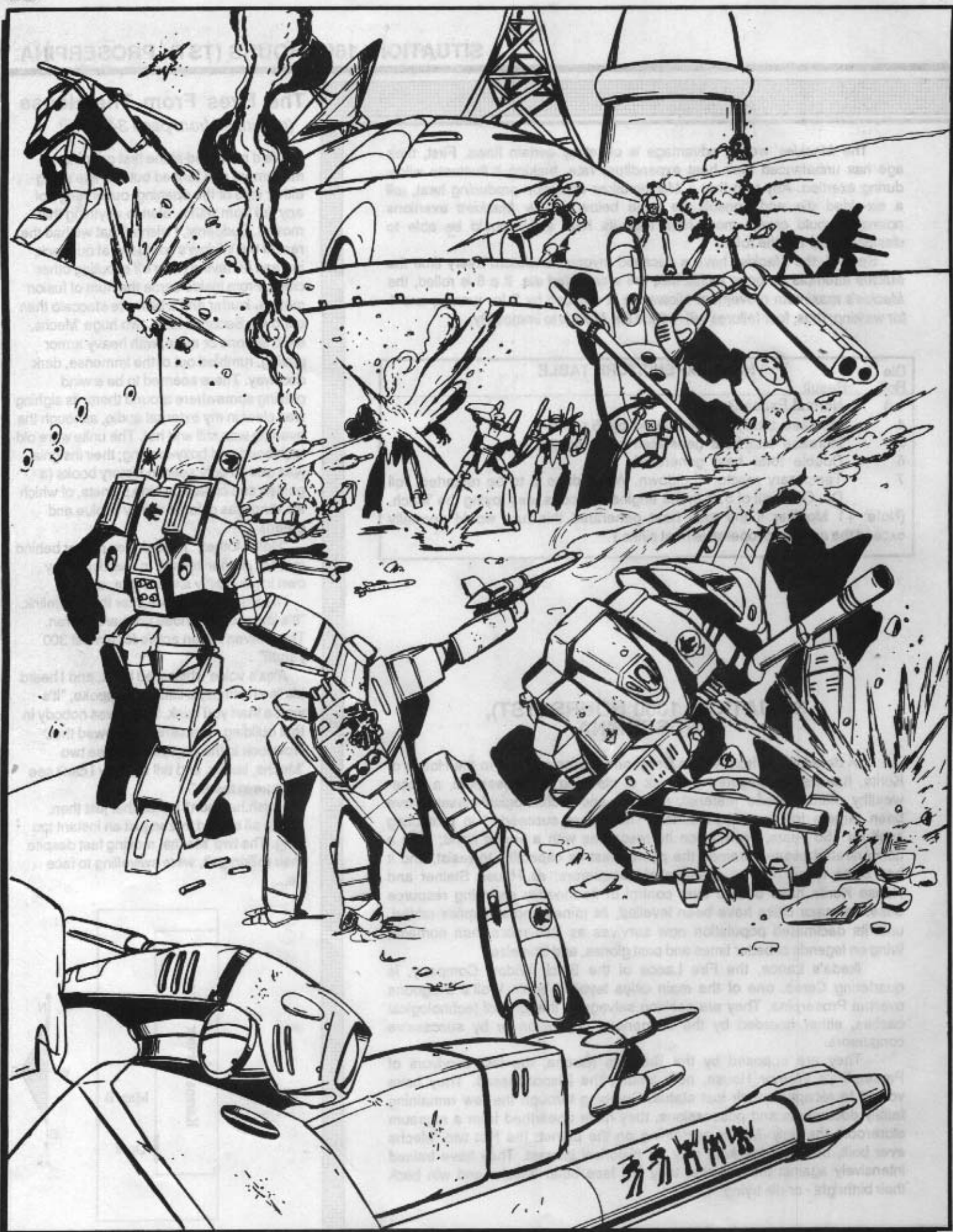
I heard my own voice over the commlink. "It's impossible. Those units are Terran. They haven't been active for almost 300 years!"

Alex's voice whispered back, and I heard his teeth chatter a little as he spoke, "It's worse than you think. There was nobody in that building - our sensors showed that. Now look in the cockpits of those two 'Mechs, buddy, and tell me why I can't see anyone in there."

I wish he hadn't asked that just then.

We all stayed frozen just an instant too long. The two 'Mechs, moving fast despite their rolling gait, were swivelling to face us...



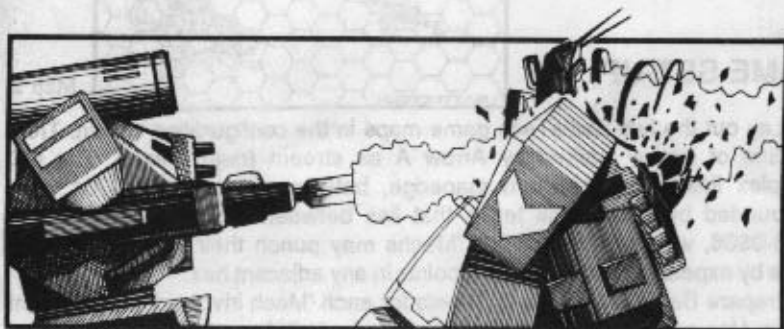


THE BATTLE FOR HOFF

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF COMMANDER NATASHA KERENSKY:

Terran history contains reams of pages produced by writers and so-called philosophers trying to find scholarly ways to justify their countries' participation in wars, prattling about "threats to basic freedoms" and "the common good". Nowadays, I don't think anybody - not even the leaders of our beloved five families - who makes any pretense about why we fight wars. It is power, pure and simple, that drives us now, and the only thing that differentiates one war from another is the size and manner of the stakes involved, and the size of the final body count.

