IMPERIAL ARMOUR

VOLUME THREE - THE TAROS CAMPAIGN

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to volume three of Forge World's line of Imperial Armour books. This book is a change in style for those readers familiar with the previous two volumes. We have moved away from a vehicle guidebook to a campaign book. It details the history of a single conflict, along with the forces deployed, battles won and lost etc, and still covers the vehicles of the campaign, with technical information and rules. This campaign also takes a wider holistic view of the 40K universe. It doesn't draw lines between the different games systems, because in the end it is all the same universe; Battlefleet Gothic does not happen in isolation from Epic Armageddon or Warhammer 40,000. This campaign includes elements of all three games.

The origins of the campaign in this book lie a long time ago, in fact back in 1989. Having been playing Warhammer 40,000 Rogue Trader since it was first published, a group of three friends and myself decided to play a campaign over our college summer holidays. It fell to me to write the background and scenarios for the forthcoming campaign (some things never change), so I set about creating a world and a background so we could play wargames that were linked together. Younger players will have to bear in mind this was back the days before Codex army lists or the vast range of miniatures that are available today. We just had a rulebook, our own small, but burgeoning, collection of models, a willingness to make terrain from polystyrene and plastic cups, and a desire to spend sunny days indoors playing with toy soldiers.

The world I invented for the campaign was called Taros VI, and it was a desert mining world where water was very scarce. I originally chose a desert world because I had a yellow tablecloth to cover my green wargames board, and rocks would be easy terrain to find (in my garden). I decided that the Planetary Governor of Taros had gone rogue and wasn't fulfilling his valuable mining quotas. The Imperium was going to forcibly remove him from power and replace him. On one side would be the renegade Planetary Governor and his mercenary forces, including a large contingent of Eldar pirates (no Tau, they had not been encountered in 1989), verses the Imperium's forces of the Imperial Army (as it was called then. The Imperial Guard were still a few years away), and my brother's Dark Angel Space Marines.

I wrote up long army lists for every force, drew maps, wrote the background and scenarios for the initial attacks (including the Dark Angels assaulting a defence missile silo), and organised the first games. We must have played 8 or 9 games over the summer, all set on Taros, culminating in an attack on the Governor's Palace, where the Governor was killed and his rebel force defeated.

Obviously my summer of '89 campaign had something in common with this book, but it was not this campaign. The name and the terrain are where the similarities end. When I was asked to come up with a synopsis for IA3, which was to be a campaign sourcebook rather than a vehicle guidebook, I drew on my previous Warhammer 40,000 experience for it. The campaign has changed a lot since original conception.

The final version of the background to the Taros Campaign was agreed on between Tony Cottrell and myself, mostly whilst we were waiting to pass on press for Imperial Armour Volume 2. We had several hours to kill at the printers, and did so by working out just what we wanted from the next book. Not just the story, but new models as well. Most importantly we had to decide who would fight whom. The Imperium would be on one side, that much was easy. On the other side we considered Eldar, Orks and Chaos, but in the end settled for the Tau. Why? Because there were already many Tau models on our wish-lists (most now exist as models), and we already had models of the Barracuda, Tiger Shark, Great Knarlocs etc. Fighting the Tau would also allow use to have a straight fight. It would match tanks, infantry, aircraft and artillery in a conventional shooting war. The desert would be a good environment for Tau and Imperial tanks to battle it out.

A second source of inspiration for this book hails back four years, to when I was editing the Citadel Journal, Epic and BFG magazines. I had a plan to write and run a series of articles that crossed between the magazines. It would be a campaign that involved games of 40K, Epic and BFG and described the history of one war. I wrote quite a lot of material but due to other commitments the plan never got any further. It was something I was keen to re-visit for this book, and the time spent writing those unseen articles has been recycled into this book. It seemed a simple idea to me, that if there was to be war then players should be able to play the larger battles in Epic, and the space battles with BFG. It was something that had often been talked about but had not yet been done. Forge World already made the models for the Tau Epic forces, and had started work on a Tau fleet. If this book is about supporting our model range, then we had to include rules for these models as well, so this book grew to include the Epic and BFG elements.

Growing is something this book did a lot of. There is so much we could have included but in the end size and space became an issue. A Tallarn army list was one notable early casualty, reduced to a single page of amendments to the Imperial Guard codex. Epic lists for Tallarn regiments and the Elysian regiment also had to go, although we will hopefully re-visit them in future IA books.

In writing this book I wanted to create a solid piece of 40K history. We have a lot of background for 40K, races, troop types, characters etc, that allow players to fight each other in tabletop games, but not a lot of real history. By this I mean history with dates, locations, people and places. Details of how events happened, where and why. I am a keen military-history enthusiast (like many at GW), and find such details fascinating. I wanted to get some of that detail into 40K and into this book. Details of who fought who, when, where and how. What equipment was used? How was it deployed? How did it perform?

I was conscious when writing this book that it was something new, and as such would be setting a president. The history in this book would serve as an example of how, and why, the Imperium and Tau fight (beyond two players wanting to play a wargame). It would be an example of the kind of conflicts the Tau Empire engages in. Essentially it is border war fought over mineral resources. For the Imperium it is quite a small affair, the kind of conflict that I imagine flairs-up throughout the Imperium on daily basis. It is not fought with huge resources, and in no way compares to say the Battle for the Cadian Gate (to which it is contemporaneous) or the 3rd War for Armageddon. The High Lords of Terra will lose no sleep over Taros – if they ever even hear about it!

Conversely, for the Tau Taros is a large and serious conflict. They do not have the endless resources of the Imperium, and the commitment to Taros represents a sizeable deployment of the T'au Sept. Despite the Tau's rather 'nice-guy' image, this is also a war of aggression, to expand the Empire and serve the Greater Good. I like this idea, the Tau might seem reasonable when compared to the Imperium's other implacable enemies, like Chaos or the Tyranids, but they are ruthless in pursuit of their own ends.

Another new addition to this Imperial Armour book is the 16 scenarios, which are all 'historical' re-fights. They include some background to the battle, a guide to terrain and both side's objectives, a sketch map of the tabletop and force lists. They are not evenly pointed games. The objective of the game is to try to do as well as, or better than, the 'historical' outcome (and have fun in the process). You play to find out what might have

happened. It is a different style of gaming to tournament-type even pointed games, and not one that we have covered much before, because to play historical re-fights you need to know the history first, and it has just not been present. This is an entirely different style of wargaming, and one that I, and the Imperial Armour books, shamelessly support.

It would be remiss of me not to thanks all those you have helped in oneway or another with this book. Many people have aided me in my year-long Herculean task, if only with suggestions, encouragement or rules advise (and that includes those fans who e-mailed the Imperial Armour inbox with feedback). Thanks all.

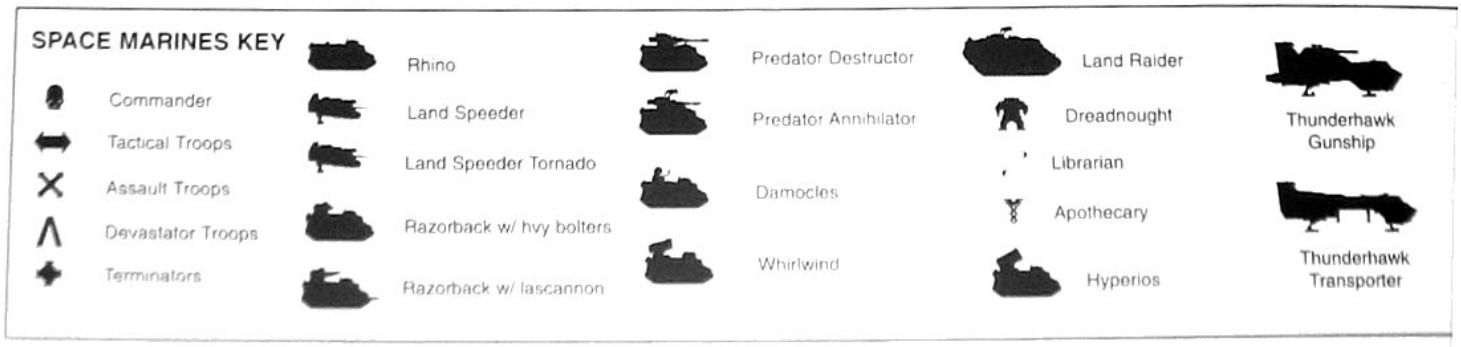
Developing, writing and assisting our modelmakers as they designed and made the models has been great fun for us, and we hope you enjoy this book as much as we have.

Warwick Kinrade

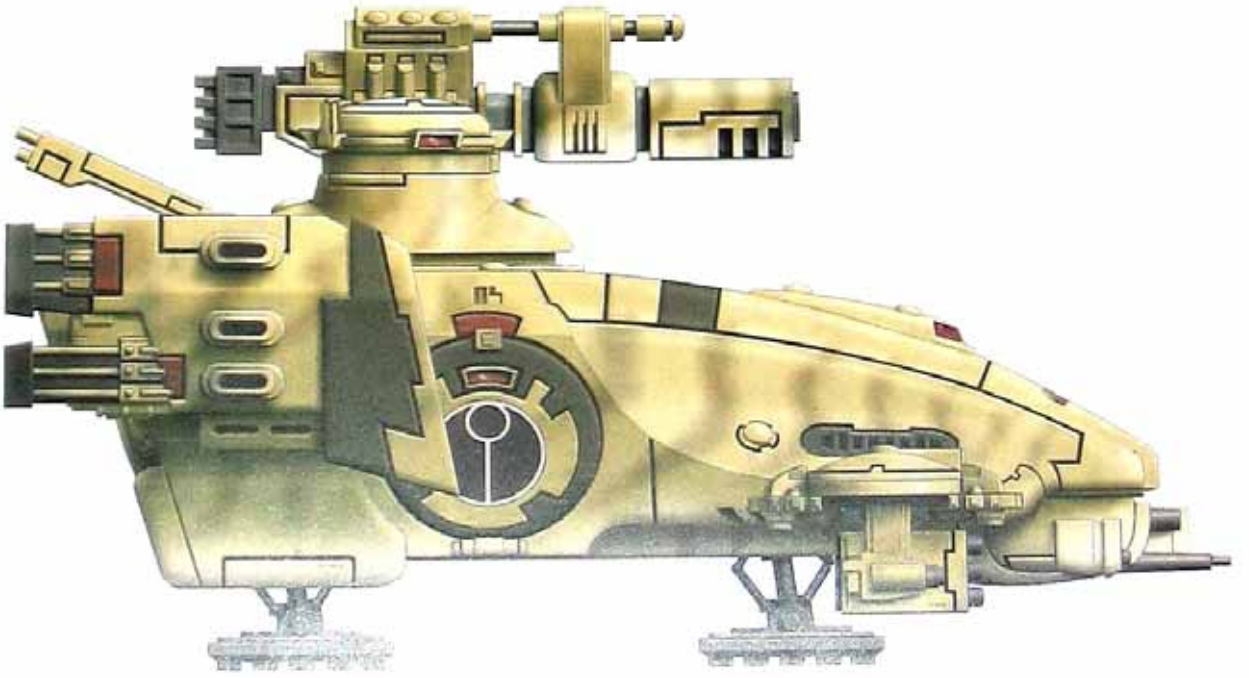
April 2005.

USING THIS BOOK

This is not a stand alone supplement, reference is made to other Warhammer 40,000 publications throughout, and you may find it helpful to have read these before reading this book. To use this book in games of Warhammer 40,000 you will need the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook and the following Codexes: Space Marines, Imperial Guard and Tau Empire. Some of the vehicles mentioned in this book and used in the scenarios have rules which appear in Imperial Armour Volume 1: Imperial Guard and Imperial Navy, and Imperial Armour Volume 2: Space Marines and Forces of the Inquisition, and having these books will assist in playing the scenarios and informing the background of this campaign. For playing the Battlefleet Gothic and Epic scenarios you will need the Battlefleet Gothic rulebook and the Epic Armageddon rulebook. The Battlefleet Gothic Armada supplement may also be useful for Tau fleet players.



HISTORY OF THE TAROS CAMPAIGN



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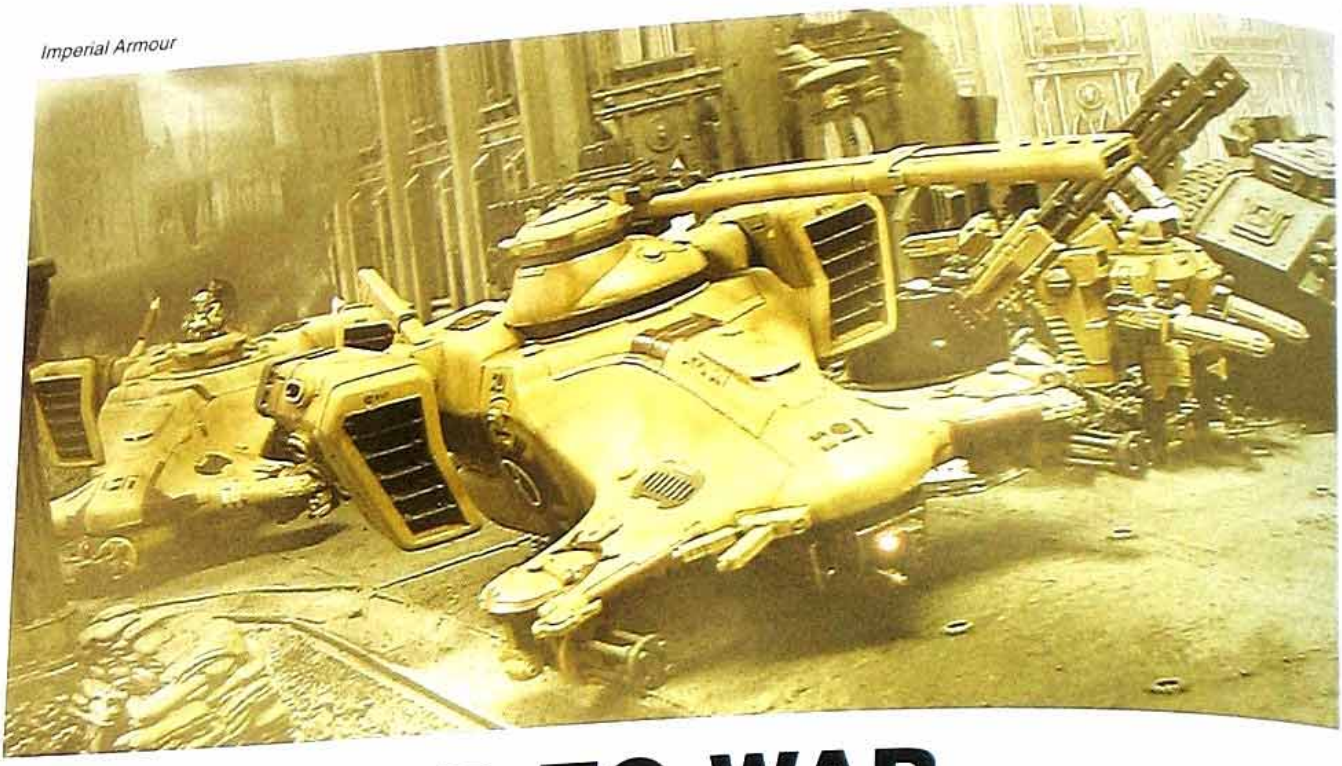
Imperial Armour



THE ROAD TO WAR

CHAPTER 1

Above: *Tau military forces move through the streets of Tarokeen, as the aliens occupy the city in the name of the Tau Empire.*

The Imperium under threat

The Imperium of Man is vast, consisting of over a million worlds scattered the length and breadth of the galaxy. It is the greatest empire in human history, and as a great empire the casual observer might think that the Imperium is strong – strong enough to resist and defeat any threat – but it is not so.

In truth, the Imperium is failing. The galaxy is a dark and terrible place, filled with bloodthirsty aliens, malign powers and horrors too terrible to name. Beset by external wars and internal divisions the Imperium of Man must constantly fight for survival. The continued maintenance and protection of the Imperium is governed by the Adeptus Administratum, a vast and labyrinthine bureaucracy centred on Terra, from which every segmentum, sector, sub-sector and solar system is run. The task is vast and complex, so complex that the Administratum cannot control every aspect of it. Within the Administratum sub-organisations have their own areas of responsibility. One of the largest of their organisations is the Departmento Munitorum, which oversees the supply of men and material to the Imperium's largest armed force, the Imperial Guard. In itself this is a task of epic proportions. The Imperial Guard is a fighting force consisting of billions of men and millions of fighting vehicles. It is deployed to warzones and garrisons across the galaxy. At any one time the Imperial Guard might be engaged in thousands, maybe tens of thousands of conflicts, all of which need supplying. As the Departmento Munitorum labours to meet these demands, the threat to the Imperium's continued existence is growing.

As the end of the forty-first millennium grew closer, the omens of a new and terrible threat to the Imperium began to grow. Within the Eye of Terror, where warp-space and real-space overlap and the worshippers of the Chaos gods rule, the Warmaster of Chaos, Abaddon, the Arch-Traitor, Destroyer of Worlds, was making his plans and gathering his strength for a new assault upon the Imperium and its false Emperor. Driven by the bloody desires of his insane gods and a thirst for vengeance which had not been quenched by ten thousand years of war, Abaddon's 13th Black Crusade was mustering its forces, secure within the Eye of Terror. When Abaddon's storm broke it would be the largest Black Crusade yet. Abaddon would unleash his diabolic forces from within the Eye with the objective of capturing the Cadian Gate.

The Cadian Gate is the only stable passage from the Eye of Terror, and the most direct route between the Eye and the centre of the Imperium, Holy Terra. Abaddon's ultimate objective, like that of Horus, his master before him, is the overthrowing of the Emperor's rule and the destruction of the Imperium. To do this he must eventually assault Terra. The capture of the Cadian Gate would be a large step towards that ultimate objective.

But the Cadian Gate is a lynchpin in the strategic defence of Holy Terra. Cadia is a bastion world, the most militaristic in the Imperium; a hugely strong fortress-world protected by fleets of the Imperial Navy, orbited by powerful battle stations, and defended by the strongest bastions, garrisoned by regiments of hardy Cadian Shock Troops. The

surrounding worlds are also well protected and garrisoned. The capture of the Cadian Gate would require a huge assault, and plunge the Imperium into its largest single war since the arrival of Hive Fleet *Kraken* on the distant Eastern Fringe. When Abaddon's Crusade struck it would be a war that required the full weight of the Imperium's resources to win. It would be a battle of titanic proportions.

War on such a massive scale does not come secretly or by surprise. The Imperium is not completely blind to events within the Eye of Terror. Sages and seers were forecasting dire warnings long before Abaddon launched his crusade. Omens taken from the Emperor's Tarot predicted the threat. Raids were increasing around the Eye of Terror. The Adeptus Mechanicus Exploritas launched nullships deep into the Eye of Terror, to send back information about events inside. What they found sent shock waves through the upper echelons of the Imperium. The twelve High Lords of Terra, the council that rules the Imperium in the Emperor's place, long debated what course of action to take. It was clear that the defences must be strengthened, reserves must be found, weapons, ammunition and supplies stockpiled on armoury worlds across Segmentum Obscurus. Space Marine Chapters must be readied and positioned to respond to the attack. Wherever the hammer-blow fell the Imperial Guard must first hold, and then drive back, the followers of Chaos. Every fighting force at the Imperium's disposable must be ready to fight to the last shell and last man to protect the Cadian Gate.

If the High Lords of Terra decree it, then so it shall be, for they speak with the authority of the Emperor. Their word is law. The Administratum set about the task of preparing the Imperium for another great war.

Stygies VIII Forge World

Abaddon's 13th Black Crusade would indirectly affect every part of the Imperium, whether it was demands for new Imperial Guard regiments, increased tithes or higher production from the forge worlds to meet supply demands. Abaddon's ambition could be likened to throwing a stone into a pond, where the ripples stretched out to the far corners of the galaxy.

In Ultima Segmentum, the largest of the five great Segmentums that divide the Imperium, the effects would also be felt, even as far away as the Eastern Fringe. Stygies VIII is one of Ultima Segmentum's greatest forge worlds, and one the Adeptus Mechanicus' largest research and production facilities. In productivity Stygie VIII stands in the second tier of forge worlds, with Mars alone on the top tier. Situated in the Vulcanis system and covering the entire surface of the eighth moon of the ringed gas-gaint Stygies, the forge world is one of the most productive in Ultima Segmentum, and of great importance to the Imperium's war efforts.

As a forge world, Stygies VIII does not pay tithes to the Administratum, instead it is bound to supply arms, munitions and equipment to the Departmento Munitorum for use by the Imperial Guard. This is a very important task, productivity is carefully monitored to meet demand forecasts (itself something of arcane art practiced by the Adeptus Mechanicus' Logis). Should the forge world fall behind it might have serious consequences in the future when, in some far-off warzone, the ammunition or replacement weapons begins to run out. The Departmento Munitorum spends a lot of its time and resources making sure this does not happen. Carrying the authority of the Master of the Administratum, Departmento Munitorum official arrived on Stygies VIII with a new set of production figures and targets. The forecasts of a coming Black Crusade meant many new Imperial Guard regiments were being raised, and these fighting men needed equipping. The rulers of Stygies VIII and a High-Prefect of the Departmento Munitorum held long councils to discuss the new requirements.

At this council Stygies VIII argued that if production was to be increased, then more refined and raw materials would need to be found. The lifeblood of any forge world is the material it consumes. For production on the scale of Stygies VIII, vast amounts of minerals and chemicals are required. Mining planets across the Imperium supplies these demands. The task of finding new materials was a big one, and the Departmento officials returned to Terra to begin it. Administratum Auditors set about finding where reserves had been located and catalogued, and where planetary-audits suggested that extra productivity might be squeezed from refineries.

It was during this process of evaluation and cross-referencing that the planet of Taros first came to Administratum bureaucrats attention. Taros was a small mining planet deep in Ultima Segmentum. It was unremarkable except for two things: the estimated size of the planet's untapped mineral wealth and secondly, its rather too-close-for-comfort proximity to the expanding borders of the alien Tau Empire. The Departmento Munitorum briefed a delegation to visit this backwater planet. Armed with an ancient audit report compiled in the 38th millennium by officials collecting data for just such circumstances. Auditor-Prime Nymus Dree and his team of scribes and archivists were dispatched to inform the Planetary Governor of Taros of his new increased production targets and to help organise how the targets could best be met. Dree was authorised to use the Departmento's ultimate sanction. Under the conditions of the Pax Imperialis, if the Planetary Governor could not, or would not, meet the increased targets, then he would be replaced by a new Governor, one who could.

The Departmento Munitorum Delegation

The man chosen to lead the delegation to Taros was Auditor-Prime Nymus Dree, a functionary from the upper ranks of the Departmento Munitorum. He was accompanied by a team of record-scribes and messenger-cyphers. On leaving Terra his first port of call was Stygies VIII, to collect representatives from that forge world, including a High Magos Metallurgicus, an expert in the study of metals. Dree also needed to confirm his own figures and calculations with the needs of the forge world, before moving on to Taros. Given the location of Taros, an Imperial Navy escort was requested, and granted, for the delegation's transport ship.

The first Taros' rulers knew about the delegation from Terra and Stygies VIII was when a transport and two Imperial Navy frigates unexpectedly arrived in system. This was a deliberate policy by Dree, not to forewarn the Planetary Governor, and thus give the delegation the best chance of seeing how efficiently the mining operation was currently being run.

After a long and arduous warp journey the three ships safely entered orbit around Taros. Dree's delegation boarded a flight of Aquila shuttles and transferred down to the space port at Taros City (Tarokeen), the planet's only city. The Planetary Governor, with his advisors and officials awaited the delegation's arrival and greeted them with due ceremony. The entire entourage transferred to the Governor's Palace, where an official meeting was scheduled for Dree to inform the Planetary Governor of the Administratum's revised plans.

After the meeting Dree began a tour of the mining works to see for himself how the operations were conducted and

THE TAU EMPIRE

The Imperium has known about the alien race called the Tau since the 35th millennium. Five thousand years ago an Explorator vessel discovered and categorised their homeworld, T'au. Located far from Terra on the Eastern Fringe of the galaxy, T'au was originally recorded as dry world but with areas of lush vegetation and a high population of terrestrial xenomorphs. The most advance of these xenomorphs had only just developed primitive weapons and mastered fire. They were regarded as no threat to the Imperium. The world was scheduled for routine cleansing and then re-colonisation.

T'au's fledgingly inhabitants were saved when the Imperium's fleet, dispatched to clear and colonise T'au, was destroyed in a freak and violent warp storm, which cut off the world from further human contact. Unable to proceed, the Imperium moved on, forgetting about the new, but minor, alien race it had discovered for many, many years.

Saved from eradication by luck or fate, the Tau developed rapidly. Over the course of just a few thousand years the Tau evolved and developed a sophisticated culture and caste system, based of dynamic expansion and a holistic philosophy of 'all working together towards one end'. Driven by their ideal of 'the Greater Good', the Tau made huge and rapid strides in science and technology. By the 41st millenium they had become a space-faring race with a small but burgeoning empire.

Given the Tau's ambitious desires to expand further into the cosmos it was inevitable that they would eventually come into contact with the Imperium of Man. In their quiet backwater on the Eastern Fringe of the galaxy, the Tau finally encountered the Imperium again when one of their spacecraft, probably innocently, entered the Devlan system.

Disregarding or misunderstanding all warnings the Tau vessel was attacked by Devlan's system defence ships, and was unable to make an escape before being destroyed by the Imperial Navy. News of the incident caused alarm within the Imperial Navy hierarchy. Who were this alien race which had suddenly appeared in Devlan, as if out of nowhere, with advanced spacecraft? Adeptus Mechanicus Genetors, investigating DNA material taken from the destroyed ship discovered that the genetic material was the same as that originally found on T'au six millenia ago. It seems the primitive alien race that had so narrowly escaped extinction had rapidly grown up.

Rogue Traders and Merchant Captains were dispatched to the Eastern Fringe to investigate further, only to discover that the Tau had already expanded from their homeworld and started colonising other worlds throughout the small but densely packed cluster of star systems around their homeworld. Several other minor alien races had been inducted into this small but growing empire. Worse still, several of the Imperium's worlds had also started trading with the aliens, whose negotiators had learned human languages and customs and busied themselves making diplomatic contact with surrounding worlds. It was a threat that could not be ignored, and the Imperium, fearful of alien contamination and the threat the new race posed to the Emperor's safe rule, prepared an attack to destroy the Tau.

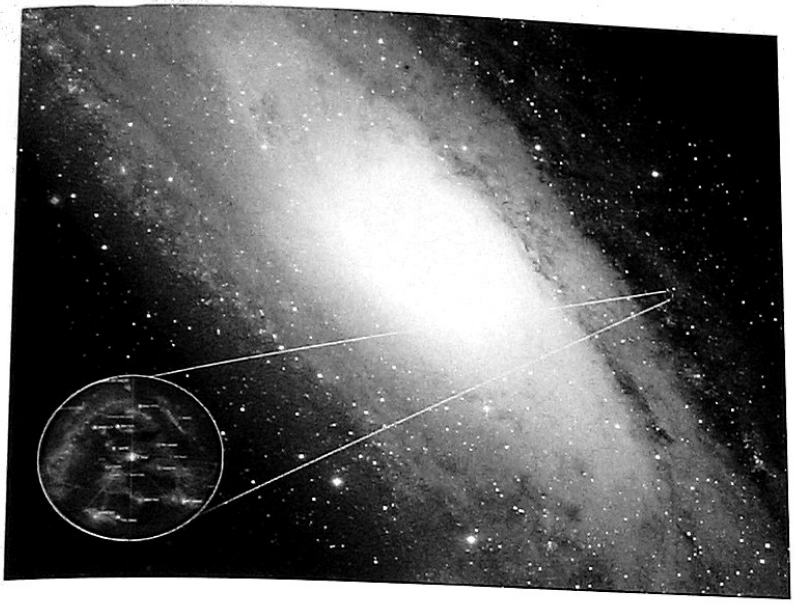
In 742.M41 the Damocles Gulf Crusade was launched. It failed. Several Tau colony worlds were successfully captured, but a combination of the Tau's advanced military technology, their ferocious alien allies and an unshakeable belief in the cause of 'the Greater Good' eventually halted the Imperium's crusade after bloody fighting. The Tau Empire survived its first great threat and, in the subsequent years, continued to expand.

Tau Society: Tau society is very homogenous, and characterised by an ethos of 'togetherness'. This is one of the race's greatest strengths. They always work together for the good of all Tau. Their society is divided into five Castes. Each Caste has its own broad areas of specialisation and responsibility. The Water Caste are generally diplomats, politicians and administrators. The Earth Caste are artisans, constructors and labourers. The Air Caste are pilots, messengers and spaceship crew. The Fire Caste are warriors and protectors. Selective breeding within this caste has developed members which are slightly larger and stronger than other Tau. The final and smallest caste are the Ethereals. Ethereals are a group of councillors and advisors who seem to have a strong, almost religious, hold over other Tau. They are regarded with awe and veneration by the members of other Castes. The Ethereals act as guides to all the other Castes leaders.

Unlike many of the alien races encountered by Mankind, the Tau are not naturally hostile or aggressive. The Tau's dynamic, young and energetic society means that their rapid expansion has brought them into contact with other alien races. It is known Tau military forces have fought and defeated several large Ork attacks. They have also recently encounter the Tyranid hive fleets, which are starting to threaten the borders of their Empire. Since first contact with the Imperium the relationship has never been good. The Imperium sees the Tau Empire as a threat (all be it not its greatest threat), and the Imperium's authorities will not standby and let aliens take over the Emperor's worlds or see its citizens forced to submit to alien domination. The Imperium has vowed to fight all Tau expansion. No doubt, in time, the twelve High Lords of Terra would like to see this minor but irritating alien threat quashed altogether. A genocidal crusade to exterminate the Tau would be welcomed. Indeed, the Ecclesiarch of the Adeptus Ministorum has already drafted several sermons on this very subject. Currently such a crusade is just not possible. The Tau Empire, although small by the Imperium's standards, still consists of some hundred worlds. The forces needed to conquer them all would be immense. The Tau military have already proven themselves a match for the Imperial Guard, and there are too many other more urgent wars, not least the threat of the Tyranid hive fleets, which are a huge drain on the Imperium's manpower. Lately, there is also the threat of Abaddon's 13th Black Crusade. In response, the Tau are quite willing to match fire with fire. When diplomatic means fail they are becoming well-versed and more confident in the use of military power to obtain their own ends. Raiding, bush-fire wars, invasions and counter-invasions are becoming increasingly common currency along the borders of Tau space.

Tau Physiognomy: The Tau are a roughly humanoid, bi-pedial alien race. They are generally smaller in stature than humans, shorter and with less body weight and muscle mass. Their skin has a greyish-green or blue colouring. They have two eyes and a mouth but no obvious olfactory or auditory organs. Each hand has three digits, and a single opposable thumb. A major difference from humans is the bone structure of their lower legs, ankle and foot. Tau have far shorter tibia and fibia bones but their feet have elongated talus and cuneiform bones and two large, central, weight-bearing toes. The Tau have evolved to stand and move without the use of their heels.

Tau Fire Warrior soldiers seem to possess many qualities broadly similar to human norms, such as endurance levels and pain tolerances.



Above: *The Tau Empire is located in the far Eastern Fringe of the galaxy, in Ultima Segmentum. Centred on their homeworld of T'au, it contains approximatey 100 colonised worlds, including the homeworlds of several other minor alien races. Since first contact with the Tau Empire, they have continually sought to expand thier sphere of influence.*

interview the mineowners in person. Meanwhile the Adeptus Mechanicus representatives would begin assess the quality and purity of the ore currently being supplied from Taros.

First Investigations

Planetary Governor, Lord Aulis, accepted that, with the Munitorum's aid, that current productivity levels could be increased, and that the new targets required to keep Stygies VIII forge world operating at its increased capacity were achievable. He promised to do all in his power to meet the targets, and in all respects was the loyal and convivial host to the Imperium's officials. To begin with he aroused no suspicion within the delegation.

It was not until Auditor-Prime Dree started to visit the outlying mining sites that he started to wonder about certain aspects of the mining operation on Taros. Firstly, there were many abandoned mining sites scarring the deserts, evidence of much activity. Each time he was told that the lode or ore seam had been mined out, and the operation had moved on. To the mine owners this was evidence of industrious hard work, but to an Auditor it was the physical evidence that the planet's estimated reserves where being eaten into, or were not as large as had been originally claimed in the M38. audit.

Dree's tour continued, and each mining operation seemed to be working hard, finding new lodes and blasting them out in huge strip mining operations. The ore was being separated and shipped in large quantities to the space port at Tarokeen. The stockpiles at Tarokeen were now large, awaiting the arrival of empty transports to carry it away to refineries. On the surface all was well, but Auditor Dree started to look deeper.

Each mine was requested to hand over productivity statements, going back for ten or twenty years. Several mineowners could not, their records were incomplete, but most responded and from them Dree began to get an overall picture of how much ore had recently been exported off Taros. Next he looked into survey and geological reports about new lodes and the size of these finds. From this information he gained a good idea of how much mineral wealth remained. These figures did not tally with how much the ancient audit report claimed. At the current rates of extraction, using figures collected from refineries and Stygies VIII, there should have been more left than current estimates stated. There was a disparity between the different sources figures, which concerned Dree. Had Taros been over-mining, in which case where where the stockpiles? Those in storage in Tarokeen did not cover the disparity. Or had Stygies VIII got it wrong, in which case the forecast figures might also be mistaken, and the far-reaching effects of this could result in a future lack of supplies. For now the Auditor kept his suspicions to himself.

It took Dree several weeks to gather all the information he needed from Taros. By the end of his investigation he had a good idea of what had been happening here. The mines had been over-producing. For years they had been stripping out ore at a greater rate than was required or needed. All this ore had been shipped to Tarokeen, and although quotas for refineries and Stygies VIII itself had been met, the rest of the valuable ores had vanished. Because there was no let up in the supply the mistake had never been noticed. The book-keeping trail ended here. Where had the missing ore gone? Before leaving Taros, Dree decided to confront the Planetary Governor about the disparity and seek an explanation, although it was likely that the Governor himself had no idea about the problem.

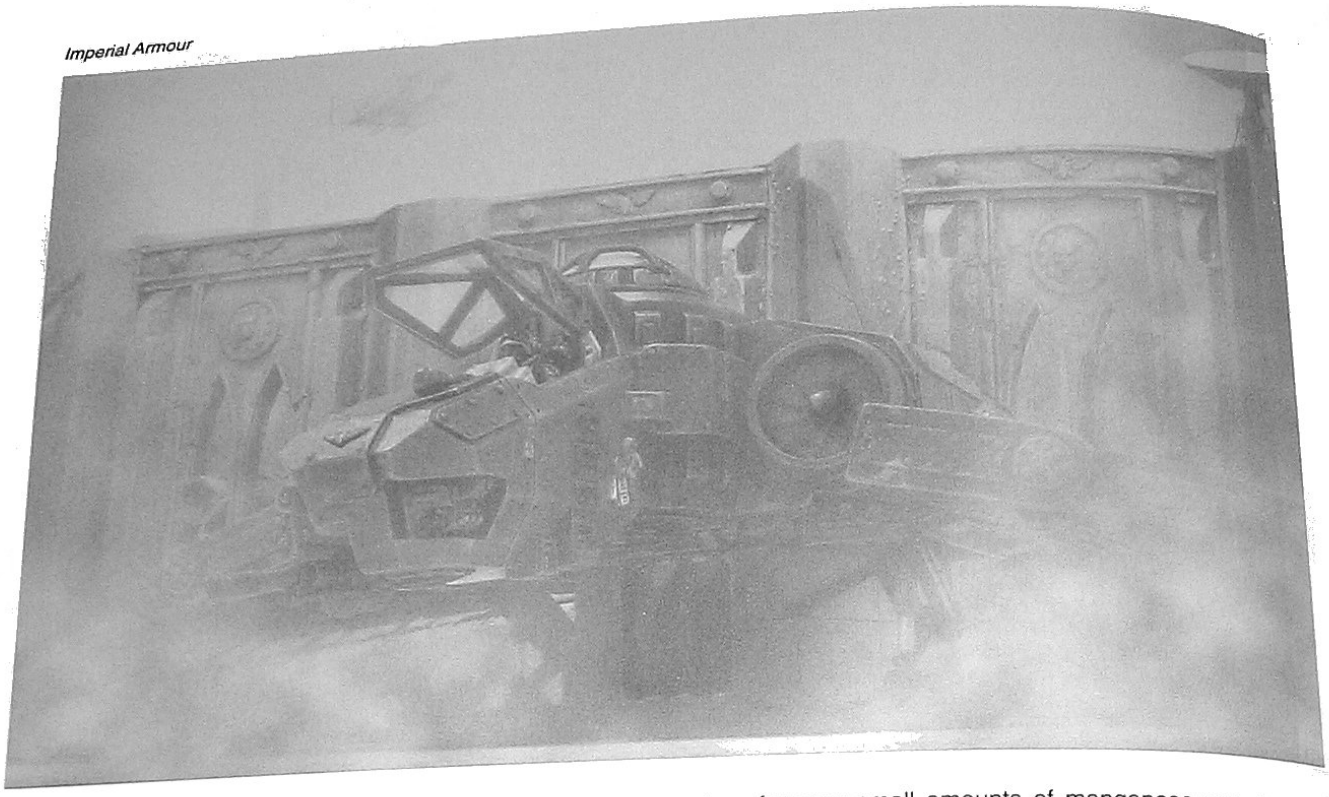
Governor Aulis did indeed claim ignorance. As far as he was concerned quotas had been met, and shipments had been made on time. He didn't concern himself with the day-to-day running of mines, that was the job of the owners. Governor Aulis' advice was to 'ask them!'.

So Dree did just that, requesting that the largest mineowners each attend a hearing to explain the figures. They had no explanation. They just dug and blasted, and dug some more. They found lodes and stripped them out as fast as they could with the workforce available to them. Ignorance was their defence. Getting nowhere, and suspecting a conspiracy of silence, Dree decided more drastic action was needed.

Conspiracy on Taros

Unknown to Auditor Prime Dree he was starting to scratch the surface of events which had been developing over the past two decades on Taros. The arrival of his delegation had, to the casual observer, been gracefully received. In fact, his presence had caused wide-spread concern throughout ruling elite of Taros.

The Tau had a long time interest in the planet of Taros. As their Empire had expanded, systems had been systematically scouted for possible colonisation. Many had been identified. One such planet was Taros. It had a breathable



Imperial Armour

atmosphere, and although it was a harsh desert planet (the Tau themselves are better adapted to hot climates than cold), it has some water and was capable of sustaining life. Best of all, it had abundant mineral wealth. It was noted as a good prospect for future expansion and swift colonisation, but there was one major drawback. Taros was the Imperium's world, and that meant capturing it would be difficult. Since first contact with the Imperium at Devlan, when a scout ship had been destroyed, the Tau had learned that the Imperium would not easily give up worlds claimed in their Emperor's name. Any military attack would bring a swift response. Capturing Taros would involve a major war, and the Ethereals on T'au did not believe the gains outweighed the risks. For now there were other, easier, targets. Any initial plans for a quick invasion were shelved, but Taros was not forgotten.

Instead of calling upon the Fire Caste to capture Taros, the council first turned to the Water Caste. Diplomatic moves might bring results if the Water Caste played a quiet, patient game. The Imperium's worlds usually refused all contact with aliens, and the Water Caste had learnt that many Planetary Governors could not be seen to be in negotiations with aliens, for fear of their own rulers finding out. However deals and small trading could be negotiated if everything was kept secret. Merchant guildmasters and the leaders of trading cartels were rich, greedy men, and a chance to trade with the dynamic Tau Empire offered them riches they could not find anywhere else on the Eastern Fringe.

A delegation of the most experienced and cunning Water Caste diplomats was sent to Taros to seek a meeting with its rulers. This team included human representatives from other worlds already working with the Tau. Armed with assurances that the Tau Empire had no ambitions to continual expand in this area, and that Taros was completely safe from attack, the diplomats were only to seek small trading contracts. In return for very small amounts of manganese ore, the Tau could offer water purification and recycling technology, as well as hydroponics equipment for growing food and luxury goods. These items could make a harsh life on Taros that much easier for its social elite.

At first, the Planetary Governor baulked at the Water Castes approaches. He knew full well that trading with aliens was strictly forbidden, but Taros was just one planet in a million, and small amounts of ore would not be missed. Governor Aulis talked to the mineowners and merchants, and in turn they saw a chance to make extra money and wealth. The Imperium's quotas had not been changed in generations. The mining operations were working efficiently. The Administratum was content. Who would know or care if some extra manganese or vanadium ore was blasted out and sold to these Tau? Other human worlds had grown rich doing it, the alien delegates had brought the proof with them and, in the long run good relations might help keep Tau expansionism at bay.

Negotiations were completed some twenty years ago, and the Tau got their first foot in the door on Taros. The agreement started very small, no more than one shipment of manganese and vanadium a year, but gradually, as the Planetary Governor and his mineowners got away with it, the amounts being shipped increased. The tithes set by the Administratum were still being met, but the mines began to find extra new lodes to exploit. Over the next ten years, the Tau gained more and more say in the mining operations, several Earth Caste delegations visited to offer aid and advice. The Tau paid for the ore in technology and luxury goods such as precious stones from Tash'varr and exotic fruits from Au'taal. The high society of Taros began to grow wealthy on the illicit trade. For almost two decades the Administratum's bureaucrats remained ignorant, whilst the Tau's influence grew.

The unexpected arrival of the Adeptus Munitorum delegation caused much concern in the inner circle of Taros' ruling elite. Those mineowners who were profiting by the deal became very nervous. Governor Aulis urged calm. He argued that they could bluff it out, claim ignorance, lie, cover-up, anything. He believed the delegation would do its duty, the increased tithes could still be met, and nothing need ever be found out. Act too hastily and the conspiracy would be uncovered, and they would all be arrested. However, the Planetary Governor did not reckon on the thoroughness of Auditor Prime Dree.

Soon, cracks in the cover-up and lies were being found and suspicions aroused. As Dree dug deeper concern grew. For the conspirators, the situation was becoming desperate. Some mineowners even advocated assassinating the entire delegation and blaming the Tau. The Planetary Governor forbade it. If the delegation were harmed it would only be worse for them all in the long term. Maybe he could find some way of discrediting Auditor Dree's report. Lord Aulis continued to try and bluff it out until the delegation left. Unknown to him events far away, and beyond his control in the Denab system would reveal all...

The Denab Incident

Meanwhile, unrelated to any events around the Eye of Terror or Taros, the Imperial Navy's Patrol Group *Ravanor* was conducting a routine anti-pirate sweep through the Denab system, an area of wilderness space on the edge of the Damocles Gulf. The five-ship patrol, operating under standing orders to attack and seize suspected pirate vessels or conduct harrying raids against Tau targets of opportunity, was under the command of Captain Darillian of the Dauntless light cruiser *Lord Ravanor*. The patrol had been out for several months with little success, and Captain Darillian was preparing to return to base and report that pirate activity in the area was minimal when the Sword class frigate VCS-6 of *Scadryn* squadron, positioned well ahead of the main line, reported sensor contact with three unidentified transport vessels. Suspecting these maybe the pirate ships he was hunting, Captain Darillian began a cautious pursuit.

Patrol Group *Ravanor* carefully stalked the three vessels through the Denab asteroid belt, maintaining a distance that would not reveal their presence and making maximum use of the asteroid belt's cover. For three days they maintained the stand-off pursuit, hoping the three vessels would lead them to a pirate base or a rendezvous point, and a far greater prize. It seemed Captain Darillian was correct. The convoy was making for a small deep-space facility on the edge of the Denab belt. As the ships approached it was revealed to be no pirate base. Instead, scanner readings from his leading ship revealed the presence of a Tau waystation. Captain Darillian had experience operating around the Damocles Gulf and had encountered such facilities before, scattered in remote locations. Why would three transport freighters be rendezvousing with an alien waystation? Positioning a single escort vessel to maintain the surveillance, the Captain withdrew and reported the curious events to fleet command.

Whilst the *Lord Ravanor* was away, the frigate VCS-6 observed the three transports dock at the way station and a single Tau vessel, of the 'Emissary' class, left shortly afterwards. Hidden within the asteroid belt, VCS-6 watched and waited.

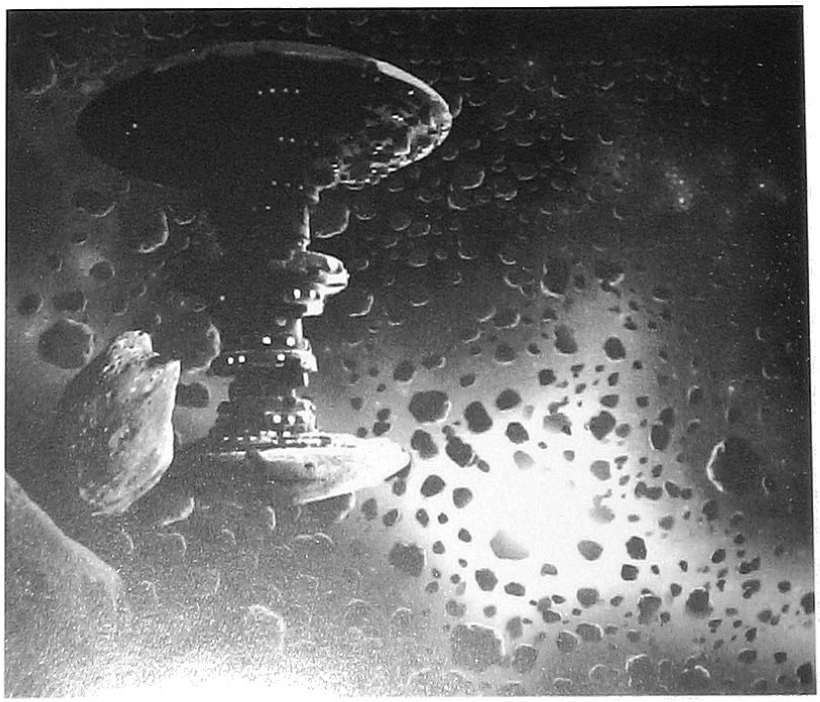
Meanwhile, Captain Darillian's astropathic message reached Imperial Navy High Command who were equally in the dark about these events. Inquiries about these three ships revealed nothing. Whoever these ships belonged to, they were obviously consorting with aliens. New orders were issued to Patrol Group *Ravanor* – destroy the Tau waystation and capture the transports. Prisoners were to be taken for further interrogation.

The *Lord Ravanor* returned to rendezvous with VCS-6 and prepared to attack. The crews were roused to battle-stations and the escort captains briefed. The group would slowly approach the station through the asteroid belt and then attack at all ahead full, giving the rogue transports the minimum of time to effect an escape. The *Lord Ravanor* would engage the waystation, whilst the escorts prevented any escape or pursued any transports that tried to flee. After crippling the waystation the *Lord Ravanor* would then grapple alongside a transport and board her to take her as a prize and capture the crew. Captain Darillian issued his final order "On my command, go straight at them. All ahead full, no mercy, and may the Emperor rot their treacherous hearts!"

With that order the great plasma reactors of the five Imperial Navy ships roared into life, accelerating them out of the asteroid belt in line

Left Opposite: *The Departmento Munitorum delegation, led by Auditor Prime Nymus Dree, arrives at Tarokeen in a flight of Aquila shuttles. Dree's investigations on Taros would begin the slide towards war.*

Below: *The Tau waystation, hidden on the edge of the Denab system asteroid belt. It was destroyed by Imperial Navy forces after its location was accidentally discovered by Patrol Group* Ravanor.



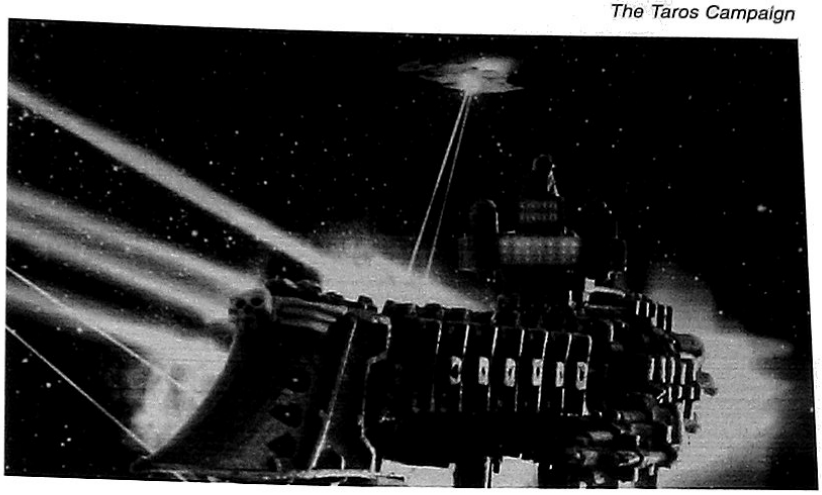
astern, and directly at the waystation. With surprise on their side, the patrol group raced past the waystation, unleashing a full broadside at short range. Lance batteries and macro-cannons roared into the void, impacting upon the waystation with shuddering explosions. The station attempted to return fire as best she could, with little effect. One transport was immediately hit and crippled as it lay at berth, the others, as predicted, attempted to disengage and flee. *Scadryn* squadron was immediately in rapid pursuit. It seemed his surprise attack had worked, except, Captain Darillian was about the get a surprise himself. His bridge survey-controllers urgently reported more Tau vessels approaching. A second convoy of transports and an escort of light warships, identified as of the Castellan class, had appeared on scanner screens. The Tau were closing fast. Suddenly, from a one-sided ambush, Patrol Group *Ravanor* had a real fight on its hands. Reacting to the new situation the Captain recalled his escorts from their pursuit and set a new course to intercept the approaching Tau vessels.

"Helm, lay us alongside at spitting distance. We'll match shot with these dogs, and I'll wager we outmatch them." The gruff old Captain ordered a new attack, calculating that he had enough firepower to see the Tau convoy off or destroy it entirely. With her four escorts closing in behind her, the *Lord Ravanor* ploughed in amongst the alien convoy, broadsides blazing from both starboard and port batteries. In return, the Tau vessels peppered her back, shields flaring and decks quaking under the impacts of railguns and ion cannons. It was bitter and hard fought at close range, with both sides inflicting heavy damage during the engagement. The Sword class frigates VCS-6 and 7 were both crippled, and the *Lord Ravanor* was limping with engine damage and fires on several decks. But the Tau convoy was scattered, leaving one drifting transport as a wreck and both Castellans, the targets of the *Lord Ravanor's* heaviest guns, as burning hulks. To the cheers of her gun crews Patrol Group *Ravanor* had had the best of it and decisively won the skirmish. In the process two of the rogue transports had escaped.

Captain Darillian gathered his battered but victorious officers and issued orders for the post-battle operations. Boarding parties were to be readied to board the waystation and crippled transport. All prisoners were to be brought directly to him. A second party was to board the Tau transport and seize her cargo. Meanwhile, VCS-8 and 9 were to rescue surviving crew from the patrol group's two crippled escorts. After completion of operations they would make course out of the Denab system and home, battle-scarred but victorious.

Aboard the Tau transport the boarding party found only empty holds. The waystation had been badly damaged, and a final bombardment before departing would destroy it beyond salvage. Crewmen from the crippled rogue transport were captured after a brief skirmish with survivors. It seemed they had no knowledge of the ship's cargo, but the ship's log recorded that their last port of call had been Taros. The crewmen claimed not to know why they were here, or why their cargo was being unloaded by the Tau. They were just following orders, but orders from whom? The prisoners would be turned over to Inquisitorial interrogators once the *Lord Ravanor* returned to port, and then lying tongues would loosen.

Below: *The* Lord Ravanor *and her escort group whilst on a routine anti-pirate patrol. Unknown to those involved, the Denab Incident would reveal the truth about events on Taros, and provoke the Imperium's retaliation. This small skirmish would eventually escalate into an invasion.*



Right: *A Tau Custodian heavy escort vessel feels the full weight of the* Lord Ravanor's *broadside during the battle. The light cruiser sustained heavy damage in the engagement, but her firepower finally won the day.*

On his return, Captain Darillian was awarded the Order of the Knights of Damocles and promoted to Captain the cruiser *Hammer of Thrace* for his part in winning the engagement. He filed a full report about the 'Denab Incident', but the truth behind the events remained a mystery to the Imperial Navy.

The truth remained a mystery only until the Denab Incident report was discovered by Auditor Prime Dree, during his research into the missing minerals on Taros. For Dree, Patrol Group *Ravanor's* discovery was evidence of treachery. Dree's suspicions were confirmed. The three transports had been carrying a cargo of manganese, vanadium and rhenium ore, loaded at Taros and originally destined for refineries which in turn supplied Stygies VIII. But the convoy had been diverted and then ordered to unload some of their cargo at the Tau waystation, from where it would be transferred to Tau vessels and transported back into the Tau Empire for their own use. This would not have been the first time valuable resources had been given, or more likely sold, to the aliens. The patrol group's luck in stumbling across the convoy and waystation had given the Departmento Munitorum official the damning evidence he needed. There was a conspiracy on Taros, a secret deal with the Tau Empire to syphon-off mineral resources, which belonged to the Imperium. Dree was sure that the Planetary Governor must be at the heart of the conspiracy. Lord Aulis might be all industrious loyalty on the outside, but within beat the black heart of traitor to the Imperium. The Planetary Governor had broken the sacred Pax Imperialis, and swift retribution would be his reward.

Swift Retribution

Auditor Prime Dree presented his report to the Office of the Master of the Adeptus Munitorum on Terra, for consideration of action to be taken. Dree had completed the investigation but it was now out of his hands. He had no power to decide what to do about Taros, only to present his findings. Only an Inquisitor would have the sweeping powers to intervene, and Dree was a mere bureaucrat.

The Office of the Master of the Adeptus Munitorum on Terra is in itself vast, overseeing much of the work of the Departmento's many sub-departments. It would take several months for the bureaucracy to process Dree's report and for anybody with real authority to eventually see it. His report was just one amongst thousands.

Dree returned to his day-to-day functions. The wheels of the Administratum's bureaucracy do not turn fast, but slowly events on Taros came to the attention of the Master of the Adeptus Munitorum's office. A report claiming serious breaches of the Pax Imperialis and conspiring with aliens was to be taken seriously. Dree was summoned to a hearing to explain his findings, which he did. Things on Taros were rotten, Dree said, and the Planetary Governor was at the heart of the conspiracy.

Action needed to be taken, swift action to end the problem. Amongst the upper ranks of the Adeptus Terra it was decided that the Planetary Governor should be removed and replaced with a more trustworthy candidate. The Administratum started to consider its options. The first and most obvious option was to contact the Officio Assassinorum and secretly dispatch one of the Imperium's most lethal weapons to Taros. Maybe a servant of the Vindicare temple to execute the Governor for his crime with a single well placed sniper shot to the head, or a servant of the Callidus temple could infiltrate his organisation and get close enough for a silent knife in the dark. But the simple death of the Planetary Governor would not solve the problem. Taros was close to the Tau Empire, and an obvious prospect for Tau expansionist ambitions. The Imperium needed to send the aliens a strong message – that Tau interference on Taros would not be tolerated. The problem was not just the Planetary Governor, it was also the Tau. Simply assassinating Lord Aulis would not deter their ambitions.

The Officio Assassinorum was ruled out in favour of a bolder, larger plan – a coup d'etat. A strike force would target the Planetary Governor and his supporters. Using maximum force they would demonstrate to Tau observers the Emperor's will to hold onto Taros. Once the operation was complete, the strike force would become a temporary garrison to deter any Tau counter-attacks. There was one force capable of such a mission at short notice, the Adeptus Astartes.

The Space Marines would be the Emperor's instrument of divine justice on Taros. During the Damocles Gulf Campaign the Tau had learned to fear Mankind's finest warriors, and a strike force on the ground would send an unmistakable message – the Imperium will do everything it can to hold Taros. If the Tau wanted the planet they must first face the Space Marines!

A Space Marine Chapter was quickly identified for the coup d'etat mission and a high-level delegation with the relevant intelligence information was immediately dispatched to the Chapter-Monastery of the Avenging Sons, along with a well worded request signed by the Master of the Administratum's office asking the Chapter Master for his assistance. Official records would later name this operation 'the First Taros Intervention'.

TAROS PLANETARY SURVEY

Taros System: 4 planets (I-IV), 1 inhabitable (Taros II)

Size: Equatorial distance: 16,000 miles

Gravity: .96G

Satellites: 2 moons

Population: 12,000,000 approx (human and abhuman)

Rotation Speed: 1,200 mph

Climate Classification: Extreme – Hyper Arid.

Post Terra-form Troposheric Composition: Nitrogen 76%, Oxygen 20%, Argon 2%, Ozone 1%, Carbon Dioxide 0.2%

Planetary Governor: Lord Uphir Aulis. 19th Ruler of the House Aulis.

Climate: Exclusively hot to very hot. The coolest climates are in the highly mountainous polar regions, although never cold enough for ice to form, the hottest in the deep deserts.

Mean average temperate in the coastal sea region is 35°C (95F), rising to over 50°C (122F) in the deep deserts. Minimal recorded precipitation, less than 1mm per annum.

Nights are extremely cold, with little cloud cover. The major proportion of the evaporated water condenses and returns to the surface during the night.

Climatic Regions: Taros is divided into four principle climatic regions; Mountains, Arid Deserts, Semi-Arid Deserts and Seas. Shifting sands and bare rock cover 95% of the planet's surface.

The largest region is the mountains. Low mountainous highlands cover 40% of the planet's surface. Heavily eroded, they are not tall, but are extremely rugged. There are no major routes through the mountain regions, and no settlements. They remain an unexplored wilderness.

The second largest regions are the arid deserts. The Great Sand Seas are uninhabitable, and whilst there maybe vast mineral resources buried beneath the logistics of working in such a hostile environment, with very high temperatures, no water supply, high winds and the threat of large sandstorms (*see Sand Devils*) make it impractical. Most of the deserts remain unexplored wilderness.

Semi-Arid regions, concentrated around the coasts are mostly barren rocky badlands. At ground level strong, sand filled winds are common.

The seas help to mediate Taros' extreme temperatures. Surrounding the small seas are the inhabited areas of semi-arid desert (*see the Aestus*). These regions are home to the planet's hydro-farmers.

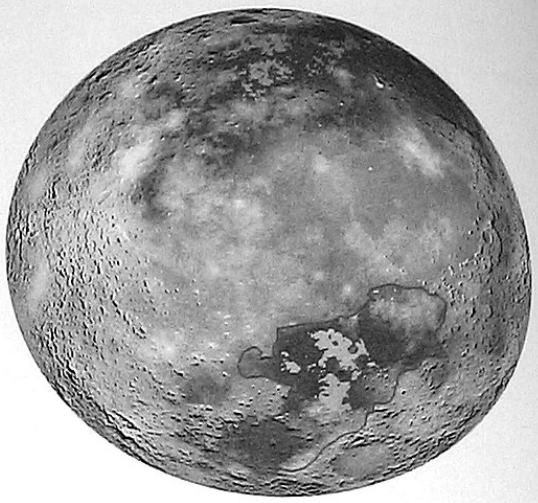
There are the two main seas on Taros called the Ak-Sai and Em-Sai. These small, land bound seas are Taros' only source of surface water, and were probably artificially created as part of the planet's terra-forming during the Dark Age of Technology. Today the seas are highly alkaline, but provide two third of the populations water supply from hydro-processing.

Climatic Phenomenon: High altitude air streams and *'Sand Devils'*

Hot air rising from the deep deserts collides with the cooler air from over the polar highland mountainous regions. The pressure difference causes a high-speed river of air in the upper atmosphere. This air stream can reach incredible speeds, up to 400 mph. This dominates the climate of Taros. As the small amount of water in the air condenses to form the whispy clouds common to the skies of Taros, in the hottest areas these begin to form localised storm clouds, heavily laden with water vapour. The storm clouds rise on hot thermals. If they meet one of the air streams, the top of the cloud begins to rotate in the fast moving wind. This spinning force radiates down through the cloud, spinning faster and faster to form a hurricane. These hurricanes can be huge and blow for days on the surface of Taros. Sucking up huge amounts of sand these become 'Sand Devils' (local name). Most blow themselves out in the deep deserts, but occasionally Sand Devils destroy water farms or mining facilities.

Terra-forming: Once, in the distance past, Taros was a dead world. Uninhabitable, it was a bare scorched desert wilderness. In the Dark Age of Technology, after discovery of its mineral wealth, it was terra-formed by the introduction of water and genetically engineered flora to produce enough oxygen. This has managed to create an environment that a few humans can survive in.

Flora and Fauna: No native flora. Genetically engineered flora has been imported and survives in the semi-arid zones, as scrub and cactus-like plants. The sea contain toxic algi, which generates most of the planet's oxygen. There is no recorded native fauna.



Economy: Almost 12 million souls inhabit Taros, mostly in or around Taros City (Tarokeen), and the semi-arid regions surrounding the small seas. Taros city is situated in the Aestus region, where several small land-bound seas are Taros' only surface water. The water is highly alkaline, but hydro-processing plants situated on the shores turn it into drinkable water. This process is aided by the scattered water-farms, which gather moisture from the air. Water farmers sell their produce to the Planetary Governor, via exclusive contracts. The Governor and his officials control all water on Taros, and therefore all life.

Tarokeen is the single largest urban area with the planet's only spaceport facility.

Most workers are miners, working long tours at the strip mines and quarries out in the desert. Other major industries are water-processing and hydro-farming. Hydroponics workers grow food in atmospheric controlled hydroponic plants. Ore transportation is another large industry, moving raw ore from the desert mines to collection points in the city before transportation off-world. Short distance transportation uses manpower (literally labourers carrying a sack each) or tractors towing trains of ore carts. Long distance transportation uses large cargo aircraft.

Ogryn Labour Force:

In M38, as part of the then Planetary Governor's drive to improve productivity he requested an order to import off-world labour in the form of Ogryn colonies of Jopall. Several thousand of the big abhumans where shipped en-masse to Taros to work in the mines in the most inhospitable desert areas. Very strong and hardy, the Ogryns are well adapted to the physical work of loading, unloading and hauling ore carts. On Taros, Ogryns are still used by many mines as part of the workforce. The last census carried out by the Administratum, some 400 years ago, estimated a population of 10,000 Ogryn scattered across the planet.

Society: Mostly poor mineworkers and labourers operating in 'work gangs'. A high level of technology is maintained, with many tasks automated. Ministorum Galaxia missionaries report little in the way of genetic mutation.

Water Supply: Due to the extreme aridity of the planet water is major resource on Taros. Hydro-farming is an important industry, as is hydro-processing from the alkaline seas. Sea water is processed to make it fit for human consumption. All water trade is centrally controlled by the Planetary Governor through his official 'water-agents'. Processing plants are situated on the coast and purify the water via a three stage process. Hydro-farms are widely scattered across the Aestus region.

Principle Exports: Mineral ores for ferro-alloys. lead, vanadium, rhenium, manganese.

Vanadium:

A toxic silvery-white metallic element, occurring in vanadinite, which is red/yellow/brownish mineral formed by the weathering of lead ores in desert climates. Used in steel alloys to give extra hardness and as a catalyst in other alloys.

Rhenium:
A dense, silvery-white metallic element with a high melting point. Occurring in gadolinite and molybdenite. Used in alloy with tungsten in high-temperature thermocouples.

Manganese:
A brittle greyish-white metallic element occurring in manganite – a blackish mineral consisting of a form of manganese oxide. Used in some steels (manganese steels) and other ferromagnetic alloys. Manganese steel is a very hard steel containing 11-14% manganese to product hard wearing tools such as rock crushers, heavy pistons and gun barrels with high tensile properties.

Lead:
A heavy toxic blue-white metallic element occurring in galena (a bluish-black mineral consisting of lead sulphide). Highly malleable, it is used in alloys for accumulators, cable sheathing and radiation shielding.

Cobalt:
A brittle, hard, metallic element that is a ferromagnetic metal, occurs in cobaltite, used in steel alloys to resist corrosion.

Principle Imports: Foodstuff and water

Food Supply: Grown under cover in large, atmospheric controlled hydroponic plants. Many buildings have their own hydroponic plants, but the largest are situated around Tarokeen and in the coastal regions. This provides the population with 80% of their food supply, the other 20% being imported from surrounding worlds. Principle crops are variants of the millet and sorghum plants, members of the grass family, providing highly nutrious grain. Groundnuts, related to the soya bean are a growing source of protein and provide many varied foodstuffs. Some exotic 'off-world' fruits are grown. All crops have evolved to survive on a minimal water supply, which is heavily recycled by the hydoponic plants to prevent wastage. Others sources of vitamins and protein come from algi and marine micro-organisms, harvested from the seas and chemically processed to make an edible gruel, called 'Kreml' by the natives. This is the staple diet of the miners and workers. Other foodstuffs, meats, dairy products and luxury items must be imported, and are the preserve of the top of the social order, officials, mine owners, etc.

Urbanisation: Only one major city exists. Taros city (Tarokeen) has a population of approximately four million. It acts as an ore collection point, the centre of the planet's administration, distribution centre of water and food supplies and other smaller industries. The surrounding hinterland (*see the Aestus*) has the highest density of hydro-farms and water processing plants and mines, but there are very few other large settlements. Those that do exist are towns built up around the largest strip mining and quarrying operations.

The Aestus: *(marked on map).* The hinterland of Tarokeen and the populated area around the seas is called 'the Aestus', and is home to approximately 6 million of Taros' population. Living on scattered hydro-farms and temporary mining settlements around the mining facilities such as Tungusta Station, Fornax, Tyndaris, Gaidamak, Sarych Station, Deucalion and Erebus. This area has the most temperate climate on the planet, due to the proximity of the seas and the prevailing wind conditions, hence most people reside here.

Other Geological Features:

Iracunda Isthmus:
The strip of land between Ak-sai and the Em-sai on which Tarokeen is situated. It is part of the hinterland of Tarokeen and the most densely populated area outside the city.

Great Sand Sea:
The vast empty deserts. The Great Sand Sea is uninhabited, and there are no roads. It is empty except for rolling sand dunes. Huge mineral deposits may still remain undiscovered here, yet to be exploited.

The Furnace:
An area of desert surrounded on all sides by mountains. It is accessible only by aircraft. The highest temperatures on Taros occur in this heat trap.

The Phyyra Heights:
An area of rocky badlands and low hills with a reputation for banditry but lucrative mineral deposits.

Known History of Taros: Imperial records do not detail the early colonisation of Taros. Mostly likely that the planet was discovered in the early years of the Dark Age of Technology. No records specifically refer to the system, but it is known that many systems on the Eastern Fringe of the galaxy were first being explored at this time.

On first discovery Taros must have been a dead world, bereft of any life, just a hot desert world of sand and rock. If life ever tried to evolve here it never progressed beyond the level of micro-organisms. The planet had no ground water and very little atmospheric moisture. The atmosphere was not breathable to humans. Conditions were just too harsh to foster life.

But early explorers must have noted that although lifeless now, the planet's ecosystem was not far from being life sustaining. Temperatures were high (in the great deserts very high), but not to the point of making the world uninhabitable. There was some atmospheric moistures, and better still the planet was rich in mineral wealth. Huge quantities of useful ores were present, much of it close to the surface and easily accessible. Their was an stable atmosphere, which could be manipulated. Taros was not beyond hope for colonisation.

The draw of the ore deposits made the planet a viable prospect for terraforming. Back in the Dark Age of Technology, Mankind had the technology and knowledge to alter planetary atmospheres and eco-system to create a place capable of habitation by humans. The transformation would not have to be miraclous, they did not need to create a garden world of flowing streams and lush vegetation, but a climate where colonist could survive and mine.

Aided by long forgotten advanced science and technology they set about terraforming the lifeless desert world into something human-kind could survive on. It did not happen over night. In fact it may well have taken over 5,000 years of work, but water was introduced to the planet' surface in the form of seas. Specially genetically engineered plants and algae also contributed to the ecosystem, creating oxygen. Careful management and nurturing slowly changed the atmosphere. How this was done is a mystery, but some life now exists on Taros.

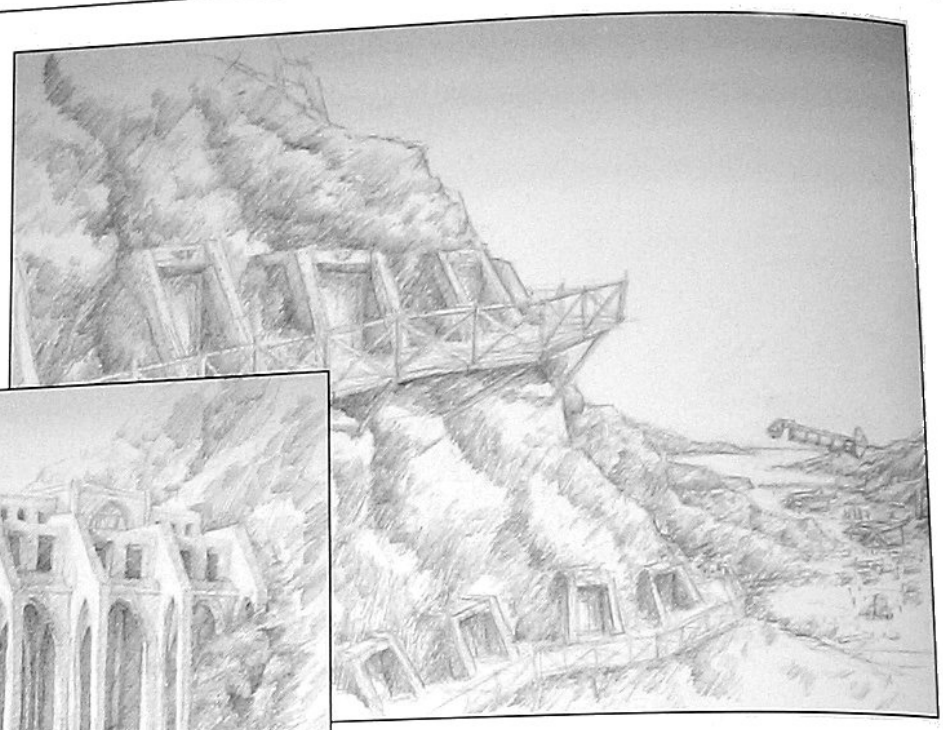
The first mention of Taros in Imperial achives is in M30, after the Age of Strife. The planet was re-discovered by the armies of the new Imperium as they spread out from Earth, re-conquering the galaxy and reuniting the scattered human colonies that had been sundered by warp storms and wars. Mankind had barely survived on Taros, degenerating into a savage, stone-age tribal living. The population, probably never large, had dwindled to less than one million. In another thousand years, human life on the planet would have been extinct.

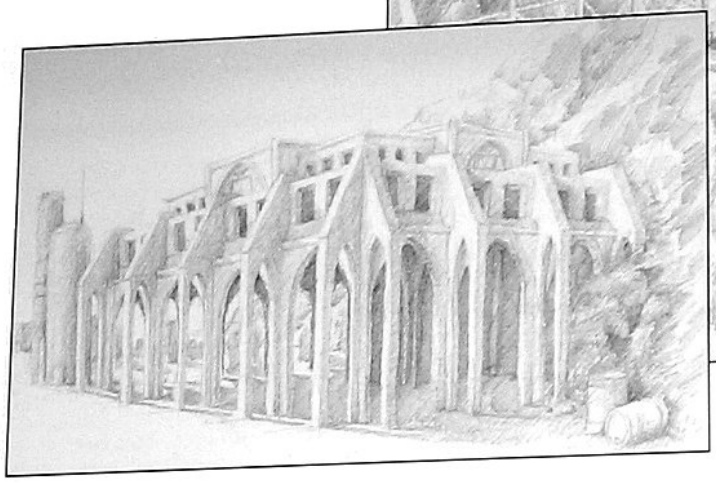
Rediscovery of the planet's mineral wealth resulted in the Imperium re-colonising Taros. The regressed colonists were exterminated and new colonists moved in, establishing mining stations and a star port. Over the past ten thousand years of the Imperium's rule Taros' population has steadily grown to its current level of approximately 12 million souls. One major city has developed, around the star port. Metal ore mining is still the planet's main function.

Imperial Guard Recruitment:
Departmento Munitorum records show that in the 10,000 year history of the Imperium (and it should be borne in mind that records are incomplete) Taros has raised only eight Imperial Guard regiments. The Taronian 1st was annihilated during the 3rd Black Crusade. The Taronian 2nd and 3rd served as part of the St Saen Crusade, and were eventually disbanded, with survivors being folded into another Imperial Guard regiment. The fate of the Taronian 4th and 5th are unknown, records do not tell. The Taronian 6th was heavily engaged against Ork during Waaagh! Badun, and later was disbanded, with the surviving manpower being turned over to the 15th Cadian regiment as replacements. The 7th regiment was lost as part of Rogue Trader Foulway Tor's third expedition into the Eastern Fringes. The 8th regiment is currently active as part of the garrison force of Hellion IV.

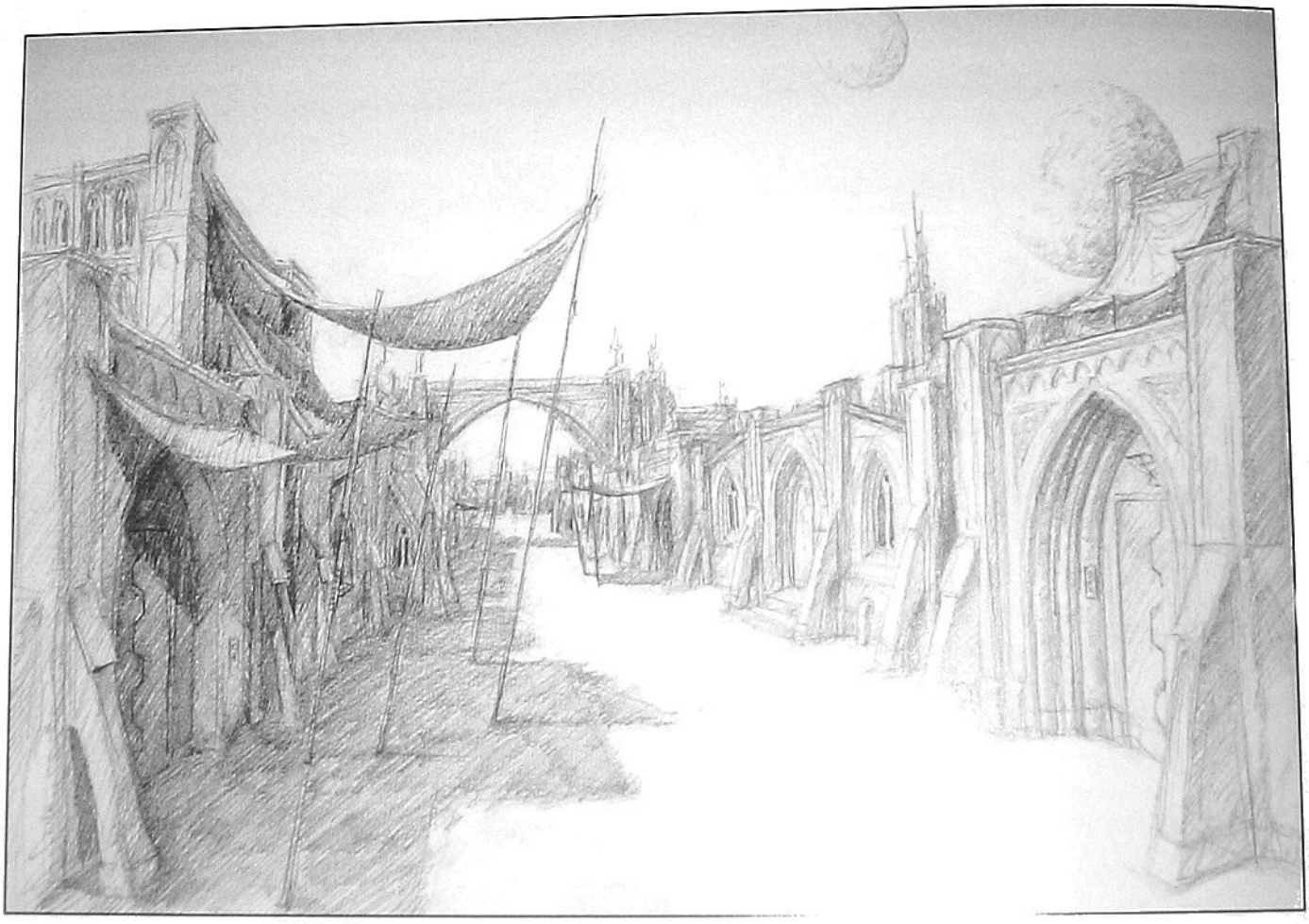
Right: *Miners settlement in the deserts. Small caves blasted into the hillside form the accomodation for work gangs.*

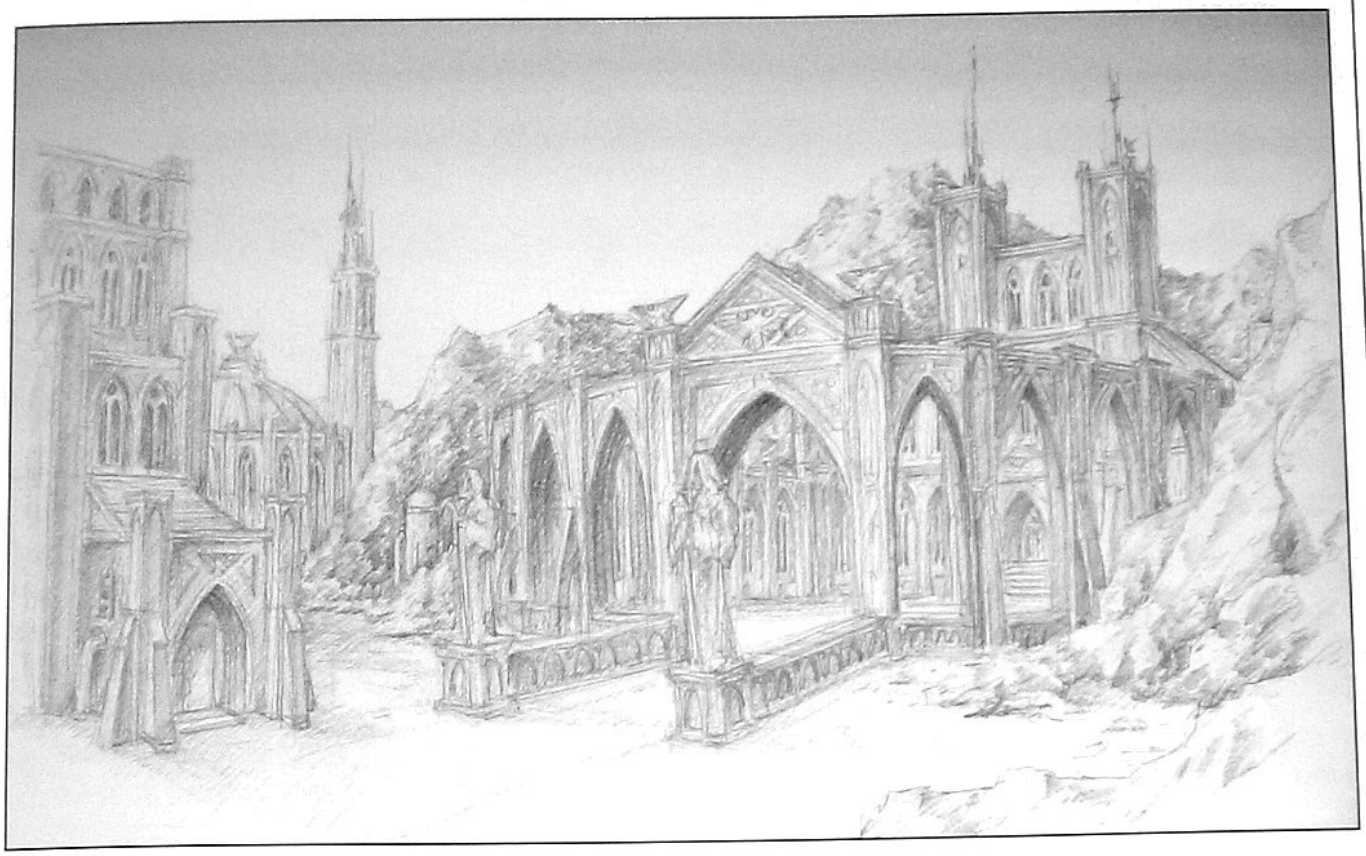
Below: *Mine administratum building or headquarters, raised on columns to form a shaded meeting place underneath and partly dug into the hillside. Subterranean dwelling are common on Taros.*

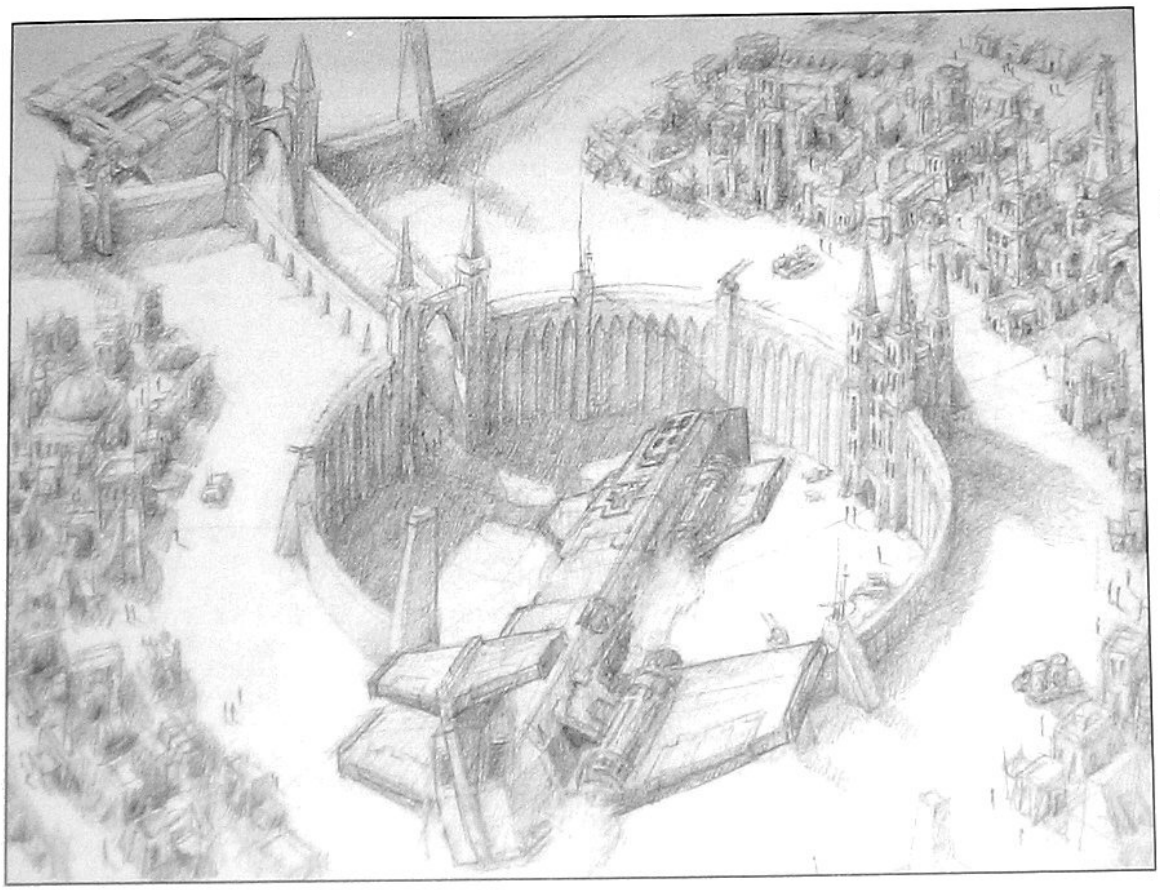




Below: *Common street in Tarokeen. Entrances often lead underground.*







Above: *Planetary Governor's residence and inner palace grounds.*

Left: *Landing pit at Tarokeen space port. These are used for loading ore shuttles to ferry cargoes to transports in orbit.*

Imperial Armour

THE FIRST TAROS INTERVENTION

CHAPTER 2

Above: *Avenging Sons' drop pods descend upon Taros to bring the Emperor's justice to the planet's renegade Governor.*

The Avenging Sons responded swiftly to the Administratum's request for punitive action to be taken against Taros. After receiving the Administratum delegation, the Chapter Master summoned his company commanders and explained the mission.

"Now hear these words. News has come to us that the Governor of the Taros system has foresworn the sacred oaths of the Pax Imperialis. He has colluded with aliens and put the safe and good rule of our Emperor in jeopardy. For these crimes it is judged that his punishment shall be death. The Avenging Sons have been chosen to be the instruments of that sentence. We are honoured to accept.

It shall fall to second company and Captain Armaros to do the Chapter's duty. Prepare your brethren Brother-Captain, but know you are not alone in this mission. The Master of Forge shall ready the Machine Spirits of the Armoury to assist you, and brothers of the first and tenth shall also aid you. The Master of Fleet shall ready the strike cruiser *Proxima Justus* and by sundown on the second day you shall be embarked. May the tides of the warp see you safely to Taros, and may the Emperor watch over your souls in the coming battle.

You are to unleash his divine wrath upon this miscreant. Quash all resistance. Leave none that stands against us living. Send out a message from Taros for all to hear. The Emperor stands here, and shall not be moved. Let us all say the second Prayer of Vengeance together before our brethren depart."

Second company readied themselves for battle. Boltguns and power armour were anointed and blessed by the company Chaplain, whilst Brothers Hakael and Caim were awoken from their slumbers. Their Dreadnought systems were checked and declared fully functioning by Techmarines. For twenty-four hours the chapter-monastery was a bustle of activity as the second company, assisted by a squad of the veteran first company and scouts of the tenth, mustered its full strength.

Captain Armaros and his men embarked onto the Chapter strike cruiser *Proxima Justus* and accompanied by a single escort vessel made best speed out of the system before engaging warp engines. There would be time enough on the month-long journey for briefing and training. The Taros Intervention Force was on its way to battle.

Planning

Whilst bound for the Taros system, Captain Armaros began planning his attack and briefing his fellow officers and squad sergeants. The mission objective was straightforwards – locate and eliminate Planetary Governor Aulis. In the process, the operation should be a strong show of force. The attack should be swift, ruthless and brutal. All opposition was to be destroyed. It was the kind of mission Space Marine strike forces excel at. Armed with all the intelligence the Administratum and Auditor Prime Dree could provide, the Captain planned the assault in detail.

First he would need to locate the Planetary Governor. The first and most obvious target should be the Governor's Palace, his residence. Armaros had detailed layouts of the large building to plan the assault. If the Governor escaped or was not present then the attack would move into a second phase; a search and destroy operation. This would involve moving the heavier equipment and vehicles onto the ground and beginning a sweep through the city. Other likely hiding places were earmarked for immediate follow-up raids. During the second phase of the operation Armaros would also need the aid of the *Proxima Justus* in low orbit, utilizing its powerful surveillance and sensor equipment, and should resistance require it, the strike cruiser's weapons for orbital bombardment. As a show of force, the willingness to flatten Tarokeen would send a strong message, as well as help subdue the local population. If the population began to feel that they were all suffering for their Governor's crimes then they might turn against him and inform on his hiding place. It was a brutal tactic, but Captain Armaros was a Space Marine, with a lifetime of indoctrination and hypo-suggestion that meant he cared not one bit. His duty to the Emperor was all that mattered. To his mind, there were no innocents on Taros any more.