No matter how many times my men and I go to war - and God willing, that'll be another quarter century or more - I doubt we'll ever be involved in a campaign as important as the war waged by Wolf's Dragoons on the planet Hoff in 3022. First of all, there were the Houses involved: Davion vs. Kurita, the two heavyweights of the five Successor families, going at one another with no holds barred. Second, there was the caliber of our opposition: four battalions of the Eridani Light Horse, the only mercenary unit in the Human Sphere with the tactical competence to seriously challenge our status as the best regiment in the galaxy. (What about Hansen's Roughriders, you say? Be serious! How could anyone be afraid of a unit whose commander has the strategic subtlety of a cement DropShip!) But third, and most importantly, there was the prize involved. Not water, nor metals, nor control of another flea-bitten frontier planet. No, this time the stakes were that rarest of commodities, a cadre of scientists and engineers, assembled on Hoff by House Davion to conduct the first serious research into 'Mech technology in almost a century. House Kurita wanted to get its hands on the fruits of those labors, wanted it so bad it was willing to offer us the highest price ever paid for a Merc contract. And so, my friends, did we...



SITUATION: HOFF, APRIL-MAY 3022

The four scenarios that follow all take place during the six-week struggle between the forces of House Davion (led by the Eridani Light Horse) and those of House Kurita (led by Wolf's Dragoons) for control of the planet Hoff and the research team working there. Both sides are well-equipped, evenly-matched, and well-schooled in the art of feint and counter-feint. At times, their struggle will seem less like a war than an elaborate chess game, one in which not all moves are what they first appear to be.

Hoff itself is a rather unspectacular world, with just enough natural and industrial resources to sustain a modest, early 19th-century lifestyle, yet not possessing enough of any one commodity to have ever been a major Succession War target. The region surrounding the Davion research facility is moderately-populated, rugged grazing land. There are a few operating open-pit coal and iron mines, and a pair of minimally-functional industritplex facilities in the general area.

The primary objective of the Kurita offensive is, of course, to identify the location of the scientific outpost and to capture its contents and personnel. To do so, Wolf's 'Mechs must first soften the defending garrison's resistance by crippling their supply depots and repair centers, and by defeating portions of that force in detail. Conversely, House Davion and the Lancers will be looking to conceal the true location of their prize for as long as possible, while attempting to blunt the force of the offensive by any means available. The defenders will be able to employ some of the technological innovations currently being developed by the Hoff research team in some engagements fought during this battle.

BATTLE FOR HOFF: SCENARIO I

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

Major Pierre Bouchard sat in the cramped van that served as the Eridani 27th Company's mobile command center, his chair propped against one wall, scanning the computer readout from the reports of his Recon teams. Things in the Arlun Valley were quiet - almost too quiet.

Bouchard had worked with Jaime Wolf before, back on Callisto V, when the Dragoons were still pledged to House Steiner. Now they were fighting for opposing houses, but from their previous work together, Bouchard had a good idea of what his opponent was likely to do. The Colonel would not wait long before starting his offensive, and was likely to hit on several fronts simultaneously.

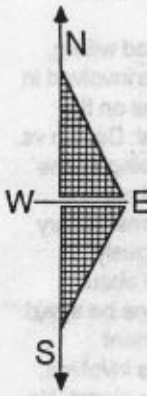
"Well, we're waiting," Bouchard thought, and stared out the window at the line of battle-ready 'Mechs, while his metal-encased bionic right foot beat out an anxious rhythm on the steel floor of the van.

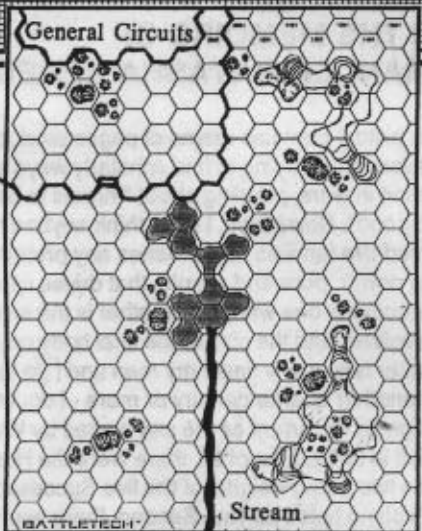
As if in response, the computer started spitting out lines of print. Observers to the east, reporting enemy 'Mech movement: one full lance or more marked with the satiny web pattern of Kerensky, the Black Widow, headed along the banks of the Kethrin River. There could be no doubt what their target was.

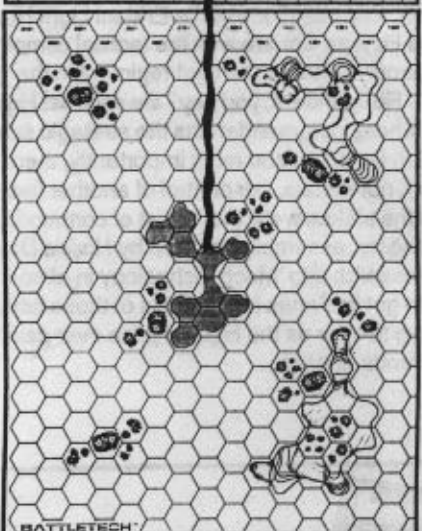
Bouchard yelled through the open door, "Daley, come in here!" and clambered to his feet. He handed his burly aide-de-camp the last page of the printout, and Daley whistled softly as he read it. Tossing the paper back onto the monitor console, Bouchard asked, "What do you think?"

"Well, sir, it seems pretty clear they're after the old General Circuits complex up near Belfast Heights. I'd say let 'em have it. We've already moved most of the usable equipment and stockpiles out of there."

"Of course, Lieutenant, you and I know the GC plant has little strategic importance. I'm betting Wolf does, too; he's always fielded a good intelligence team. No, Daley, the plant is just a pretext for Wolf to let the Widows off the leash, to let them sniff around and see how prepared we are. It wouldn't be in the spirit of the game to ignore such an opportunity to show them what they're up against this time."







GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown. Treat the line of hexes marked by Arrow A as stream (river) hexes. The GC complex lies at the northern mapedge, between hexes 0101-0701. It is surrounded by a chainlink fence that lies between hexes 0801-0805 and 0106-0806, with a gate at 0406. 'Mechs may punch their way through this fence by expending two movement points in any adjacent hex.

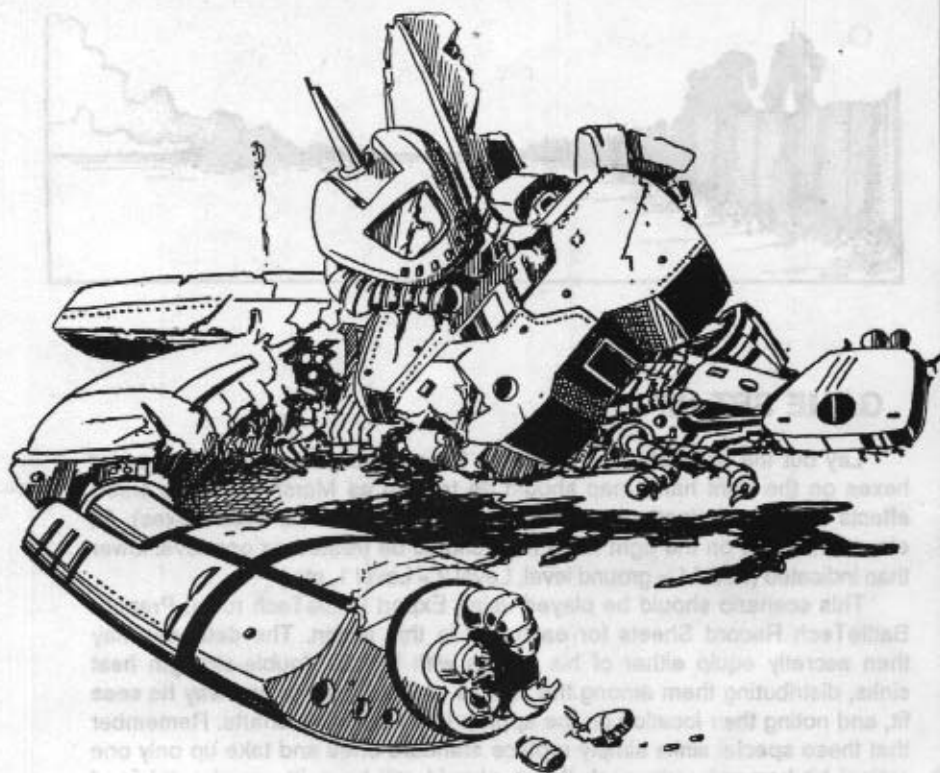
Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for each 'Mech involved in the current action. Use a separate sheet of paper to record all damage taken and ammo used by the Defender's conventional ground forces. This scenario should be played using the Advanced or Expert BattleTech rules. The Defender deploys first.

Defender
Major Bouchard's Patrol consists of:

- 1 Crusader (Bouchard's 'Mech)
- 1 Archer
- 2 Griffins
- 1 Wasp

Deployment:
These units may deploy in any hex north of row xx13 on Map 1. The GC plant also has a token garrison consisting of 1 Hunter and 2 jeeps. These latter units may initially deploy anywhere inside the facility's fence. They are destroyed by any hit and cannot fire.

SITUATION: 1540 (TST), APRIL 9, HOFF (HORNWALD SECTOR)



Attacker

The Widow's expeditionary force consists of:

Kerensky's *Warhammer*

Hayes' *Griffin*

Clavell's *Rifleman*

Fraser's *Stinger*

Jahan's *Stinger*

Deployment:

These units may initially deploy anywhere south of row xx06 on Map 2.

Victory Conditions

The defender and attacker in this scenario have precisely the same victory conditions. Either side wins a Major Victory if it can destroy three enemy 'Mechs without losing more than one of its own 'Mechs. It wins a Marginal Victory if it destroys three enemy 'Mechs while losing two of its own units. If neither side satisfies either condition, the battle is considered a Draw.

Each side has orders to begin to withdraw from the field as soon as two of its 'Mechs have been disabled. A withdrawing 'Mech must always retreat its full MP allowance toward the mapedge from which it entered (Defender north, Attacker south), but may continue to employ all fire and other combat options in normal fashion. If either side achieves a Major Victory or Draw, all disabled 'Mechs will be left on the field, and may become targets for future salvage or scavenger actions.

In a major, prolonged struggle like the Battle for Hoff, the first engagements of the war generally will be small unit skirmishes involving no more than a handful of 'Mechs. Sometimes these battles result when two Recon teams cross paths while scouting the same area. At other times, both sides will attempt to seize the same tactical objective, such as a waterhole, bridge, or ford. In the rarest cases, combat may also occur simply because one or both sides want it to happen, either to serve as a test of strength, as a means of heightening combat readiness in a unit rusty from a long layoff, or as a way of planting certain thoughts or fears into an opposing commander's mind.

This current engagement can be classified as just such a test of strength. The actual value of the target the Widow's forces have been sent to find (the semi-operational GC plant) is marginal because the facility presently contains only a small cache of components and scrap steel. Nonetheless, both sides have sent crack teams to the area to contest the site, anxious to draw 'first blood'. The Widow and Major Bouchard are both proud commanders. Each will yield the field only grudgingly (especially if there are crippled 'Mechs being left behind). Neither unit is prepared to battle to the death on this afternoon, however, and both have orders to withdraw if they sustain significant damage.

Queen's Gambit Accepted

(continued from page 38)

"Yes, sir, of course." Daley nodded, acting as if he understood, although he didn't. Few did, who still had all their own limbs and senses. "I'll dispatch the Fire Lance at once to intercept."

"Thank you, Daley, but that won't be necessary. Just round them up and bring them to me. I'll be leading this mission to check out the Widow's tricks first hand." As Daley stalked out, more than a bit befuddled, Pierre felt the blood begin to race within him. He flexed his right foot, felt the pliable metal accommodate his motion. A date with the Widow - a death duel both rare and delicious. These days, combat was the only time he really felt alive...

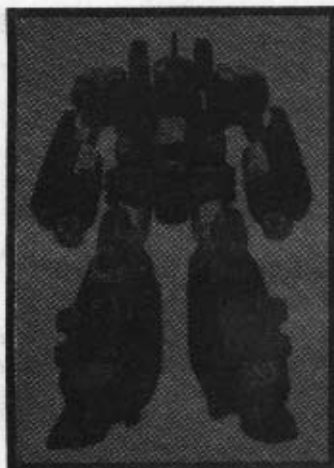
BATTLE FOR HOFF: SCENARIO II

THE BETTER MOUSETRAP

What's the first thing they teach you about survival in a 'Mech? In an evenly-matched combat, it's real easy for both of you to lose. If you don't die from accumulated damage or a hit to the head, then you have a good chance of shutting yourself down through overheating. Every good commander from Hanse Davion down to the damned Black Widow bases a good part of his strategy on the idea of luring his opponent into overheating. Make 'em overheat and you can shoot at 'em all day while the poor sods sit there trying to get their reactors started up again.