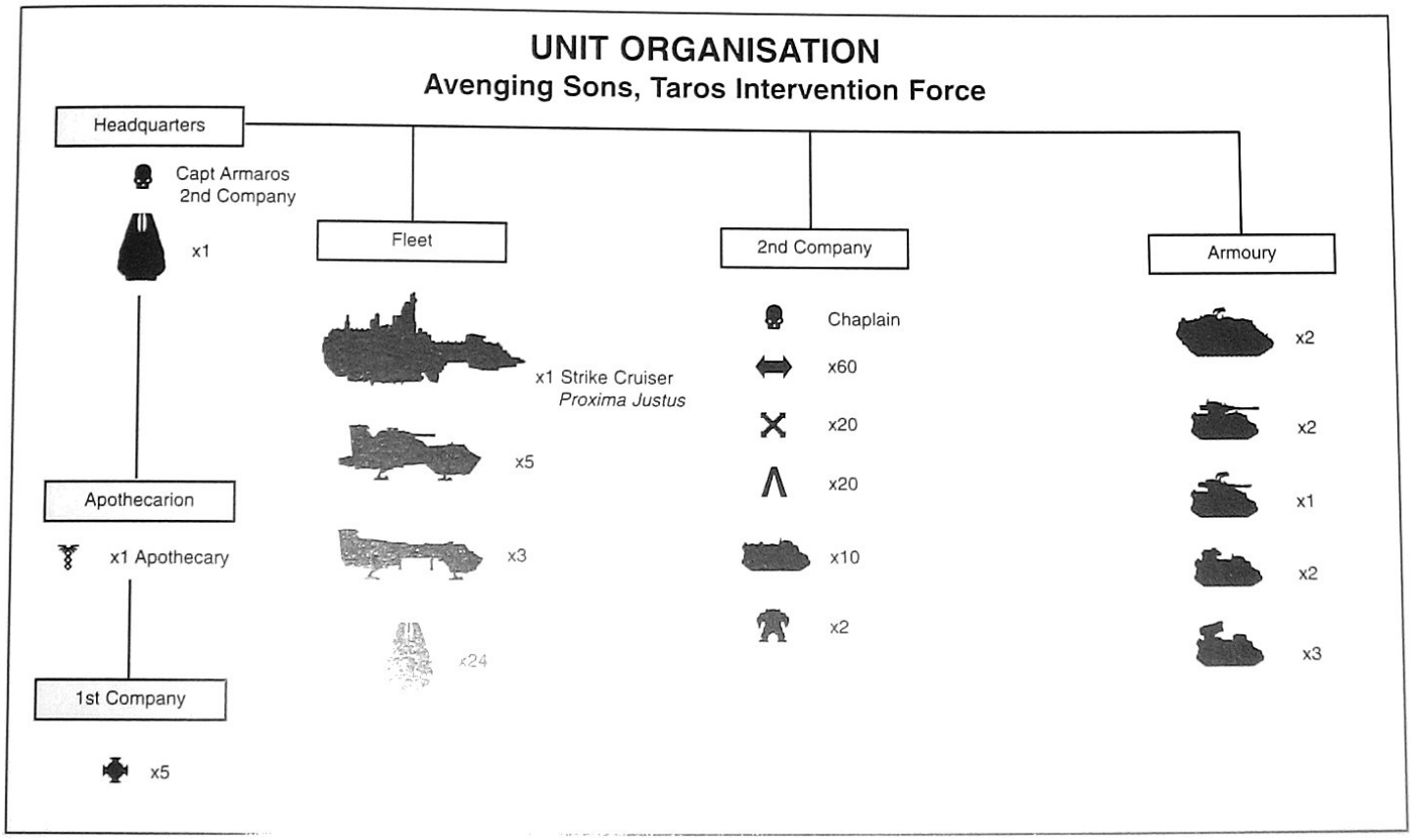
Rather than a single building, the Governors Palace was a complex of government buildings, but Aulis' private residence would be the first target. For speed and surprise Armaros planned a drop pod assault. All of 2nd company's manpower, aided by the teleporting Terminator veterans of first company, would play their parts.

First, four of the six Tactical squads were assigned their roles. Using darkness for cover, each would establish a blocking position. Landing close to their target location they would move to form a roadblock, holding the key locations to prevent reinforcements from reaching the Governor's Palace quickly. This part of the mission would be under the sub-command of Veteran Sergeant Einem of first squad. He would be responsible for holding these locations, moving men between them as he saw fit to reinforce if one position came under heavy enemy attack. Armaros, briefing Sergeant Einem, felt this was unlikely, as the entire mission was planned as a swift strike. The captain did not intend to be waiting around long enough for the enemy to react and gather a large force.

Isolated by the four blocking squads, the battle company's two Assault squads, supported by the two remain Tactical squads, would land within the palace complex itself, directly on the heels of the Deathwind drop pod, which would be the first to impact, before unloading its lethal cargo of missiles indiscriminately. The assault units would overcome any resistance at the palatial residence before sweeping through it to locate Lord Aulis. Captain Armaros himself would lead this assault along with Chaplain Baraqel.

First company's Terminators would be the ultimate instrument of justice. Once his force had located the Governor within the palace, Captain Armaros would use his teleport homer to summon the waiting Terminators. Arriving via teleporter, the Terminators would appear at the

Below:
Organisation of the Avenging Sons force commanded by Captain Armaros.



location and use their massive close range firepower to eliminate the target.

Immediately upon success the codeword 'Justice' would be given and the operation could move into the evacuation phase. Should the codeword not be received after one hour, or the override code 'Malevolent' be issued, this would mean that the target was not present or had escaped. 'Malevolent' would mean everybody moving to phase two – search and destroy.

During the first phase attack there would be a small reserve force consisting of both Devastator squads, the two Dreadnoughts and the Scout squad. Their primary mission would be to cover the company's withdrawl and then form the backbone of a secure perimeter about the Governor's Palace whilst an evacuation was conducted by Thunderhawk gunship.

This force would also be relied upon to counter any stronger-than-expected enemy resistance. At Captain Armaros' call they would move to intercept and engage. With their heavy weapons fire they should be able to inflict serious damage rapidly, buying the company enough time for the other squads to complete the mission and either withdraw or move to phase two.

Captain Armaros plan had three things to its advantage, even though he would be attacking into the heart of enemy territory with only 120 battle brothers, no heavy support or armoured vehicles and no preparatory bombardment to soften up the target.

Firstly, and most importantly, was surprise. The enemy may have been expecting an attack, but they did not know when, where or how. Secondly, the defenders were only local planetary defence forces, low quality troops with little discipline and, by Space Marine standards, poorly equipped. Their morale would also be poor, and Armaros expected that after a sudden, swift blow organized resistance would crumble. Thirdly, overwhelming concentration of forces. The Avenging Sons strike force would be close together and fighting as one unit. The enemy would need to call in reinforcements from other defensive positions, if these could be delayed that would give him time to complete the job. Success would require courage, precision and speed, but the Space Marines had all three.

Battle for the Governor's Palace

The Avenging Sons' strike cruiser *Proxima Justus* disengaged its warp drives and plunged back into real-space just beyond the Taros system. It immediately came to battle-stations and made best course for Taros II.

Most Imperial planets have some form of systems defence, and Taros was no different. It could call upon its network of surface to orbit missiles and a single squadron of three system defence monitors. It was a force incapable of matching a heavily armed and armoured Space Marine strike cruiser, and although the Monitors were given orders to engage the approaching Space Marines, all three ship crews refused the order and mutinied rather than face almost certain destruction. The Space Marine's reputation travelled before them. *Proxima Justus'* approach to Taros was unimpeded.

Above: *Presaging the main assault, the Deathwind drop pod unleashes indescrimate fire about the Governor's Palace, sowing panic and confusion amongst the unsuspecting defenders.*

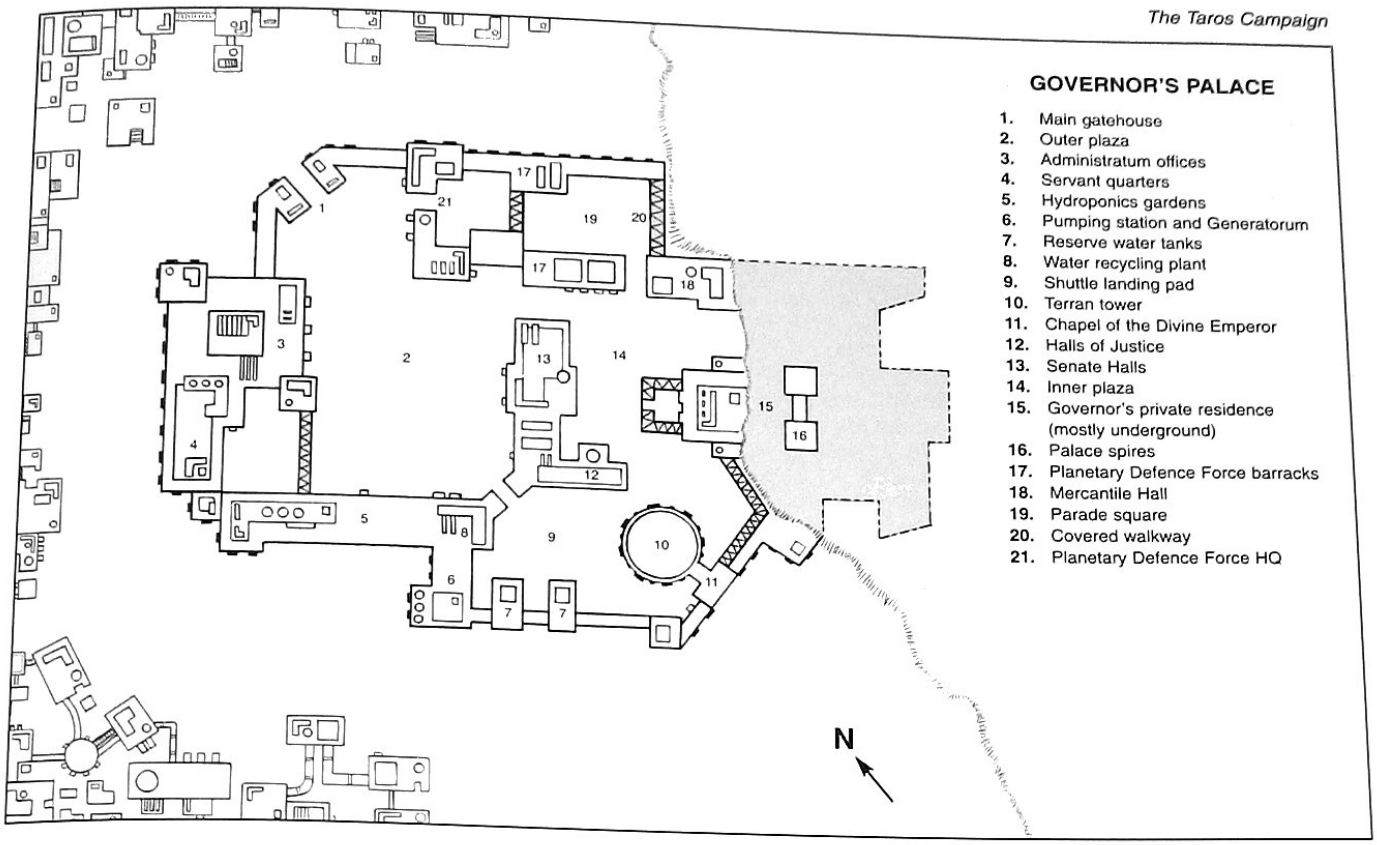
Once in orbit, the only threat to the *Proxima Justus* would be the missile silos. These would take some time to target, prepare and launch. Upon arrival in orbit, the Avenging Sons would already be ready to launch drop pods. After launching and planetfall the strike cruiser and her escort would withdraw to stand off Taros at a safer distance whilst the ground assault was completed. It would only move in again when required.

The *Proxima Justus* swept into position in low orbit and Captain Armaros gave the order to launch the first drop pod wave before boarding his own drop pod to lead the second wave, which followed close behind the first.

The launch operation went like clockwork. One after another the drop pods sped away from the strike cruiser, burnt through the atmosphere and plunged down, retro-thrusters re-orientating each pod towards its pre-programmed landing coordinates.

The first pod to land was the Deathwind, aimed directly at the Governor's residence and loaded with a lethal cargo of missiles to sweep the area with indiscriminate fire. As it opened fire, the four blocking Tactical squads would be landing and disembarking to take up their defensive positions.

From the inner courtyard in front of Govenor Aulis' residence the sky above was streaked with fiery comet trails as the drop pods burnt through the atmosphere. The distant roar of engines and rushing wind grew louder. Then



Above: *The Governor's Palace is the centre of Tarokeen government.*

The main building is the Governor's private residence itself, a spacious palace mostly delved into the rocky hillside. Other important buildings are: The Halls of Justice, Taros' highest legal court; the Senate Hall, the debating chamber of the Governor's advisors; the Mercantile Hall, where the Merchant Guilders meet; the Chapel of the Divine Emperor, the palace's shrine of the Imperial Cult; the Terran Tower, Tarokeen's highest point, which stretches towards Holy Terra.

came the sudden hissing roar as retro jets went into full burn to slow the final descent of the rapidly approaching drop pods. Next came a ground-shaking impact which shattered nearby windows and created a rising plume of thick dust. Through the dust the distinctive shape of the drop pod, sitting upright in the courtyard, could just be made out. A brief moment's silence and stillness followed before the electronic servo-whine of the locking bolts disengaging and the ramps starting to fall. Stunned onlookers watched as the dust cleared to reveal the Deathwind drop pod's lethal contents.

The courtyard became an inferno as rapid firing missiles sprayed out in all directions. A cacophony of explosions shook the palace, one after another, pulverizing masonry and sending onlookers fleeing for cover. The bombardment was brief but intense, turning the courtyard into a smoking hell of shrapnel and flames. This was only the beginning. Amidst the sudden missile attack the fiery con-trails of the second wave of drop pods had not been noticed by anyone. Having discharged its missiles, the Deathwind pod fell silent, but the roar of retro-engines again filled the sky. With a crashing, jarring impact the drop pods landed one after another, split open like the petals of a deadly flower to disgorge squads of power-armoured giants, moving with purpose through the dust, smoke and flames. The battle for the Governor's Palace had begun in earnest. The initial attack stunned the defenders. The residence building was guarded by a single squad on sentry duty, and they had borne the brunt of the firepower. Several of those caught in the open had been killed, their bodies tossed through the air like ragged dolls to lie broken upon the courtyard's now rubble-strewn floor. The Palace garrison was already responding to the attack, gathering weapons and running from their barracks buildings to meet the attackers head on.

Captain Armaros issued commands over his helmet comm link and moved towards the target building. Ahead of him the Assault squads were running, bolt pistols drawn, chainsword and frag grenades held ready to assault the building entrance. The distinctive bark and thunder-clap explosion of boltgun shells could already be heard. The sentry squad survivors attempted to return fire, lasguns flashing with little effect.

Those guards that stood their ground to defend the entrance to the palace residence died screaming as the Avenging Sons Assault squads mercilessly tore through them, leaving their victims as little more than bloody offal. Melta-charges destroyed the armoured doors, and through the explosion leapt the Assault squads. After viewing the scenes outside nobody inside had the metal to stand and fight. All fled rather than faces the notorious 'Angels of Death'.

Captain Armaros and his squads swept through the Governor's residence, room by room, throwing fragmentation grenades and clearing rooms with bursts of bolt pistol fire. The training doctrines were second nature. Any who did not escape fast enough were cut down. Eventually

the lead squads crashed into an inner council chamber were a group of officials and guards had sought sanctuary. The guards opened fire, more in desperation and self-defence than in any hope of victory. This was it, Governor Aulis must be amongst them, the rest of the building had been cleared. From outside the chamber doorway, as lasgun fire flashed by, Armaros activated his teleport homer. The signal was received onboard the *Proxima Justus*. In the onboard teleport chamber five heavily armoured Terminators awaited the summons.

Each was armed with a storm bolter and powerfist, except for one man carrying the assault cannon and Veteran Sergeant Foras with the squad chainfist, a power weapon capable of cutting through just about any material. The titanic energies of the teleporter made the room throb with power. Lighting flashed and arced across the room as the Techpriests made final adjustment and issued fervent prayers to the spirit of the ancient machine. The prayers did not fail.

In a blinding flash of white light the Terminator squad vanished, briefly being cast across the warp before reappearing amidst crackling lightning in the council chamber far below.

The firefight was over in a faction of a second. The assault cannon whirred into life, raking the room with a storm of shells which tore up the desks and walls. Storm bolter joined the slaughter, blazing their own explosive rounds into the officials and guards. As the smoke cleared none were left standing. The Planetary Governor was dead.

Captain Armaros ordered Apothecary Actium to cross check DNA samples from the party with the Order Famulous records of the House Aulis genetic codes. It was information the Administratum had provided at the beginning of the mission. The test would confirm the mission was complete. Meanwhile, the Assault squads and Terminators deployed into holding positions and began to engage the barracks troops who were arriving too late to save their commander.

Apothecary Actium set about his task, using his narthecium and checking the ragged, bloody bodies one by one. All failed the genetic matching test. Actium informed his captain that Planetary Governor Aulis was not amongst the dead. He must have escaped, or by some ill-fortune never have been here at all. Captain Armaros cursed, and issued the codeword 'Malevolent' over the comm-net – mission objective failed, prepare to go to phase 2.

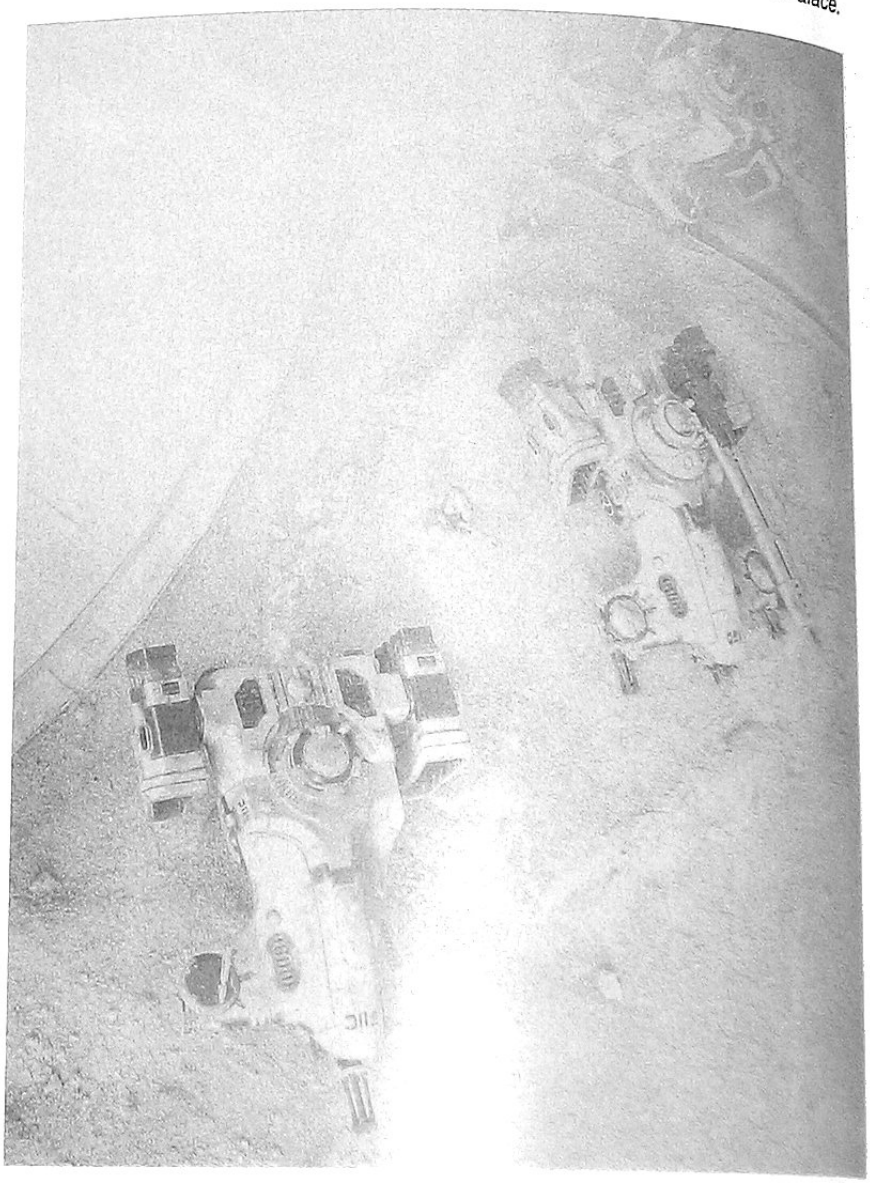
Blocking Position 3

Meanwhile, beyond the palace walls, the four blocking positions had been formed. Veteran Sergeant Einem had the squads under his command well organised. Upon landing resistance had been zero, but it did not remain so for long. After a quiet couple of minutes, the sound of jet engines could be heard approaching. Overhead the dark, swept wing outline of a Tau Manta swooped over the city, like a great shadow skimming low over the roof tops. The battle brothers at each position braced their boltguns tight and took aim up the street. They did not have long to wait.

Captain Armaros had expected some attempted to breakthrough to the Governor's Palace by exterior forces, but not so swiftly, and he had not expected to encounter well equipped Tau forces. The first the Avenging Sons knew of any Tau forces on Taros was the arrival of the Manta over the night-darkened city. Soon Hammerhead gunships, followed by Crisis battlesuits and Devilfish-mounted Fire Warriors would be closing in on blocking position three. An entire Hunter Cadre was bearing down on the Space Marines, moving at speed to reinforce the Governor's Palace.

At blocking position three the street was suddenly criss-crossed by bolt gun and pulse rifle fire. The smoky con-trail of the squads missile launcher screamed up the street, impacting upon the front of the Hammerhead in a bright explosion which buckled and scorched the armour but did not stop the approaching grav-tank. It opened fire in return, punching through the buildings with its long railgun, sending masonry crashing to the street.

The opening skirmish was a one sided affair, but the Avenging Sons stood their ground and hammered out round after round, refusing to fall back. Sergeant Einem ordered the squad at



Below: *A Thunderhawk's eye-view. Tau forces mustering for the assault on the Governor's Palace.*

position two, the next closest to position three, to move and reinforce their battle brothers. The Tactical squad moved out, pounding down the streets towards the sounds of fighting now echoing off the buildings of Tarokeen. At position three, the situation was deteriorating rapidly. With heavy support and weight of numbers on their side the Tau advanced down the street. Fire Warriors dodged from doorway to doorway under the covering fire of battlesuits and the Hammerhead. It was fierce and intense, but the remaining Avenging Sons knew they must hold. The longer they fought, the more time they bought their captain to complete his mission. Already several brothers had been killed by heavy weapons fire, others were badly wounded but fighting on regardless. Sergeant Andura of third Tactical squad was amongst the dead, his broken body lying half buried under fallen masonry after a railgun round impacted next to him.

The arrival of Tactical squad two did little to help the situation. The Tau Hunter cadre was too strong. Their firepower swept the roads clear, forcing the Space Marines into the cover of the buildings. The Crisis battlesuits led the final assault, leaping down the street on jetpacks to rake the buildings with flamer and fusion cannon fire. Unable to win a one-sided contest, the survivors of squads two and three where ordered to disengage and fallback to the Governor's Palace. The remaining Tactical squads at positions one and four were also recalled to the palace as Captain Armaros regrouped his full strength. Ten out of the twenty brothers involved in the fighting at position three had been killed in the firefight; six more were wounded. These were heavy losses for Einem's force. The Tau had broken through the cordon and, leaving a few units to secure the area, moved on towards their objective, the Governor's Palace.

Defence of the Governor's Palace – Day 1

Pre-warned of the approaching Tau Hunter Cadre by reports of the firefight at blocking position three, Captain Armaros set about re-organising his forces for a defence. Governor Aulis had not been found, and time was running out. The presence of strong Tau forces on Taros had been unexpected and unplanned for. Their swift counter-attack had seized the initiative off the Space Marines and put them on the defensive. The Avenging Sons were now reacting to Tau moves. Captain Armaros' immediate task was clear, repel the counter-attack with the forces he had at his disposal. Phase two of the mission, and his hunt for the Planetary Governor, would now have to wait.

The Tau's next attack was [illegible] presaged by the roar of jet [illegible] Barracudas raced low [illegible] Tarokeen to launch rockets into the Governor's Palace. Already battle scarred from the Space Marine attack, the once elegant buildings were rapidly becoming ragged ruins. Masonry and support beams collapsed under the repeated impacts. Fires were burning out of control and spreading rapidly, smoke billowing high into the sky. Through the wreckage stalked the armoured bulk of the Space Marines, finding positions from which to repel the coming attack.

Captain Armaros had few illusions; this would be a stern test of his men. He was now heavily outgunned by the Tau. When it hit, the attack would be powerful and concentrated. It would be deadly close quarters combat, building to building, room to room, but this would be to his battle brothers' advantage. Any Space Marine was easily a match for the aliens at close quarters. The ground fighting followed close behind the Tau's air strike. Tau ground forces were infiltrating through the buildings, and rail rifle armed marksmen had moved into position at any high points overlooking the palace courtyards. Firefights started to break out as perimeter squads were engaged by pulse rifle fire. Along the surrounding streets came Devilfish transports, disembarking Fire Warrior units who attempted to route out the Space Marines with photon grenades and burst cannon fire. It seemed each squad was fighting its own small but deadly battle. As the Tau attempted to press forwards the Space Marines stood firm and through them back, inflicting heavy losses in the close quarters combat. The Terminators and Assault squads were busiest. Stalking from room to room through the now empty and burning barracks buildings, they repeatedly charged the enemy, chainswords whirring and storm bolters barking. Against such fierce counter-attacks the Tau gained no headway and eventually retreated, leaving their dead and dying scattered through the buildings.

Below: *Avenging Sons disembark from their drop pods in a lightning assault on the Governor's Palace.*

As night fell, Armaros and his men were still holding their positions, but casualties were mounting, and the supply situation was becoming a problem. Armaros took stock. Ammunition, especially frag and krak grenades, was running low, but he had some eighty one men still battle-worthy, including all the Terminators and both Dreadnoughts. The Tau must also be feeling the strain of battle. The Hunter Cadre had been mauled by the Space Marines' stoic defence. After a day of fighting there was finally a pause. For the first time since the drop pods had landed, Tarokeen did not reverberate to the sounds of gun fire and explosions. It was as if both sides were taking a deep breath before resuming.

The second night did not pass without combat. The Tau send out small teams to infiltrate into good firing positions, using the darkness as cover, but the Space Marines had their own roving patrols, moving through the rubble in pairs or threes. In the darkness, short firefights would suddenly erupt when two patrols clashed, only for the Tau to quickly withdraw.

It was now that the Space Marines began to show their true worth. For a second night they did not need to sleep like Imperial Guardsmen, their power armour continued to supply them with the nutrition and liquid they needed to keep fighting at peak efficient. Their endurance and superior powers of recovery meant that after a day and night they were all still as ready for the fight as the moment they landed. Many bore wounds that would have killed mere men, but still fought on regardless.

Day 2

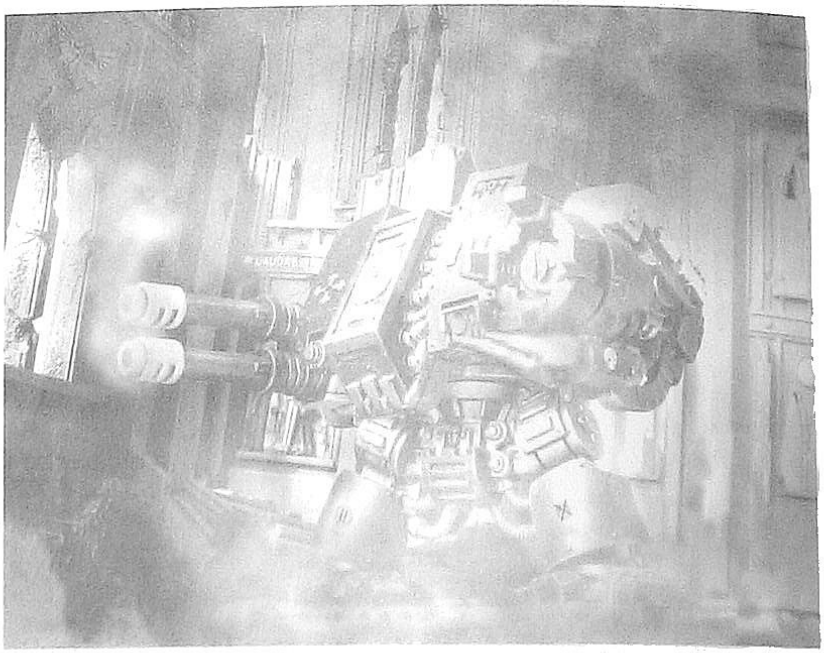
The second day dawned with the red haze of fires illuminating the smoke blackened sky over Tarokeen. Except for the sporadic patrol clashes the night had been quiet. Dawn would see that change. Their infantry led attack had been repulsed yesterday, the Tau now moved their heavier weapons into position to lead the second attack. With jet engines whirring, the Tau Hammerheads, Devilfish and battlesuits slowly moved through the streets, drone-controlled burst cannons covering the buildings as they manoeuvred into position to bombard the Governor's Palace. It seemed that if the Tau could not drive the Space Marines out, they would pound them with destructive fire.

For the Avenging Sons the battle for the Governor's Palace was now a bitter struggle for survival, but their mission was not complete, so Captain Armaros was determined to fight on. To do so he needed assistance and called on the *Proxima Justus*. Aboard the strike cruiser, the hangar decks were full with Thunderhawk gunships and transporters loaded with armoured fighting vehicles, all waiting for the order to launch. But with only a small secure perimeter to land in, sending the transporters was judged to be too risky. The Thunderhawks, armed for a ground attack mission, would be of great assistance, but with Tau Barracudas already over the combat zone, they risked a dogfight. For now, the Thunderhawks must be kept safely in reserve incase an evacuation mission was required. Only if Armaros' situation became critical would the Thunderhawks be called upon.

The first day of the battle had been fierce, day two would see the intensity increase again. The Tau had used the night-time lull to reinforce their mauled Hunter Cadre. Now they would throw everything they had at the Space Marines to destroy them. At first light, the Barracudas were ready for new strikes on the Governor's Palace, then the ground assault would resume. Attacks would commence from all directions, but the main weight of today's attack would be aimed at the gate. Crush resistance here, and the Space Marine forces could be broken into small pockets to be mopped up later, but the battle would be won.

As with day one, the Tau attack was presaged by a flight of Barracudas whose missiles and burst cannon strafed the Space Marines' positions amongst the rubble. Lacking any form of anti-aircraft defence the Space Marines could do little against the Barracudas, except stay low in their cover and wait for the attack to end. After several low passes the Barracuda's departed to re-arm, and the Tau ground bombardment began. With their distinctive whip-crack sound, railgun rounds slammed into buildings. Burst cannon pulses ricocheted of walls and rubble. A phalanx of heavy fire hammered the palace, round after round, relentless and merciless. The Tau were blasting the Space Marines out from a distance, building after building was targeted. Roofs collapsed, walls cracked, rounds punched through masonry to explode within. The noise was deafening, as the buildings of the Governor's Palace were systematically destroyed. A choking cloud of dust rose to blanket the battleground.

Opposite the main gate two Hammerheads slowly manoeuvred through the streets, constantly firing on the move. The impact of round after round eventually caused the



Below: *The honoured Brother Caim stalks the ruins of the Governor's Palace. The Dreadnought armoured battle brother would later be destroyed during the defence of the palace gates.*

Above:
As incoming Tau fire impacts all around, the Avenging Sons struggle to hold the palace gates. Savage fighting would eventually see the Tau thrown back, but not without heavy losses to the Space Marines.

gatehouse to collapse. The Devastator squad within returned fire with their missile launchers and lascannons, but the weight of fire kept them pinned down. It was punishment not even the mighty Space Marines could withstand for long. It seemed the Tau were attempting to match their enemy's brutality. The bombardment lasted all morning and well into the afternoon. Captain Armaros had little to respond with, except his own man-portable heavy weapons. It was an uneven match. With no other option open to him, the Captain contacted the *Proxima Justus* to request air support. The Thunderhawks were still prepared and ready to launch. It was a risk, but the situation on the ground was deteriorating. An air strike by the Thunderhawk's bombs and missiles was quickly planned. The Barracudas were still in the sky overhead, but the Thunderhawks would have to run the risks to assist their embattled brothers on the ground.

All five Thunderhawk gunships onboard the strike cruiser launched and made for the Governor's Palace. It was a powerful strike force, enough to keep the Tau at bay, but first it must run the gauntlet of the Barracuda fighters.

As the squadron vectored in on Tarokeen, descending rapidly, weapons primed, the Barracudas climbed to intercept. The Thunderhawks dove through the fighter screen, heavy bolters blazing as the Barracudas opened fire with burst cannons. Despite the repeated impact of pulse rounds the formation did not waver, keeping their formation tight and on course, and trusting to their thick ceramite armour plating. The Barracudas fire was ineffective. Calmly the Space Marine pilots kept their aircraft on course until over the city, whilst the gunners located targets and prepared to open fire with their main weaponry.

The flight of Thunderhawks roared down onto the city, strafing with battle cannons, turbo-lasers and heavy bolters before releasing their bombs. The guided bombs ripped into the palace surroundings. Explosions rippled through the buildings, tearing great holes in roofs and walls, flames and shrapnel engulfing whole blocks. Buildings across the city were rocked by the concussion of the bombing. Now the destruction was radiating outwards from the palace.

The air strike must have caused the Tau commanders serious concern, as in the aftermath their attack died down to sporadic sniping and skirmishing. What damage it actually caused was unknown, but as the roar of the Thunderhawks faded, the Tau withdrew again. It was a brief lull in the battle that did not last long, but it had bought Captain Armaros' men precious time to reorganise their defences.

It was at the gate that the hammer-blow eventually fell. Hammerheads and battlesuits led the way, attacking at full speed they crashed through the rubble of the gate house. The lead Hammerhead was immediately hit by lascannon fire and exploded in a blossoming orange fireball. Fire from the second grav-tank killed the lascannon gunner in return. A krak missile destroyed a Broadside battlesuit but, after the brief firefight, only three remaining

Devastators squad members withdrew. Devilfish-mounted infantry closed in behind the armoured vanguard.

Captain Armaros realised that he was losing his hold, and his perimeter was in danger of breaking. Faced with no other choice, he committed the Terminator squad to the fight. Wading through fire and smoke, the veterans met the Crisis battlesuits in a head-on exchange of fire. Both sides suffered heavy losses. The Space Marines fought for every inch, but the Tau's heavier weapons could not be matched. Three of the veteran Terminators died in the fighting, as did four battlesuits. Brothers Hakael and Caim joined the battle, destroying the second Hammerhead with their heavy weapons, before Brother Caim sustained a hit which tore off his left leg, toppling the Dreadnought to the ground and leaving it stranded and a sitting duck for following shots.

For an hour the fight at the gate raged. Led by Chaplain Baraqel the defenders fought heroically. Pressure was intense, and with the commitment of the Dreadnoughts and Terminators, there were no more reinforcements to give. Bolter rounds and missiles whined through the air, holding the Fire Warriors at bay. Meanwhile, the Tau continued to launch secondary attacks all around the perimeter, pinning Space Marine squads in position, units that could otherwise be used to bolster the defence of the gatehouse.

Captain Armaros knew that his position was hopeless. The Tau had bled his force, and now heavy casualties and a lack of ammunition were forcing him to accept that withdrawal was the only course open to him if he wanted to save his company. It galled him, but resistance here was now greater than his company could match. He had no idea of the enemy's total strength. He knew that his men might hold out for days only to eventually be overwhelmed by their numbers, and for what gain? The Governor of Taros was now beyond his reach and the Avenging Sons were facing annihilation. Armaros needed to evacuate the survivors and rescue what he could from the mission.

After a brief command meeting in the ruins of the Governor's residence, Armaros informed the *Proxima Justus* of his decision to evacuate. At nightfall the Thunderhawks were to be launched for an extraction mission. Orders were given to all the squad leaders, or stand-in leaders in those squads that had lost their sergeants. At nightfall there would a staggered withdrawal to the inner courtyard, where one by one the Thunderhawks would land, load up, and carry them back to their strike cruiser. It was an operation fraught with difficulty. It must be done swiftly so as to give the encircling Tau forces the minimum time to respond. Captain Armaros himself would lead the rearguard and be the last to board a Thunderhawk.

Evacuation

As night fell over the battlefield the Space Marine commander again took stock of his situation. The force had been reduced to approximately forty battle-worthy brothers and one Dreadnought, merely enough men to need only two Thunderhawk gunships for the extraction. The other gunships would fly as cover to those required to make the landings. Re-armed and re-fuelled, the Thunderhawks set about their new mission.

Apothecary Actium started recovering the progenoid glands from all of the fallen brothers he could find, some were already buried deep under the ruins. It was an important task if the Chapter's heavy losses were to be made good. Chaplain Baraqel said prayers for the dead, standing over the lifeless form of Brother Caim. Once a proud war-machine and a hero of the Chapter, now nothing more that a smoking wreck of twisted metal and wires. Amongst all the losses his was the most grievous for 2nd company.

Captain Armaros took command of an understrength Tactical squad and the remaining Scouts as the rearguard, and gave orders to the first squads – including Brother Hakael, Apothecary Actium and Chaplain Baraqel – to stand ready to withdraw to the first Thunderhawk when it touched down. After they blasted off, the second wave was then to abandon their positions, covered by the rearguard, and make for the landing zone. In all the evacuation operation should take no more than ten minutes not enough time for the Tau to react in force.

The distant sound of Thunderhawk engines approached and the evacuation began. Moving slowly through the darkness, crunching over rubble and broken glass, battle-scarred, scorched and wounded, the survivors loaded into the waiting Thunderhawk's hold. Overhead four other gunships circled. Brother Hakael was the last to climbed the ramp and it closed behind him. The last Thunderhawk blasted off for orbit, accelerating away from the battlefield.

Adeptus Arbites Operations on Taros

Every world under the rule of the Imperium has its own Adeptus Arbites Precinct Houses or Fortified Courthouse. The Arbitrators are the Imperium's police and enforcers, tasked with combating and punishing crimes against the Imperium. Prior to the Avenging Sons' attack, the Magister commanding the Adeptus Arbites precinct in Tarokeen received a secure astro-telepathic communication warning him of events about to unfold. It also instructed his precinct to carry out a simultaneous operation to arrest the wealthiest mine owners. These men belonged to the hereditary noble class which had run the mines for generations. They had been found guilty of colluding with the Planetary Governor and the Tau, and must also face justice. They were to be arrested, imprisoned in the Precinct House and then turned over to the Space Marine Commander.

After receiving his instructions Magister Skalka knew that his Precinct House was in great danger. If the Planetary Governor was planning on rebelling against the Imperium then, as the most obvious representatives of Imperial authority, the Arbites would have to be disposed of. He could expect to be attacked at anytime. The Arbites commander did not know when the Space Marine attack would come, but prepared to act quickly when it did.

As the Space Marines fought around the Governor's Palace, the Arbitrators moved against the mine owners. Away from the city, in the surrounding deserts, fearsome Arbites arrest units, clad in their black carapace armour and armed with shotguns, riot mauls and suppression shields, move in to surround and arrest the mineowners. Upon arrival at the mines the Arbites found themselves confronted by gangs of angry mine workers. The confrontations rapidly became riots as the mobs refused all orders to disperse. The work gangs were very loyal to their mine, their fellow team members and their masters. At each mine, the attempted arrest became a pitched battle against the crudely armed miners. As more and more work teams joined the fighting the Arbitrators were forced to withdraw. Protected by their workers, the owners were safe from Imperial Justice, for now.

Most of the battle-scarred arrest units did not return to the Precinct House in Tarokeen until after the Space Marines had evacuated the planet, leaving Magister Skalka's men trapped on the rebellious planet and now heavily outnumbered by Tau forces. They had little hope but to stand firm in the name of the Emperor and await relief.

The Tarokeen Precinct House was attacked and destroyed three days after the Avenging Sons' evacuation. There were no known survivors.

Alerted by the engine noise, the Tau patrols cautiously crept forwards to investigate. Where once Space Marines had barred their advance with boltgun fire, now there was nothing.

Meanwhile, a second transport had landed, and the remaining squads quickly embarked. Captain Armaros fell back to the landing zone, bringing up the rear of his squad, boltgun in hand. He ran up the ramp and hit the door close button. The triple engines boomed into life and thrust the Thunderhawk skywards again. The battle was over, but the mission had failed.

Aftermath

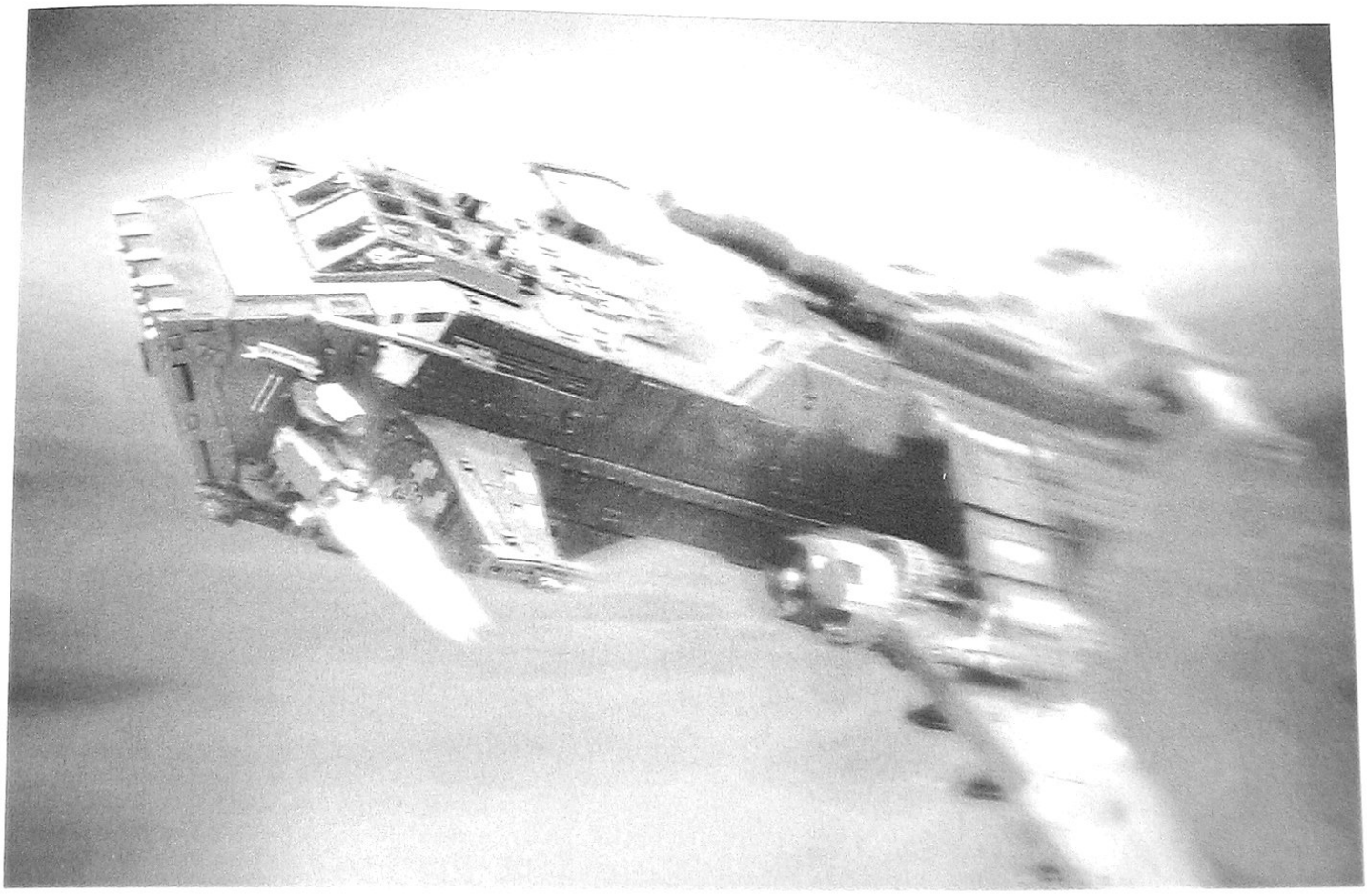
The First Taros Intervention had been a heavy reverse for the Imperium. The Tau had inflicted serious damage on the Avenging Sons in two days of intense combat. The damage inflicted on the aliens was unknown, but must also have been significant. There had been many confirmed kills and the battlefield was littered with wrecks of Tau grav-tanks and battlesuits.

The Avenging Sons took the defeat badly. Space Marines Chapters enjoy a glorious reputation as the 'Shield of Humanity' and defeat by an alien-invader was not to be taken lightly. The death of Brother Caim was to be avenged. The Chapter's fortress-monastery mourned the dead, and the great bell tolled once for each of the brothers lost on Taros.

Events on Taros, the failure of the Intervention Force, and the confirmed report of strong Tau forces fighting in the defence of the Planetary Governor, forced a change in attitude by officials of the Administratum towards the Taros problem. News of defeat was bad enough, but it seemed the Tau had already staked a claim to one of the Emperor's worlds. What had been a border skirmish was now a serious threat. Events around the Eye of Terror might be demanding many of the Imperium's resources, but Taros would not be ignored.