Things being as they are these days, there aren't that many different types of 'Mechs active in the Human Sphere, and those that are have pretty standard heat-loss characteristics. And so a Warrior usually has a pretty good idea what shape his opponent is in. Nevertheless, sometimes a commander can get everything figured out a little too accurately.

I can remember a time, back during the Battle for Hoff, when we were able to throw the Widow's whole battle strategy right into a cocked helmet. Y'see, some of our units had brand-new heat sinks that had been designed at the research base we were defending there, and they were better than anything the Queen of Spades - or anybody - had ever seen. She kept watching us pour on the firepower, certain that victory was at hand, but our 'Mechs just wouldn't shut down. We could hear her cursing in Russian over the commlink throughout the entire fight, trying to figure out just what in blazes was goin' on.



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech maps in the configuration shown. The water hexes on the right hand map should be treated as Marsh (3 MP to enter; effects on heat dissipation and combat modifiers same as water hexes). All elevation hexes on the right hand map should be treated as one level lower than indicated (Level 1 = ground level, Level 2 = Level 1, etc.)

This scenario should be played using Expert BattleTech rules. Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for each unit in this action. The defender may then secretly equip either of his lances with the 20 double-strength heat sinks, distributing them among the 'Mechs in that Lance in any way he sees fit, and noting their location on the appropriate Critical Hit charts. Remember that these special sinks simply replace standard ones and take up only one critical hit box per sink; each 'Mech should still have its usual number of total heat sinks (though the total heat dissipating ability of those sinks will be greater).

Defender

Captain Li Hsien's force consists of the following Lightning Company units:

Silver Lance

Archer #1

Archer #2

Griffin

Black Lance

Rifleman

Shadow Hawk

Phoenix Hawk

All units enter from the eastern edge of the right-hand map.

Attacker

The Widow's forces consist of the following units:

Command Lance

Kerensky's Warhammer

MacLaren's Marauder

Sheridan's Crusader

Hayes' Griffin

Recon Lance

Ikeda's Rifleman

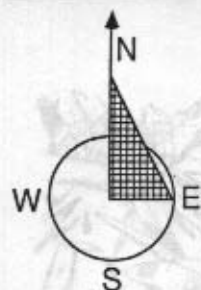
Fraser's Stinger #1

Jahan's Stinger #2

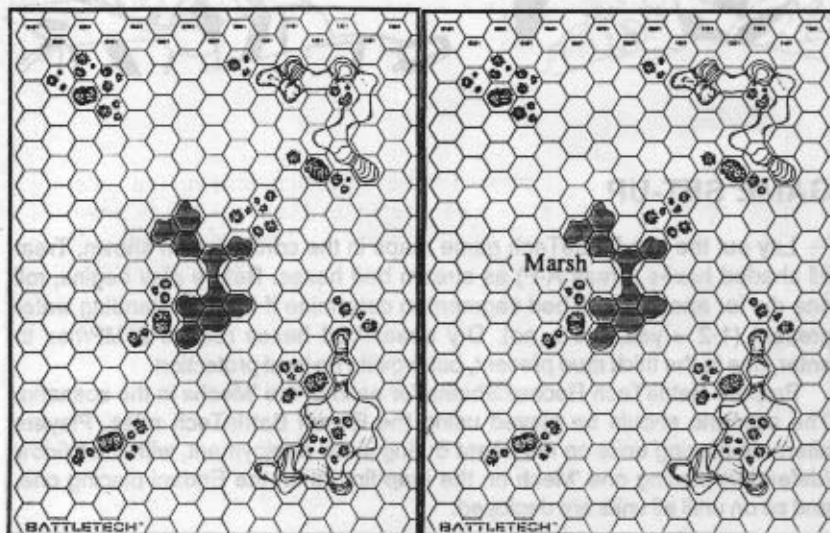
Nichol's Phoenix Hawk

All attacking units enter from the northern edge of the left-hand map.

SITUATION: 1200 HOURS (TST), HOFF NORTH CONTINENT, NEAR JOHNSON'S WATERHOLE



North



South

Victory Conditions

Both sides are anxious to have control of the Johnson's Farm complex, and will be willing to commit substantial resources in pursuit of that objective. The scenario continues until one or both sides have withdrawn from the field. The defender **MUST** withdraw if four of his 'Mechs are destroyed or immobilized, or if two of his double-strength units have been destroyed. The attacker must withdraw if four of his 'Mechs have been destroyed or immobilized. Either side may elect to withdraw earlier if they believe it to be in their best interest to do so.

At the conclusion of the scenario, each side receives victory points for its efforts as follows:

3 points for holding the farm at the end of the engagement (if both sides have been forced to withdraw, the defender receives these points).

2 points for each unit destroyed or immobilized.

If either side earns 6 or more points than its opponent, it achieves a Decisive victory; if 3-5 points more, a Marginal victory. A difference of 0-2 points is considered a Draw.

Special Rules

During the heat phase of each turn, active double-strength heat sinks draw off 2 heat points instead of the normal 1. These sinks may be destroyed through Critical Hits in the normal manner.

Johnson's Farm, a major agricultural holding on the northern continent of Hoff, has been selected by Jaime Wolf as one of the strategic targets his advance teams are to secure. The Farm lies in a fertile marshland fed by a major underground spring, and contains a thriving stock pond, several working artesian wells, and an operational (albeit primitive) water processing facility. The side controlling this site will control a major portion of the region's purified fresh water supply.

The Farm is presently being held by two Lances of the Lightning Company of the 8th Eridani Battalion. The company has recently had the good fortune of being selected as the beneficiary of the Hoff Lab's first major research breakthrough - the development of an improved BattleMech heat sink. Working from fragmentary records of studies conducted on Terra centuries before, the scientists have been able to produce a prototype heat sink that appears to be twice as effective as a normal one. Twenty of these improved sinks have been provided to the Lightning Company for combat testing; the Company commander, Captain Li Hsien, has installed these sinks into three of his best 'Mechs.

Wolf has assigned capture of Johnson's Farm to the Black Widow, and Nataša herself is at the head of the two Lance assault force that arrives shortly before midday. Kerensky has used Wolf's jamming equipment and a thick, early morning fog to cover her approach, leaving the defenders somewhat disorganized (with two of their 'Mechs off on a recon mission of their own) and outgunned. As the two opponents square off in the vicinity of the marshy waterhole in the southwest corner of the Farm, Captain Hsien must hope that his hidden technological 'edge' will be sufficient to turn the tide back in his favor.



BATTLE FOR HOFF: SCENARIO III

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

They had been there for 34 hours - 200 'Mechs trading fire so thick the stench clung to every shrub and tree not already burned to ash. Thirty-four hours of charge and countercharge, of patching up the wounded and throwing them right back into the fray. And yet, neither side broke, or even appeared to waver, along the battle line hewn by the muddy, half-dry stream bed that had once been a hard-rushing artificial tributary of the Kethrin back in the Star League's heyday. From all the evidence of sight and sound that Cassiday could take in as he wheeled his *Shadow Hawk* in a quick scan of the valley, it looked like they might well be here for another 34 hours - or 34 days.

Cassiday had been in plenty of battles in his 13 years as a MechWarrior, having risen to Lance leader on the strength of his fighting skills. He had been involved in lightning-quick strikes, and slugfests like this one, and come within an inch of losing his life on several occasions. He was no more afraid of defeat or death than most other 'Mech pilots (and considerably less afraid than most normal humans). Nonetheless, he found himself viewing the current situation with a peculiarly morbid fascination. It looked as though whoever finally succeeded in breaking a hole through the enemy's line was going to be able to cut right through the rest of the opposition like a knife through butter. Both sides were too thinly stretched and overextended to regroup effectively and seal off such a breakthrough, or to organize an orderly withdrawal from the field. Yessir, the loser here was going to be routed, and would probably be lucky if a third of its units escaped intact to go guerrilla into the western hills. Not at all a pleasant fate or a pretty end.

Cassiday saw the repair crew climbing out of Morgan's 'Mech, and called for a status report on the battered *Griffin*. A static-filled response came back: "Worst of the engine damage cleaned up. Armor patched. No way to fix the broken right foot actuator at present." It would have to do. Cassiday spoke briefly to the two remaining pilots in his lance, mouthing meaningless words of encouragement, then radioed on ahead. "Blue Seven ready to move out, Captain. Let's get the bastards this time."



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown. Treat all shaded hexes (areas A-F) as stream bed hexes. Before play begins, roll one die for each stream bed segment to determine if there is standing water present (1-2 = yes, 3-6 = no). Dry streambed hexes require 2 MP/hex to enter, due to the thick mud present, but provide no heat protection.

Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for each of the 'Mechs in the scenario. The scenario should be played using the Expert BattleTech rules. Players alternate placing units on the board during initial deployment, with the Widow (defender) placing one 'Mech on the map first, then the Eridani placing one, and so on until all units are deployed.

Defender

The Widow's entire company, save for 1 *Stinger* too disabled to fight, is present, and in the following condition (information in parentheses indicates conditions different from normal 'Mech status):

Command Lance

Kerensky's *Warhammer* (14 Heat Sinks remaining, additional +2 To-Hit Modifier on any shot fired Right Torso MG)

Maclaren's *Marauder* (unit has structural engine damage that generates 3 additional points of heat/turn)

Sheridan's *Crusader* (Right Arm LRM - 3 packs of ammo left)

Hayes' *Griffin* (-1 to all movement rates due to Engine/Gyro instability, Left Arm Armor 6, 15 packs LRM ammo)

Fire Lance

Ikeda's *Archer* (Right Leg Armor 16, and +1 die roll adjustment to all Piloting Skill Rolls)

Delius' *Archer* (Left Arm Armor 4, and one Rear Torso Laser out)

Ward's *Stinger* (roll once each combat round; on a 6, unit's engine temporarily shuts down)

Koniev's *Wasp* (9 Heat Sinks remaining, no Left Torso Armor front or rear)

Recon Lance

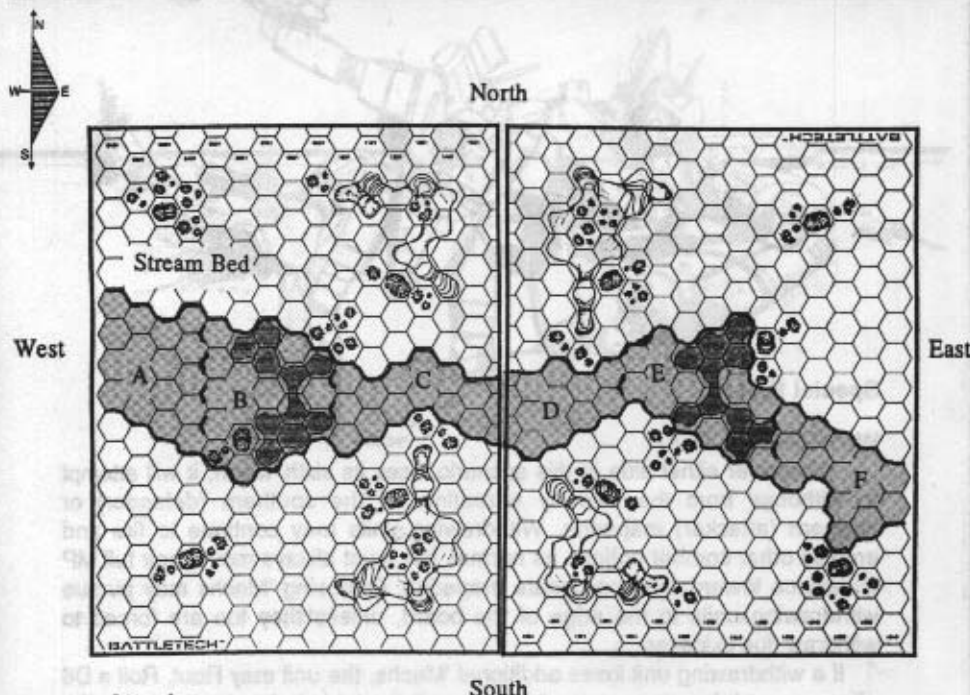
Jahan's *Stinger* (Left Leg Armor 2, 6 Heat Sinks; to jump, unit must make Piloting Skill Roll with +2 modifier)

Clavell's *Rifleman* (Right Arm AutoCannon out, -1 to all movement rates)

Nichols' *Phoenix Hawk* (7 Heat Sinks remaining)

The defender may deploy anywhere south of the stream bed.