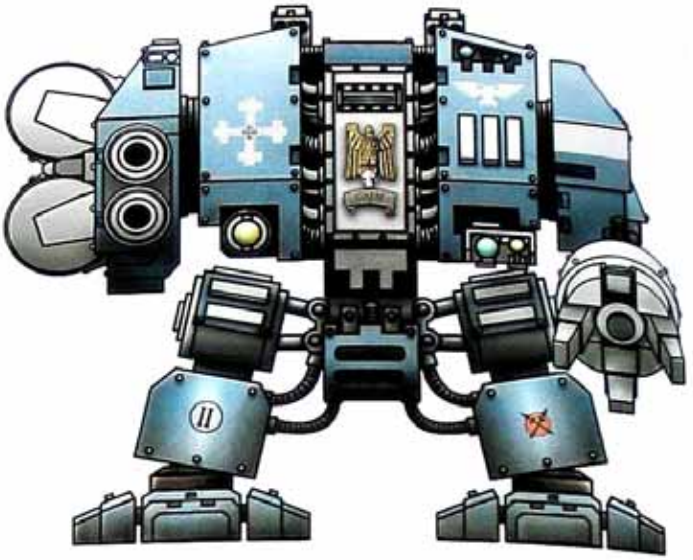
Taros was official declared *Ex Imperius Rebellis*, a system in rebellion against the Emperor's divine rule. The sacred Pax Imperialis had been torn up by Planetary Governor Aulis. His actions now made him not just a criminal but a traitor. The Tau were already on Taros in force and they must be ejected. The Master of the Administratum signed a document stating just this, as well as listing the Planetary Governor's crimes (over 100 in all, mostly punishable by death). The document, called the 'Taronian Declaration', was a licence to action a new, larger attack against the rebel world.

Next time, the attack would not be a surgical strike by a single strike force of Space Marines, it would require the involvement of all those fighting arms of the Imperium willing to commit forces to repel alien aggression. The invasion of Taros was now in motion...

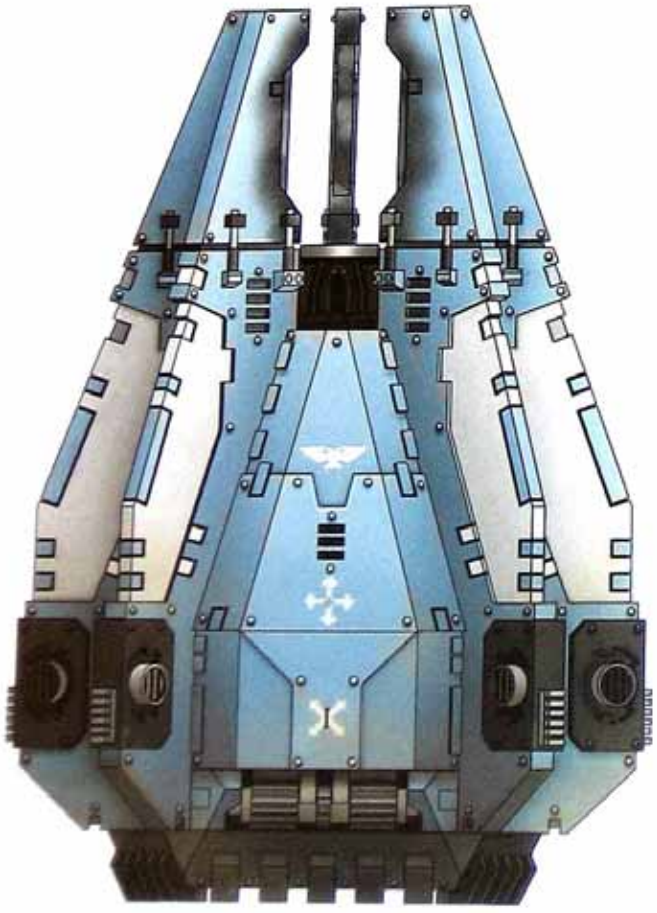


Below: *The last Thunderhawk gunship races skywards. Captain Armaros was forced to evacuate his positions at the palace even though his mission was incomplete. Under the protection of the Tau, the Planetary Governor had escaped, but he would not remain in power for long.*

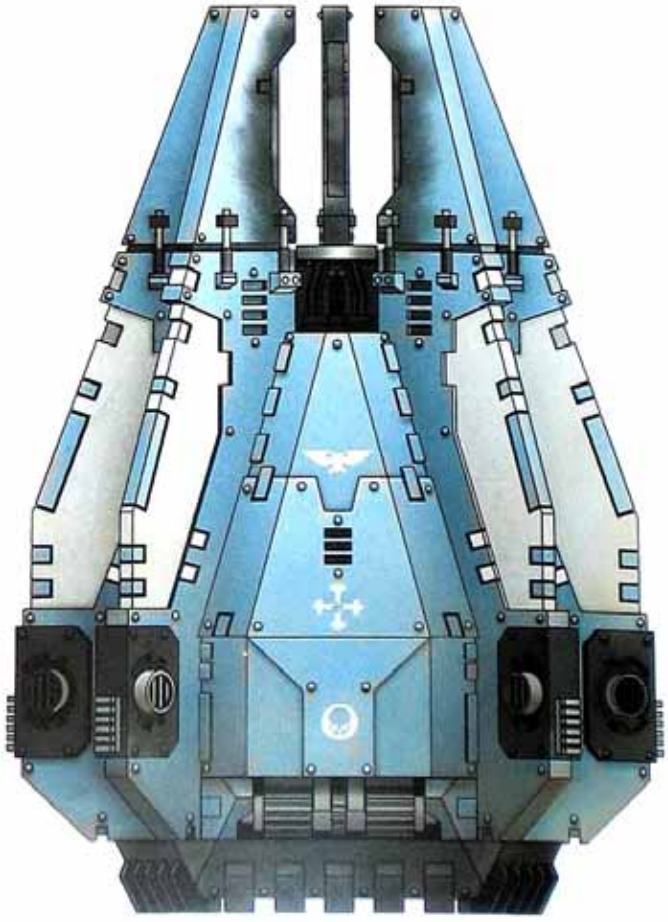
Brother Hakael, a MkIV Dreadnought of the Avenging Sons Chapter, armed with a powerfist and twin-linked heavy bolters. On his right leg he bears the 2nd Company badge, as well as a litany of devotion and a purity seal.



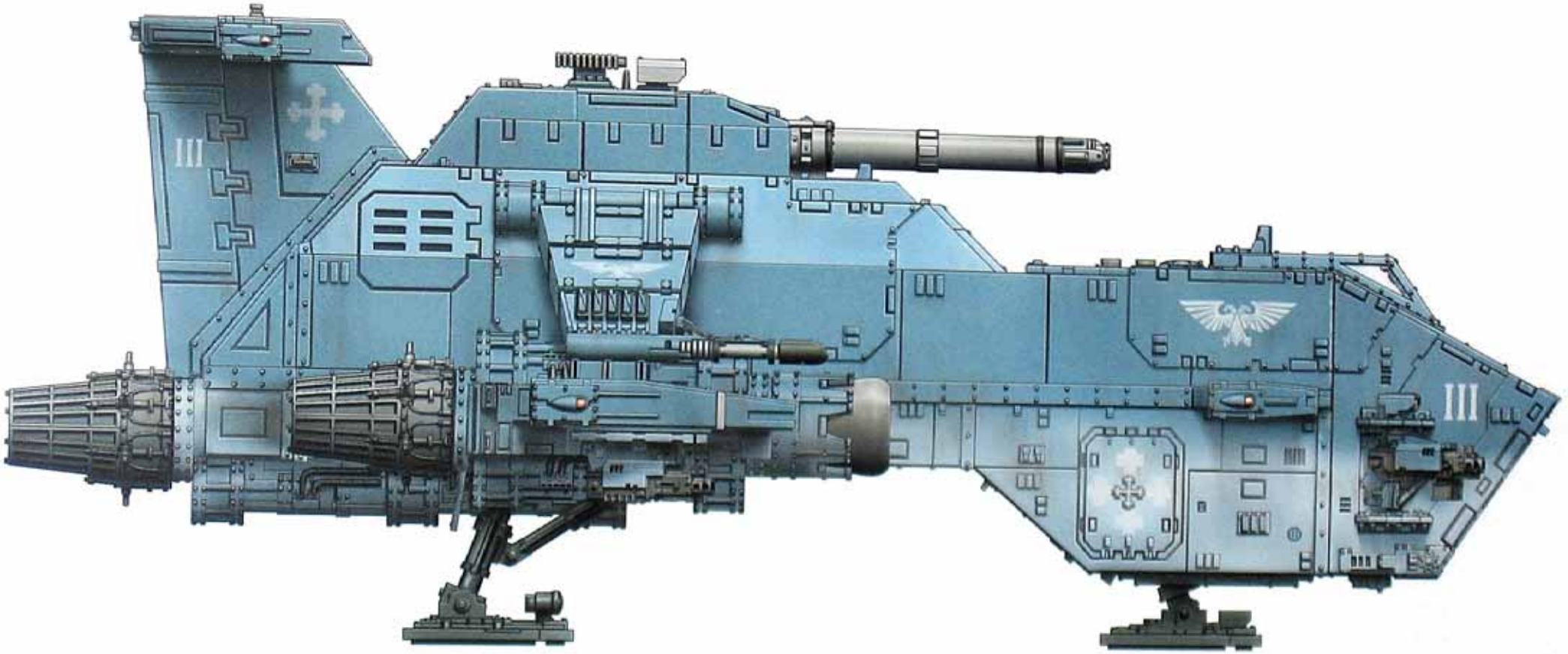
Brother Caim, a MkV Dreadnought of the Avenging Sons Chapter. Armed with a powerfist and twin-linked autocannons, he bears the Taros Campaign badge on his left leg. Brother Caim was lost during the Battle of the Governor's Palace.



Drop pod used by the First Taros Intervention Force during the attack on the Governor's Palace. This pod bears the badge of the Company's first Assault squad.

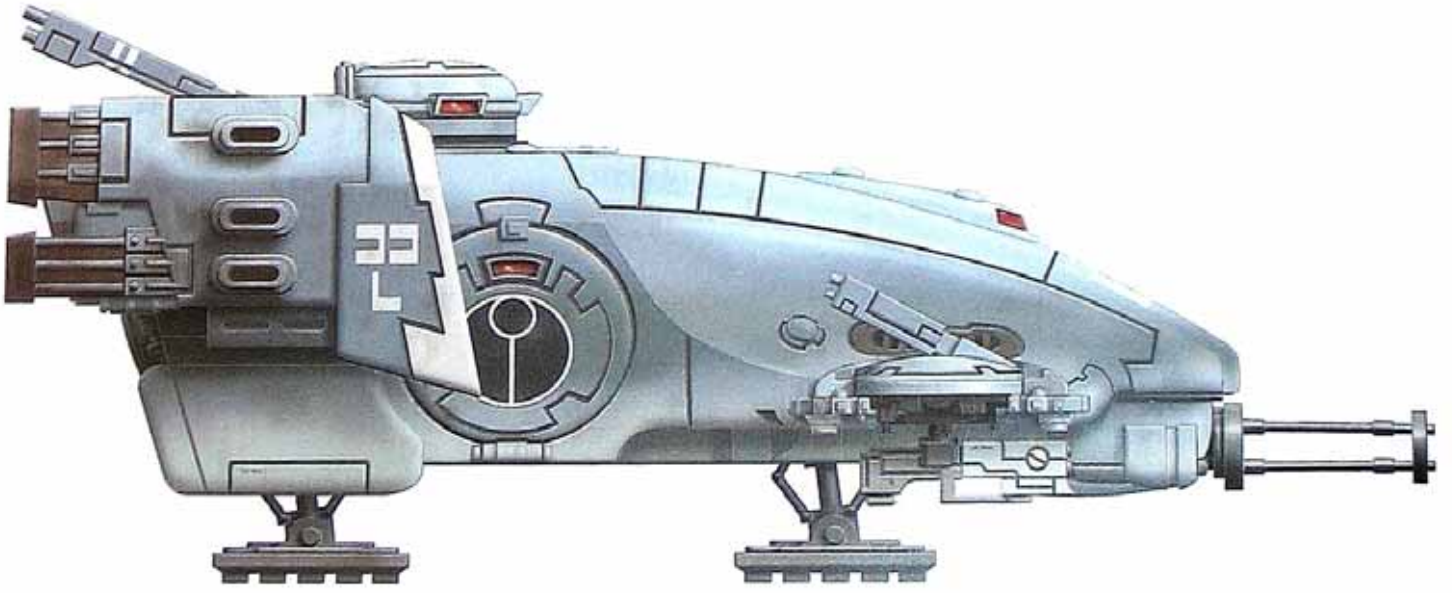


This drop pod bears a skull command badge; it maybe the pod used by 2nd Company's Captain Armaros. Alternatively, it may be the Deathwind drop pod used to lead the attack.

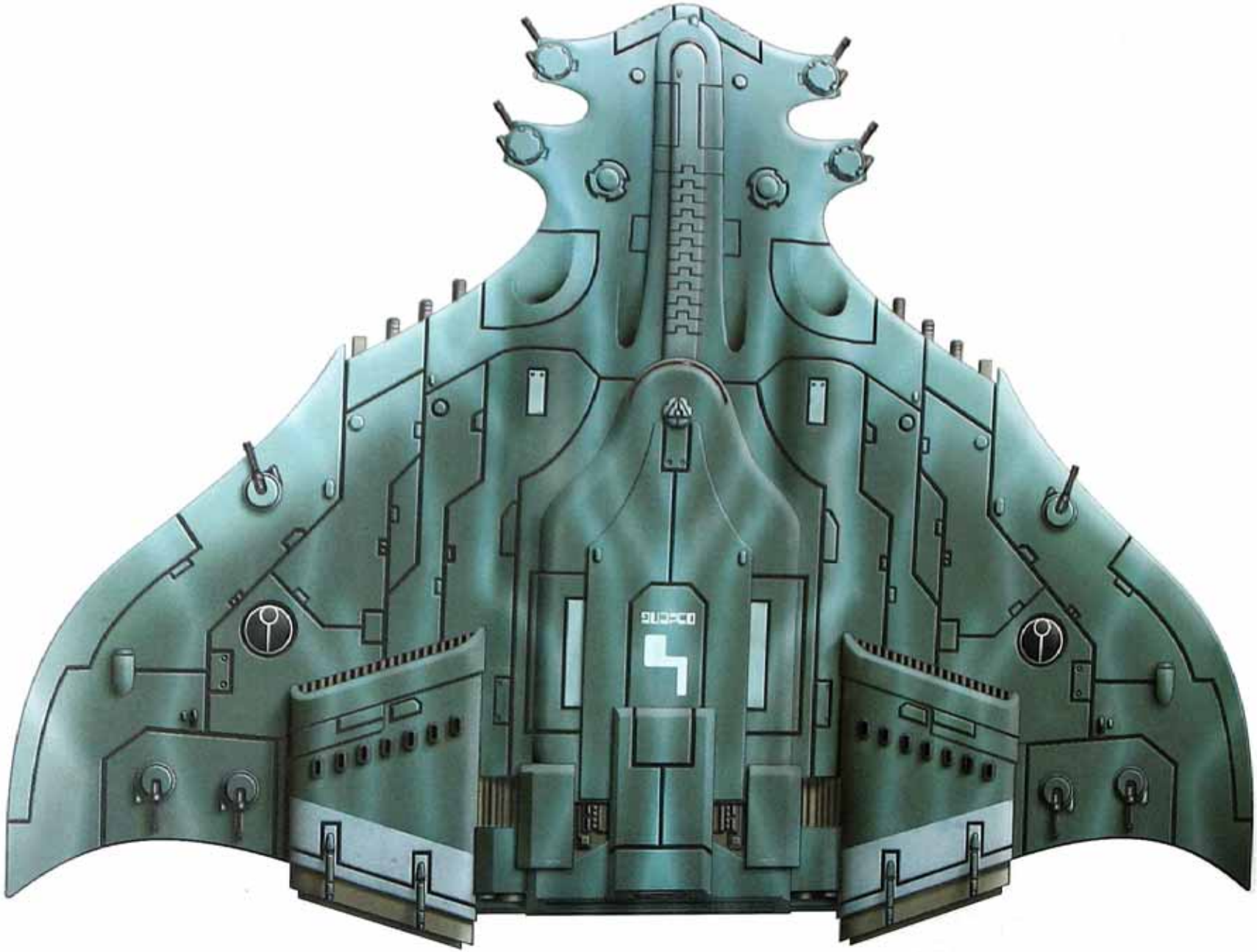


Thunderhawk gunship of the Avenging Sons Chapter. This is the third aircraft deployed with the Taros Intervention Force. It flew ground attack missions before all the Chapter's forces were extracted from the planet.

Hammerhead gunship armed with a railgun. This vehicle took part in the battle at blocking position three, and is camouflaged for night-time operations.



Devilfish troop carrier from the battle for the Governor's Palace, again coloured for night-time operations. This vehicle was destroyed during the fighting.



Manta. This aircraft's appearance over the city was a complete surprise. It carried the Tau's first response force to the Space Marine attack, and then shuttled in Tau reinforcements throughout the battle for the Governor's Palace.

PLANNING THE INVASION

CHAPTER 3

Above: *The enemy in sight. Targeter scan of a Tau Hammerhead.*

The High Command Staff

The Adeptus Administratum decision that the recapture of the Taros system was instrumental to the continued effective operations of Stygies VIII forge world and, to a lesser extent, other dependant forge worlds, meant it was now the duty of all servants loyal to Emperor to help bring these misguided subjects back under Imperium's rule and protection. The first step was to appoint a Command staff to organize and oversee the planning of the operation.

The man chosen to lead the staff, and take command of the entire invasion operation, was Lord High Commander Otto Ivan Gustavus; a man with long military record who had risen from the officer ranks of the Imperial Guard into the upper levels of the Imperium's military hierarchy. Gustavus' first task was to appoint his own Command staff and prepare for the invasion. He was given two major questions to answer. When could he be ready to invade Taros, and then, where should that attack fall? His instructions made the matter clear: the invasion should come as soon as possible. By Adeptus Administratum standards this could mean anytime in the next five years. Gustavus intended to begin within a standard Terran year.

Appointing his staff was no simple matter. The upper echelons of the Imperium's military hierarchy is rife with politics, intriguing, favours owed, debts to repay and self-interest. Gustavus had not risen this high without making a few enemies, or without calling on a few favours that he was now in a position to repay.

Selecting his command staff took several weeks of hard work and hard negotiations. The first position to be filled was not of Gustavus' own choosing. Commissar-General Mordred Van Horcic would be Gustavus' shadow and right-hand man for the duration of the campaign. The high-ranking Commissar was tasked with making sure all the officers of Gustavus' force did their duty, or faced the consequences! A powerful man in his own right, Van Horcic had the power of life and death over many of the Imperial servants involved in the campaign.

Whether by choice or coercion, over the subsequent weeks Gustavus made the following appointments. Not all were men he liked or even trusted, many were decisions forced upon him by other political factors. It was Gustavus' job to bring all these factions together and make them work together towards ultimate victory.

The High Command staff would include; Venerated High Magos Zadakine Volta, a high-ranking Adeptus Mechanicus representaive from Stygies VIII forge world. Fleet Admiral Kotto, appointed by the authorities on Kar Duniash to command the Invasion fleet. Lord Marshal De Stael, the overall commander of all Imperial Guard regiments, who would bear the brunt of the invasion fighting. Provisioner-Prime Nymus Dree, a bureaucrat from the Departmento Munitorum who had only been granted a place on the High Command staff after his initial investigation into events on Taros. Others included Air Marshal Denvelt, Staff Colonel Scheja, Deacon Gotz, the appointed representative of Cardinal Astral

Velas and Curator Adept Skel. Many others would follow, including any Space Marine commanders or Titan Legion Princeps to be involved in the campaign.

The High Command staff would be required to organise and plan the invasion, each member would have his own area of responsibility, and each would have their own staff, aides or retinue to assist them. In all, the High Command staff for the invasion, including all the sub-departments and functionaries, would number approximately three thousand souls.

Pre-Invasion Preparations

Before any military plans could be put in place first Gustavus and his staff needed to know what they were facing. Nobody on the staff, except Dree, had ever even heard of Taros until now, let alone knew anything about the planet or system. Gustavus wanted information about the planet. Climate, population, industrial capacity, rulers, topography, history, anything. It was a huge research task to be undertaken by the Adepts of the Administratum. In charge of the information gathering would be Curator Adept Skel, an Administratum official promoted from the Archive Historicus. Curator-Adept Skel had access to thousands of archives throughout the Segmentum and across the Imperium, including the great archives on Terra itself. In those archives, thousands of curators, prefects, archivists and menial workers went to work, finding out anything about Taros. From ancient records a picture of the planet and its population was slowly compiled. From tithe levels and tax records a picture of the planet's mining industry was built. Old censuses revealed the planet's population growth. No piece of data about Taros was to be considered too trivial.

A team of Lexmechanic and Logis, under the command of Magos Volta, was also assigned to the information gathering task. They worked with computer speed to compile all the data Skel was producing. The Adeptus Mechanicus' part-human, part-machine servants forecast the planets population growth, weather patterns, climate, volcanic activity, atmospheric conditions, orbital cycles. Information stretching back as far as the Great Crusades was found. Even a scrap of the original Exploritas report on the planets suitability for terraforming and colonisation where found. In all millions of fragments of information where gathered to create a complete picture. Satellite survey images, language studies, missionary reports, journals of long dead servants who had visited or been stationed on Taros. There were old genetic studies on the population and the ruling households, carried out by the Ordo Famulous seeking evidence of genetic deviation or mutation. Adeptus Arbites crime rate reports, geological and seismic surveys. No detail could be ignored, anything that might inform Gustavus' staff decisions was included. In all, it took six months to compile all the information the High Command staff needed before the invasion planning could get started.

After six months of work Gustavus had as good a picture of what was facing him as the Adeptus Terra could provide. He knew what the planet was like, how big the population was, and how this might translate into the Planetary Defence Forces' military strength, given the equipment that had been supplied to Taros down the years. He knew how the planet might be able to re-equip or resupply its forces, or create new units. He even had a forecast of what the criminal population of Taros was likely to be (often the first supply of manpower to be used as replacement troops). What he didn't know was anything about the Tau's strength on Taros.

Finding information about what the Tau might be planning was far harder, and not a task the Adeptus Terra could help with. The man on the Lord High Commander's staff assigned to this task was Staff Colonel Scheja, Gustavus' Director of Intelligence. A secretive individual, Scheja was a spy-master with former experience of working with the Inquisition. The Tau, with their philosophy of 'the Greater Good' where a difficult prospect. There were few informers or spies on the inside of the Tau Empire. There were a few humans, mostly merchants or mercenaries, whose loyalty could be bought by the Imperium, but most humans within the Tau Empire were simply traitors who had abandoned the Emperor. By assessing information from other planets along the borders of the Tau Empire, studying previous estimates of Tau military strength and historical presidents, Colonel Scheja could himself make an educated guess at how strong Tau forces might be on Taros, but without people on the ground, he had no confirmation.

Whilst the information gathering was going on, the other members of the High Command staff were not idle. The Departmento Munitorum officials on the staff began the long process of finding the fighting forces and supplies needed for the invasion.

Imperial Guard regiments needed to be raised, trained and transported across the Imperium. This was no easy task. The demand for troops in the build-up around the Cadian Gate was vast, particularly now, as the 'Plague of Unbelief' around the Eye of Terror continued to spread. The Imperial Guard might be huge, but still demand for regiments is always far greater than supply.

To counter the effects of increased demand Gustavus devised a scheme to overestimate the troops strengths need. He knew all along that he would not get all the forces he requested, but this way he might get close to his actual requirements. As yet he could give no definitive numbers, but he set the logis to work making an initial statistical analyse, and this gave him a starting point. Over the coming months the numbers would be modified and gradually evolve into a final figure, but for now it was enough to have a figure with which the Departmento Munitorum could base its work on, and so get the slow turning wheels of the Departmento's bureaucracy rolling.

The 4621st Imperial Guard Army

The Imperial Guard force needed for the invasion of Taros was founded as the 4621st Imperial Guard Army, and this large unit would be under the command of Lord Marshal De Stael. Bearing the honorific title 'Chief of Arms', De Stael would be in overall command of all Imperial Guard ground forces on Taros. All the Generals and Colonels of the Imperial Guard regiments constituting the 4621st Army would report to De Stael and his staff.

Gustavus, in consultation with De Stael, began to draw up detailed orders for the forces he would need for a successful war. The Imperial Guard might be vast, but with demand for regiments currently so high, it was not infinite. No commander ever has enough troops, and Gustavus and De Stael were no different. De Stael's initial request to Gustavus for twenty-one regiments was turned down as over cautious. That size of force could not be found in the tight timescale that Gustavus had devised for the invasion; Gustavus himself was under pressure to speed up the invasion, each day that passed was lost production that had to be found elsewhere. De Stael, rebuked, had to think again and revise his figures.

The Lord Marshal returned with a more moderate twelve regiment request, which Gustavus accepted, taking it in turn to the Departmento Munitorum. However they refused, offering an absolute maximum of ten regiments. Even then it took much bartering with the Munitorum officials to get them to agree to find ten regiments. Gustavus only agreed to

attempt the invasion with ten regiments after receiving an oath from High Magos Volta that at least one Titan legion would be committed to the invasion force. Consoled by this promise, Gustavus informed De Stael that the 4621st Army would consist of ten regiments, and, for ease of administration the army should be divide into two corps, designated X Corp and XI Corp.

After the prolonged arguments over the size of the Imperial Guard force, Gustavus and De Stael got down to the specifics of building it. The first regiments Gustavus requested were those recruited from Tallarn. Given Taros' desert climate, the men of Tallarn (itself a desert world) would quickly adapt to the conditions. They would make the most effective soldiers when it came to important skills like desert survival techniques and water discipline. Fighting men are fighting men, and any Imperial Guardmen could be made to adapt to the conditions, but the famed Desert Raiders of Tallarn would be the logical choice.

But Tallarn is only a single world, with a limited supply of men. Most of its existing regiments were already committed to other warzones, and ten new regiments could not simply be raised. The tithes on the planet did not allow for such a sudden massive drain. A single new recruitment could be ordered from Tallarn and that process was instigated. The Tallarn 331st regiment would be raised, equipped and shipped to Taros to see its first action. Three other Tallarn regiments could be withdrawn from their current commitments and embarked for Taros, although all had recently been engaged in battles and they also needed replacement men and equipment finding. A fifth regiment, the Tallarn 3rd Armoured, was currently on garrison duty on Balle Prime. If a replacement garrison force could be found it too would join the invasion force. In all, half the Imperial Guard regiments destined for Taros would be from Tallarn. These would be combined to form X Corp.

XI Corp would be composed of the other Imperial Guard regiments that the Adeptus Munitorum would commit to the Taros campaign. Five more regiments still needed to be found. The first was the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment. This regiment was unlike any other in the 4621st Army's order of battle, being an air mobile unit equipped with Valkyrie airborne assault carriers. Against the Tau ,mobility would be important. Tau forces, with their Manta's and a preponderance of grav-tanks, drones and battlesuits are fast and highly mobile. Conventional Imperial Guard infantry and Armoured regiments could not hope to match their speed, and because of this they would be continually forces to fight on the alien's terms. A Drop Troop regiment, although lightly equipped for airborne operations, would help redress the balance and give Lord Marshal De Stael the chance to match the Tau mobility on a strategic level.

The second unit was one of De Stael's own request. The Sarennian Assault Engineers were, in his opinion, some of the most useful troops in the Segmentum. They were equipped for close quarters combat and for assaulting fortified positions, clearing minefields and breaching defence lines. Few in number, the Sarennians would not be required to fight as one regiment but, before the invasion began, be divided into platoons and companies and attached to all the other regiments of 4621st Army. This way they would provide a core of assault troops when, as predicted, the time for hard streetfighting in Tarokeen arrived.

Above: *Dig for victory! A Trojan uses its bulldozer to dig a gun pit. Strong defensive positions would be vital once the Imperial Guard made planetfall.*

Other regiments scheduled to join the 4621st Army on Taros were the 114th Cadian Shock Troop regiment, an entirely mechanized unit under the command of Colonel Stranski. Then would come to 8th Brimlock Dragoons, a regiment with experience of fighting Tau raids around the Damocles Gulf. The final regiment was harder to find, several were considered and either rejected or found to no longer exist. The 12th Manninen Rangers regiment was transported, but on arrival turned out to be only the strength of a reinforced company. On Commissar-General Van Horcic's orders the regiment was disbanded and the survivors enrolled with the Tallarns. The 42nd Mordian regiment was also embarked for Taros, only to be diverted to face Hive Fleet *Kraken* on the Eastern Fringe. Gustavus' deadline for the invasion was closing, and the tenth regiment remained elusive. Eventually, the 19th Krieg Armoured regiment was requested, but it would take time to find their current location, get new orders to them, and embark them for Taros. They would not be available for the initial invasion.

X Corp would also be reinforced by two companies of Storm Troopers. These troops were the elite of the Imperial Guard, well trained and equipped. They would provide a useful strengthening of the front line regiments. Like the Sarennians, the two companies would be divided as squads amongst the other Imperial Guard regiments.

In De Stael's strategic plan for the campaign XI Corp would act as the support to X Corp. The Tallarn regiments would be required to do the bulk of the initial fighting, and would also lead the landings. XI Corp would follow on and be fed into the ground campaign once it had started. The actual invasion fleet would only be carrying X Corp when it arrived in the Taros system. It would be the Tallarn's job to get a secure lodgement area established on the planet for XI Corp to reinforce. Once the entire of X Corp was established, the next priority would be to get the 23rd Elysians 'in country', to give 4621st Army the ability to strike just about anywhere, anytime. Behind them would come the Cadians, the Brimlock Dragoons and eventually, the men of Kreig.

Other Forces

The Imperial Guard are not the only fighting forces in the Imperium. When the Adeptus Administratum committed itself to an invasion of Taros, it also sent requests throughout the other fighting arms of the Imperium. It would provide the Imperial Guard forces – the backbone of the mission – but the Imperium has many fighting forces and each might be expect to do its duty.

Firstly, the Adeptus Astartes. The Avenging Sons Chapter had already been engaged on Taros, but they were now rebuilding their strength after their heavy losses. They would have to wait to avenge their defeat on the Tau. The other Chapter to make forces available was the Raptors. A strike force of two companies and a battle barge from the Raptors Chapter would contribute significantly to the Imperium's combat power, both on the ground and with the fleet.

Next, High Magos Zadakine Volta had already promised the aid of a Titan legion, but delivering on the oath prooved more difficult. Stygie VIII was the natural forge world to provide the aid of Legio Honorum. But the legion was already fully committed. There were no battlegroups available to lend assistance. To fulfill his oath, Volta had the difficult task of finding replacements. In the end he turned to the rulers of Mars, travelling to the heart of the Cult of the Machine to personally request the aid of Fabricator General. He had only limited success. Titan battlegroups were already being committed to the Cadian Gate; the need for the Imperium's greatest fighting machines was pressing if the tide of Chaos was to be stemmed. Volta argued that he had sworn the aid of a legion, and the Adeptus Mechanicus stood to gain much from the recapture of Taros. In the end the intervention of the Fabricator General secured Volta a small battlegroup from Legio Ignatum under the command of Princeps Jernay. The battlegroup consisted of just four Warhound Titans, hardly the force he had hoped for, but enough to satisfy Volta's oath to Gustavus.

The Departmento Munitorum, as well as raising and transporting regiments, could also provide assistance in form of indentured engineering and labour corps. These were not combat troops, but units for the rear area, to dig and build. It was valuable work that helped released Imperial Guard infantry from such arduous and time-consuming duties.

The Ministorum could also provide assistance, but not in the form of combat troops. Cardinal Astral Velas was not inclined to lend military aid to the Taros Invasion Force. He only attended the first High Command meeting in person, after that he left a representative to speak for him, one Deacon Gotz. The Cardinal made it clear he was not in favour of this expedition. To him it was a waste of resources that could be put to better use fighting heresy elsewhere in his diocese. Taros was a dust-bowl planet of just twelve million souls, there were still wars to be fought on hive worlds to save the souls of billions. The Cardinal felt it was only the malign influence of the Adeptus Mechanicus lobby that had forced

FORCE DISPOSITION

TAROS INVASION FORCE

Listing of all units which were committed to the Taros Campaign

4621st IMPERIAL GUARD ARMY

X CORP

17th Tallarn Desert Raiders Regiment
89th Tallarn Desert Raiders Regiment
331th Tallarn Desert Raiders Regiment
3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment
12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment

2356th Storm Troopers Company
2378th Storm Troopers Company

XI CORP

23rd Elysian Drop Troops Regiment
11th Sarennian Assault Engineers
114th Cadian Shock Troops Regiment
19th Krieg's Armoured Regiment *
8th Brimlock Dragoons *

** Despite being part of the 4621st Army these two regiments never saw action on Taros.*

IMPERIAL NAVY

Fighter Wings (4)
83rd, 386th, 1002nd, 2774th

Bomber Wings (2)
501st, 2424th

Tactical Wings (1)
71st

LEGIO ASTARTES

Avenging Sons
1 Company *'Taros Intervention Force'*

Raptors Chapter
2 Companies *'Strike Force Orelius'*

ADEPTUS MECHANICUS

Enginseers Teams	224
Ordnance Teams	12

LEGIO TITANICUS

Legio Ignatum

Scout Titan Battlegroup	1

DEPARTMENTO MUNITORUM

Labour Corp	2
Engineer Corp	2
Supply Columns	78

OFFICIO ASSASSINORUM

AGENTS	classified

IMPERIAL FLEET

Fleet-Ground Liaison Teams	5

MINISTORUM

Ordo Hospitalle Field Hospice	6
Ordo Dialogus Interpreter Teams	19

ADMINISTRATUM

Mortuary Teams	16
Adeptus Archivists	18
Statisticians Teams	42

TAROS INVASION FLEET

Ships of the Line

Righteous Power	Overlord class
Star of Cassiopeia	Tyrant class
Black Duke	Dictator class
Hammer of Thrace	Lunar class
August	Dauntless class
Cerebus	Dauntless class

Escorts

Errant Squadron	Sword class
Invincis Squadron	Sword class
Omna Squadron	Cobra class
Novem Squadron	Firestorm class

Transports

Imperius Javalin	Armed Transport
Imperius Gauntlet	Armed Transport
Imperius Anvil	Armed Transport
Graf Derzki	Armed Transport
Prince Maud	Transport
Marcouf	Transport
Saint Machree	Transport
Isolde	Transport
Son of Jucha	Transport
Colossia	Heavy Transport
Piety	Heavy Transport
Kagul	Heavy Transport
Empress of Svedeg	Heavy Tanker
Honorus Rex	Behemoth class

ADEPTUS ASTARTES FLEET

Raptors Chapter

War-Talon	Battle Barge
Escort vessel	Gladius class

Avenging Sons

Proxima Justus	Striker Cruiser

IMPERIAL COMMANDERS

LORD HIGH COMMANDER OTTO IVAN GUSTAVUS

A large, barrel-chested, walrus of a man, originally hailing from Valhalla, Gustavus was granted supreme command of the Taros invasion after his successful command during the Vaust Schism. He has had a long and steady rise through the upper ranks of the Imperial Guard. In his youth, Gustavus first served as a Lieutenant commanding an armoured fist platoon, eventually rising to command his regiment, and then being promoted beyond field command into the ranks of the High Command staff. Wounded in action several times, and still proudly bearing the scars, his personal experience and bravery is undoubted. Gustavus is the head of the entire operation, he commands no actual forces, but he has the power to sanction or veto any plans his staff make.

Gustavus' rotund appearance and loud, bellicose manner hides a razor-keen political mind. These are the skills he will have to draw upon heavily in a combined operation such as this invasion. With a full entourage of aide-de-camps, staff officers, Commissars, Adeptus Mechanicus advisor, bureaucrats, etc, he will have to juggle their competing demands for supplies and favour, as well as make strategic decision that will send thousands of men into battle.

THE HIGH COMMAND STAFF

COMMISSAR-GENERAL MORDRED VAN HORCIC

Gustavus' shadow and right-hand man, Van Horcic is tasked with making sure all the officers of Gustavus' army do their duty, or face summary justice! In this he is aided by a large cadre of Commissars attached to every Imperial Guard regiment and Imperial Navy vessel. Van Horcic is a fearful figure. Mutilated by a melta blast whilst leading an offensive in the Hellblade Mountains on Rynn's World, he now relies on bionics to keep him alive. Van Horcic is the ultimate arbitrator of justice amongst the invasion force and has the power of life and death over many Imperial servants (except the Space Marines and Adeptus Mechanicus). As a Commissar-General Van Horcic is empowered to take over command of any Imperial Guard regiment that is deemed to be failing and appoint a new commander or lead it personally. All Commissars in the invasion force report to Van Horcic, who in turn reports to and advises Lord High Commander Gustavus.

VENERATED HIGH MAGOS ZADAKINE VOLTA

Venerated High Magos Volta sits upon the ruling council of Stygies VIII and is the highest ranking Adeptus Mechanicus representative on Gustavus' staff. He is the supreme commander of all the technical support for the invasion. Volta is the staff's main liaison between its commander and the rulers of the Stygies VIII forge world. Volta has his own large entourage of Logis, Rune Preists, Lexmechanics and servitors.

FLEET ADMIRAL KOTTO, COMMANDER OF THE TAROS INVASION FLEET

Fleet Admiral Kotto is the overall commander of the Imperial Invasion Fleet for the duration of the Taros Campaign. He has sanction over any operations that take place outside of Taros' atmosphere. Kotto is a product of the Ultima Segmentum naval academy on Kar Duniash. Noble-borne and groomed for command since birth, he has risen steady through the Navy ranks, commanding escorts, light cruisers and cruisers before being promoted to Fleet Admiral. He is a veteran of campaigns against Orks pirates, Tyranids on the Eastern Rim and Chaos raiders. This will be his first command against the Tau.

As well as overall command of the fleet in action, Kotto and his staff are charged with organising, mustering and supplying the invasion fleet ships for the duration of the campaign. A major problem for Kotto is the number of assault transports and landing craft available to him to get Lord Marshal De Stael's forces from orbit to the planet surface. During the planning stage Kotto and his staff struggled to get enough landing craft to simultaneously transport three Imperial Guard regiments, the minimum required by De Stael's invasion plan.

Confident that his fleet, aided by the Space Marine vessels, has enough firepower to fight their way into orbit against any defences that Taros or the Tau can muster, the landings and subsequent flow of supplies are Kotto's primary concern when planning fleet operations. Once Imperial Guard troops are on the ground, reinforcing them and keeping all the forces supplied, especially with water, becomes Kotto's top priority.

LORD MARSHAL DE STAEL, CHIEF OF ARMS, COMMANDER OF 4621st IMPERIAL GUARD ARMY

The overall commander of all Imperial Guard ground forces on Taros, all the Generals and Colonel of the Imperial Guard regiments report to De Stael and his staff. Although small in stature, De Stael has a keen strategic mind, born of past experience and detailed study of the Tactica Imperialis. A quiet, studious man, with an eye for detail, De Stael likes to plan carefully before committing any troops. His meticulous (some would say cautious), approach to campaigns and battles has caused frustration with more aggressive commanders in the past. De Stael realises that it is far easier to commit troops to battle than it is to disengage them. Behind his back other commanders have nicknamed him 'the Clerk', but De Stael's studious manner hides an inner ruthless streak and iron resolve. He is devoted to serving the Emperor.

De Stael is responsible for putting Gustavus' war plan into action on the ground. He is in overall commander of the 4621st Imperial Guard Army, constituting all of the Imperial Guard ground forces for the invasion of Taros. Space Marine Chapters and the Legio Ignatum forces are not part of De Stael's command and do not report to him, although it is his overall plan that other fighting arms will be aiding.

CAPTAIN ORELIUS, 3rd COMPANY, RAPTORS CHAPTER

The highest ranking Space Marine officer in the invasion force. Orelius is a long-time servant of his Chapter, having fought in wars and crusades for the past 100 years. His entire company, and support units have been committed to the invasion by his Chapter Master. Although Gustavus is the supreme commander in actuality he has little control over the actions of Orelius and his men. Still, Orelius' experience and the reputation of the Adeptus Astartes makes him a valued member of the Command staff when planning operations. His forces will not be involved in a protracted ground campaign. Once their mission is complete the Space Marines will be withdrawn to their battle barge to prepare for their next deployment. As commander of 3rd Company and the more experienced man, Orelius holds seniority over Captain Kaedes

although they share the same rank. As befits his Chapter's heritage, Orelius is an aggressive commander, who always seeks to take the battle to enemy and leads from the front.

CAPTAIN KAEDES,
6th COMPANY, RAPTORS CHAPTER
Kaedes, role is to provide support and battlefield replacements to Orelius' 3rd Company. As such he is sub-ordinate to Orelius. Should Orelius become a casualty Kaedes is fully able to step in and lead the Raptors battle brothers on the battlefield. Whilst not as experienced as Orelius, he is still a Space Marine Captain, and has all the respect that rank demands within Gustavus' staff.

STAFF COLONEL SCHEJA,
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE
The brilliant Colonel Scheja has been seconded from his regiment, the Valhallan 28th, to act as the top intelligence officer in Gustavus' High Command staff. His own staff officers study and collate information from all sources, Imperial Guard regiments in the field, Imperial Navy reports, scouting Titans, any and every source the Imperium has. He has an overview of the wider strategic situation, not just the fighting on the ground on Taros. He is Gustavus' spy-master, a secretive individual operating in the shadows, with a greater degree of independance than other commanders. Scheja has previously worked with Inquisitor Hector Rex, as part of his personal retinue during the Judgement of Hellanus, an operation which made the Colonel's reputation and catapulted him from a 'mere' prospect as the regimental commander of the Valhallan 28th into the upper ranks of the Imperial Guards command structure, despite still being only a Colonel.

PROVISIONER PRIME NYMUS DREE,
MASTER OF THE VICTUALS
A high-ranking bureaucrat from the Departmento Munitorum, Dree's job is to supply the invasion force with everything it needs, from replacement men, tanks and shells to water, food, tents etc. He has a small army of Departmento functionaries, clerks and prefects to assist him. He was granted his position on the staff after he requested it, following his investigation into events of Taros which have led up to the war. Although he commands no fighting forces, Dree is a vital member of Gustavus' staff.

CARDINAL ASTRAL VELAS
It is Cardinal Astral Velas' whose diocese Taros lies in, along with many other scattered planets and systems on the Eastern Fringe. Although 'His Worshipfulness' can, by rights, command a place on the High Command staff, in fact after the first staff meeting he returned to his cardinal world and left a representative to deal with his responsibilities for the coming war. The Cardinal's envoy on the Command staff is Deacon Gotz, who is the highest ranking Adeptus Ministorum official involved in the campaign. Confessors and Priests attached to Imperial Guard and Imperial Navy units report to their Cardinal via Deacon Gotz.

AIR MARSHAL DENVELT
Supreme Commander of all the Imperial Navy Fighter, Bomber and Tactical squadrons and their operations inside Taros' atmosphere. He is incharge of planning fighter cover, bomber strikes, transport missions and maintaining the Imperial Navy's logistical situation.

PRINCEPS JERNAY
Adeptus Mechanicus Divisio Militaris commander in the field, a servant of Legio Ignatum and commander of the Warhound Titan *Advensis Primaris.* Reporting to Magos Volta, Jernay is actually a servant of the Lords of Mars, and as such would be under their orders in any clash of interest, creating problems in the command structure, with the Titans not actually being directly controlled by the High Command staff.

CURATOR ADEPT SKEL
A high-ranking Administratum official, Skel is the Command staff's link to the Administratum's extensive archives and all their ancient records about Taros.

4621st IMPERIAL GUARD ARMY

LORD MARSHAL DE STAEL'S COMMAND STAFF

General Wassily – Quartermaster General 4621st Army

Staff Colonel Nafir – Chief of Operations, X Corp

Staff Colonel Mawhri – Chief of Operation, XI Corp

Regimental Commanders

X Corp

General Barim-Abas (17th Tallarn Regiment)

General Izra Omdurman (89th Tallarn Regiment)

Colonel Hamid (331th Tallarn Regiment)

General Hasso Raz-Aziz (3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment)

Colonel Ahsa-Bilad (12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment)

XI Corp

General Syckava (23rd Elysian Drop Troop Regiment)

Colonel Horul (11th Sarennian Assault Engineers Battalion)

Colonel Stranski (114th Cadian Regiment – Mechanised)

Colonel Fouks (8th Brimlock Dragoons Regiment)

Colonel Weidemark (19th Kriegs Armoured Regiment)

Imperial Armour

the Adeptus Terra into sanctioning this attack, and he did not trust the Cult of the Machine and their mysterious ways. The Cardinal would supply no fighting forces, but would do the duty required of him. Priests and Confessors would be found for each of the Imperial Guard regiments, to guard the souls of the men of the Imperial Guard. The Orders Dialogus would supply useful support in the form of Tau language experts. The Order Hospitaller would provide some medical care for the injured, but the contribution was, in truth, small.

Power politics within the upper ranks of the Ecclesiarchy probably had much to do with the Cardinal Astral's reticence. A powerful man in his own right, in shadowy corners it was spoken that Velas was not a supporter of the current Ecclesiarch. To be lending aid to the invasion might be seen to be responding the Ecclesiarch's recent anti-alien sermons. The Cardinal liked to think of himself as his own man, with far greater concerns that twelve million wretched miners. He might also be seeking favour with those factions within the Ministorum that had their own plans for the succession to the Ecclesiarchal Throne on Terra.

When and Where?

Gustavus' command had been almost a year in pre-invasion information gathering and mustering the forces, now it came to planning the actual attack. How would they commit the troops they had requested, and how would they keep them supplied once on the ground? One immediate consideration for Gustavus was the longer he spent planning and mustering the more likely it was that information might leak out. A traitor from within his ranks with access to classified information might sell it to the Tau for a vast price or the promise of safety within their Empire. Pre-warned, the Tau would be in a far better position to defeat his attack. Security around the planning needed to be tight. Colonel Scheja, whose efforts so far to infiltrate a spy onto Taros had come to nought, was given the task of maintaining internal security. He would establish a network of informers and spies within the High Command and Imperial Guard regiments, people paid by Scheja to keep their eyes and ears open, and report to him.

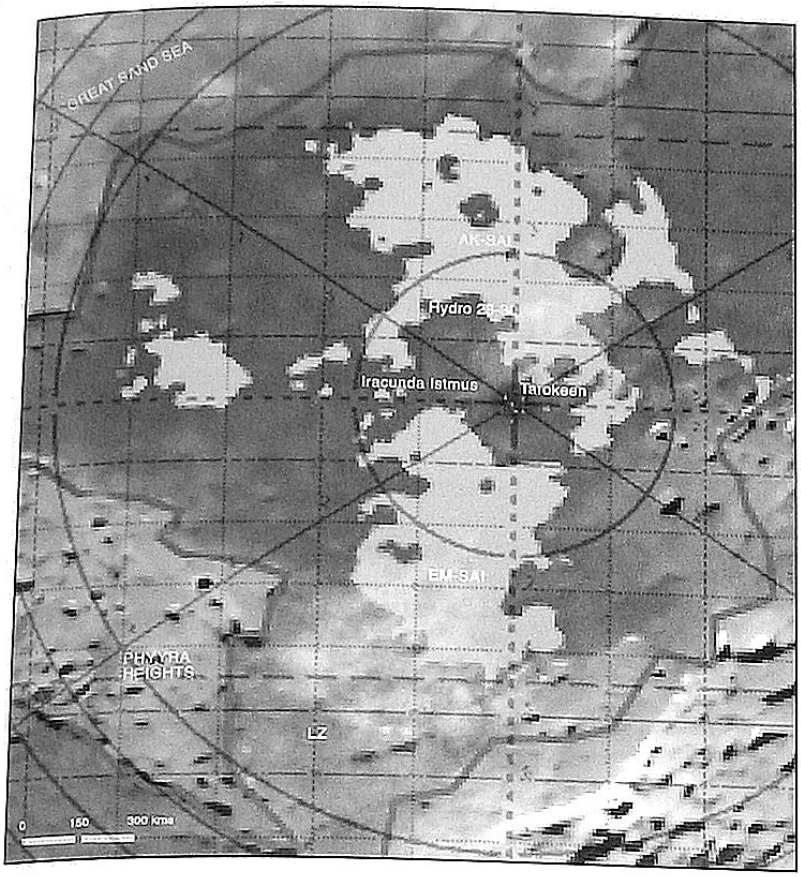
To aid with the internal security, Gustavus ordered that the gathering invasion force should not be concentrated just yet. The men would be scattered about surrounding sectors. This way it would seem many other small warzones were being reinforced. Hopefully the build-up would go unnoticed until it was too late. Imperial Guard regimental commanders would not be informed of their actual destination until the last moment.

Drawing on the good work of the previous year the High Command began the invasion planning process. In order to satisfy the demands of the Imperial Guard regimental commanders and Lord Marshal De Stael, three key objectives had to be considered.

Firstly, the invasion would need to quickly capture an operational spaceport. If not in the initial assault then in the following few days of ground operations. A large spaceport would be vital in maintaining the flow of supplies needed by the forces on the ground once battle was joined.

Secondly, the invasion should be undertaken by at least three regiments simultaneously. This would be a force large enough to overwhelm all but the very strongest resistance and would mean a firm bridgehead could be established between orbit and the planet's surface, strong enough to resist all immediate enemy counter-attacks. Without a secure lodgment area the invasion could be defeated in its first few days.

Thirdly was the water supply. On a desert world like Taros water was a valuable commodity; water was supplied from hydro-plants and recycling. The ground forces would need a secure supply of water rapidly, or the fighting men would be



Above: *A map showing 'the Aestus', the temperate zone bordering Taros' major seas which would be the focus of the invasion and the subsequent campaign. All the fighting took place within these four million square kilometres of rugged desert.*

unable to operate effectively.

These three reasonable objectives contributed much to the planning process. Firstly, Taros had only one spaceport, in Tarokeen. Hence a direct assault on the city was considered in some detail. Tarokeen was also the centre of the planet's industry and administration. If the war was to be won then Tarokeen would have to be captured. Whilst the traitors or the Tau held the city the war would go on, and the mineral resources would be unable to leave the planet. The enemy also knew this. Tarokeen and its immediate hinterland, the Iracunda Isthmus, would be the strongest defended part of the entire planet. A direct assault, under the guns defending the city would invite disaster. Too many enemy ground forces would be waiting for them, too many orbital defences could threaten the invasion fleet. The direct approach was disregarded as too risky.

The landing zone would have to be close enough to the ultimate objective to keep supply lines short, but not so close as to risk too much enemy resistance. The practicalities of landing on the far side of the planet and then transporting every man, gun and shell around the world were impossible to overcome. With the invasion fleet in orbit it was only prudent to get as close to the final objective as possible. As for the spaceport, it would be the priority once landed. In the meantime an entire Engineer corp would be tasked with constructing a landing site suitable for the delivery of supply ships.

Opposite Top: *The backbone of the Imperium's assault. Tallarn Armoured companies would match their firepower and armour against that of the Tau.*

Secondly, the main restriction on the initial attack would be the number of drop ships and assault transports available. Fleet Admiral Kotto had the task of organising the Imperial fleet's role in the invasion. He had to find the landing craft needed. This was no easy task, and it was unlikely that enough could be found to simultaneously land three regiments. Anyhow, Gustavus wasn't convinced it was needed. Three regiments would give the invasion force the flexibility to attack several locations at once. De Stael argued for this plan, but Gustavus overruled him. To split their forces would be to give up their biggest advantage as attackers. Even if Taros was expecting an attack (a reasonable assumption), they would have to defend every possible location an invasion might fall. This would cause Taros and the Tau to spread their forces thinly. Gustavus' plan would allow their forces to concentrate at a single point in overwhelming numbers. If the landing was to succeed then they had to hit one place so hard it could not be repulsed. Although it might be a tempting option, even if only used as a diversion to draw anyway enemy forces, splitting the ground forces over several land zones would mean each regiment risked becoming isolated from support and destroyed in detail in subsequent battles. In the end, a single landing zone strategy was settled on. It would include as many troops as Fleet Admiral Kotto could find transports for.

The invasion location still needed to be considered. Somewhere within the Aestus, either north or south of the city was the best option. North would mean increased exposure to the high temperatures and violent storms of the Great Sand Sea. South would be slightly cooler and more stable, but the enemy also knew this and may well be better prepared there. In the end Gustavus preferred the later option.

Thirdly, the water supply situation. An unopposed landing in the uninhabited and undefended deep deserts with their high temperatures and lack of any water supply, as well as the risk of desert storms and the huge distance to the objective rapidly ruled this option out. Where ever the landings eventually occurred water would have to be supplied from off world, shipped-in on the heavy tankers in vast qualities, at least until sufficient supplies could be captured. Standing orders were to be issued to all Imperial Guard regiments that any moisture extraction equipment or hydro-plants capture during the course of the campaign were to be undamaged and turned over to High Command. In this way the advance could help meet some of its own water requirements. There was no easy answer to this tricky problem. Life on Taros was harsh because water was so scare, they would have to be very careful distributing it, and make sure a secure supply line from off-world provided enough for the ground troops. Extra water evaporation equipment would also be loaded.

THE INVASION

CHAPTER 4

At 2392998.M41 the Taros Invasion Fleet officially came into existance under the command of Fleet Admiral Kotto, who raised his flag onboard the Overlord class battlecruiser *Righteous Power*. The six ships of the line, their escort squadrons, and the troop transports began assembling. The holds of the transports were loaded with Imperial Guardmen, artillery pieces, vehicles, tanks, and vast supplies of fuel, food, ammunition and, most vitally, water. The fleet rendezvoused over the course of three days, each transport and its escorts arriving from different systems and forming up into line astern to create the invasion armada.

Each Imperial Guard regiment had been embarked on its assigned transports to a carefully devised timescale, so as to bring all the transports together at the rendezvous point at the same time. As the fleet readied only X Corp was present. The regiments of XI Corp would follow behind as a second wave after the fleet at fought its way in-system, launched the invasion forces and established a secure lodgement area on the surface. Also not yet present was the Legio Ignatum Titan battle-group, but the fleet could not wait for stragglers.

Already waiting at the rendezvous point, and forming the head of the column were the armada's two largest ships, the battlecruiser *Righteous Power* and the Raptors Chapter battle barge *War Talon*. These two ships, and their close escorts, would be the first to arrive in the Taros system. They would be the spearhead of the invasion force, fighting their way in system towards the objective. The three other cruisers of the line would be following close behind, forming a potent battlegroup in the vanguard of the invasion force. Behind them would come the flotilla of transports, with an escort of light cruisers and frigates for close defence.

Admiral Kotto was in supreme command of all the Imperial fleet aspects of the invasion plan. He did not know what resistance to expect within the Taros system, but, from the formation of his fleet, he was preparing to meet Tau ships in a fleet action and to use his largest ships as a shield for the smaller, vulnerable transports.

At 404998.M41 the astro-telepathic signal was sent to the bridge of the *Righteous Power* instructing the fleet to get under way. Ship after

Below: *The Raptors' first strike. Thunderhawk transporters deploy the strike force's heavier equipment onto Taros.*

ship engaged its main thrusters and began to follow the lead vessels towards Taros. The long planned invasion had begun...

The Taros System

After three weeks navigating the fickle tides of warp space the *Righteous Power* disengaged its warp engines and fell back through the mantel of reality, out of the Immaterium. The crew ran to battle-stations as klaxons blared through the decks. Immediately behind the *Righteous Power* was the *War Talon*. The vanguard of the invasion had arrived, it found no enemy fleet waiting. Admiral Kotto set course directly for Taros, but sensor readings showed no enemy ships in the vicinity. The Space Marines verified this; their powerful scanners could find no targets. Admiral Kotto's approach was cautious, maintaining his alert status and expecting a surprise attack, but none came.

In the vanguard's wake followed the cruiser-group, the mainstay of Kotto's fighting force. As the *Star of Cassiopeia*, *Black Duke* and *Hammer of Thrace* powered towards their target they were unemployed. The Tau fleet was nowhere to be found. Several of the escort squadrons were detached to begin wider patrolling for enemy vessels, but they found nothing. Maybe the Tau had abandoned the system to its fate, fearing to face the might of the Imperial Navy. Maybe it was a trap. Admiral Kotto proceeded towards Taros with due caution against zero enemy resistance. The invasion transports could approach unhindered.

The excepted fight to gain low orbit and allow the invasion forces to disembark never materialised. The Imperial fleet moved steadily onwards. It seemed there would be no attempt to halt the invasion in space. With each passing minute it became clearer that there was no Tau fleet here. Free from defensive duties the *War Talon* powered-up and raced ahead, the Raptors commanders keen to begin their planetfall operations. The *War Talon* and her escort were the first to arrive in low orbit, the rest of the fleet keeping a safe distance until the Space Marines had completed their mission.

Missile Silo Decima

For the landings on Taros the Raptors Chapter had pledged its third and sixth companies to the invasion force. Under the command of Captain Orelius, the strike force would also be supported by elements of the Chapter's armoury and fleet, including the power of the battle barge *War Talon*.

The mission assigned to, and accepted by the Raptors was of critical importance to the landings. They were to make sure that a planetary defence missile silo, the only one identified in a position to threaten the invasion fleet in geo-stationary orbit above the landing zone, was destroyed. The silo, codenamed 'Decima' for the operation, was targeted for destruction.

Missile base Decima was part of a network of such facilities, built by the Imperium as Taros' main defence against hostile aliens. If left unhindered, the silos could engage the vulnerable troop transports in orbit. The loss of a single transport would cause massive loss of life amongst the Imperial Guards units onboard, and could drastically effect the outcome of the landings or the following campaign. It was a risk that could not be taken, silo Decima must be neutralised before the main Imperial Guard landings could commence.

The target area was to be subjected to a heavy bombardment by 250 rounds from the *War Talon's* bombardment cannons, but the danger of even a single operational silos surviving, and then scoring a successful hit on a troop transport meant that a unit had to be assigned to making sure no silos were able to fire on the invasion fleet. If the silos were destroyed by the

INVASION FORCE EMBARKATION PLAN

(Transport and principle units carried)

Transport Ship	Unit
Righteous Power	2356th Storm Trooper 89th Tallarn
Star of Cassiopeia	2378th Storm Trooper 89th Tallarn
Black Duke	1002nd Fighter Wing 83rd Fighter Wing 501st Bomber Wing
Hammer of Thrace	386th Fighter Wing 3rd Tallarn Armoured
August	Departmento Munitorum Engineer Corp
Cerebus	Departmento Munitorum Labour Corp
Imperius Javalin	17th Tallarn
Imperius Gauntlet	17th Tallarn
Imperius Anvil	17th Tallarn

Transport Ship	Unit
Graf Derzki	89th Tallarn
Prince Maud	89th Tallarn
Saint Machree	12th Tallarn Armoured
Isolde	12th Tallarn Armoured
Son of Jucha	12th Tallarn Armoured
Marcouf	Ordo Hospitaller 2774th Fighter Wing
Colossia	3rd Tallarn Armoured
Piety	Departmento Munitorum Labour Corp 2424th Bomber Wing, 71st Tactical Wing
Kagul	331st Tallarn Regiment
Honorus Rex (not present)	Legio-Ignatum Battlegroup

shelling then all well and good, but there was no guarantee of success unless there were troops on the ground. The underground silos were designed to withstand the heaviest bombardments, even the fearsome weaponry of the *War Talon* might not be able to destroy the missiles within. High Command deemed Decima to be the single greatest threat to the invasion forces, it fell to the Raptors battle brothers to lead the way and destroy it.

The commanders decided Decima would have to be taken by ground assault. The Raptors would be the first Imperial troops to land on Taros. The third company of the Raptors Chapter, led by Captain Orelius, and later reinforced by the sixth company, would be responsible for this vital mission. Only when Decima was eliminated could the landings start.

The operation was to be a swift surgical strike directly from orbit. There would be no supporting armoured vehicles. The objective was simple, to destroy the missile silos at all costs. Once destroyed, the objective achieved signal would summon the Chapters remaining landing craft to reinforce the ground forces with the sixth company and heavier armour. Once landed the Space Marines would be ready to strike overland or counter-attack enemy moves against the landing zone.

Intelligence Gathering

Once his invasion mission now confirmed, Captain Orelius set about gathering all the intelligence he could about the target and its defences. From the High Command's earlier work there was some relevant information to aid the Space Marines' attack.

One of the documents unearthed by Curator Adepts Skel search was a Departmento Munitorum construction report, almost a thousand years old, and it described the construction of a missile site by a penal labour corp. It gave details of what the site contained. Two underground missile silos, a command bunker, two personnel shelters, enough for a hundred strong silo crew and security staff. External defences works, including a minefield, ditch and razorwire, and an anti-aircraft position, equipped with a hydra turret, as well as other vehicle shelters and stores. Most of these would be below ground, making them very difficult to destroy with conventional artillery, even the *War Talon's* bombardment cannons might not reach deep enough. Amongst the data recovered were also three faded vid-slate images of an inspection made by the then Planetary Governor of the site after it came into service. From these images and the construction report, a map could be created of the target.

Attacking the site based on only second hand information was risky. What if the regime or the Tau had upgraded the defences or increased the size or the number of silos? It was not unreasonable to assume that given the planet's renegade status, the Planetary Governor would seek to increase his defences against an outside attack. Captain Orelius needed some first-hand information he could rely on.

Before any of his battle brothers were committed to the assault he would send the available scouts to the surface to reconnoitre the site and relay their findings. His strike force was supported by only one Scout squad. They would be the first to deploy, before any bombardment of the target began. The scouts' mission would be to survey the site from a distance and relay that information back to the *War Talon* for final adjustments to the attack plan.

Planning and Training

On board the *War Talon,* Orelius and his senior battle brothers prepared for the coming battle. This assault was the sort of mission his brothers trained for all their lives, but it still needed detailed planning. Specific refresher training in the use of melta-bombs and demolition charges, as well fire and movement routines and Thunderhawk disembarkation drills were practiced time and again aboard the battle barge.

Orelius was well aware that the initial threat to any planetary assault would be the anti-aircraft defences. These would be high-priority targets, because the loss of a Thunderhawk gunship full of 30 battle brothers could put the whole mission in jeopardy. Before the main force could attack the silos, the Hydra turret would need to be eliminated.

The third battle company, being of standard Codex Astartes organisation, contained two Assault squads trained to use jump packs for deep strike operations from high or low altitude. A single Assault squad would be committed to attack the Hydra emplacement. They would be the first wave, led by Veteran Sergeant Igis and deploying from Thunderhawk gunship at high altitude. Such deployments are usually made from low altitude, to avoid the worst effects of any ground fire, but given the nature of the target, Orelius commanded that the Thunderhawk stay above the maximum known range of the Hydras autocannons. This way, the Thunderhawk carrying the assault squad would be totally safe. The risk of brothers being hit whilst in free fall was judged far less than that of a Thunderhawk being destroyed or so badly damaged it would be forced to abandon its mission.

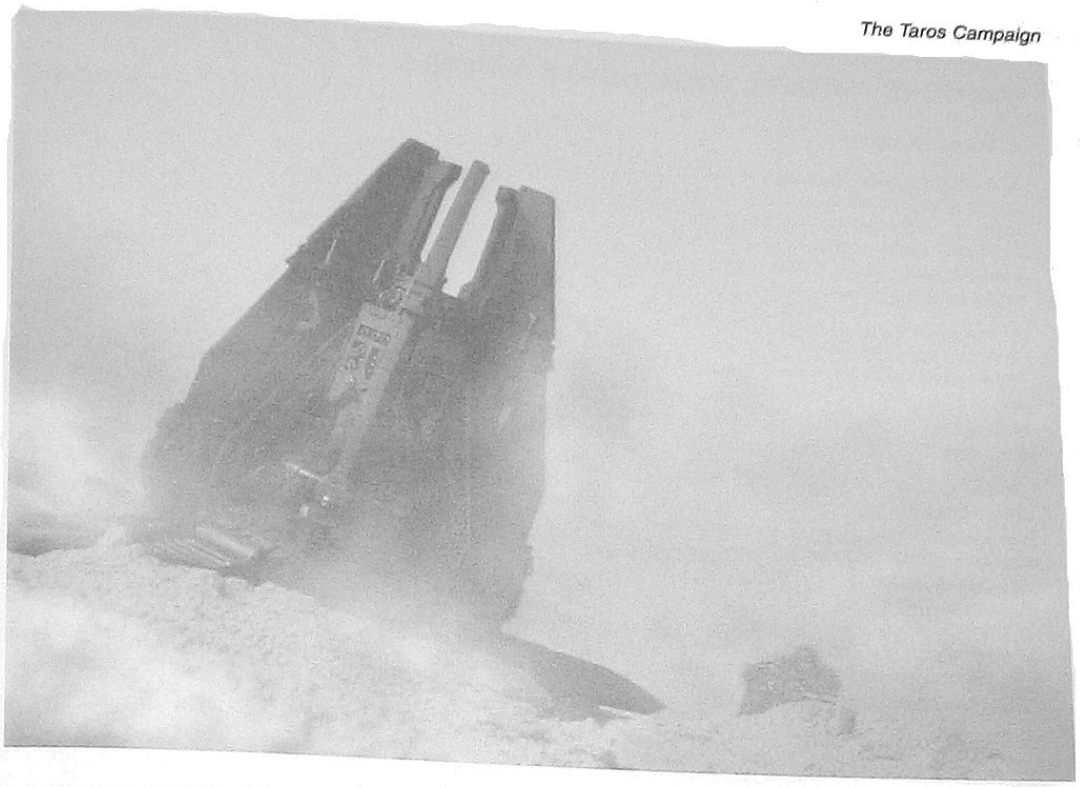
The Assault squad was to land as close to their target as possible, rapidly overcome any resistance and set melta-charges on the Hydra turret. The time the Assault squad jumped from their Thunderhawk would be designated as Z-hour. All other timing for the operation would be taken with Z hour as the base. The scouts would launch in drop pods at Z hour -105 and land at Z hour -102, giving them 53 minutes after landing to get in position, observe the target and report back their findings.

The second wave was scheduled to attack at Z hour +6, giving Veteran Sergeant Igis and his 9 Space Marines just 6 minutes to knockout the AA turret.

The second wave would consist of the main strike forces, two Thunderhawk gunships each carrying two Tactical squads and a Devastator squad, designated as Strike Forces B and C. The Thunderhawks would land their

Time Table for Raptors Attack

Z-Hour -105:	Scout drop pod launched
Z Hour -102:	Scout drop pod lands
Z Hour -85:	Scouts in surveillance positions
Z-hour -32:	Orbital bombardment begins
Z-hour –10:	All Thunderhawks launch
Z-Hour -2:	Orbital bombardment ceases
Z-Hour +0:	Strike Force A jump from Thunderhawk
Z-Hour +6:	Hydra turret destroyed Strike Forces B and C land
Z-Hour +9:	Strike Force D lands
Z-Hour +15:	Predicted primary objectives complete
Z-Hour +30:	Predicted all enemy resistance overcome
Z-hour +40:	6th Company landings begin



Right: *The first invasion forces to land. Raptors scouts land in the desert ahead of the main attack. Their mission was to report on the missile silo's defences and then observe the orbital bombardment.*

TAROS INVASION FORCE

ADEPTUS ASTARTES TACTICAL WEAPONS LOAD

Mark 7 power armour, settings optimised for desert environments.

1 x Mark IV 'Macragge' pattern Boltgun.

4 x 20 bolt sickle ammunition magazines

1 carbon composite combat knife

2 Type 14 general purpose fragmentation hand grenades

2 Type 7 anti-tank 'krak' hand grenades

1 shaped demolition charge (2 per squad)

cargoes inside the battery perimeter. The squads would then disembark to attack the missile silos themselves. A third Thunderhawk would land just behind them carrying Captain Orelius and his Command squad along with other vital support, Apothecary, Techmarines etc, and a reserve force of 3rd company's remaining 2 Tactical squads. This was designated as Strike Force D. These reserve units had a flexible role, to reinforce either of the attacks should they meet with stiff resistance. If all went to plan they would not be needed for the main assault and could be saved to establish a secure perimeter on the ground after the silos were destroyed. The final squad of his company, the second Assault squad, was to remain on the *War Talon* to deploy with 6th company.

The plan for Strike Forces B and C was simple. The two Tactical squads would advance on the silos under dedicated covering fire from their supporting Devastator squads. Once close enough they would set the demolition charges on the silo rooves. They would then fall back to a safe distance and the squad sergeant would detonate the charges, collapsing the silo roof to prevent missile launch.

Their primary objective complete, 3rd company would then sweep through the rest of the silo site, eliminate any resistance and secure a perimeter before reinforcements and vehicles from 6th company landed. In all, it was estimated the entire operation would take just 30 minutes from Z hour to all objectives being complete and secure.

Orbital Bombardment

With the vanguard of the invasion fleet now approaching Taros, the *War Talon* quickly manoeuvred into its bombardment position in a geo-stationary low orbit. Its target location already locked in, the bombardment cannons and lance turrets prepared to open fire as the planet's rotation slowly brought the target area into the battle

TAROS INVASION FORCE

ADEPTUS ASTARTES ASSAULT WEAPONS LOAD

Mark 7 Power armour, settings optimized for desert environments.

1 x Mark II 'Macragge' pattern bolt pistol.

4 x 10 bolt straight ammunition magazines

1 Mark IIIb chainsword

1 carbon composite combat knife

2 Type 14 general purpose fragmentation hand grenades

2 Type 5c melta charges

1 'Phaeton' pattern multi-directional, twin retro-thrust jump pack

RAPTORS TACTICAL SQUAD SPACE MARINE

1. Power Armour

This Space Marine wears a suit of Mark VII power armour, sometimes referred to as 'Armorum Impetor' or 'Eagle Armour', although on this particular set of armour the Chapter Artificers have replaced the breastplate with one converted from an older Mark V suit, with the re-instigation of the chest eagle and the power cables relocated to the interior.

All marks of Space Marine armour have many variants. Some do not contain all the original features, others, as in this case, utilise parts from different marks of armour. Armour is usually personalised by each Space Marine, and is revered as a holy relic of the Chapter. Suits or parts of suits can be very old and are often reused many times.

Like all power armour, this suit contains an exoskeletal array of actuators and fibre bundles which replicate muscular commands via a neurone interface that literally plugs into the wearer's spinal column, (via his black carapace), to his motor-nervous system. Through this interface, the heavy armour becomes part of the wear and responds to his movements and mind-impulse controls without adding any encumbrance, despite the suit's weight when inert. Whilst appearing heavy and unwieldy, this Space Marine will experience little weight gain and retains almost his full array of movements and agility.

The muscle fibre bundles and actuators actually increase the (already considerable) strength of the wearer, allowing him to lift heavier loads or jump greater distances than when not wearing the suit.

The outer, armoured layer of this powered armour consists of shaped adamantium and plasteel plates, encased in a ceramite ablative layer. The armour is shaped to deflect as well as absorb the energy of incoming blows. The shoulder pads of this suit contain small, auto-responsive plates which burst outwards in a micro-explosion to counteract the energy of an incoming attack and prevent penetration.

Beneath the armoured protection lies the internal workings of the suit's life-support and combat systems. The armour contains numerous life support systems. The lower back holds a liquid high-protein food store, which when combined with the Space Marine's genetically enhanced metabolism produces no waste and keeps a Space Marine's body functioning without the need for any other nourishment. During battle there is no need for this Space Marine to stop to eat or drink as the suit provides all his nutrition.

The suit also has its own back-up power supply and a solar array to recharge this supply, meaning the suit can operate for a short time without its back pack.

The suit also contains a de-tox injector with five doses. This will counteract the effects of most common poisons and toxins. The injector can be also be used for stimulants and (in contravention of Codex Astartes guidelines), some Chapters have used it to administer combat drugs.

The palm of the gauntlets contain sensors to read information from weapons held in the hands, and to pass genetic identification codes to the weapons. Without the proper code, this Space Marine's boltgun will not function.

The soles of the boots are magnetic, as well as being constructed of a micropore adherent compound, meaning a Space Marine will not slip on even the slickest surfaces. The magnetic function can be turned on or off as needed.

2. Backpack

The main power source for the suit is situated in the backpack. This highly efficient sub-atomic core provides the power for all the internal systems. The suit does contain a reserve supply and a back-up micro-solar panel array in case of emergencies. The reserve power source can be recharged via the solar panel, and when fully charged should be enough to last a month (with all non-vital systems disabled), without the need for major maintenance or resupplying.

Thermal waste dissipators form the characteristic nozzles on the backpack. This thermal waste can be used as limited manoeuvring thrusters in zero-gravity.

The backpack also contains this suit's oxygen supply and air purification system that allows the wearer to breath in toxic environments. Combined with a Space Marine's multi-lung implant, the wearer can operate unhindered in any atmosphere, as well as underwater and in hard vacuum. Air intakes are also situated on the backpack.

The lower part of the backpack is the temperature regulating system. In combat, with the suit functioning at maximum capacity, heat can build up rapidly. Settings for heat control can be adjusted depending upon what environment the suit is operating in, obviously retaining more heat in cold conditions or in the -278 centigrade of deep space than in hot conditions. On Taros, this suit will be optimised for the planet's mean average temperature. Within the armour, the wearer will experience only minor temperatures fluctuations as the suit maintains the correct temperature to keep the Space Marine operating at peak physical effiency.

3. Helmet

This Space Marine's upgraded Mark VII helmet contains most of the suits combat systems. All of these helmet systems are referred to by one title – auto-senses. Features include the primary, thought-activated, comms-link.

continued overleaf

Brother Kalius of the Raptors Chapter, 3rd company. He is a veteran brother of 2nd Tactical squad, seen here deployed for the attack on missile silo Decima.

This Space Marine's helmet also has an additional comms-booster and scrambler attachment, to block enemy attempts to listen in to communications channels. The right eye also includes range-finder, targeter and target recognition friend or foe upgrades to the helmet's basic set. Such equipment is more common in Devastator squads, but not limited to them.

The visor displays tactical information. This includes maps, waypoint markers, compass, as well as calling up weapon-data, passed through the weapon's grip and the palm of the glove. Primarily this would be an ammunition counter display, but also gives emergency warnings about overheating and jams. This helmet also incorporates visual magnification up to x4, which when combines with the wearer's Occulobe implant means a Space Marine sees very well in most conditions. The visor also includes basic infra-red scanning.

Through his auto-senses, the Space Marine can access full diagnosis of the armour's operating status and relay information about the external environment, such as atmospheric composition, barometric pressure, the presence of harmful chemicals and toxins etc. Diagnostic sensors are positioned in various places on the suit to scan for such information.

The helmet can also display biological information about the Space Marine himself, heart rate (for both hearts – Space Marines have two), blood pressure, toxin levels, the workings of the Larraman's organ or Oolitic kidney, to assess internal damage. These bio-status read-outs can also be broadcast to Space Marine command units for monitoring during battle and training.

As well as containing the communications equipment, the helmet's ear pieces screens the wearer from sonic attacks and includes amplifiers to the Space Marine's Lyman's ear, giving sharper hearing and allowing the Space Marine to filter out or enhance specific sounds. The Lyman's ear also means a Space Marine is unlikely to become dizzy or disorientated, even when hit by strong blast waves.

The grill on the helmet contains a microphone, allowing the wearer to talk normally through the helmet or amplify his voice over a short distance, sometimes useful in the din of battle. If the atmosphere allows, the grill can open to allow the wearer to breath the atmosphere rather than use the air purification equipment or internal air supply.

Finally, the helmet visor incorporates an auto-reactive photo-chromatic visor, that protects the wearer from light level changes, dimming or blacking out completely should the wearer be exposed to sudden, dazzling light.

4. Relic and Insignia

Strapped to the left shoulder pad are two engraved skulls. These are holy relics, which maybe former owners of the armour, fellow squad members killed in battle or those of worthy foes carried as trophies. Many such sub-cults exist throughout the Space Marine Chapters, with each following its own rituals and traditions, often inherited from the Chapter's recruitment world. These relics will be gifts from the Company Chaplain, rewards for exceptional dedication or bravery in battle.

The plastron chest eagle is worn as the symbol of this Space Marine's loyalty to his Emperor. Chest eagles are common to all Space Marine Chapters.

The Raptors Chapter badge is a white eagle's head. It is worn on the left shoulder pad (the beak is just visible) and repeated on the right knee-pad.

The right shoulder pads bears the Tactical squad markings (large arrow) and the squad number in roman numerals, in this case second Tactical squad. Underneath this is a name scroll. This personal cloth scroll bears the Space Marine's name, and, like all the non-codex additions to this armour will have been donated by the Company Chaplain, to reinforce the Space Marine's faith and morale.

The badge of the Taros Campaign (crossed spears on a red disk), have been temporarily stencilled onto the left leg greave and helmet. This symbol should be carried by all the Emperor's forces fighting on Taros, regardless of which fighting arm or organsiation they are from. The badge helps identify the forces as loyal during combined operations. It will be removed at the conclusion of the campaign.

As a veteran, this Space Marine bears his own personal heraldry; a shield pinned to the right shoulder pad, bearing a sun symbol. The meaning of this is unknown, but it may hark back to a time before this Space Marine was recruited.

Finally, this Space Marine's boltgun bears twelve kill markings scored onto the weapon's case, probably from previous missions.

5. Boltgun

As a member of a Tactical squad, this Space Marine's principle weapon is the boltgun. This weapon is a standard model Mark IV with a sickle magazine containing twenty bolts. Each bolt is a rocket propelled, armour-piercing, mass-reactive, explosive round. Bolts explode after penetrating a target, and are capable of destroying small vehicles, as well as having horrific effects on infantry. The weapon has single shot and semi-automatic setting, firing a burst of three bolts in quick succession. The boltgun also includes a palm print sensor for genetic identification coding.

6. Grenades and Equipment

In addition to his boltgun, Brother Kalius carries other combat equipment. Hanging from his utility belt are two fragmentaion grenades. He also carries three spare magazine pouches for his boltgun. The cylinderical object hanging from his back, below the backpack, is harder to identify. Given the nature of the Raptors' first mission on Taros, this may well be a shaped demolition charge, carried to destroy the target missile silos. Not visible here, the Space Marines will also be carrying krak grenades, and may well also carry a bolt pistol as a secondary weapon.

7. Combat Knife

The Space Marine's last weapon, and his only close combat weapon, is his combat knife. This highly ornate piece, bearing a dedicational eagle crossguard, heavy pommel and a 50cm, blade is almost a short sword. Used for hand-to-hand combat, it is kept honed to a keen edge.

It is also used during the Chapter's ceremonies and rituals, and will have been blessed before battle. It is not a bayonet, and cannot be fitted to the boltgun, it must be wielded by hand. Hand-to-hand combat and knife-fighting is part of all Space Marine's basic training, instilling skills which will continue to be honed throughout Brother Kalius' service to the Emperor.

barge's line of fire. If the gun crew's mission was successful then the subsequent attack would be a simple mopping-up operation. With luck, the demolition charges would not be needed at all, and the *War Talon's* big guns would knock out the missile silos with direct hits. This was unlikely though, over such long distances destroying a small, armoured target would be difficult and confirmation would still be needed on the ground.

Whilst the gunners prepared, the flight decks and launch bays of the *War Talon* were a mass of activity. Thunderhawk gunships prepped for take-off, fuel tanks full, every system checked and double-checked. Four Raptors Thunderhawks stood ready to begin the invasion of Taros.

Each individual Space Marine was also prepared for battle. His power armour suit was calibrated for desert environments, 99% efficient water recycling and maximum heat dissipation. Bolters and heavy weapons were test fired on the ship's range before being issued. Extra ammunition, grenades, knives, chainswords and bolt pistols were handed out to the files of armoured battle brothers. Lastly, each Tactical squad was issued two bulky demolition charges, and the squad sergeants were given the detonators.

Before embarkation, the entire of third company stood shoulder to shoulder in ranks as Captain Orelius addressed his brothers. He advised them that they would bring the Emperors justice to those that chosen to turn away from his divine light. Theirs was the honour of striking the first blow. In life or death each brother would do the Chapter great honour this day. Then they all knelt before their company Chaplain as he led them in the ritual pre-battle prayers.

The company rose as one as the *War Talon's* bombardment cannons opened fire, the concussion reverberating through the decks. The first shells to fall upon Taros itself would presage the beginning of the invasion. The Raptors Space Marines efficiently filed into position within their Thunderhawk gunships to await launch.

Planetfall

Before the bombardment started, operations had already begun. The Scout squad in their drop pod had already launched. The pod made planetfall safely and the scouts moved out across the sun-scorched surface, disguised by their cameleoline cloaks and carry heavy surveillance equipment as well as their sniper rifles.

Once in position, the squad set up their equipment and began beaming a secure transmission back to the *War Talon's* operations room. Initial intelligence was correct, the sight contained two silos and an AA turret, but the outer ring of defences had been improved with the addition of turret gun emplacements. These heavy weapons might be a major threat to landed Thunderhawks, so, as Captain Orelius watched the relays aboard the *War Talon*, he made some adjustments to his plans.

Strike Force B was to abandoned its target silo and instead use their heavy weapons to engage and destroy the turret emplacements. The three reserve Tactical squads would take over Strike Force B's part of the mission. This left Orelius with no flexible reserve on the ground to counter unexpected enemy moves. So he quickly contacted Captain Kaedes of sixth company. Kaedes' company was already on standby to reinforce the assault. Instead of waiting for third company to secure the landing zone, Orelius requested two Tactical squads immediately prepare for a drop pod launch and standby should he need reinforcing at short notice.

Last-minute adjustments to the plan complete, Orelius boarded his own Thunderhawk, the ramp closing behind him. The planning was over, now it was time to fight.

Left: *Amidst dust clouds thrown up by their orbital bombardment, Raptors Space Marines press their assault on the missile silo.*

Left: *Raptors Tactical brothers mop-up resistance after destroying missile silo Decima, and clearing the way for the invasion fleet to move into orbit.*

Down on the surface the Scout squads watched from a safe distance as the orbital bombardment began to impact on the surface. Huge clouds of smoke and dust were thrown up in the desert as the flashes of lance beams and great explosions rent Taros' surface. It lasted exactly 30 minutes, as an area for 5 kilometres around the site was smothered in heavy explosions. What damage had actually been done to the silo site was impossible to tell through the thick dust.

Onboard the *War Talon* the four Thunderhawks received clearance to launch. Rocket engines blasted into life as one after the other the gunships sped from the launch bay and headed for the surface. The first Thunderhawk to pass through the heat of atmospheric entry was that carrying Strike Force A. Inside, ten heavily armed assault troops, each with a jump pack, chainsword, holstered bolt pistol and a bandolier of melta-bombs, stood ready. Following instructions from the cockpit each brother awaited in silence for the order to jump.

Its nose still red hot from the stress of atmospheric entry, the forward hold's rear ramp was lower, blasting all inside with a rush of air. The first squad members stepped forwards to the edge, each powering up his jump pack systems. When the order to jump was received through their helmet-comms there was no hesitation – two by two the assault troops stepped over the edge into the void.

Instantly each Space Marine was flicked into the Thunderhawk's slipstream, the torrent of fast moving air created by the gunship's own forward motion. The impact of the wall of air was severe, and each man fought to avoid being flipped and tumbled uncontrollably by it. As the forces of gravity pulled the assault troops downwards, their jump pack motors began to work. At a mere 100 metres above the ground, the thrusters ignited to slow the plunging descent. The braking power of the jump pack exerting huge gravitational pressure on the troopers, pressure that could crush a normal man, but protected within his power armour and by his genetically enhanced physique each assault troopers could overcome the lethal Gs, orientate himself to the landing zone, and control the direction of his descent. Using the jump packs thruster controls he could guide himself directly onto the target to a safe landing. From jump to planetfall, the descent took no more than sixty seconds.

The Assault on Missile Silo Decima

As Strike Force A hit the ground they came under sustained fire from the Hydra emplacement. Explosive autocannon rounds began to kick up the dust and tracers flashed past the assault troops. Unable to hit its attackers in the sky, the AA gunners had waited, and now laid down a hail of shells, all four barrels of the quad-mount thundering. Despite the heavy orbital shelling, it seemed most of the defences had remained intact, as had the silos. The area was scarred with smoking impact craters, but the bombardment had scored no direct hits. The craters would be vital cover for following the assault, Veteran Sergeant Igis found himself in one such crater. On landing two of his squad had already been seriously wounded. There was no time to waste, the crater offered cover, but his assault troops must silence that gun before the other Thunderhawks arrived. Gathering the men immediately around him, Sergeant Igis ordered them to move forwards, before launching himself over the crater rim. The heavy fire was intense, the big autocannons barking as its grazing fire flashed across the desert. As the Assault Marines rushed forwards several more were hit, the force of the rounds knocking each man clean off his feet. Sergeant Igis was first to arrive at the target, dodging through the fire, bolt pistol in one hand, melta-bomb in the other. In one mighty power armoured leap he cleared the emplacement parapet, ducked under the red-hot gun barrels and rolled to the base of the turret. He was quickly joined by two of his men. Igis activated his melta-bombs and slapped the magnetic disk to the turret. "Six seconds!" he warned over the comm, as the others placed their charges and rolled away.

Within the turret the gun crew knew what to expect, and heard the metallic clang of the melta-charge being fixed outside. The commander threw open the hatch and leapt

clear as the melta-charges detonated in sequence, a triple explosion that turned the Hydra turret into an inferno. Molten metal sprayed the compartment within, killing the remaining crew before igniting the ammunition store. Fragments of the gun turret were thrown high into the air as it was ripped apart from the inside. Igis and men rolled away, their power armour pepper with flames and shrapnel but most of the lethal blast clearing them. The first part of the mission was complete. In all, three assault brothers had be seriously wounded in the headlong attack. The others who had been hit were not seriously wounded, each had been saved by the admanatium shell of his armour, they would continue the fight.

Now the distant sound of Thunderhawk jets could be heard growing louder, the silo's security platoon, who had survived the orbital bombardment in their underground shelter, began to emerge. At first they faced little fire, only the bolt pistol rounds of Igis survivors, who were now clustered around the brightly burning wreckage of the AA turret. Then, as the triple jet roar grew closer, heavy bolter fire began to sweep the area. It was a deluge of fire raining from above as the Thunderhawks raced in, slowed, hydraulic landing gear lowered and the aircraft flared back its nose before touching down. The ramp was already opening, crashing down to reveal the Space Marines within. The Tactical squads rushed down the ramp and into the battle, boltguns levelled at the hip, bolter rounds slashing across the silo compound.

The Planetary Defence Force security squads had seen enough. Several broke rather than face the wrath of the infamous Space Marines. As explosive rounds detonated all around them they sort cover or fled. The Tactical squads advanced steadily upon their targets, whilst the Devastator squads took up their firing positions. Only seconds after landing, the Thunderhawk behind them powered skywards again, leaving a thickening pall of dust swirling in its wake.

Underground, in the silo command bunker, the controllers were frantically trying to arm and prepare the missiles for launch. News from the battle above was confused and unclear. It was a race against time. The command bunker had a clear target, the *War Talon* stationed in low orbit above, but could they get their missiles launched before the silos were destroyed?

Overcoming resistance on the ground was simple enough. The security platoon had offered little fight after the first uneven exchanges of fire. The attacking Tactical squads had little to fear from lasgun fire. The perimeter turret emplacements were a different matter. These weapons were sighted to defend the base against a ground attack, but they could also sweep the silo site with fire. Captain Orelius had diverted Strike Force B to engage them, hoping to use the Devastator's heavy weapons to destroy the well-armoured guns. They were now engaged in a heavy exchange of fire.

Meanwhile, against only light resistance, Strike Force C had reached its target silo. Having cut through the encircling razorwire with their combat knives, the squads were planting and fusing demolition charges. The first silo was doomed. The second silo was holding out due to the fire of the turret emplacements, but as the Devastator squad began to win the engagement, destroying the turrets with krak missiles and lascannon hits, the assault units were closing-in on it, too.

The desert shook to the sound of the first silo being destroyed. The shaped explosions of the demolition charges splintered the reinforced plastcrete silo roofs, causing it to collapse. The missile launcher tube within with choked with rubble. Any attempt to launch now would be a catastrophe, causing the missile to explode inside. Realising they had the lost the race, the command bunker crew abandoned their posts and fled. Soon the Raptors Space Marines would be blasting in the bunker doors and sweeping the interior with boltgun fire. The command crew fled rather than face certain death.

Target Decima had been taken. The second silo was destroyed soon after the first. The last remanents of resistance surrendered or fled. It had been frantic battle but Raptors casualties had been light. One dead, five serious wounded, twelve lightly wounded. Captain Orelius surveyed the smoke blackened scene; the dead lying scattered in the sand were they had fallen, his Space Marines moving quickly into new positions to defend the site's perimeter. Upon hearing each squad report in and declare their area of the perimeter secure, he contacted the *War Talon* with instructions to launch sixth company.