SITUATION: 1500 (TST), MAY 12, HOFF (BRAND VALLEY SECTOR)

**Attacker**

Pelham's Company has two 'Mechs that have been knocked out of commission completely by the day's fighting. The ten 'Mechs still available to fight are in the following condition:

Red Seven

- 1 *Phoenix Hawk* (Left Arm Laser jams on roll of 10+; this check is made before the To-Hit roll and adds heat. Left Arm Armor 1. Unit cannot run or jump due to severe gyro damage.)
- 2 *Rifleman* (one with Head Armor 2, only 12 rounds of AutoCannon ammo, and 8 Sinks; the other with 9 Heat Sinks, Right Torso Armor 3, and -1 to Movement Allowance)

Blue Seven

- 1 *Shadow Hawk* (Center Torso Armor 19 front/6 rear, 8 Heat Sinks)
- 1 *Griffin* (9 Heat Sinks, LRM launcher costs 5 heat points to fire, and has 15 ammo packs left)
- 1 *Stinger* (1 Engine hit, producing 5 points of heat per turn)

Gold Seven

- 1 *Crusader* (Left Arm Armor 13, Left Leg SRM out)
- 1 *Phoenix Hawk* (Head Armor 4)
- 1 *Shadow Hawk* (all movement rates halved due to engine damage)
- 1 *Griffin* (Right Leg Armor 14, 6 Heat Sinks)

The attacker's forces may deploy anywhere north of the stream bed.

Victory Conditions

Both the attacker and defender in this scenario have the same victory conditions. To achieve a Decisive Victory (and a battle-turning breakthrough), a side must cause the enemy force to rout (see **Special Rules** below), and have lost no more than five of its own 'Mechs. A side wins a Marginal Victory (but no breakthrough if it causes the enemy to rout, but has lost six or more of its own 'Mechs; or if it forces the enemy to withdraw from the field and has lost five or fewer of its own 'Mechs. All other results are considered draws.

In the days following the skirmish at Johnson's Water Hole, Wolf's Dragoons succeeded in taking control of several other strategic strongpoints in the region. The added heat sink capabilities that had been built into many of the House Davion garrison units, while unquestionably useful, did not prove to be a pivotal factor in these engagements. Meanwhile, the main body of Wolf's assault force also made progress, driving back the Eridani 8th Battalion at the battle of Aram's Ravine, and soundly defeating a mixed force of Eridani and House Davion 'Mechs in a night assault along Proud's Ridge. At month's end, when Colonel Wolf received reconnaissance reports pinpointing the location of the research station, he confidently announced to his company commanders at dinner that "the enemy is ours".

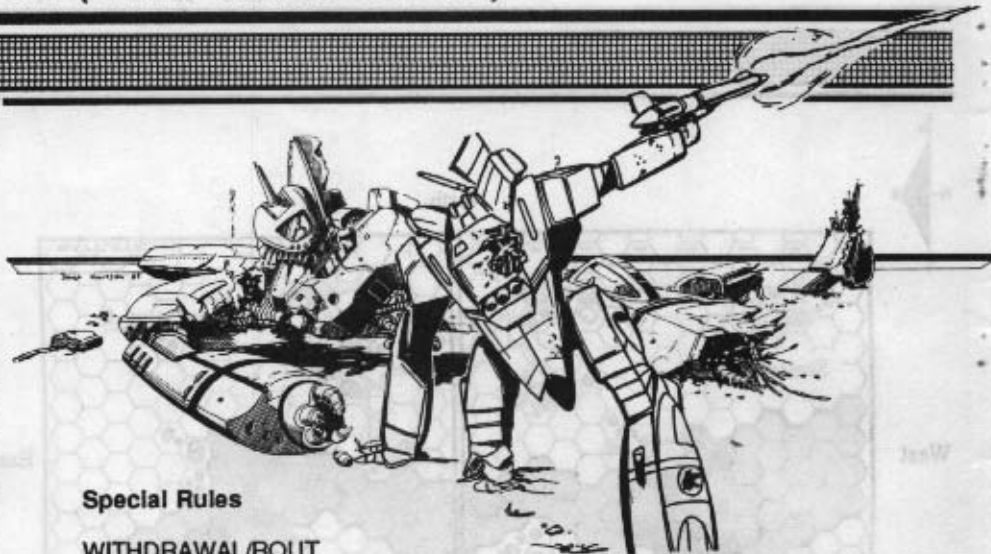
Nothing could have been further from the truth, however. The Eridani halted their retreat near the old mining town at Flint and, reinforced by part of the 6th Battalion that had been guarding the mines, they repulsed Wolf's next thrust. The next day, fate intervened on the side of House Davion as well. The Commander of the House Kurita force, following a mysterious augury cast by his personal soothsayer, suddenly broke away from the main formation without warning and set off to attack the mine garrison. In the ensuing confusion, the Eridani was able to launch a counterattack into the breach in Wolf's line, and forced the enemy to withdraw in disarray, inflicting severe damage on the Dragoon battalion left to cover the retreat. House Kurita's ill-starred side venture also ended in defeat, and ironically resulted in the Commander's own death when his *Marauder* was toppled into an open mine shaft by an explosive charge.

Wolf and Kurita's forces, intensely harried by the Eridani light units, finally regrouped about 50 kilometers southeast of Flint, at the base of the Brand Valley. On May 11, a large Eridani-Davion force descended on this site, but Wolf stiffened and held. Several further assault waves by both sides were similarly turned back. With each failure, each side has called in more and more units from perimeter positions to attempt to turn the tide. At this hour, there are no more than a handful of 'Mechs on each side that have not been committed to this battle, which has become the pivotal point of the whole war.