Reinforcements

The Raptors sixth company arrived in a flight of Thunderhawk gunship and transporters, setting down inside the silo site perimeter to unload men, vehicles and fresh ammunition supplies. They had run the same operation countless times in the past. Quickly, smoothly and without a hitch the Space Marines prepared for the invasion following behind them. They had cleared the way with a ruthless efficiency only the Adeptus Astartes could provide. Even as the custodians of the strike forces' vehicles climbed aboard their charges and awoke the Machine Spirits within to life; the Taros Invasion Fleet was moving into orbit.

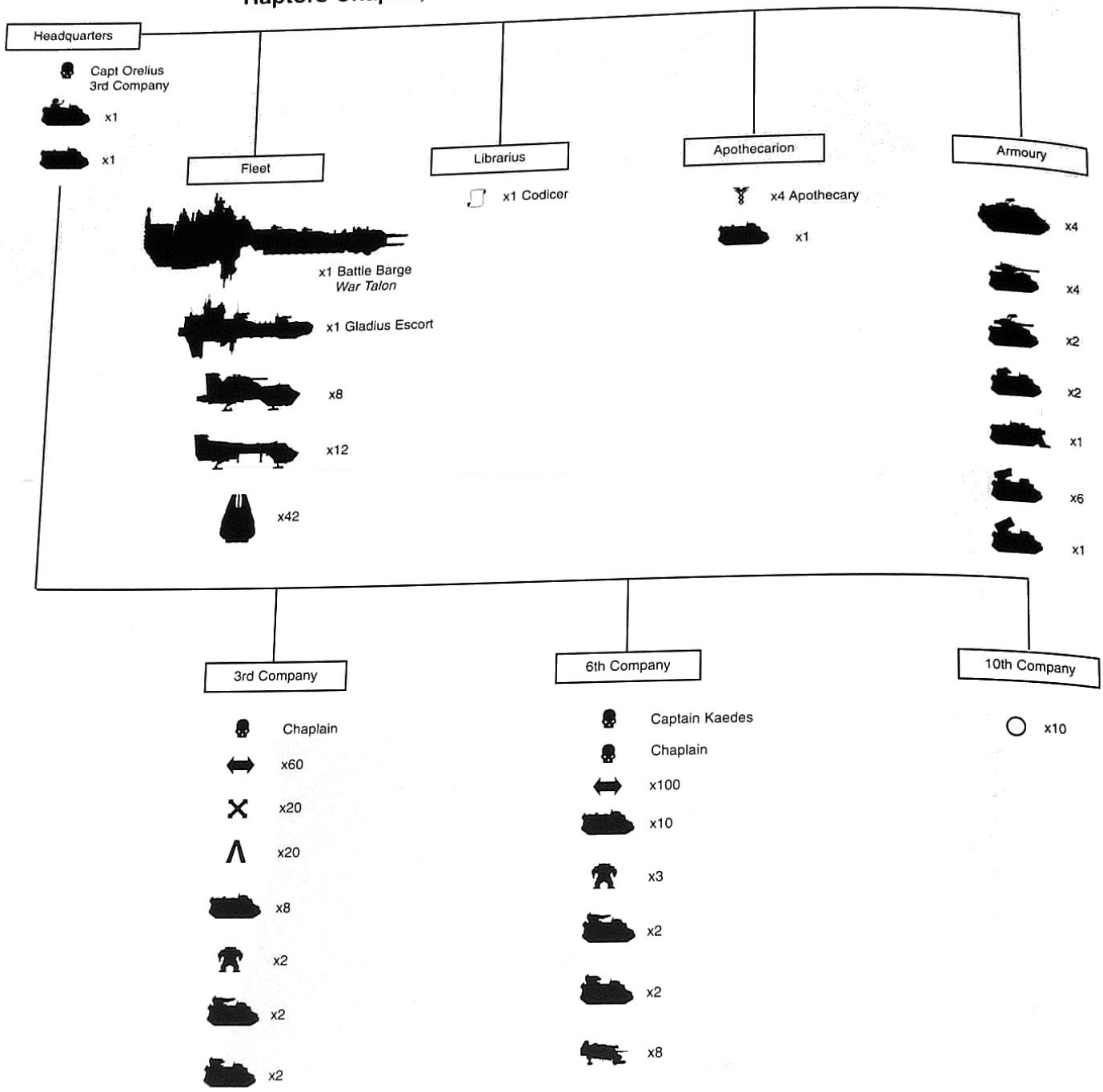
Captains Orelius and Kaedes await new orders. Their task now was to sit tight, and should any enemy force threaten to attack the landing site, launch a fast, armoured, counter-attack into them. They had cleared the way for the Imperial Guard transports, now they must act as a security shield around the landing zone.

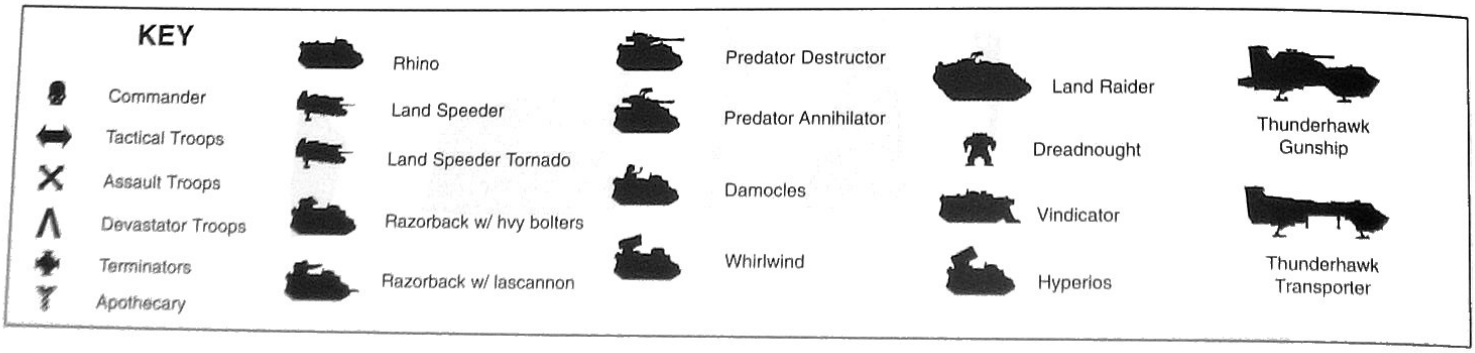
Imperial Guard Landings

The mission objective complete signal from Capatin Orelius was the cue for the first invasion tranports to move into low orbit and begin their own landings. The first Imperial Guard troops to land on enemy territory on

UNIT ORGANISATION

Raptors Chapter, Strike Force *Orelius*, Taros Campaign





Taros were to be infantry companies of the 17th Tallarn regiment. Many felt the elite Storm Trooper companies, specially trained to spearhead the invasion, should be deployed, but this faction in De Stael's staff was overruled. Lord Marshal De Stael wanted a rapid build-up, more men, more heavy weapons, more vehicles and tanks. A Storm Trooper company offered good infantry but could not provide the heavier equipment. General Barim-Abas of the 17th felt that his men had the experience, training and equipment to perform the mission admirably.

The original plan had required enough landing craft to put down three entire Imperial Guard regiments in the first wave. Fleet Admiral Kotto had been unable to supply the vast numbers of landing craft required to fulfil that plan. Instead the fleet had enough landing craft for just over one regiment. The other would have to wait their turns.

Onboard the sister transports, *Imperius Javalin, Gauntlet,* and *Anvil,* in excess of 10,000 men of 17th Tallarn regiment were being transfered from their berths to the landing craft. As well as men came vehicles, equipment and supplies. The men destined for the first wave were equipped with full combat loads; armour, grenades, extra ammunition, rations and water supplies had been issued to the leading infantry companies. The men filed into the bellies of the big landing craft, packed in shoulder to shoulder in darkness. The last man onboard from each company was the company commander. On landing he would also be the first man off. At the back of each assault company was a Commissar, bringing up the rear to force any malingerers out of the landing craft and into battle.

Whilst the three transports moved into low orbit the fleet's escort ships took up patrol stations, and the larger cruisers piquetted the surrounding space to defend the waiting transports against sudden attack. The *Righteous Power* herself stayed in low orbit with the lead transports, ready to provide orbital bombardment. Aboard several of the landing craft were Imperial Navy shore parties, led by Navy officers from the *Righteous Power.* They were there to act as liason between the Imperial Guard and the fleet, and as fire control teams should resistance be strong enough for the *Righteous Power's* guns to be needed. Also onboard the battlecruiser was Lord Marshal De Stael, in place to oversee landing operations until he could transfer his headquarters to the surface.

After a bumpy descent through the atmosphere it seemed De Stael had chosen his southern landing ground well. In the deserts of Taros' Aestus there was no resistance. The landing craft, each packed with men and materials, were not fired on. When the great loading doors opened and the ramps fell, crashing into the desert sand, the men of the Tallarn 17th marched out into scorching temperatures and bright sunlight to find there was no battle. The enemy was nowhere to be seen. As the landings proceeded not a shot was fired. File by file the lead companies of Imperial Guardsmen marched down the ramps and into the savage, dry heat of Taros. With their officers shouting orders the disembarkation was orderly and quick. Immediately upon landing the companies began to move forwards to begin forming a defensive perimeter. Following the lead infantry came the first tanks. One after another, Leman Russ rumbled down the ramps and followed the men to form strong points in the new perimeter. De Stael listened to the reports from the surface of an unopposed landing. So far so good, but the enemy might already be reacting and mustering a counter-attack force. He needed to seize this opportunity and reinforce as rapidly as possible; he didn't know how long it might last. Company by company the 17th Tallarn landed, disembarked and marched away from the landing zone. Once unloaded, the landing craft blasted off and returned to dock with the other transports now moving into low orbit to begin the process again. The 89th Tallarn would be the next regiment to land. The transports repeated the process of the 17th. The invasion force had its foothold, now they need the extra forces and extra supplies to make it stick.

Whilst the regiments of X Corp began the long process of transfering everything from orbit to the landing zones the Raptors Chapter had already completed its landings. The entire of third and sixth companies and all their vehicles were in position surrounding Decima silo. Captains Orelius and Kaedes placed themselves next the task force's Damocles Rhino and listened to the incoming reports. The invasion was progressing as planned. No enemy contact had been reported – yet.

As it turned out, the Raptors assault on Decima was the only combat on the first day of the Taros invasion. It seemed the enemy had been caught by surprise by the landings and had no forces positioned for an immediate counter-attack. The second day might see the excepted attack materialise, but the longer the enemy left it, the stronger the Imperium's forces would become, and the harder it would become to remove them.

Days went by and nothing was seen of the enemy. The 17th Tallarn regiment, now dug-in behind sand-bagged positions, their artillery batteries located, Leman Russes half buried in tank scrapes in the sand, was ordered to begin reconnaissance operations. Their Sentinel companies and selected Infantry squads were to launch long range patrols out into the surrounding desert to see if they could find any evidence of enemy activity or build-up. The main effort was to be concentrated northwards, the direction the eventual advance would come. As well as reporting enemy sightings, the patrols would also provide useful information about the terrain the regiments faced and routes of advance.

Meanwhile, behind the 17th's front lines the landing zone was a hive of activity. Landing craft were continually touching down or taking off. Sentinel powerlifters were stomping to and fro carrying ammunition crates and fuel drums. Trojans were dragging fuel and water bowsers between the ships and the supply dumps. Through all this

Taros Invasion. Landing Schedule
(Order of units to be disembarked)

17th Tallarn Regiment
89th Tallarn Regiment
2378th Storm Trooper Company
3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment
Departmento Munitorum Labour Corp
Departmento Munitorum Engineer Corp
386th Fighter Wing
Departmento Munitorum Labour Corp
2356th Storm Trooper Company
331st Tallarn Regiment
Ordo Hospitaller Detachment
2774th Fighter Wing
2424th Bomber Wing
71st Tactical Wing
12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment
83rd Fighter Wing
501st Bomber Wing
1002nd Fighter Wing

marched columns of men, mostly Tallarn infantry or Storm Troopers platoons, heavily laden with their own fighting kit, or wretched Departmento labour squads, dressed in rags and carrying shovels and picks. Tanks and Chimera squadrons rumbled through the desert in neat lines. De Stael's build-up was now in full flow.

On day four, the first of the Munitorum labour corps was landed and immediately set to work constructing an aircraft landing field. The first of the Imperial Navy fighter squadrons, the 386th, was awaiting onboard the *Hammer of Thrace* for an airbase and supplies to be put in place before they could transfer to the surface. This was a priority task. The addition of an Imperial Navy Fighter squadron would add greatly to the invasion force's reconnaissance assets. Able to range far and wide over the desert they could seek out enemy forces at far greater ranges than the Sentinels or Armoured Fist squads already operating in the surrounding desert.

For De Stael the landing was a triumph of organisation. The feared Tau counter-attack had never come. The force build-up was going well. Of course there were problems to be solved. Congestion in the landing zone, men or landing craft becoming lost or arriving at the wrong location. Already water supplies were a problem, but the tanker *Empress of Svedeg* was now in orbit and unloading 1,000 tonnes of water a day. At this rate it would still take twenty days to fully unload. The men on the ground needed more, and transporting water was taking up more space in the landing craft than expected, slowing the whole landing process down. There was a shortage of powerlifters for unloading, and De Stael requisitioned many from the Tallarn regiments on the perimeter to aid at the landing zone. The knock-on effect of this was that the Tallarn regiments had to use their own manpower to move supplies to the front. Guardsmen were used as pack animals to carry shells to the artillery guns or water cans to the trenches. Platoons given supply duty laboured in the hot sun carrying crate after crate. In the first week it became the most hated of duties, but whilst the enemy didn't attack this inefficient use of combat manpower was not a problem for 4621st Army.

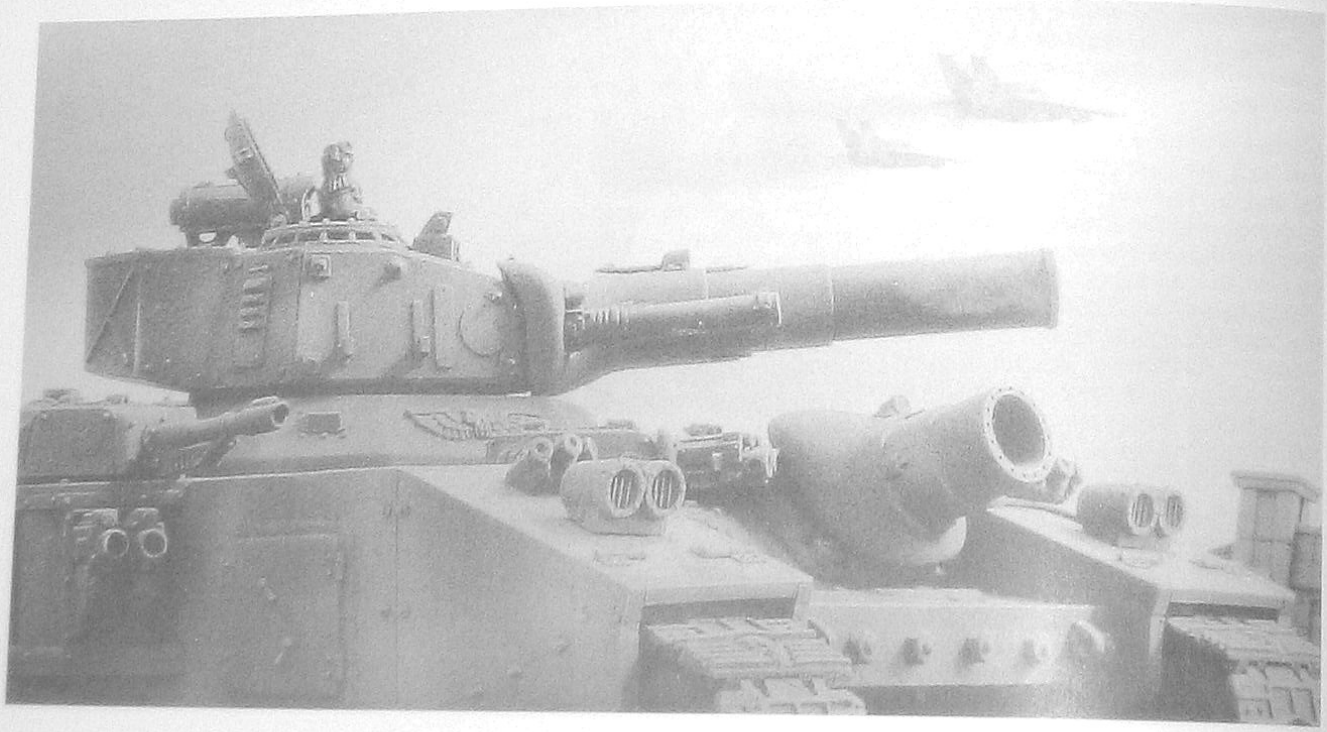
Supplies of all kinds were now pouring onto Taros. Fuel, food, medical supplies, communications equipment, sandbags (by the thousand), replacement vehicles, feed for rough rider squadrons, tents – small, medium and large, powercells of all kinds, spare track links, spades, pickaxes, jerrycans by the pallet load, razorwire by the mile, mines, fuses, right down to boxes of shiny new medals. The supply depots grew and grew, everything being carefully recorded, logged and stored. Despite valiant attempts to impose order the landing zone was in chaos. One Storm Trooper company requested new vox-casters, but on opening the crates found they had been delivered brand new horse saddles!

The landing operation was vast, but even with his first three regiments now in position De Stael was in no hurry to start offensive operations on the ground. The more men and supplies he got in place the better his ultimate chance of success. In all it took nearly two weeks to move everything down to the planet surface. It was two weeks of intense unloading activity; two weeks in which the enemy made no sign of attacking. For the men on the front line it was two weeks of waiting. The men started referring to the Taros invasion as 'the Clerk's war', both a comment on De Stael's nickname and the fact that the supply clerks were the busiest men in the army.

After being on standby for three days the Raptors Space Marines were withdrawn back to their battle barge. They had completed their mission, and enough Imperial Guard forces were now in place to resist any attack long enough for the Raptors to re-deploy if needed. The only Space Marine unit to remain of the surface was the lone scout squad, they were to assist in the pre-offensive intelligence gathering.

The Imperium's force were now securely on Taros and, amazingly, barely a shot had been fired. Reconnaissance reports indicated some enemy activity in the deserts. Traces of Tau movement or occupation were found, but as yet there were no sightings. If the Tau were out there in the desert then they were playing a patient waiting game. It was De Stael's next task to find them and bring them to battle.

Below: *The shape of things to come. A Baneblade of the 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment deploys onto Taros.*



THE DESERT WAR

CHAPTER 5

Above: *A pause in the advance, as a Tank company of the 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment receives new reports from its forward scouts.*

De Stael's plan for the ground war

Once the Imperial Guard forces had established a secure landing zone they did not move immediately. Instead, they set up a strong defensive perimeter around the landing zone and began to reinforce and stockpile supplies. This process lasted two weeks. In the meantime the Tallarn regiments launched Sentinels and long-range infantry patrols into the desert to reconnoitre along expected routes of advance. The patrols encountered very little, the enemy continued to husband their strength and refused to committing to battle. Sightings of the enemy were zero. Where where the Tau?

The second weeks build-up saw other Imperial Guard regiments and more Departmento Munitorum units land. Airbases were rapidly constructed by the labour corps, simple strips of flatten earth, before Imperial Navy aircraft deploy from their carriers in orbit. The 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment arrived and started the long process of transferring their three thousand men and one hundred and eighty aircraft to the surface.

Only once everything was in order, X Corp was in place, and the supply stockpiles were large enough would Lord Marshal De Stael move from his defensive posture to an offensive one.

The agreed objective of the ground offensive was to capture Tarokeen and the star port. Secondary objectives were to find and kill the Planetary Governor, and destroy all the Tau forces on Taros.

The city of Tarokeen was situated on the Iracunda Isthmus, a strip of land between Taros' two major seas. Its location gave De Stael's planners a problem. The city was only approachable by ground forces from the west or east. The eastern end of the Iracunda Isthmus was very narrow (less than 15 kms) and represented a dangerous bottleneck for the Imperial Guard. Tau forces could easily block this route of advance and force a stalemate. With no room to manoeuvre, only costly direct assaults would breakthrough to the city beyond, and De Stael did not believe he had the men required for such brutal, attritional warfare. He decided to concentrate his efforts on the western end of the isthmus, which was wider and should allow the Imperial Guard's numbers and firepower to tell.

Before the offensive could begin there was a High Command staff meeting onboard the *Righteous Power*. Lord Commander Gustavus arrived in person. He was concerned that not threatening the eastern end of the Isthmus would allow the defenders to mass their forces at the western end and make any breakthrough far harder to achieve. Gustavus believed a diversion was required to draw any enemy forces away from the isthmus and pin them down, if not by action, then at least by the threat of imminent action.

After a long discussion it was agreed that a second attack was needed, and De Stael adjusted his plans accordingly. For this new

task the Lord Marshal requested Captain Orelius attend his next planning council. Orelius' Raptors would be required again, this time to launch a powerful armoured strike from the landing zone eastwards, circling around the south of the southern sea. The Space Marines' objective would be to draw Tau forces to them, and defenders to the eastern end of the Iracunda Isthmus. The Space Marines need not seek to engage the enemy in a decisive battle, but the threat of the Space Marines presence, if only for a while, would help the main northwards advance by drawing away resistance.

Captain Orelius and his fellow officers strongly disagreed. His battle brothers were not being usefully employed if they were to act as a mere diversion force! Unhappy with the plan for his forces, Captain Orelius declined the mission, but did offer to include his forces alongside the main advance, even to form the spearhead of the first armoured thrust, rather than be "under-employed in a sideshow to the main campaign", as he called it. Irritated by Captain Orelius' refusal to sanction De Stael's plan, but unwilling to risk the complete loss of his valuable Space Marines allies, Gustavus insisted De Stael revise his offensive plan.

Instead of the Space Marines making the diversionary eastward thrust, it would fall to the raw 331st Tallarn regiment, their first action since being founded. As un-blooded troops the 331st were best given an easier introduction to war against a cunning alien foe than thrown into the crucible on the front line. The objective would remain the same as for the Space Marines, but the advance, being mostly on foot, would be somewhat slower. Still, the whole of the regiment's men and tanks marching through the desert should draw Tau forces to them and out of the path of the main advance. Colonel Usfal Hamid, the commanding officer of the 331st, was summoned and given his orders by De Stael. Advance eastwards for thirty days then establish a new defensive blocking position anchored against the south coast of the Em-sai. The 331st regiment's advance would begin on the same day as the main offensive and should be pushed forward with vigour and aggression, the diversion has to look like the real thing.

With the issue of the diversionary spearhead resolved, De Stael turned to planning his main northward offensive. It would advance on a wide front, driving north across the desert and then swinging east onto the Iracunda Isthmus. Rather than concentrate all his combat power, De Stael elected to spread it out. This would seem to go against the teachings of the Tactica Imperialis, but so far all De Stael's intelligence reports suggested the Tau forces would not be numerous enough to stop him everywhere. If one sector of the advance was halted by Tau action, then another would be advancing unimpeded. Overall, the offensive would keep moving forwards. A broad advance with the Tallarn regiments side-by-side would make for steady gains. De Stael's offensive timetable called for the Tallarn regiments to make an ambitious twenty kms a day, but he expected that in some sectors along the front the Tau would stand and fight, and that sector would naturally be slowed down or halted by combat. If the Tau committed their forces to battle in one sector, then others sectors would be able to move faster. De Stael's staff believes an average of twenty kms a day should be sustainable, especially as the Tallarn units would be operating in a familiar environment. At this rate, it would take sixty days of advancing to reach the outskirts of Tarokeen.

With his offensive timetable complete De Stael turned to his supply officers. He ordered that sixty days of supplies would be required. Enough ammunition, food and, most importantly ,water must be stockpiled. Reports showed that available stockpiles were currently at approximately half this, enough for thirty days, but supplies continued to flow from orbit unimpeded. De Stael decided that thirty days of supplies was enough to begin his offensive, the rest would follow as the offensive progressed. It was a fateful moment.

De Stael's offensive strategy would see X Corp of 4621st Army take the lead role. It would involve the Tallarn Infantry regiments advancing, using their own Armoured companies and artillery to support the lead Infantry platoons. The 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment would be on the right flank and the 3rd Armoured regiment would be kept behind the front line as the corp reserves, for deployment only if the offensive started to stall.

Arrayed from west to east the X Corp formation would be: 17th Tallarn regiment on the left, 89th Tallarn regiment in the centre, 12th Armoured regiment on the right. Behind would follow the 3rd Armoured regiment. Striking eastwards would be the 331st Tallarn regiment. The other Imperial Guard regiments of XI Corp, once they had been landed, would be held as the strategic reserve. Should this offensive fail to reach Tarokeen then De Stael would turn to these units and a new plan.

The difficult attack on the eastern end of the Iracunda Isthmus would be spearheaded by the Raptor's Space Marines, with the Warhound Titans of Legio Ignatum (when they arrived) and the Tallarn tanks in support. The weight of this attack should carry the offensive through the bottleneck and on to the outskirts of Tarokeen itself. Once in position around the city, De Stael would besiege the enemy, cutting off water supplies before the final assault with the fresh regiments from XI Corp. The detailed planning of the assault on Tarokeen would have to wait until the offensive got well under way.

For the thousands of men from Tallarn it would be a long, hard march in hot, harsh conditions, but they would have tank support, and their artillery would constantly move up to keep the front lines in range. The Imperial Navy would be flying combat air patrols and bombing raids from their newly established airbases. The Tau might slow them down and even gain local successes, but the offensive would press on, grinding ever forwards by its weight of numbers.

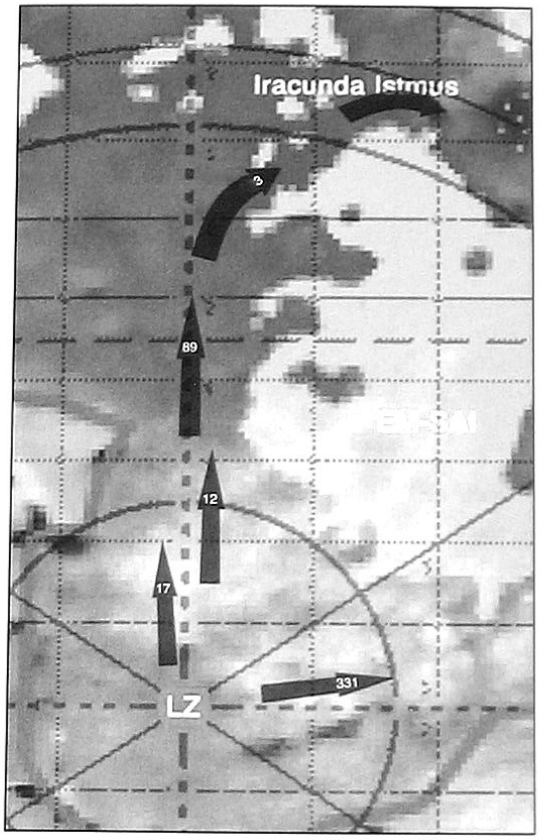
The First Offensive – Sixty Days to Tarokeen. Day One

At 514998.M41 De Stael ordered his regimental commanders to begin the long drive towards Tarokeen.

The offensive began with a sustained rolling artillery bombardment all along the front line. Mortars, battle cannons, Earthshaker cannons and Griffons began an intense barrage. It was as if the gods themselves were hurling thunderbolts across Taros. The noise, concussion and great belches of fire from each muzzle made a huge din. Thunderous explosions rolled across the desert, followed by geysers of sand and flame, one here, another there, the blasts coming so thick and fast that they merged into a single roar. Pillows of smoke and flame shot skywards in a wall of high-explosive which crept, metre by metre, across the desert. The rolling barrage crept forwards for thirty minutes before the infantry began their advance. Every gun in the corp was blazing away. It was a barrage designed to soften up any enemy forces lying immediately ahead of the first advance. As the infantry rose from their dug-in positions they could feel the ground shaking and hear the out-going artillery shells whine and scream overhead. If the enemy was out there, they were taking a pounding, and that gave the Guardsmen great heart. Then, as suddenly as it had started, the barrage ended. A strange calm descended after the storm. Ahead of them, the infantry could see a thick pall of dust rising, into which the first platoons advanced.

Right: *Map showing De Stael's plan for X Corps' offensive. Three regiments (17th, 89th and 12th Armoured) would strike north from the landing zone (LZ) on a three regiment front. Reinforced by 3rd Armoured, they would then breakthrough onto the Iracunda Isthmus and surround Tarokeen for XI Corp to then take over the attack.*

One regiment (331st) would launch a feint, advancing eastwards to draw Tau forces away from the main thrust, by threatening to circle the Emsai and attack Tarokeen from the east.



17th Tallarn regiment Offensive Echelons

First: Reconnaissance screen
- Infantry Recon Squads
- Sentinel Scout Squadrons

Second: Front line
- Lead Infantry Platoons
- Tank Squadrons
- Fire Support Squads
- Forward Observers

Third: Reserve
- Reserve Infantry Platoons
- Storm Trooper Squads
- Anti-tank Squads

Fourth:Forward command
- Company Command
- Mortars Squads

Fifth: Artillery
- Artillery Units
- Anti-aircraft Defences
- Infantry Platoons (security)

Sixth: Supply
- Regimental Command
- Supply Columns
- Sentinel Squadrons (security)
- Rough Riders (security)

Above: *The guns of Tallarn stand ready to open fire. Their bombardment would prepare the way for the beginning of the offensive towards Tarokeen.*

17th TALLARN DESERT RAIDERS REGIMENT

regimental Command
Headquarters Staff
Medical Company
Signals Company
Recon Squadron
Attached Commissars
Attached Priests
Attached Techpriests

I Brigade
1st Infantry Company *(Mechanised)*
2nd Infantry Company
3rd Infantry Company
4th Infantry Company
5th Infantry Company
6th Infantry Company
7th Infantry Company
8th Infantry Company
9th Infantry Company

II Brigade
10th Infantry Company
11th Infantry Company
12th Infantry Company
13th Infantry Company
14th Infantry Company
15th Infantry Company
16th Infantry Company
17th Infantry Company
18th Infantry Company

III Brigade
19th Infantry Company
20th Infantry Company
21st Infantry Company
22nd Infantry Company
23rd Infantry Company
24th Infantry Company
25th Infantry Company
26th Infantry Company
27th Infantry Company *(training and replacement)*

Non-Brigaded regimental Assets
28th Rough Rider Coy
29th Rough Rider Coy
30th Rough Rider Coy
31st Sentinel Company
32rd Sentinel Company
33rd Sentinel Company

1st Armoured Company
2nd Armoured Company
3rd Armoured Company

IV Artillery Brigade
1st Artillery Company *(Basilisk)*
2nd Artillery Company *(Basilisk)*
3rd Artillery Company *(Basilisk)*
4th Artillery Company *(Basilsk)*
5th Heavy Artillery Coy *(Bombards)*
6th Heavy Mortar Company *(Griffon)*
7th Anti-aircraft Company *(Hydras)*
8th Anti-aircraft Company *(Hydras)*
Attached Munitorum Supply Columns (31)

XENOS-MOUNT – MUKAALI

Some of the Tallarn regiment's Rough Rider squadrons rider large xeno-mounts, called Mukaali. These desert-dwelling herbivores are originally indigenous to the vast equatorial deserts of Goru-Prime. Many Mukaali have been transported to other desert worlds, including Tallarn itself, because of their superior evolutionary advantages in dry desert conditions. Part of many Tallarn regiment's battle-honours include the right to export thousands of Mukaali's from Goru-Prime every ten years. Some regiments no longer exercise these rights, but many still do.

The Mukaali (sometimes locally referred to as *Sand Pacers*), live in huge herds. They are grazers, living on a thin diet of tough shrubs. They have multiple stomachs which can process most vegetation, this is then regurgitated for ingesting a second time. A Mukaali can survive for long periods on very small amounts of food and water. Conversely, they have very poor protection against cold climates and die quickly when exposed to sub-zero temperatures for any length of time.

A Mukaali's main advantage over a horse is its exceptional endurance and load bearing ability. In the driest of hot desert conditions they can keep going for days, even without food or water, and will long out live a horse or a human rider. They can carry heavy loads, and are sometimes used for transporting supplies or towing other equipment. A Mukaali-mounted Rough Rider squadron can range further afield and carry more equipment than a horse-mounted squadron.

A Mukaali's feet are adapted to move over sand at speed. Large soft pads help spread their weight to avoid sinking in soft sand. Their thick hides generally have a mottled grey/ blue colouring, running to a pink/brown underbelly.

Once broken and trained, Mukaali are well-tempered and placid creatures, if rather dim-witted, but lack any natural aggression. They make superb riding beasts and beasts of burden in arid climates, but will not fight. Even bull males show little aggression, and faced with danger an unmounted Mukaali always flees!

Strung out in line abreast the lead Infantry squads began to move forwards at a steady rate. Along side or just behind them followed the tanks. Leman Russ' grinding the desert sand into dust, engines revving and belching black fumes into the air. Each platoon began to finds its own way forwards. The screen of reconnaissance troops in front still reported no enemy contact.

The front line reached the barrage area. It was a landscape scarred by still smoking shell craters. The sand had been scorched black, boulders had been shattered into pebbles, but their was no evidence that the opening bombardment had hit anything other that the empty desert.

The advance moved deeper into the desert, a steady march that continued all day, and still no sign of any resistance. Some started to think perhaps the Tau had given up Taros, and the campaign would be a walk over. By nightfall on the first day the forward units had covered the required twenty kilometres. As darkness fell the artillery pieces hooked up to their Trojan tows and began to move forwards into new firing positions. Already the advance had outstripped the guns ranges, even the long Earthshaker cannons were at the extreme edge of their range. It was a night-long task to drive or drag the weapons forwards, dig new firing positions and prepare for tomorrow with fresh ammunition supplies from the stockpiles.

Day Two

The night was as bitterly cold as the day was stifflingly hot. Ice had formed on many of the Imperial Guardsmen weapons during the short hours of darkness, it soon melted with the dawn sun. Day two was to be a repeat of day one, but without the pre-planned rolling barrage. Such a high ammunition expenditure could not be maintained everyday. Instead the guns would target those locations the Tau might be occupying for brief harassing firemissions, before standing by to assist any units that came under attack.

As the artillery and mortars opened fire again, the infantry began their advance. Morale was high, so far there had been no resistance. By mid-morning all that had changed.

The Tau had been waiting for the advance since the landings on Taros. Their Pathfinder squads and Stealthsuit units had already scored a significant success before a shot was fired, by observing the locations of Imperial Guard units and alerting the Hunter Cadre commanders as to the likely routes of advance for the Imperial Guard's armour. The Hunter

Cadre commanders, following Shas'o R'myrs' instructions, were well hidden in the desert and waiting to move forward and counter the advance. The Hunter Cadres were formidably equipped for mobile desert warfare with its wide open battlefields and engagements which commonly took place at long ranges, most notably with railguns and Seeker missiles. Twenty four hours before the offensive was set in motion, crack Stealthsuit teams, operating in darkness and evading Imperial Guard patrols, had noted the build-up of equipment and stores, and forecast that the Imperium's forces were readying for an attack. The Tau had left no formations within artillery range, but their mechanized Hunter Cadres were well supplied with Devilfish transports, they could move forwards and react quickly and decisively when the time came.

It was finally judged that the time had come on the second day of the Imperial offensive. The Imperial Guard infantry and tanks had left their perimeter defences of sand bags, razorwire and minefields behind, and were now in the open. Attacks should be swift, keeping the enemy at a distance. They needed to inflict casualties then withdraw back into the desert. Hopefully the Imperial Guard would pursue. The next day they would be hit again.

Tau forces engaged in brief long-range firefights all along the front on that second day. The 17th Tallarn regiment suffered the strongest counter-attack at midday. Approaching an abandoned mining facility, called Tungusta Station, the Tau struck in force with Hammerheads and Seeker missiles.

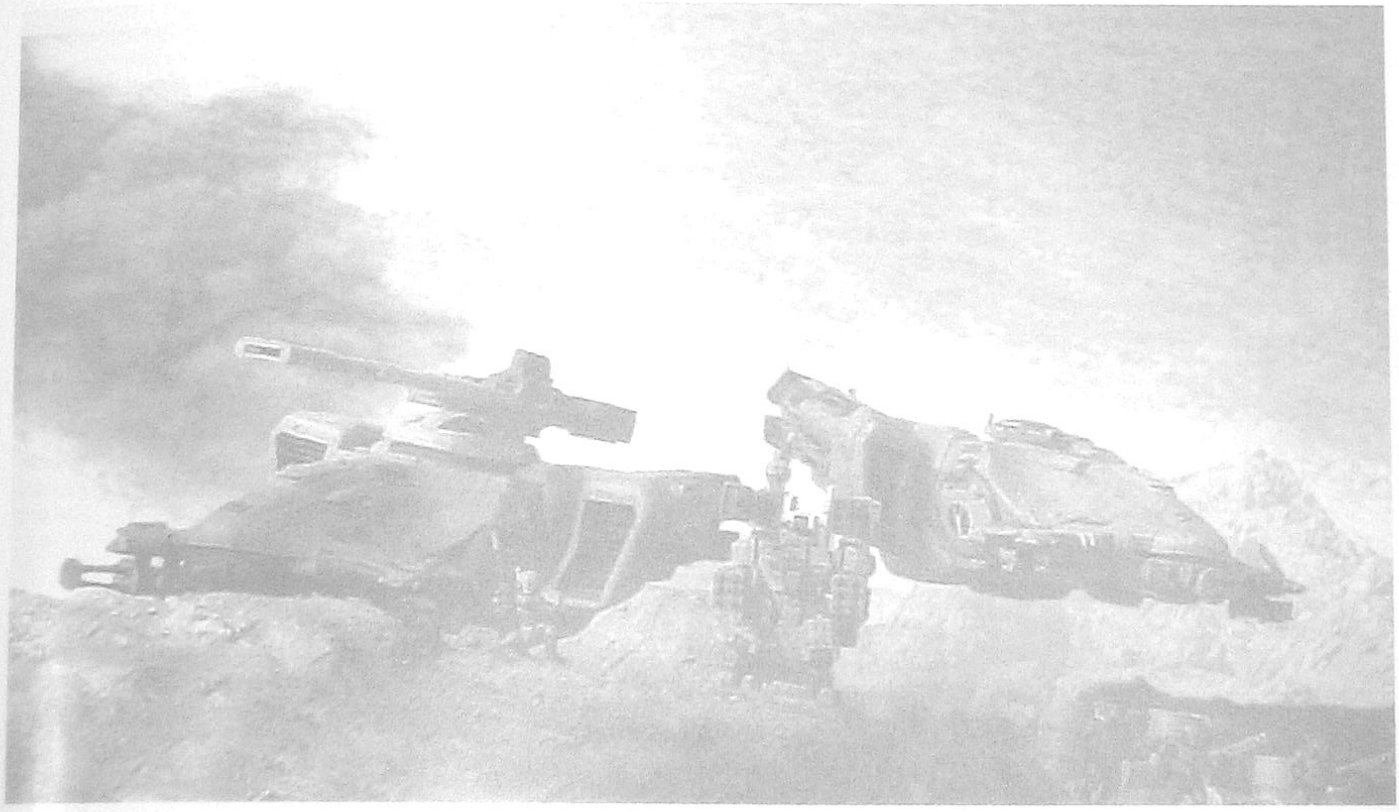
The Battle of Tungusta Station

At first light on the second day, the Tallarn 17th regiment resumed its advance along its entire front. On the command of their officers the men rose from their quickly dug foxholes, whilst tanks gunned their engines and began to grind slowly forwards. Behind them the artillery opened fire from new firing positions, hitting selected targets all along the front. The regiment's three Armoured companies formed the cutting edge of the advance, with squadrons of Leman Russ tanks stretched out across the desert sands. Lacking Chimeras the advance would be at walking pace. It would be another day of slow, steady gains.

As the combined force of Armoured companies and Tallarn infantry moved across the desert they encountered their first enemy. A Hunter Cadre had moved forwards into engagement range. These forces had sped to intercept the Imperium's tank spearheads, guided by Pathfinder teams which were already observing the Imperial Guard's advance from a distance. The faster moving Tau grav-tanks had arrived in the vicinity of Tungusta Station only minutes before the Imperial advance.

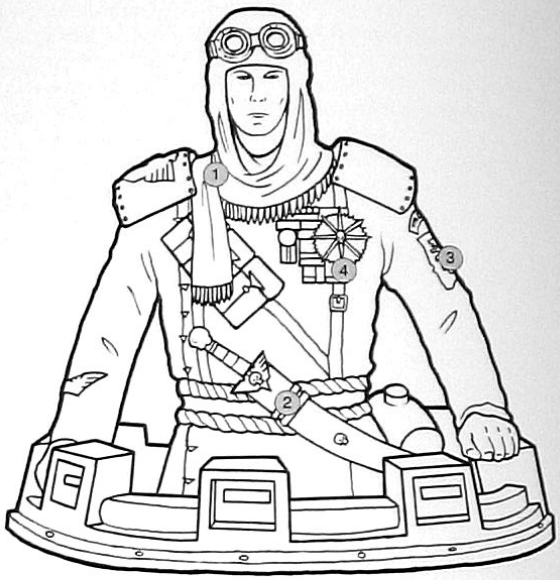
Tungusta Station was a small collection of buildings, lean-tos and old mining equipment, abandoned by its operators after the Imperial forces arrived. It had already been scouted and then shelled by the artillery as part of the preparation for the days advance. The surrounding area was pockmarked with Basilisk shell craters.

The battle started as the lead tank encountered a hidden Tau Pathfinder unit. The Leman Russ opened fire with its battle cannon. Using their Markerlights and Seeker missiles, the Tau's return fire immediately knocked out the Leman Russ, which started to burn fiercely as the crew tumbled out of the hatches to the desert floor. Their position compromised, the Pathfinders quickly withdrew on foot. In the distance, on the edge of the Tungusta Station, Hammerhead gunships appeared and opened fire with their railguns. The whip-crack sound of railguns soon filled the air. The surviving Leman Russ' souight cover, firing off smoke launchers and returning



Above: *Spearhead of the counter-attack. Armoured Tau forces move to counter the Imperial Guard's advance. Well-equipped, Manta-mobile Hunter Cadres (elements of which can be seen here), were dropped into the desert to conduct fighting delaying actions and spoiling attacks.*

TALLARN DESERT RAIDER



1. Clothing

This tank officer wears the general service uniform issued to all members of Tallarn Imperial Guard regiments, regardless of their specific role. The Tallarn desert smock is a piece of utility clothing made of very hard wearing natural materials. The desert smock usually hangs to just above the knee in length and often has voluminous sleeves. This veteran commander has modified his smock by narrowing the sleeves, because unwieldy pieces of cloth are not practical when working within the confines of an armoured vehicle. The desert smock traditionally has no pockets, all items must be carried in the webbing pouches, backpacks or sling-bags issued to all ranks. Smocks are manufactured in a wide variety of colours, including desert camouflage patterns. Most are a brown or sandy yellow colour, although there is little standardisation even within the same regiment or company. Some maybe brown whilst others are camouflaged.

The traditional headscarf or 'Shemagh', is the distinctive garment of the Tallarn people. They are worn by everybody from that planet as a matter of social custom. The Shemagh acts as a protection against the worse effects of the suns rays, and in the hottest conditions is sometimes worn after being soaked in water, to help reduce body temperature and prevent sunstroke. The scarf also doubles as a dust mask, rapped across the face to prevent inhaling dust and sand. Combined with goggles, this provides good protection against the worst effects of sandstorms.

Other standard issue clothing (not visible here), are an linen undershirt, combat trousers, heavy-weight marching boots and leg bindings. Tallarn Imperial Guardsmen will scavenge replacement equipment, and on campaign uniforms often show minor variations.

2. Equipment

This Tallarn officers carries equipment which has much in common with all Tallarn Imperial Guardsmen. His goggles are of tinted plexiglass and leather construction and are standard issue to all Desert Raiders. They provide protection against wind-blown sand and dust, most irritant gases and the dazzling effect of strong sunlight. They are not photo-chromatic, and offer only minimal protection against sudden flashes such as photon grenade explosions.

The officer still wears his No 38, Mark III plasteel shoulder pads. The right should badge bears the winged skull symbol, showing that the regiment is a fully inducted member of the Imperial Guard. The shoulder pads attach via small buckles to the webbing. A front and rear plasteel chest and back plate can also be attached to complete the armour. These solid blocks of plasteel are regarded as too heavy by most men and are rarely used. The protective shoulder pads are often disgarded by tank crews who find them encumbering within the confines of an armoured vehicle, and feel they have little need for personal protection.

His webbing and belts are made of leather and used to hang general equipment, pouches, water canteens, scabbards and holsters from. As a tank crewman, the officer has little need of extra carrying pouches, his personal kit will be stowed on his vehicle. The triple pouch cross-belt contains replacement powercells for his standard issue laspistol (his sidearm is not visible in this picture. It is usually stored in the tank). He also has a standard issue canteen, vital in Taros' climate.

The officer's only visible weapon is his knife. The distinctive curved knife, known on Tallarn as the 'Khalig', comes in many shapes and sizes and is preferred by natives of Tallarn over standard issue knives or bayonets. For most Tallarn Guardsmen it is their only close combat weapon. This is a particular fine example, with a cast lion's-head pommel and ornate scabbard. It was probably uniquely manufactured and awarded to the officer in recognition of a battlefield victory or a heroic action. The size of a Khalig can vary from that of a small belt knife to those the size of a sword. Powersword's also mimic the distinctive shape.

3. Badges and Insignia

The officer bears the cloth badges of his regiment on his upper left arm. Tallarn 17 is a common shoulder strip sewn onto all the men's smocks.

Underneath this is the regimental arm patch, a red lion rampant on a white background. This patch is issued to all men once their training is complete and they become full members of the 'Desert Lions'. Given the badge's size and colour many choose not to sew it onto their smock to aid camouflage, and simply keep the badge amongst their personal kit instead.

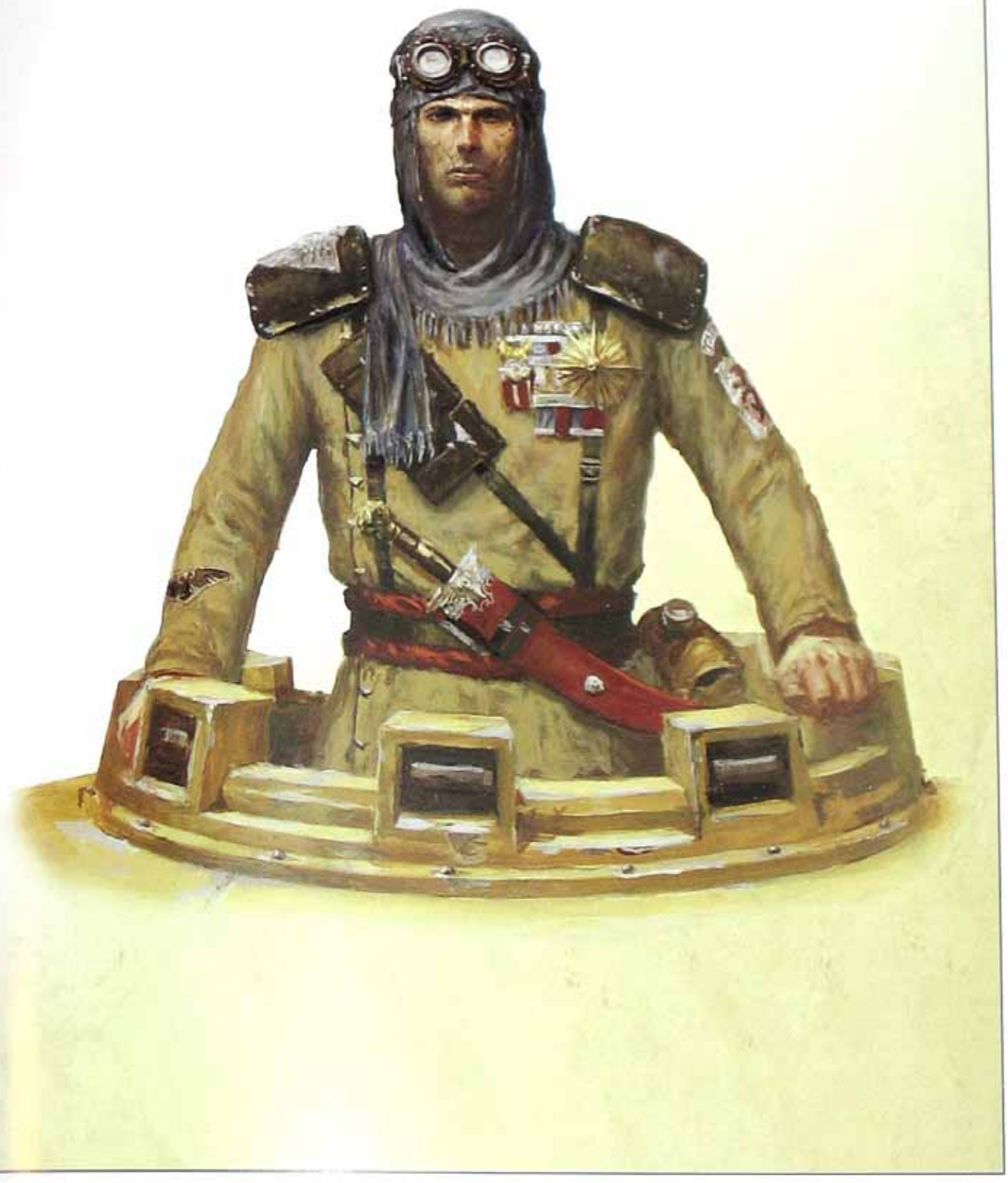
Imperial Guardmen are often very superstitious and many men carry personal good-luck totems, blessed by the regiment's Priests, to help protect them from misfortune or injury in battle. These small items vary widely, from the skins of animals native to their homeworld, to pendants or other jewelry, to scrolls bearing passages from the Fede Imperialis. This officer wears the Imperial Eagle badge on the right sleeve, pledging his allegiance to the Emperor, in the belief the Emperor will protect him.

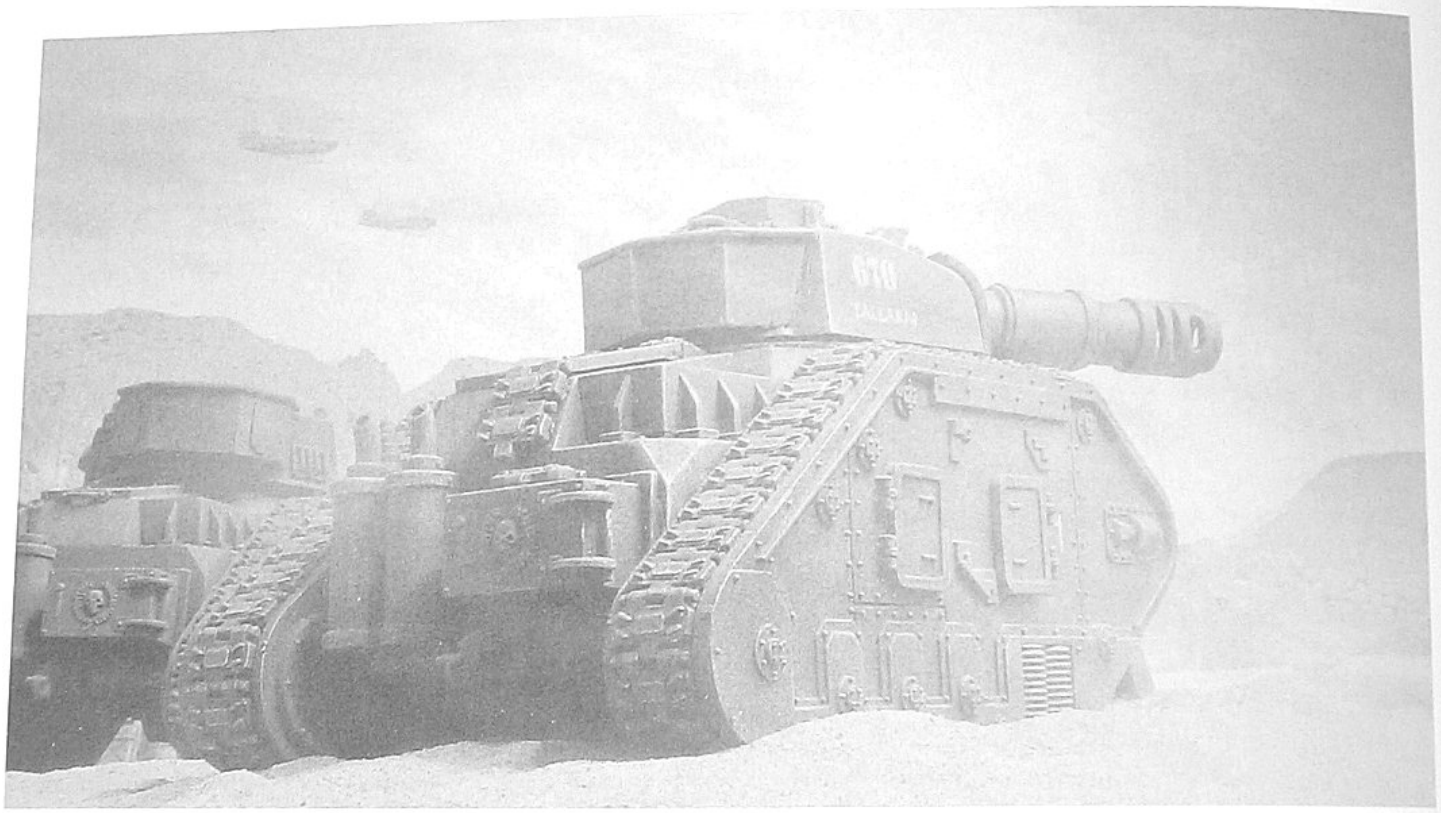
4. Medals

On his left breast this highly decorated officer displays his medals. Largest is the *Honorifica Imperialis Armorum*, commonly referred to as the 'Tank Battle Badge'. It is awarded for outstanding gallantry in the face of the enemy, whilst serving as crew in an armoured vehicle, and is rarely awarded. He also bears the Medallion Crimson for being wounded in the line of duty.

Within the 17th Tallarn Regiment, it is traditional that any member of the regiment who has served for over five years is awarded a silk sash, regardless of rank. Worn around the waist, under the belt, it is the mark of a veteran campaigner. Men who wear the sash are viewed as senior to men of the same rank who do not bear it. The sash is usually made of the best quality material available and can be in any colour, depending on the availability of cloth.

This is Captain Suhara of the 17th Tallarn Desert Raiders Regiment. He is the commanding officer of the regiment's first Armoured company. A veteran officer of the regiment, hero of the Yarant III campaign, and bearer of the Honorifica Imperialis, he was also awarded the Medallion Crimson after being injured during the Battle of Byron's Hill.





Top: *Leman Russ Vanquisher of the 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment, with a Conqueror and Support Sentinel in close attendance. Many of the Tallarn Tank companies contained a mixture of Leman Russ variants, and were supported by Basilisks. It was felt that Vanquishers and Earthshaker cannons scattered throughout the leading companies provided an instant response to the dominance of the Tau's railguns. In their turn, the Tau learnt to target Vanquishers first, causing heavy casualties amongst Tallarn tank command crews.*

Above: *Leman Russ tanks of the 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment awaiting orders in the desert, under the close protection of their Thunderbolt fighter cover.*

fire, Vanquisher and battle cannon matched against railguns in a deadly long-range duel. With the armoured vehicles pre-occupied in their own private battle the Imperial Guard infantry, led from the front by their commanding officer, Lieutenant Kavir, pressed forward towards the buildings.

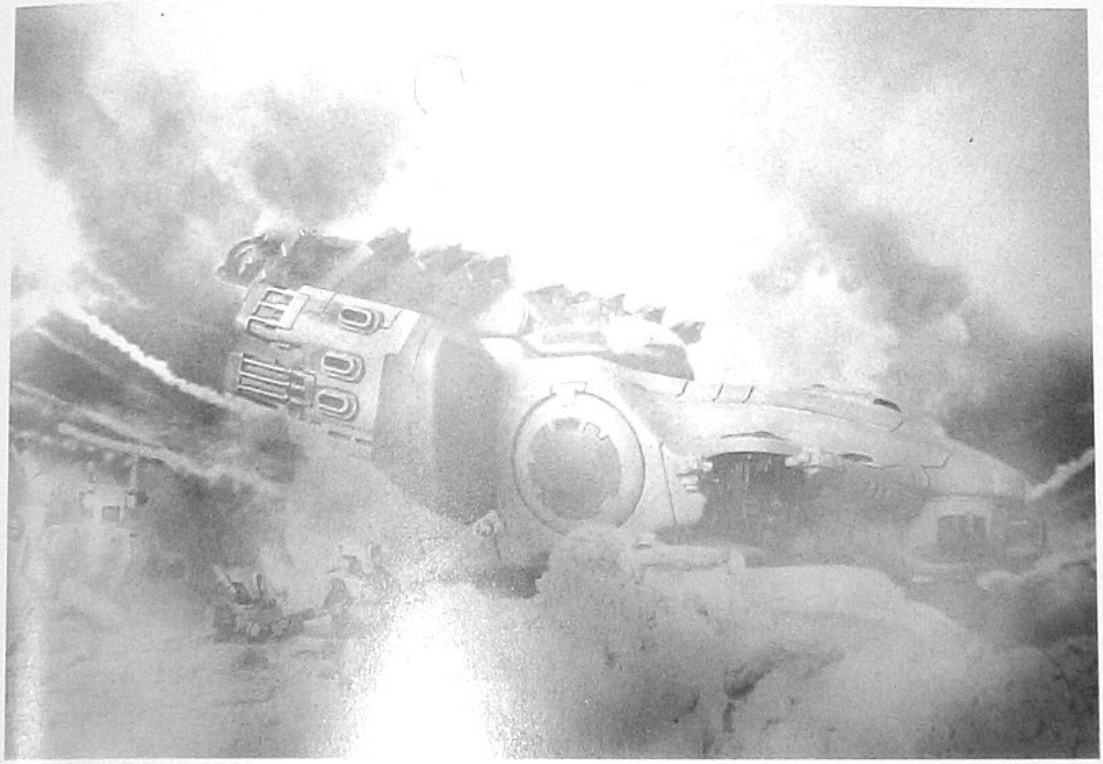
The men of 1st platoon, 2nd company, advanced towards the outskirts of Tungusta Station only to encounter Fire Warriors supported by Devilfish troop carriers. A fierce fire-fight ensued. Lieutenant Kavir was killed during the attack as his command section was overrun and annihilated by counter-attacking Crisis battlesuits, probably the Cadre's Shas'el commander in person. Without close armoured support the Tallarn platoon was heavily outgunned. They urgently called for reinforcements, and a Storm Trooper squad was ordered forwards to their location. A Thunderbolt fighter was also scrambled to intercept the Tau forces.

The arrival of more Tau reinforcements and a low flying Barracuda strafing the battlefield decisively swung the fight in the Tau's favour. Out-matched, 1st platoon fell back with heavy losses, despite the timely arrival of the Storm Trooper reinforcements, speeding to the fight in their Chimeras. The Thunderbolt air support raced low overhead to bomb Tungusta Station. Already three Leman Russes were burning in the desert. In this sector the advance had stalled for the day.

As the Imperial Guardsmen withdrew from Tungusta Station, destructive artillery fire was directed onto the buildings. For several hours Basilisk shells again pounded the entire area. In darkness, a patrol was ordered to investigate the ruins of Tungusta Station. They found little remaining. The enemy had already withdrawn to regroup, leaving only the smouldering wrecks of a single Hammerhead and a Devilfish troop carrier behind. Next morning, the advance resumed, with 2nd companys 5th platoon being ordered into the front line to replace the battle-weary survivors of 1st platoon. Later that morning, 5th platoon's cautious advance captured the remains of Tungusta Station without further resistance from Tau forces.

Tungusta Station was just the first of many such attacks throughout the following days, designed to weaken the front line units and temporarily stall them. Sudden sharp attacks all along X Corp's front line became a daily hazard.

Above: *The business end of Tau firepower! Railguns proved highly effective weapons in the open deserts, out-performing the Imperial Guard's own battle cannons, and giving the Tau the decisive edge in tank verses tank combat.*



Left: *Tau forces under heavy fire advance into Tungusta Station. In the deserts, a Sky Ray's multiple Seeker missile proved a useful back-up to the railguns.*

12th Armoured regiment's Advance

On the right flank, the 12th Armoured regiment was experiencing similar problems. The Hammerheads and Broadsides, with their railguns and mobility, excelled in these conditions. Unbroken fields of fire allowed them to target the Leman Russ firsts, before manoeuvring to avoid return fire. Once the tanks were destroyed, the Chimeras carrying infantry support were powerless to respond. Crews had to rely upon the weight of the Leman Russ armour for survival, but against the fearsome railguns it was not always enough. The ominous whip-crack of railguns became a sound each Imperial Guardsman learned to hate and fear. The Tau's weaponry seemed to slice through armour at any range. The magnetically-driven, hyper-sonic passage of each round heated the air so it seemed to fizz and crackle. The speed was such that infantry men stood too close would find the air sucked from their lungs as it passed overhead. The slipstream of each round would raise the sand, forming a speeding, swirling trail of dust which cut across the desert faster than the eye could track. With little cover to hide from the railguns, the desert war was costly in equipment. After five days advancing, the 12th Armoured regiment had lost 50% of its tank strength amongst the forward deployed companies. They had inflicted some damage on the enemy, but it was an uneven exchange. Replacement tanks could be found, but not enough to make good all the losses. The regimental commander, Colonel Ahsa-Bilad, recognising that his Tank companies needed the extra support, deployed the Basilisks of his first Artillery regiment forward, to act as assault guns rather than conventional artillery. His artillery was proving ineffective against very mobile targets. It was a shrewd move, by utilising their Earthshaker cannons longer range, the artillery helped level the playing field. But the regiment was already falling behind its twenty kilometres a day timetable, and Basilisks, like Leman Russes, were vulnerable.

In those first days of the desert war, a typical tank engagement might run something like this. The lead Infantry platoons would be advancing in line abreast, directly supported by a Leman Russ. Lying in wait for them would be a single small Pathfinder team, well hidden amongst rocks. They would target the Leman Russ with their Markerlights, and far to the rear a volley of Seeker missiles would be launched, locking onto the target tank. The first the Imperial Guard would know about the attack would be the sudden destruction of the tank under multiple missile impacts. Other tanks would move to reinforce, only to come under long range fire from railguns as Hammerheads skimmed forwards into range. A long range exchange of fire would take place between the armoured vehicles, whilst the Imperial Guard infantry pressed forwards. The infantry would be counter-attacked by Fire Warrior units racing forwards in Devilfish transports, dismounting and again engaging at long range with pulse rifles. The Imperial Guardsmen were outgunned in the infantry firefight, although their squad snipers did achieve some kills with their longer ranged weapons. As the Guardsmen pressed forwards, casualties mounting, they might be able to bring their heavy weapon squads, mortar batteries or, if a forward observer was present, their heavy artillery to bear. As Tallarn fire built the Tau would board their transport vehicles and withdraw rapidly, to be followed by their Hammerheads. The battlefield would be left in the Imperial Guard's possession, but at a cost in tanks and men.

Move and Counter-Move

Lord Marshal De Stael's staff began to analyse and understand the tactics the Tau had adopted and looked to counter them. First of all, the Pathfinder teams need to be hunted down more vigorously. Reconniassance squads were reinforced with more Sentinel units to aid them in this new mission. Neutralise the Tau scouts and the long range ambushes would be harder to achieve. This had some

success, with scouts units regularly clashing in small skirmishes. The light Sentinels still proved to be vulnerable to the Tau's weaponry and many were lost during these engagements, but each clash of scout patrols meant the front line behind would be free from the Seeker missile ambushes. The losses in Sentinels was compensated for by the saving in tanks and men behind them.

Next, De Stael looked to his own mobility to counter Tau speed. As a response force he turned to the Imperial Navy. The Thunderbolts and Lightnings of the Imperial Navy fighter wings would be the solution. If the tanks could not bring the Tau decisively to battle, then the aircraft could. Air patrols over the front line would be increased, with pilots given license to roam, locate and engage targets of opportunity. Squadrons were put on standby to scramble should a front line unit report contact with the enemy. These would race to the front line and deliver devastating volleys of Hellstrike missiles. The Tau might outrun his artillery, but they could not outrun the Imperial Navy.

As De Stael's operational tactics evolved, naturally so must have the Tau's. For the commanders, the war was a to-ing and fro-ing of move and counter-move, plan and counter-plan. The Imperial Navy was heavily active for several days over the front line, the sky criss-crosed with vapour trails and filled with the roar of jet engines. The Thunderbolts of the Imperial Navy began to find ground targets, scoring notable success and inflicting heavier losses on the Tau than the ground forces had managed. The Tau's response was to commit its own air forces in increasing numbers. Barracudas began to be seen over the battlefield, not in a ground attack role, but diving from high altitude to intercepting the Imperium's aircraft. From distance bases on the Iracunda Isthmus the Barracudas kept up patrols to defend their ground forces. The air war over Taros had begun. Dogfights became common between the two evenly matched forces. This drew the Imperial Navy's resources away from its ground attack role, and once again the Hunter Cadres were freed up for their probing counter-attacks.

Despite the losses and the escalation of the ground war into the skies, the offensive continued to grind forwards through the desert. After ten days it had made up to one hundred and fifty kms; it was behind schedule by between 30 and 50 kms but the broad front was still moving northwards daily.

Below: *A battery of Basilisks in their firing positions prior to the Imperial Guard offensive. Note that supply trailers of extra ammunition are already in place in expectation of extended action.*

Storming the Phyyra Heights

The established pattern of the campaign continued as the Imperial Guard moved northwards, but within the first weeks the pace of the advance started to slacken. After twenty days they had covered approximately three hundred kms. All regiments were reporting problems with their supply lines. Convoys were not making it to the front line, days past whilst there was not enough fuel for all the vehicles. Only when it arrived could the regiment push on and attempt to make up for lost time. Water rationing was having to be strictly enforced by Commissars. This made offensive operations increasingly difficult and slow.

On the left flank of the broad front, the Tallarn 17th was approaching an upland area known as the Phyyra Heights. These rugged escarpments scarred the distant horizon with their steep slopes. Orders from De Stael's headquarters were for the regiment to swing slightly westwards and capture the high ground, hopefully outflanking the majority of the Tau defenders and opening a clearer path to the Iracunda Isthmus.

For the past seven days the 17th Tallarn regiment's advance towards the Phyyra Heights had gone without incident. The Tau had left the regiment to its slow flank march, and twenty five days since the offensive began the lead platoons found themselves at the foot of a steep, rocky climb into the highlands.

The regiment's reconnaissance squads had arrived several days before the main body, moving on foot up the slopes at night. The scouts had begun to seek the best routes through the rocky terrain. Several prospective routes had been identified, and the first probe by Sentinel units had not been attacked. The versatile walkers faired well on the steep hillsides, but it was terrain the regiment's supporting tanks would find highly restricting.

Since arriving, the Recon squads had spotted a few enemy tracks, but in the process several men had been injured by rockfalls (at the time, these were put down to unfortunate accidents).

Amongst the lower slopes they had no confirmed sightings of the enemy, and had not found any indication of an enemy force present in large enough strength to threaten the continued advance.

Meanwhile, unknown to those below, the Tau's savage allies, the Kroot, were hiding and waiting on the high ground. A few Kroot trackers ventured out to keep an eye the humans and set rockslide booby traps, but the main forces kept to the high ground, never exposing themselves to the human scouts. If they were spotted, then it would bring the heavy artillery down on their heads. The Master Shaper was clever enough to know that in the dense rocky terrain his ferocious kindreds and hounds would be at an advantage. Once spotted, his forces would become the targets of heavy shelling, and this might force him to withdraw. Out of the hills, in the open desert, his forces would stand little chance against the enemy's firepower. If the Tallarn advance was to be stopped, it would have to be here.

General Barim-Abas issued his orders to capture the high ground. In scorching heat, the lead companies and platoons set off on the arduous climb, Scout squads and Sentinels showing them the way. From their caves and rocky hiding places the Kroot emerged, hungry and ready to fight. They scurried downhill to hide behind the first ridgeline. On each Shaper's command the warbands rose as one, suddenly appearing on the ridgeline above the guardsmen as a long howling line. With hounds baying and Knarlocs shrieking the Kroot charged headlong downhill. Leaping from rock to rock their momentum carried them into the Imperial Guardsmen below. Suddenly it was desperate fight. Some Tallarn units fled rather than face the bloodthirsty savages. Other squads sought cover, stood, fought and died on the Kroot's blades or savaged by wild alien beasts.

With his vanguard platoons under sudden and heavy enemy counter-attacks, General Barim-Abas ordered all his artillery to open fire on the first ridgeline. Directed by forward observers team on the hillside, mortars and Earthshaker cannons launched repeated barrages up the hillside. Fire, smoke and dust engulfed the ridge. The heavy fire gave the lead platoons enough time to withdraw, and mercifully the Kroot did not follow, preferring to remain amongst the dense cover on the high ground.

Bloodied and weary the Tallarn Guardsmen had been repulsed, but the fighting to climb the Phyyra Heights was just beginning. Over the next ten days, three more attempts to storm the treacherous slopes each ended with the regiment being thrown back with heavy losses. A fourth attack, led personally by General Barim-Abas, did capture the first ridgeline. The 17th regiment's offensive had stalled. The only reserve force available to aid them was the Tallarn 3rd Armoured regiment, but their Leman Russes and Chimeras could not operate effectively in the highlands. De Stael wisely refused to commit them. He would seek a breakthrough elsewhere whilst the 17th skirmished with the Kroot for possession of a barren rocky wilderness of little use to either side. For the 17th, it was the high water mark of their advance on Tarokeen. They had captured three hundred and fifty kilometres of desert.

New Impetuous

With the 17th Tallarn regiment now involved in a protracted battle against Kroot warbands to capture the Phyyra Heights, Lord Marshal De Stael turned to his other three regiments to carry his stalling offensive to the mouth of the Iracunda Isthmus. He ordered his reserve regiment, the 3rd Tallarn Armoured, to reinforce the 89th and 12th Armoured regiments, adding fresh firepower to the frontl ine. The 3rd regiment, under Colonel Hasso Ras-Aziz, was divided into three battlegroups, titled A, B and C. Battlegroup A moved to reinforce 12th Armoured, B moved to reinforce 89th regiment and C remained as the reserve. The new tanks added new impetuous to the offensive, and for a while the pace began to increase again.

At 596998.M41 Battlegroup A, 3rd Armoured, spearheaded a fresh attack. Amidst the heavy diesel stink and creaking tracks of armoured vehicles, the combined weight of the regiment's first and second Tank companies struck northwards with renewed vigour. A cloud of dust hung over the desert as the tanks passed by, followed close behind by

Right: *A Great Knarloc's shriek echoes through the barren Phyyra Heights. The treacherous, dense terrain made it all but impossible for the Imperial Guard to deploy their armoured vehicles, whilst the Kroot's native creatures proved highly adaptable and difficult to combat.*

Chimera carriers and Basilisks. As ever, the Tau were waiting, picking off tanks with railguns before falling back again. The attrition continued, the first day alone cost the 3rd regiment six vehicles.

On the third day, the lead elements of Battlegroup A came into sight of a the large mining operation at Gaidamak, where the land was scarred by deep quarries in the earth, surround by towering spoil heaps. Surveying the area through his magnoculars, General Ras-Aziz made plans to attack and capture the mine.

Battle of Giadamak

Giadamak was a huge strip mine where the ground had been torn up over centuries, its deep quarries leaving dramatic rends in the earth and huge, strangely regular mounds of waste rock piled high. It was a desolate and dusty place, home to several thousand miners until the approaching tank columns forced most to flee to safety. Some hardly work-gangs vowed to stay and fight. The scattered quarries, buildings, workings and equipment hid the defenders. The deserts provided little cover for the attackers. Where once the clanking and grinding of heavy machinery had rumbled across the desert, all was now silent. Fire Warriors scanned the southern horizon for the tell tale dust columns of the approaching tanks.

Lord Marshal De Stael suggested that General Ras-Aziz ignore the tricky mining complex and move around it, striking for the bigger prize of the Iracunda Isthmus, and leaving the defenders isolated. The General disagreed. He could not allow a strong Tau force to remain behind his front line. His lead units might reach the Iracunda Isthmus, but the Giadamak defenders could then launch a potentially catastrophic counter-attack from their strong point, rolling through the regiment's vulnerable rear areas. In his opinion, the mine must be seized and the defenders killed, captured or forced to withdraw. An attack would clear the way for the continued advance northwards. The veteran Tallarn General made this clear during a briefing onboard De Stael's *Leviathon*. The Lord Marshal concurred with his front line commander. The attack would begin at first light next day.

The briefing complete General Ras-Aziz climbed aboard an Aquila shuttle and flew back to his forward command post to oversee the battle.

As the first rays of light crept over the dark horizon, the rumble of heavy artillery fire once again rolled out across the desert. In the dawn light, Earthshaker and mortar explosions blossomed all around Giadamak. The men gathered ammunition, ration supplies and filled canteens before climbing aboard their vehicles and slowly moving to the start lines. The regiment's attack plan was simple. Two Tank companies would envelope the mines, circling to the west and east. When the tank vanguards had met, the mine would be surrounded and cut off from reinforcements. Then the infantry would move in, racing forwards in Chimeras behind a rolling barrage of artillery fire, before dismounting and closing the last few hundred yards on foot. It would be the dismounted infantry that would roust the Tau from their hidden positions in close quarters fighting, under the covering fire of their transports.

The attack started well, with the tanks moving out to the left and right unmolested by Tau fire. With the crack of artillery still resounding the Leman Russ columns bounded forwards in two wide arcs. In the centre, the Chimeras advanced in line abreast behind a wall of Earthshaker fire. With two hundred yards left, the artillery screen lifted and men dismounted to dash forwards and seize the objective. As the infantry closed in the Tau opened fire, flaying the dismounted Tallarns with pulse rifle fire. The Tau had created a killing zone in front of their position with interlocking fields of fire. The leading Tallarn infantry were now caught in it, and men started to fall one after the other. As they attempted to advance, the men of Tallarn were dusty tan shapes running, falling, crawling, firing, rising again and fall again, wounded and writhing. The heavy pulse fire was punishing. Soon the flat ground was littered with the small hummocks of dead and wounded men. Second company, the first to attack, was repulsed with heavy loses. They retreated in disarray leaving a hundred dead behind.

Left: *Tallarn Armoured Fist infantry, supported by fire from their Chimera, press forwards through the smoke, shot and shell, towards Giadamak mine.*

His first assault defeated, General Ras-Aziz ordered a fresh Armoured Fist company forwards. This time it would be third company's turn. Again muzzle flashes erupted from the defenders' lines, scouring the desert with pulse rounds. Chimeras moved forwards to lend their fire, multi-lasers whining, heavy bolters chattering return fire. Leading the attack was Captain Hadid. His own Chimera was hit thirty five times by pulse rounds, eventually penetrating the front armour and killing his driver. Dismounting, the captain rallied his men and led the way, closing in on the objective. The weight of Chimera fire and the platoon's supporting mortars was having an effect, suppressing the defenders as the first Tallarn platoons reached the edge of Giadamak. Now the fighting would become close and personal. With knives and grenades in hand, squads were stalking through the billowing smoke and rusting machinery, hunting down the entrenched defenders.

Meanwhile, the encircling tanks had completed their envelopment against only light resistance. They took up positions to repel any attempted Tau breakthrough to help the force now surrounded amongst the deep quarries of Giadamak. There was little the tank commanders could do as, in mid-afternoon, the Tau launched an aerial evacuation. From the east a formation of four Orcas, surrounded by a defensive shield of Barracudas, raced overhead, banked steeply towards the mine and came in to land. The Tau were withdrawing again.

Fighting amongst the quarries was more like street fighting than desert warfare. The artillery could no longer fall as the forces were too close and intermingled. For three hours the battle was a brawl fought with grenades, knives and sometimes bare fists. The Tau had little stomach for such combat. The Hunter Cadre commander had called for an evacuation. He had inflicted his damage here, it was now time to cut-and-run before his force was annihilated.

The Orcas swooped in, burst cannons raking the sand and the Fire Warrior teams withdrew under the covering fire of their sacrificial rearguard. Scurrying away they loaded up and quickly took to the air. From his command post, General Ras-Aziz watched through magnoculars as one by one the Orcas lifted off and banked away northwards, chased by sporadic Hydra flak fire, whilst Barracudas circled above.

The survivors of Giadamak moved to mop up the Tau rearguard, quickly rounding up the haggard, wounded and battle-weary alien prisoners. In all, sixty three prisoners were taken. The 3rd Tallarn regiment's losses stood at 322 killed or wounded and eleven vehicles destroyed. That evening, sixty-eight Tau bodies were piled into a single mass grave and bulldozed over. After a day of heavy fighting Gaidamak was now a fire scoured wilderness, dotted with artillery impact craters, littered with spent powercells, bloody bandages, smouldering wreckage and the dead of both sides.

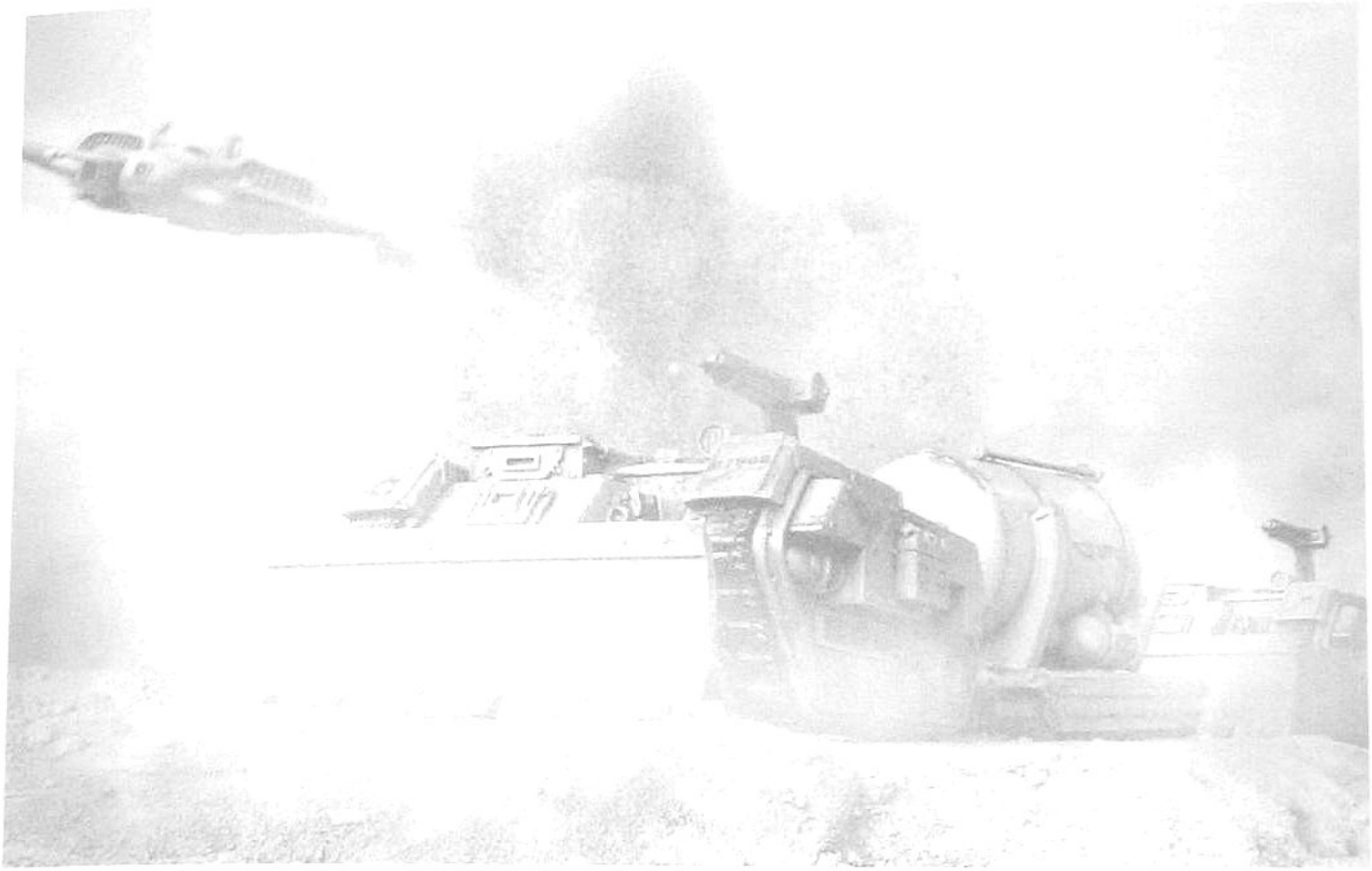
After another fourteen days of advancing, faced by daily Tau sniping, the front line, led by Battlegroup A, had closed to within fifty kilometres of the objective. But they too were now running out of tanks, fuel and water.

As the front line pushed forwards the lengthening supply lines felt the pressure. The second phase of Shas'o R'myr's campaign plan was starting to reap its rewards. With so many units committed to the rear echelon raids, the Tau commander might no longer have enough Hunter Cadres to stop the offensive, but the Imperial Guard was slowly running out of momentum due to its own logistical needs.

Tau Raiders

Whilst the 17th regiment fought for the Phyyra Heights and De Stael committed the 3rd Armoured to give his offensive new momentum, the Tau had started to infiltrate deep into enemy territory. The second phase of their campaign plan had begun.

Operating mainly at night, Tau Fire Warrior, Pathfinder and Stealth teams dropped via Orca into the desert and fanned out in search of targets. Night after night, Orcas flew secret transport missions to drop more teams, seeding the Imperial Guards' rear area with raiding parties, under orders to identify supply routes and dumps, headquarters and airfields. Once located, then action would be planned. Teams were only sanctioned to conduct ambushes on supply routes. Other Pathfinder teams were dropped with



Top: *Artillery of the Tallarn 17th regiment in firing positions during the battle for the Phyyra Heights. This is a pause in the heavy shelling to resupply the battery.*

Above: *Convoy 'Halo XJ 21', made-up of Trojans towing fuel or water bowsers, comes under attack from a low-flying Barracuda. Aircraft, especially the Barracuda, played an important part in interdicting the Imperium's supplies. Here, a Seeker missile seems to have narrowly missed its target.*

Left: *Two Devilfish of Hunter Cadre Shi'Eldi manoeuvre in the desert under the protection of a Barracuda. Note the crewman seems to be scanning the sky for enemy aircraft.*

KROOT KNARLOC RIDER

1. Kroot

The Kroot are the Tau's most numerous alien allies. Natives of the jungle world of Pech, which lies within the Tau Empire, the Kroot commonly serve alongside the Tau Hunter Cadres. The details of this arrangement are unknown, but seem to stem from a time when Tau forces liberated several Kroot enclaves from Ork domination. The Kroot have been happy to serve the Tau as mercenaries ever since.

Physiologically, the Kroot have many notable features. They seem to have evolved from an avian genus, and still retain the vestiges of a beak and have a light skeletal structure. An average Kroot stands 2.3m tall with a lean wiry build, which conceals an immense strength. As tree dwellers they are naturally adept climbers and jumpers, able to cover great distances swiftly. Kroot have no ears or nose but instead have evolved spine sensors, from which they get much of their sensory data. These spine grow from the back of their head and pass information directly to the brain. Their sensitive spines make it difficult to hide from a Kroot, also making them excellent sentries.

Kroot communicate in their own language, consisting of a series of hoots, whistles and high-pitched shrieks. They also seem to rely heavily on smell to communicate. Kroot excrete pungent pheromones, all foul smelling to human senses, but these smells seem to have deeper meanings to other Kroot and their related animals.

On Pech, Kroot live in jagga trees, in tree houses constructed of regurgitated dead wood. Their nest-hives are clustered together in family groups, called kindreds. Each kindred is led by a family elder, called a Shaper.

All Kroot are voracious carnivores. They have evolved to absorb a meals DNA into their own body, hence a Kroot can, over time, take on the characteristics of its meals. This is the Shaper's main role within the kindred: to direct their evolutionary development by selective feeding.

Kroot seem to be impervious to climate changes, operating effectively in sub-zero ice worlds, to humid jungles to parched deserts. Extremes of climate do not seem to bother the Kroot. In fact their diet-based evolution has allowed them to adapt quickly. One kindred has been identified that have adapted themselves to breathe normally in a toxic chlorine atmosphere. They also have the ability to enter hibernation, slowing their body functions to enter a deep sleep, which conserves energy. On Pech kindreds hibernate together through many months of the year.

2. Kroot Long Rifle

The Kroot's main weapon is the Kroot long rifle. This is an essentially primitive rifle, using a chemical propellant to fire a projectile, but until encountering the Tau it was the peak of the Kroot's technological achievement. It seems that the Tau have taken it upon themselves to assist their allies by altering these weapons to fire a charged pulse round, which they supply in vast quantities to Kroot kindreds in service with Tau forces. The Kroot rifle is a single shot breech-loading weapon. It must be reloaded after each shot, making its rate of fire slow.

Blades are mounted on the stock and muzzle of the rifle, and the length of the rifle allows it to be wielded as a staff in hand-to-hand combat. This is a throwback to the Kroot tradition of stave fighting. Kroot naturally excel in close combat. Tall, strong, agile and skilled with their preferred weapon, they are fearsome opponents, and it is these qualities that the Tau prize.

This Kroot also carries a large Kroot knife as a secondary weapon, but it is more often used as an eating utensil or tool than as a weapon.

3. Equipment

This Kroot carries a variety of equipment whilst on campaign. Pouches and sacks carry stores of food for the rider and mount, probably taken from previous victims. One pouch contains extra ammunition for the Kroot rifle. Note he does not carry a waterskin, vital for humans in Taros' climate. Other sacks will contain items looted from the battlefield.

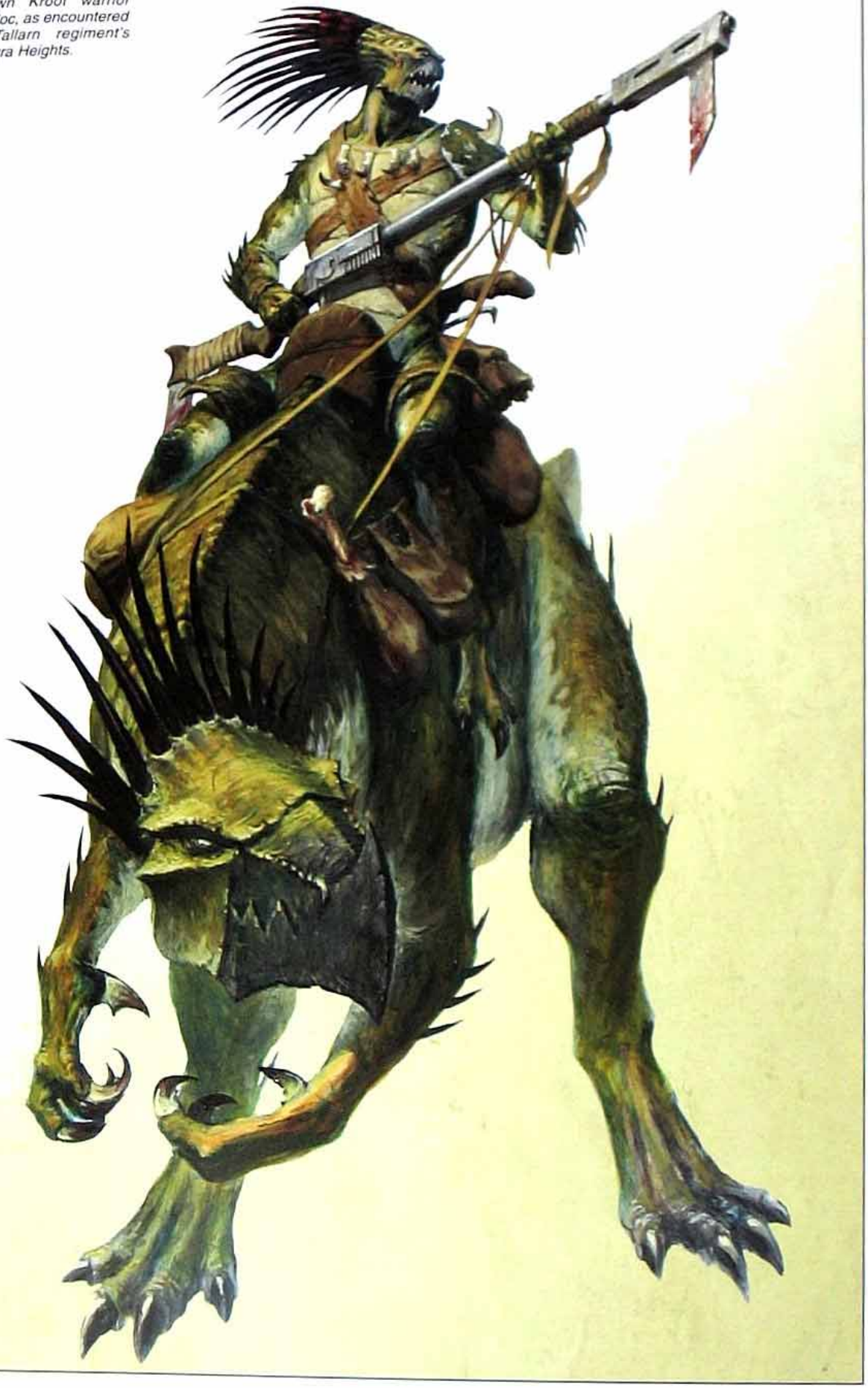
The Kroot do not utilise armour, although this Kroot wears a plasteel shoulder pad taken from an Imperial Guardsman. As in many primitive cultures, trophy taking is an important part of the Kroot's warrior code. Items from vanquished foes are displayed with pride. Here the warrior also wears a necklace of Kroot Hound claws, perhaps displaying hounds he has raised and trained.