Continued on page 44, column 1.

SITUATION: 1500 (TST), MAY 12, HOFF (BRAND VALLEY SECTOR)

Along the right flank of Wolf's line, the Widows have been locked in their own stalemate with Pelham's Company of the 7th Eridani. As this scenario begins, both sides are preparing to launch a fresh assault, hoping to be the ones who can achieve that critical, tide-turning breakthrough.



Special Rules

WITHDRAWAL/ROUT

Whenever either side in this scenario loses its sixth 'Mech, it will attempt to withdraw from the field by retreating off the southern (defender) or northern (attacker) mapedge. Withdrawing units may continue to fire and employ other combat options as normal, but must always move their full MP allowance toward the appropriate mapedge. Opposing 'Mechs may pursue withdrawing units to the edge of the board, unless they too are forced to withdraw due to losses.

If a withdrawing unit loses additional 'Mechs, the unit may Rout. Roll a D6 after any such loss is sustained and consult the table below to determine if a Rout occurs:

ROUT TABLE	
'Mechs Lost	Rout On
7th	1-2
8th	1-4
9th	Always

SCENARIO REPLAY

If the scenario has not ended in a Decisive Victory for either side, players may wish to assume that fighting along the rest of the front has remained stalemated, and replay the confrontation again. During the interval between attacks, both sides will send their techs onto the field to try and recover the 'Mechs left crippled there. To determine the success of these efforts, roll a D10 for each 'Mech left behind:

- 1 Unit lost to other side
- 2-3 Unit incapable of being repaired
- 4-10 Unit recovered

If the previous encounter has ended in a Marginal Victory for one side, that side gets to add 1 to all die rolls it makes on the above tables, while the loser must subtract 1 from all his rolls.

Once each side determines which units it still possesses, it may make repairs on these units as follows (in all cases, the player chooses the particular area he wants repaired):

- One-half of all Critical Damage may be repaired or
- Three-fourths of all Armor lost may be replaced or
- Three-fourths of all Ammo used may be restocked.

If the 'Mech was disabled because of the death of its Warrior, assume one of the Technicians takes his place (use the variable skills table in the Optional Rules to determine the *Piloting* and *Gunnery* skills of the new Warrior. In all replays of this battle, a 'Mech force will begin to withdraw as soon as it has lost half its remaining 'Mechs. To determine if Rout occurs, adjust the table so that 7th is replaced by W+1, 8th by W+2, and 9th by W+3 (where W = the force's Withdrawal limit).

BATTLE FOR HOFF: SCENARIO IV



DANA KURTSON '85

BATTLE FOR HOFF: SCENARIO IV

LAST LINE OF DEFENSE

Dr. Jorge Belasco walked hastily along the cinder-block corridors of the old aerospace plant that housed the House Davion test facility. He was a man on an unpleasant but necessary mission. In almost every room he passed, other techs were busily crating up equipment and supplies, preparing for an evacuation that might never take place.

Many of them called out questions to Belasco, but he did not pause to answer. There was no time to stop and reassure them out of their frightened stares. If Project Phoenix failed now, there would be all the time in the world for questions - in whatever internment camp House Kurita placed him and his associates for 'debriefing' and interrogation.

Minutes ago, four blips had appeared on the central computer monitor screen, moving rapidly toward the facility. He supposed that this first wave was probably a Recon Lance, but that there would be many more 'Mechs here within hours.

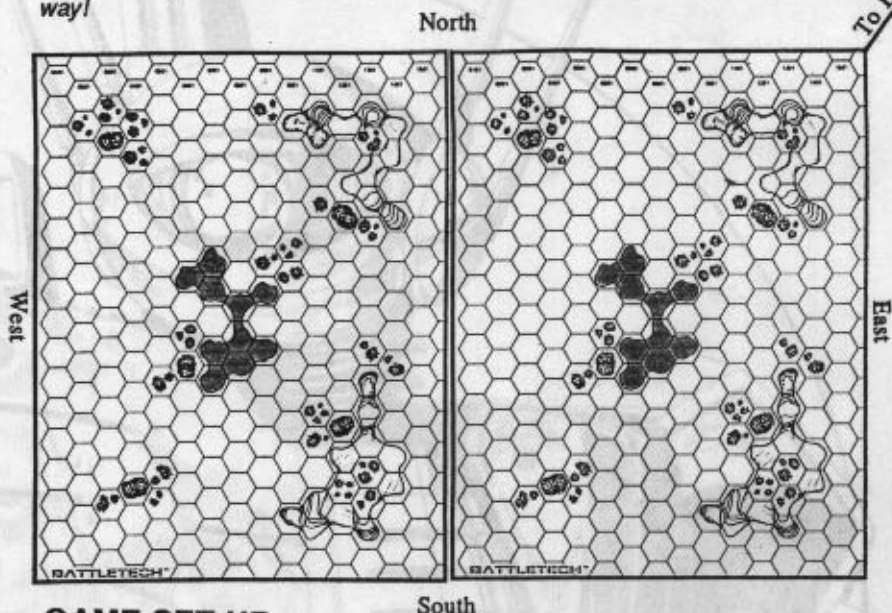
"If we have any chance of escape," Belasco thought, "we must make our stand now, before others arrive."

Belasco emerged from the lab building and sprinted over to the open hangar on its west side. Inside, in a bay that had once held prototype aerospace fighters, stood the research team's last hope: two shining 'Mechs, the end product of 18 months of hard work, and the first fully-rebuilt and redesigned units produced in more than four decades. Two House Davion 'Mech Warriors already stood next to them, fully garbed for battle.

Belasco saluted as he addressed them, his voice cracking slightly as he spoke. "Men, you've been with these babies since their birth, and you know as well as I what they can do. I wish we'd had a chance to test them out a little more fully, but there's no use crying over spilled milk. I don't need to tell you that the whole future of this project is riding on what happens in the next 30 minutes. Just go on out there, and buy us the time we need." He watched in silence as they clambered aboard, listened with a practiced ear as they brought the fusion engines up to full power; then they were gone.

Suddenly, there was nothing to do but wait.

The situation described in this scenario clearly assumes that Wolf's Dragoons somehow won the decisive battle in Brand's Valley. If this did not occur in your replay (i.e., the Eridani attackers won a major victory), you should probably adapt this encounter to another planetary setting, and feel ashamed of yourselves for letting a crack unit like the Widows get beat that way!



GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech game maps in the configuration shown. The Friden plant lies about half a kilometer off the map to the northeast.

Prepare BattleTech Record Sheets for all the 'Mechs involved in this action. For accounting purposes, list all ground units involved in this scenario on a separate sheet of paper. This scenario should be played using the Expert BattleTech rules. The defender deploys first.

Defender

As previously noted, the defending 'Mech force consists of a modified *Griffin* and two modified *Wasps*. For convenience, the vital statistics for both units are provided below.

Attacker

The current status of the Widow's Recon Lance is as follows:

Fraser's *Stinger* (Left Leg Armor 5, Center Torso Armor 8/3, and 8 Heat Sinks)

Clavell's *Rifleman* (Right Arm AutoCannon jams on roll of 11+ this check is made before any To-Hit roll; Left Leg Armor 9)

Nichol's *Phoenix Hawk* (7 Heat Sinks remaining; add +1 modifier to all To-Hit Rolls made using Right Arm Medium Laser)

The Attacker may deploy his units anywhere on the Western map.

Victory Conditions

The Defender wins if he can destroy at least two of the Attacker's 'Mechs AND keep at least one of his own 'Mechs operational (because, under those conditions, the remaining Widows would withdraw and wait for reinforcements), or by destroying all the attackers 'Mechs. The attacker wins if he can clear the board of all defending forces, and retain at least one 'Mech in operating condition.

SITUATION: 0815 (TST), MAY 13, HOFF (FRIDEN AEROSPACE PARK)

Type: GRF-2N Super-Griffin	Tons
Tonnage: 60	<u>60</u>
Internal Structure:	6
Engine: Coretek 275	15.5
Walking MP's: 4	
Running MP's: 6	
Jumping MP's: 9	
Total Heat Sinks: 13	3 (Includes 3 double-strength heat sinks for total Heat Dissipation Ability of 16)
Gyro:	3
Cockpit:	3
Armor Factor: 160	10
Boxes	
Head: 9	
Center Torso: F:24 R7	
Rt/Lt Torso: F:22 R7	
Rt/Lt Arm: 13	
Rt/Lt Leg: 18	
Weapons and Ammo:	
Type Loc	Tons
PPC R.A. 3	7
LRM 10-pack R.T. 2	5
Ammo:	
LRM 24-pack R.T. 2	2
Med. Laser L.A. 1	1

Type: WSP-2A Super-Wasp	Tons
Tonnage: 25	<u>25</u>
Internal Structure:	2.5
Engine: Nissan 200	8.5
Walking MP's: 8	
Running MP's: 12	
Jumping MP's: 6	
Total Heat Sinks: 10	0
Gyro:	2
Cockpit:	3
Armor Factor: 64	4
Boxes	
Head: 6	
Center Torso: F:10 R:4	
Rt/Lt Torso: F:7 R:2	
Rt/Lt Arm: 6	
Rt/Lt Leg: 7	
Weapons and Ammo:	
Type Loc Critical Tons	
Med. Laser R.A. 1	1
SRM 2-pack L.L. 1	1
Ammo:	
SRM 50-pack C.T. 1	1

It is early on the morning after the Dragoons' hard-fought victory at Brand Valley. Most of Wolf and Kurita's units are still busy trying to chase down and destroy the Eridani Lances who successfully fled or blasted their way off the battlefield in last evening's rout. The Widow, however, has cleverly withdrawn her own Recon Lance from the fray, and dispatched them north to secure the research facility that has been the war's primary target (and, in so doing, to seize a large chunk of glory for herself). As practically all available 'Mechs on the planet were called into the battle just concluded, the Black Lady expects to encounter little opposition at the facility other than conventional ground defenses (tank and infantry). Consequently, she has ordered her techs to patch up only the worst of the Recon Lance's damage before sending them off again, acting in haste to prevent any other allied unit with similar ideas from beating her to the punch.

Unfortunately for the Widow's calculations, House Davion's scientists still have a surprise ace in the hole (albeit an untested one) that could deny Wolf and Kurita their prize. For the past several months, the research team has been designing and building two new prototype 'Mechs that are essentially more mobile, beefed-up versions of the *Griffin* and the *Wasp*. The 60-ton 'Super-Griffin' moves slightly more slowly than its standard counterpart, but packs more heat sinks, armor, more powerful jump jets, and an additional piece of weaponry (a medium laser). The 25-ton 'Super-Wasp' employs a substantially larger engine that provides it with a substantial land movement speed advantage over all standard light 'Mechs.

Today, these new 'Mechs will be receiving their baptism of fire under the toughest possible circumstances. They, together with the regular facility defense forces, must succeed in turning back the Widow's first wave to give the research team any chance of escaping into the hills. If they fail in this effort, Wolf's victory will be complete.

TALES OF THE

BLACK WIDOW

COMPANY

BATTLETECH™

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Command Lance



Warhammer
Capt. Kerensky

Marauder
MacLaren

Crusader
Sheridan

Griffin
Hayes

Fire Lance



Archer
Lt. Ikeda

Archer
Delius

Wasp
Koniev

Stinger
Ward

Recon Lance



Rifleman
Lt. Clavell

Phoenix Hawk
Nichols

Stinger
Fraser

Stinger
Jahan

This supplement is packed with descriptions of one of BattleTech's most elite fighting companies: The Black Widow Company of Wolf's Dragoons. Selling their services to the highest bidder, this mercenary unit is well-known throughout the Successor States. Included is a history of the Black Widow Company and her commander, Natasha Kerensky, details of the units that make up the company and the MechWarriors who do the fighting, plus 15 scenarios of actual engagements fought by the Black Widow.

Some of the scenario's included are:

Lady Sings the Blues
Queen's Gambit
Spider Trap
The Lady and the Tiger

The Bounty Hunter
Ghost Unit
The Battle For Hoff
(A 4 scenario campaign)

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