4. Knarloc

The planet Pech is abundant with life. Much of it originates from the same genetic root as the Kroot, but has developed along a slightly different evolutionary path. Some of these creatures adapt and thrive, others die out. Most seem to develop as far as they can and become trapped in an evolutionary cul-de-sac, like the Kroot Hound and Krootox.

As the name suggests, Knarlocs are close relatives of the Great Knarloc. They are smaller, more sociable pack hunters. As would be expected the Knarloc has much in common with its larger relative. They hunt in a similar way, spring ambushes or use their stamina in long pursuits. The main difference is they live and hunt in packs. They are voracious hunters, who work together to attack and kill just about any sized prey. Through cooperation they have developed a cunning intelligence. The Kroot seem to respect Knarlocs, revering them as successful hunters. Kroot only hunt and trap Knarloc young to tame and train. Amongst Kroot kindreds, Knarlocs are highly prized as cavalry mounts. It is thought to be a symbol of status to ride a Knarloc.

This is an unknown Kroot warrior mounted upon a Knarloc, as encountered during the 17th Tallarn regiment's advance into the Phyyra Heights.



Campaign Analysis of Tau Defensive Strategy on Taros

Subsequent analysis of the campaign on Taros, through a study of events, interrogation of captured combatants, signals intercept data and other (classified) sources have revealed much of how the Tau planned to defend Taros. This information was collected and collated by Colonel Scheja, and was submitted to the Administratum and the Office of the Lord Commander Militant during the campaign, until the Colonel was killed in action.

For the Tau Shas'ar'tol (High Command) their fundamental problem on Taros was simple. After being invited to help defend Taros, their subsequent swift conquest meant they had more new territory than they could effectively defend. The entire planet was at their mercy, but it also meant that if/when the Imperium reacted and counter-attacked, how could they hope to stop them? The Tau could not occupy every inch of the planet, and therefore the Imperium could land just about anywhere and get a strong foothold on the surface. The size of an expected Imperial attack was also a concern. Would they have enough troops to stop a full invasion?

To aid their manpower problems it has been ascertained that the Tau arranged to induct as many of the old Planetary Defence Forces as they could. The Tau were already well used to using such 'foreign' troops, and rather than waste them as cannon fodder, actually respected their fighting qualities and treated them fairly and well. After time in Tau service, many such traitor units became keen to aid the so-called 'Greater Good' and fought well for their new alien commanders. This was contrary to initial expectations of poor morale amongst indentured troops.

We can summise that long discussions took place on T'au about the situation on Taros. Many councillors argued that in order for the conquest of Taros to be successful any Imperial invasion must be immediately hurled back, causing maximum damage. Such a heavy defeat would persuade the Imperium of Man never to try and invade again. On the ground, and in space, the Tau should match force with force. These commanders also argued that by the time the Imperium could organise another invasion attempt the situation on the Empire's frontier would have moved on. The next planet would already have been targeted, and the Imperium's focus would have to shift to its defence; Taros would be forgotten. In their opinion, what the situation on Taros needed was a rapid build-up of more Hunter Cadres and more Kroot mercenaries. Militarise the system, build defence stations in orbit and make a show of strength that the Imperium might baulk at.

But the commander of the Tau's military forces already on Taros, identified as Shas'o R'myr, [codenamed: Commander 'Longknife'] guided by the Ethereal [identified as Aun'Vre], were already planning a different strategy to defeat any attack. Rather than rely on more troops and a large fleet presence in system, O'R'myr was more conservative in his needs. He already had lots of experience of fighting Imperial Guard forces, and had learned something of their strengths and weaknesses.

Shas'ar'tol Shas'o'R'myr believed that to try and defeat the Imperium in an open battle was a mistake. He had little doubt his forces could achieve a victory this way, but only at a heavy cost, – perhaps a greater cost than the Empire should pay for the conquest of Taros.

If it came to a pitched battle, the Imperium would send more forces and the battle would escalate. More ships, more men, more tanks would follow the first, and the Tau might destroy them, but victory would not be quick and the cost in lives would be great.

Worse still, O'R'myr was concerned that the Tau fleet was not capable of inflicting a decisive defeat on the Imperium's ships if it came to a fleet engagement. The vast firepower of Imperial ships would always give them the advantage in a straight fight. To his mind the Tau fleet was not a war fleet but a colonisation fleet. To stand and fight in space would be a mistake, and cost the Tau fleet heavily. Instead they should offer minimal resistance and allow the Imperium to gain orbit and land its troops. In O'R'myr's plan, the war for Taros could be won on the ground, in the scorching deserts, not in the cold depths of space.

For his strategy, Shas'o R'myr was using the Tau doctrine of Kauyon – 'patient hunter'. This time the hunter's lure would be the absences of Tau forces. They should allow the Imperium onto Taros, draw them deeper into the deserts before striking and cutting off the Imperium's lifeline of supplies. This was the Imperium's weakness. Their soldiers would need food, ammunition and water to fight, and if his forces could target these supplies he believed it would bring rapid success.

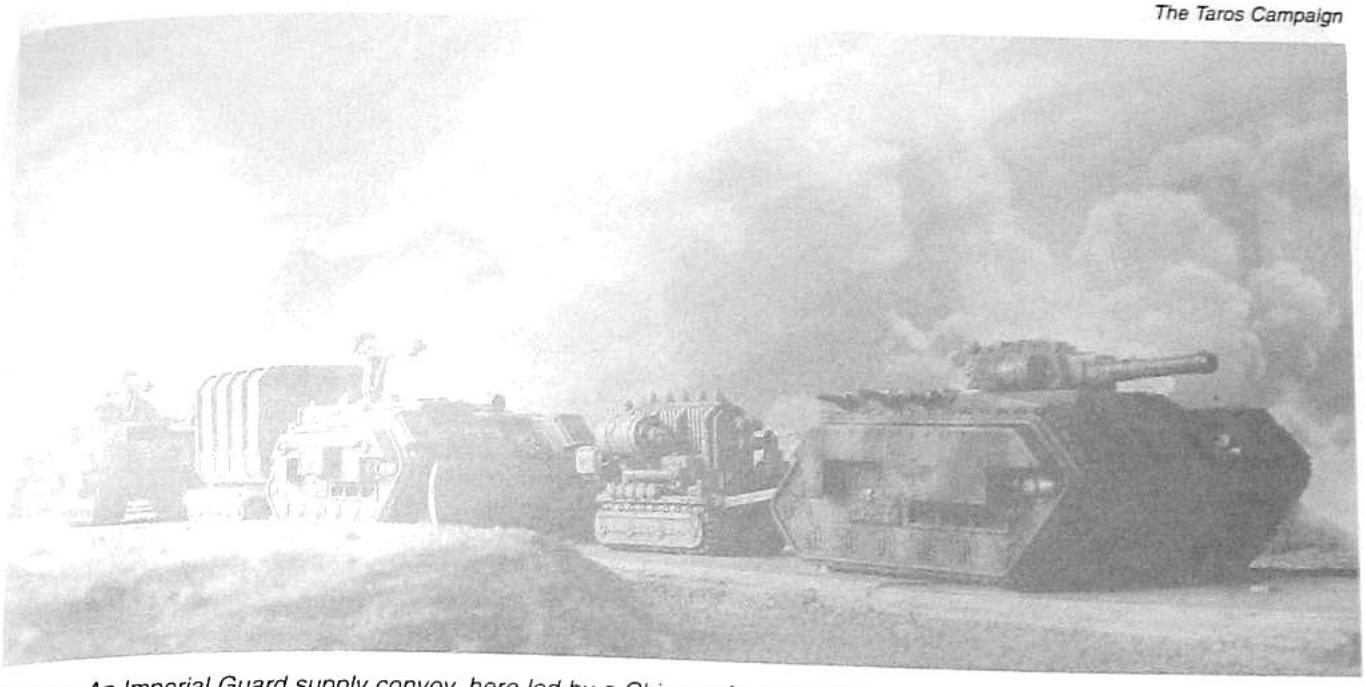
Once battle was joined on the surface, O'R'myr would turn to the Tau doctrine of Mont'ka – 'the killing blow'. The Tau's ground war would have two separate but linked missions.

First, having used the absence of troops as a lure to draw the Imperial forces into the open, out of their defensive positions and into the deserts, O'R'myr would strike, targeting the forward Imperial units with the long-range firepower of his Hammerheads and Broadsides. Rapid strikes by mobile armoured Hunter Cadres, hitting the Imperial forces hard then quickly withdrawing and dispersing would slow any advance and sap Imperial manpower and morale. In the open desert he would be maximizing his advantage in range and avoiding expensive close quarters battle. He would give ground before the advance, never standing to fight for more than a localised counter-attack. This way he would be stretching Imperial supply lines whilst making them pay daily in manpower and fighting machines. When the Imperium's attack was over extended and weary from weeks of combat the second phase would commence.

Next, using Mantas and Orcas, O'R'myr would launch a series of stealthy, fast, Hunter Cadres deep behind enemy lines, to attack rear installations and supply columns. He would put his most vigorous Shas'el commanders in charge of this operation. Making wide use of Stealthsuits, Pathfinders and aircraft, the teams would locate and attack supply dumps and convoys, airbases and headquarters, sowing confusion and denying the front line security for its supply lines. Combined with new fleet operations in the system, specifically targeting the Imperial transport vessels he hoped to cut off the Imperial Guard's lifeline of supplies, support and reinforcements, leaving them stranded in the desert. The Imperium's weakness was its huge logistical tail, that would be the place for the Shas'el to concentrate their efforts.

From interrogations, it is now known that many Tau Hunter Cadre commanders in the Shas'ar'tol thought the plan was overly defensive and too easily handed the initiative to the Imperium. The Imperium would be at its weakest during its planetary landings, smash them with a large counter-attack and the war would be over before it started. Do not give the Imperium war machine a chance to start moving, because with their seemingly endless resources it might become unstoppable.

This theory was sound enough, but in practice, given the planet's size and the Imperium's perceived dominance of the space lanes, how could O'Rmyr stop an invasion? Try to anticipate the possible landing site, or sites? Once in low orbit the Imperium would have the entire planet to choose from. Certain areas could be ignored, like the inhospitable deserts and mountains, but the area to be defended was still vast. Only by spreading their forces thinly would their be any likelihood of forces being available for an immediate counter-attack, and thinly spread forces would mean not enough firepower to overrun the landing zones. They could concentrate forces and take a guess at the most likely landing site, but it would only be a guess. Concentrating forces too early would present the Imperium with a good target for its heaviest weapons, orbital bombardment. This would be a huge risk, because a sustained orbital bombardment might tear Tau forces apart before battle even started. Finally, O'R'myr reminded his fellow Shas'el commanders that "He who defends everything, defends nothing!". The argument was won; Shas'o R'myr got his way. The Tau commanders on Taros would play the patient hunter and wait, then they would strike their two killing blows.



Above: *An Imperial Guard supply convoy, here led by a Chimera for additional security, comes under attack from Seeker missile strikes. Part of the Tau's campaign strategy was to target the Imperial Guard's rear-echelon.*

Tetra speeders, allowing them to move with great speed to each new target.

Pathfinder and Stealth teams operated in unison to attack Imperial Guard supply columns of Trojans towing trailers full of water, fuel and ammunition. Rear area security was mainly being conducted by Sentinel and Rough Rider squadrons, and these proved ineffective against the small, well-armed Tau teams. Day after day, convoy after convoy was ambushed. The Pathfinders inflicting rapid loses before withdrawing back into the desert. Soon, supply routes were marked by the blackened hulks of destroyed Trojans and trailers, or the slowly bleaching bones of horses killed in ambushes. Security was increased. Armoured Fist squads were withdrawn from frontline duty to help defend the vulnerable convoys, but the Tau attacks continued.

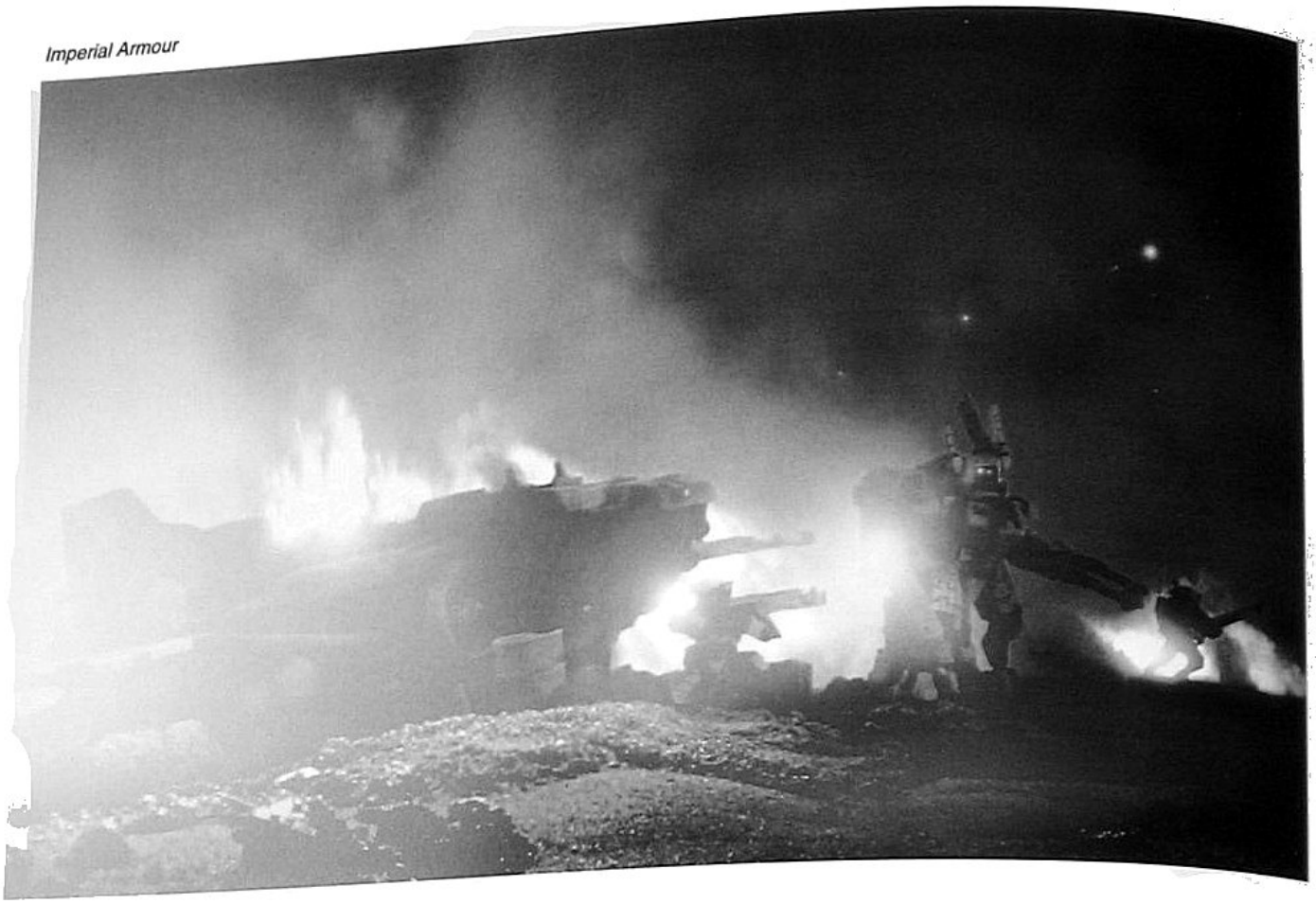
One large supply dump was destroyed in a night-time raid without a shot being fired. Pathfinder teams infiltrated past the dump sentries to stealthily set charges amongst the fuel cans and ammunition crates. Just before dawn a huge orange fireball rose out of the desert, waking even Lord Marshal De Stael onboard his *Leviathon* command vehicle. At dawn there was a tall mushroom cloud of dust and smoke marking the supply dumps location, still rising high into the sky for all to see for miles around.

By 640998.M41 the offensive towards Tarokeen had ground to a halt, lacking replacements and supplies. The 12th Armoured, spearheaded by Battlegroup A of 3rd Armoured, had almost reached the mouth of the Iracunda Isthmus; the other two infantry regiments on their left hadn't made it so far. The 17th regiment was stuck in the Phyyra Heights, and although they had made some small gains, no breakthrough seemed imminent. The 89th regiment thinly filled the gap between the two flanks. Far to the south, the 331st regiment had advanced to the southern shores of the Em-sai and was now digging in, but the Tau had not fallen for the feint.

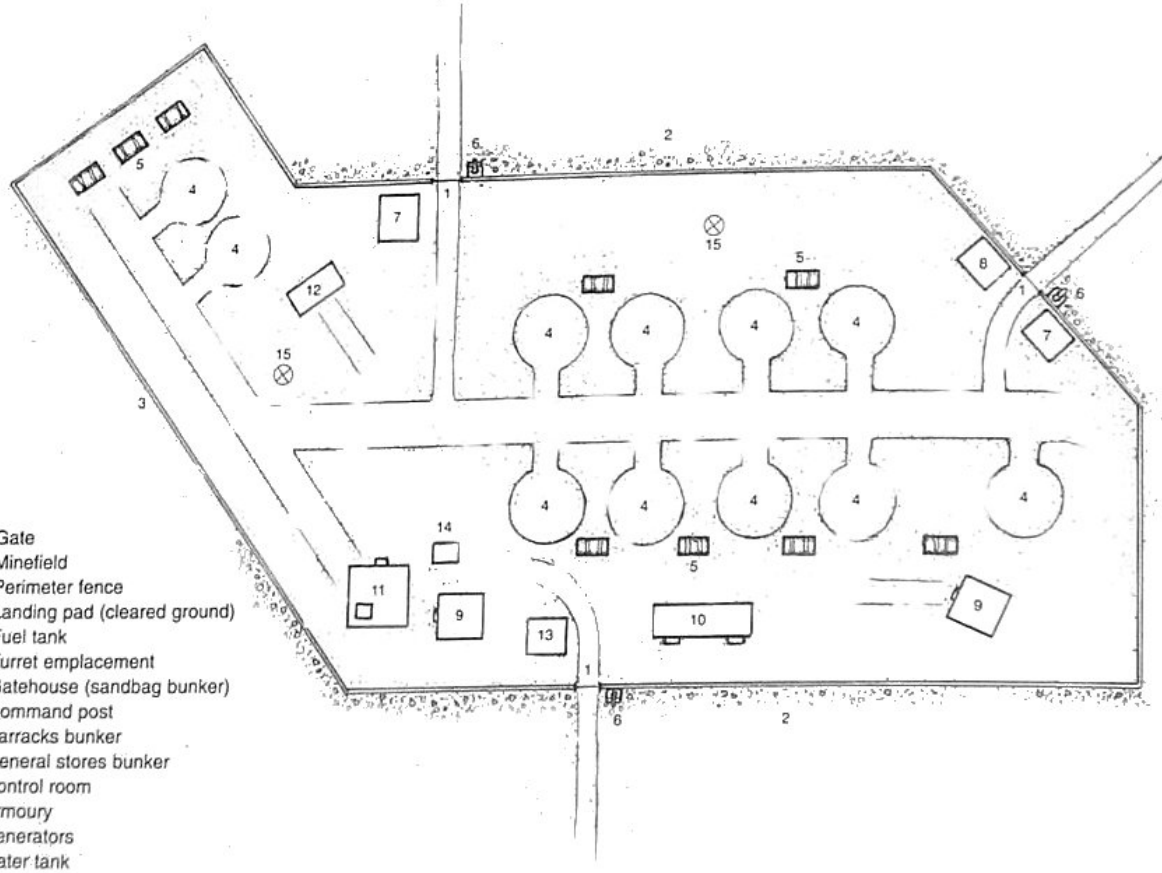
Up until now the air war over Taros had continued daily, an evenly matched duel, with both sides struggling to gain superiority. The Tau had the edge in numbers, but the Imperium had the edge in experience. It was a battle neither side could afford to lose. Unless the Tau dominated the skies, their defensive strategy would be facing a major problem. If their Barracudas could no longer protect the Hunter Cadres then the Imperial forces would have an advantage in the ground war. The Hunter Cadres would be exposed to repeated air attacks, and forced to rely on their Sky Rays for defence, which were proving themselves a potent weapon against ground targets when used in conjunction with small Pathfinder teams. Also, Barracudas and Tiger Sharks were playing a big part in the second phase of the campaign, strafing supply convoys. The Imperial Navy was still putting up an alarming fight, and at this time it was the main threat to Shas'o R'myr's campaign plan. Urgent action was needed to help swing the balance of the air war in their favour. The Tau launched a daring raid to destroy Imperial Navy aircraft whilst still on the ground.

Small Stealthsuit teams had already infiltrated the Imperial Guard rear area. Operating only at night, their mission was to find and report the location of Imperial supply dumps and convoy routes. They were under strict orders not to engage the enemy, just to find potential targets for other strike forces to attack. They received new instructions: their mission was now to find the airbases. These were now the highest priority targets.

When a patrolling Stealth team reported the location of the forward airbase, Shas'el K'irri responded quickly. Utilising only his best Fire Warrior teams he gathered an elite strike force. His plan was simple but very dangerous. In a daring night-time raid, a single Orca loaded with troops would fly low over the desert and pass directly over the airstrip. The Fire Warrior teams and their support units would jump out, and under the covering fire of drones and Crisis battlesuits, destroy all the grounded aircraft with EMP grenades. Shas'el



FORWARD AIRBASE



1. Gate
2. Minefield
3. Perimeter fence
4. Landing pad (cleared ground)
5. Fuel tank
6. Turret emplacement
7. Gatehouse (sandbag bunker)
8. Command post
9. Barracks bunker
10. General stores bunker
11. Control room
12. Armoury
13. Generators
14. Water tank
15. Hydra flak platform

K'irri would lead the attack himself. After the drop, the Orca would circle round and return to land directly on the airfield. Once the enemy aircraft were destroyed and the Orca had landed, the teams would fall back to the Orca and make a rapid escape, covered by a flight of Barracudas scrambled to intercept any Imperial pursuit. Surprise would be on their side, but once the airbase realised it was under attack they would respond quickly and in force. K'irri warned all his chosen Shas'la that the chances of survival were low. They would be deep in enemy territory and should anything go wrong, they would be cut-off. But should they succeed then it could have dramatic effects on the front line. It was a risk worth taking for the Greater Good!

To start with the attack went as planned. The Orca, equipped with blacksun filters and a disruption pod to make it difficult to track, approached the airfield, skimming fast and lower over the desert surface. On its final approach to the target the Orca attracted the attention of the airbase's anti-aircraft defences and sustained several hits as the Hydra flak guns opened fire. Once over the airfield, the rear ramp lowered and the troops jumped out, hitting the ground and immediately going into action. As tracers from the Hydra's autocannons lit up the night sky, the Fire Warrior teams raced towards the parked aircraft. The Shas'el's Crisis battlesuits leapt towards the Hydra platforms, silencing them with multiple hits from plasma rifles and missile pods. Illuminated by the fires of the burning Hydra, an emplaced multi-laser guarding the perimeter fence found its range, destroying a battlesuit, which exploded in a shower of sparks.

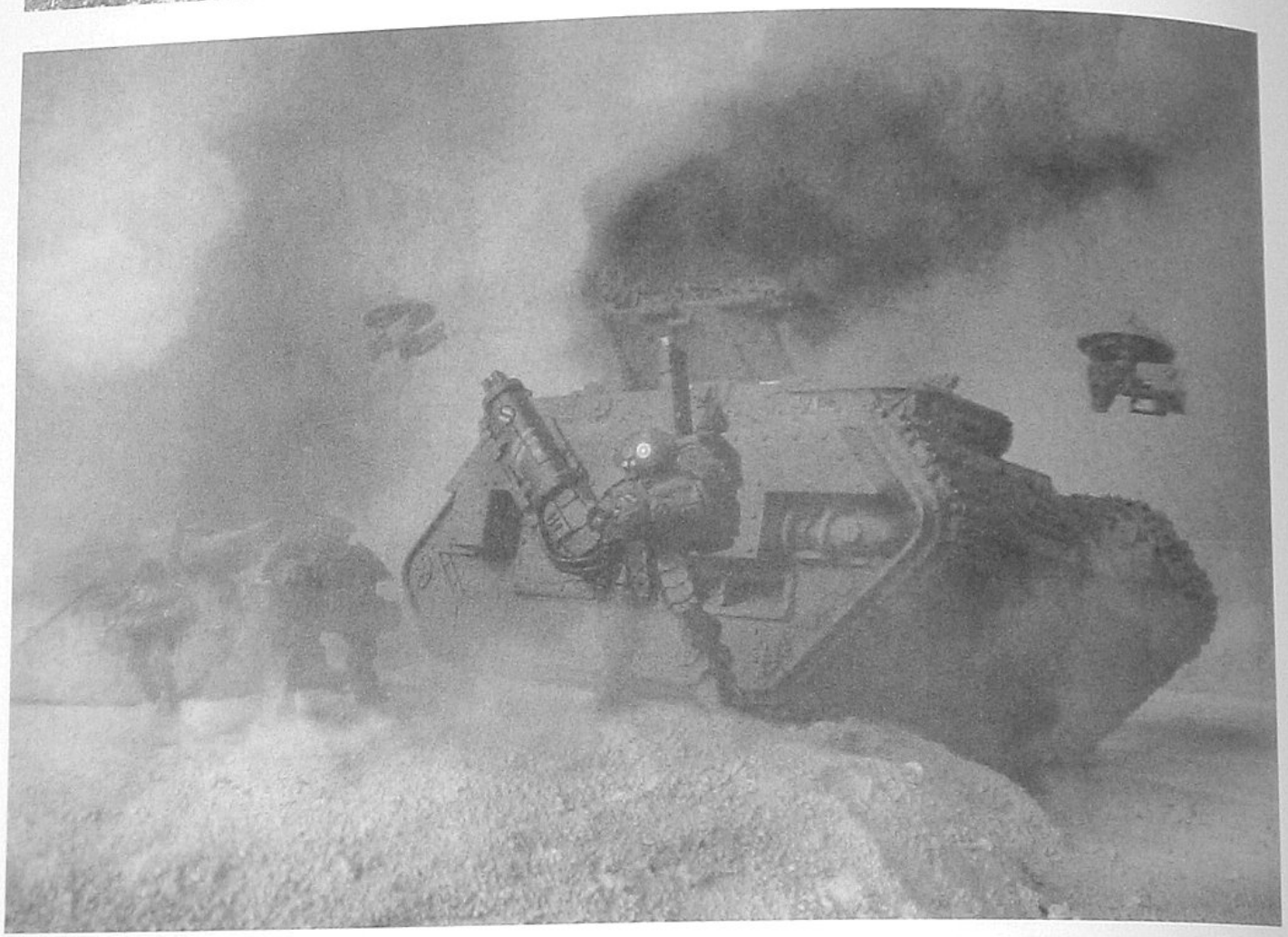
Pinned in their command post by fire from Gun Drones, the guard command section called for urgent help. Other security squads were already rushing to their aid. First to arrive was a squadron of Sentinels, attached to the airbase for rear area security duty. The confused night-fight escalated, pulse rounds and lasgun blasts criss-crossing the airfield, until, with sudden bright explosions, one after another aircraft began to explode. In all, six explosions in quick succession lit the darkness, fountaining flames and sparks from the cockpits of the grounded Thunderbolts. The destruction of the aircraft did not see the end of the fighting. The Orca had circled the base and returned to land on the runway. Such a large target attracted a lot of fire from the defenders. The dropship attempted to return fire with its own burst cannons, only to be rocked by repeated impacts. One engine started to burn, crippling the aircraft and preventing it from taking off, gradually the flames engulfed the Orca, forcing the crew to abandon ship. The mission had achieved its objective, but for the attacking Tau teams, there was no longer any escape. Deep in enemy territory they fought on throughout the night until overwhelmed by the defenders. Every raider was either killed, wounded or captured in the attack, including Shas'el K'irri.

As dawn broke it revealed the results of the intense fighting. Six aircraft lay as smouldering wrecks, along with the Hydra turrets, battlesuits and the gutted Orca, flames still flickering from inside the stricken dropship. The airbase was shrouded in acrid smoke and littered with the dead and wounded of both sides. It was a scene of devastation. The cost had been heavy on both sides. The Imperial Navy had suffered the loss of its aircraft and the airbase was out of action until the debris could be cleared. The Tau had lost their entire raiding force in the strike. What the overall effect on the campaign would be, it was too early to tell.

The attack on the airbase was not the end of the raids. More supply dumps would be located and then targeted by Pathfinders. Convoys continued to be ambushed by stealth teams or strafed by Barracudas. It was a plan designed to cripple the frontline regiments by reducing their supplies to a trickle, and it was working.

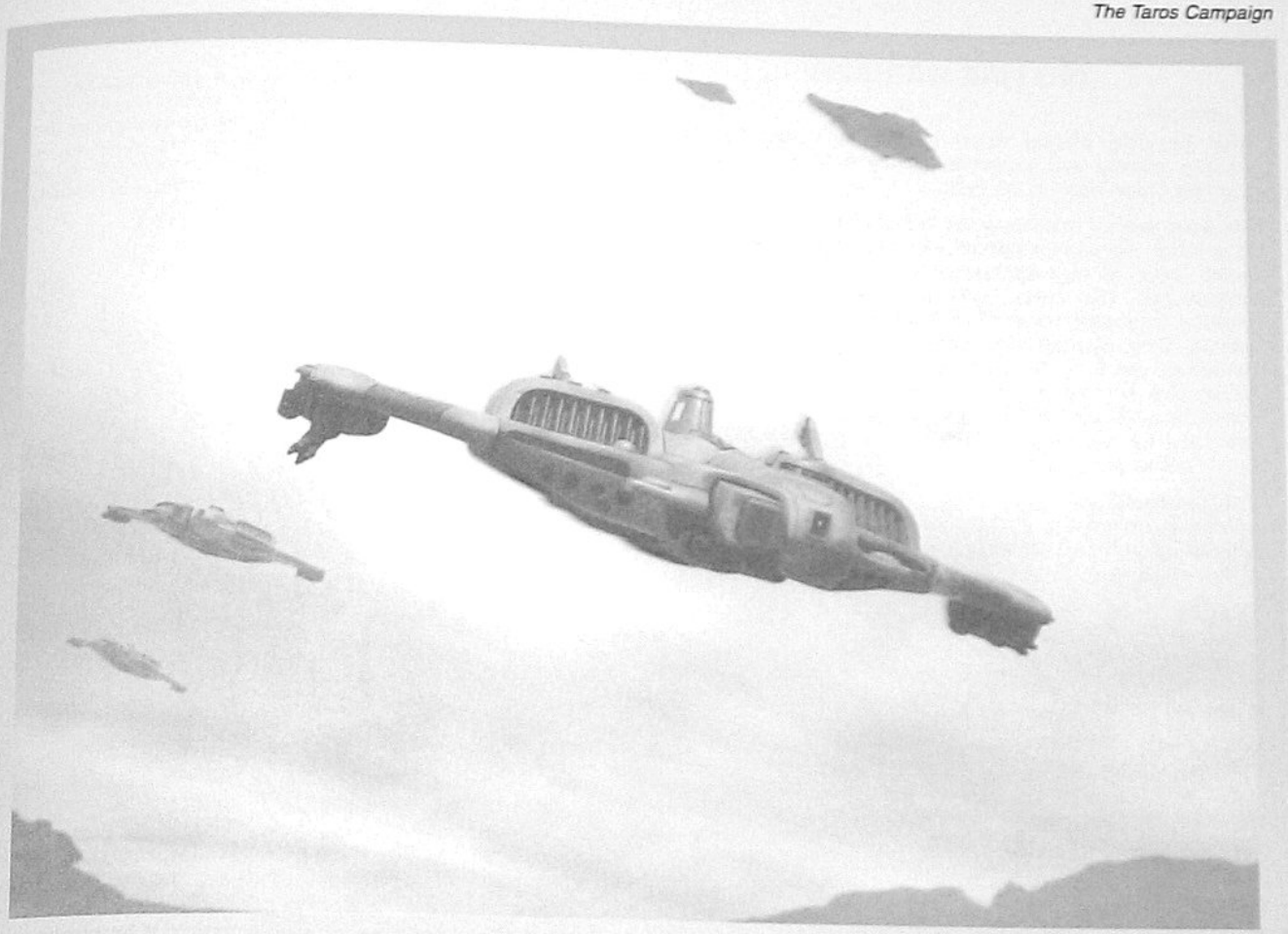
Opposite Top: *Silhouetted by the flames of a burning Thunderbolt, Tau raiders destroyed six aircraft in their surprise attack. They paid a high price; the entire raiding force was captured or killed in the action.*

Right: *The night sky is lit up by tracer fire as the Orca comes in to land. Later it would be destroyed before the Tau could evacuate.*



Top: *Crisis approaching. Battlesuits utilise their jetpacks to move quickly through the deserts.*

Above: *Target eliminated! Tau reconnaissance forces leave an Imperial Guard convoy as burning hulks after a surprise ambush.*



AIR WAR OVER TAROS

Also worrying for De Stael was the Tau's growing air superiority. The Tau had obvious established a network of good airfields on Taros, with smaller forward bases hidden in the deserts and larger facilities closer to Tarokeen. The Tau had assembled an unknown quantity of aircraft, but Air Marsal Denvelt was estimating at least ten squadron-sized groups, maybe 120 Barracudas and 40 Tiger Sharks. Despite losses inflicted by Imperial Navy Fighter, squadrons the Tau were airborne relentlessly. The situation had not been helped by the Tau raid against one of Denvelt's forward airbases and the loss of six fighter aircraft in one night. In all the Imperial Navy had four Fighter wings, two Bomber wings and one Tactical wing committed to the Taros campaign. At the peak of its strength (the start of the campaign), Air Marshal Denvelt commanded 78 fighters, of which the vast majority were Thunderbolts, 24 Marauder bombers and 18 Valkyrie transports (not including those of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment). Since the campaign had started, he had received exactly zero replacements, despite repeated requests.

The squadrons were starting to feel the strain of prolonged combat. As well as aircraft and aircrew losses, the fuel situation was not good, and air dropped munitions were running low. Imperial airbases were mostly situated far to the rear, close to the original landing zone, where Departmento Munitorum Engineer and Labour corp had been instructed to construct them. As the front advanced, this left the aircraft further and further behind, with longer missions times, and hence less time in the air over the battlefield. An original plan to move fighter bases forwards had been cancelled. Since the Tau raid it was considered too risky to expose grounded aircraft to roving Stealth teams. As it was, all airbase security had been increased, with forces being drawn from the forward Imperial Guard regiments.

The Bomber squadrons had hammered Tarokeen and the Iracunda Isthmus with repeated air raids, pounding the city and suspected Tau bases. It seemed to be having little effect on the Tau. Attempts to hit Tau Hunter Cadres in the deserts seemed to expend a disproportionate amount of munitions for slim results, and bomber losses to the ever-present Barracudas had been alarming: five in the first two days. In summary, the air war was (much like the ground war), slowly slipping away from the Emperor's forces.

Because of this, the Imperial Guardsmen on the ground faced the ever-present danger of low-level Barracuda attacks. The Tau aircraft slipped along low over the desert, hugging valleys and ridge lines, only to rise suddenly in a whirl of ion cannon fire, missiles and burst cannons that raked the sand and sent everybody diving for the nearest cover. Supply convoys were a priority target and suffered heavy losses. Without reinforcements the Imperial Navy was struggling to defend them. By the time *Operation Comet* was launched, Air Marshal Denvelt commanded just thirty-seven fighters, twelve bombers and thirteen Valkyries. Still no replacements had reached him, and none ever would.

Above: *A flight of Barracudas fly as a fighter-escort to a pair of high-flying Mantas.*

TAU FIRE WARRIOR

1. Armour

This Tau Fire Warrior wears the standard issue combat uniform, armour and equipment common to all members of the Fire Caste when in the field.

His body armour is constructed in two layers. The outer face is a hard, ultra-dense nanocrystalline metal, bonded to an inner layer of high-performance, thermo-set, molecular polyethene. The inner layer acts as energy-absorbent padding for energy dispersal. This helps prevent blunt trauma effects from high-velocity impacts. The highly advanced materials used in its construction are very resilient to penetration and lightweight compared to more conventional materials such as plasteel. The construction techniques are unknown as the Adeptus Mechanicus are forbidden from investigating dangerous alien technology by the Ordo Xenos.

The elongated and thickened left shoulder pad acts as an additional protective shield, especially when the Fire Warrior is kneeling with the weapon at his shoulder, covering that side of the warrior's body with extra armour.

This Fire Warrior proclaims his allegiance to his racial home world of T'au by carrying the symbol of that Sept on his shoulder pad and chest.

2. Helmet

It is thought that the distinctive domed Tau combat helmet includes many systems. Communication equipment, night vision sensors, targeting and range-finder information, and access to the command network. It is believed that the helmet includes some form of visual relay, but this is unconfirmed.

The markings on his helmet are rank insignia, indicating the Fire Warrior is of the rank of Shas'ui (believed to be broadly equivalent to that of an Imperial Guard Sergeant).

3. Pulse Carbine

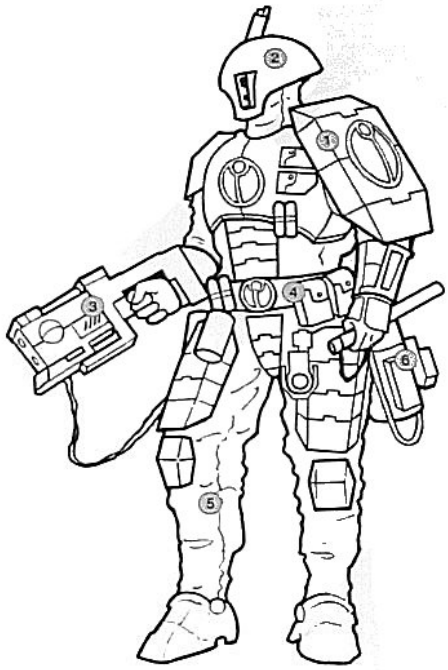
This Tau's personal weapon is his pulse carbine. A short-barrelled, lightweight version of the more common pulse rifle, often issued to scout units and for special operations. The carbine sacrifices range for portability and is especially useful at close quarters.

The weapon generates an induction field which is used to propel a particle. The particle reacts to the field by breaking down into a plasma state (referred to as a pulse). Power is provided by a powercell, which must be replaced after 50 shots. Tau powercells are a standard fit for all weapons. A pulse carbine includes an under slung photon grenade launcher as standard. The single-shot grenade launcher fires a standard issue photon grenade over a short distance. The pulse carbine also mounts a remote thermic sight, which combine with the weapons advanced stabilisers and recoil reduction make it highly accurate during aimed fire.

This Fire Warrior's only other weapon is his bonding knife. Not intended for combat the ceremonial knife is a symbol that this warrior and his team have performed the Ta'lissera ritual, and that all members of the team are bonded together. It is a rite of deep signifance to members of the Fire Caste, pledging themselves to fight together until the last man. A common Fire Caste saying is 'Only in death are the bonded parted'. As well as the knife itself, the Fire Warriors of a bonded team often stencil the knife symbol on their armour. Here it is present on the right thigh guard.

4. Equipment

From his belt hangs a sensor unit. The purpose of this device is unknown, although commonly issued to team leaders it is thought to be some form of sensor and tracking equipment.



Hanging from the webbing braces are two pouches for additional pulse powercells, and two smaller signal flare pellets. These have not been encountered before and are believed to be used for visual communication or as a back-up to standard communications for marking his team's location.

The standard issue webbing belt contains pouches for extra powercells and a container for photon grenades. These can be armed and thrown by hand or loaded into the grenade launcher. A photon grenade is primary a defensive weapon, detonating with a powerful sonic blast and multi-spectrum light which dazzles and disorientates the enemy. Although non-lethal the effects can be severe and long lasting.

He has also been issued with EMP grenades. These weapons emit a brief but powerful electro-magnetic pulse which overloads circuitry, causing melt downs and malfunctions. EMP grenades cannot be fired from the grenade launcher.

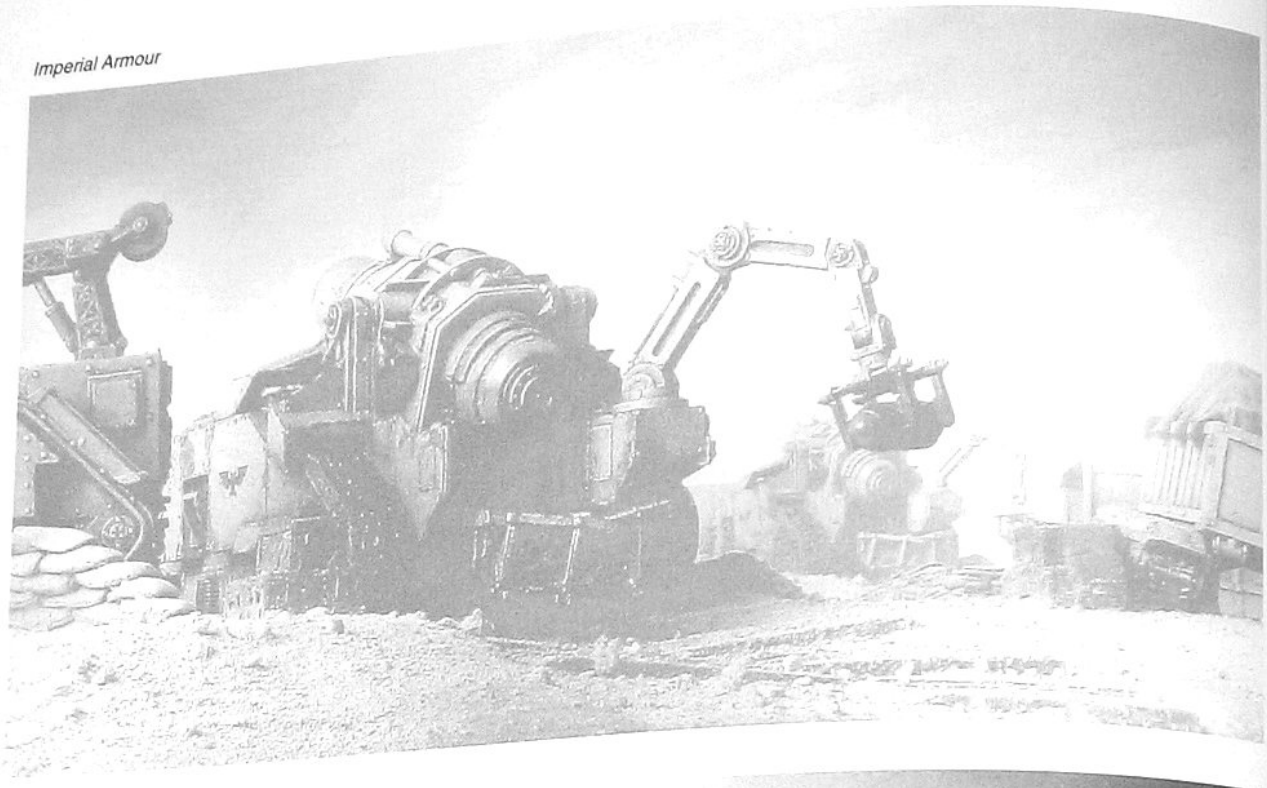
5. Fatigues

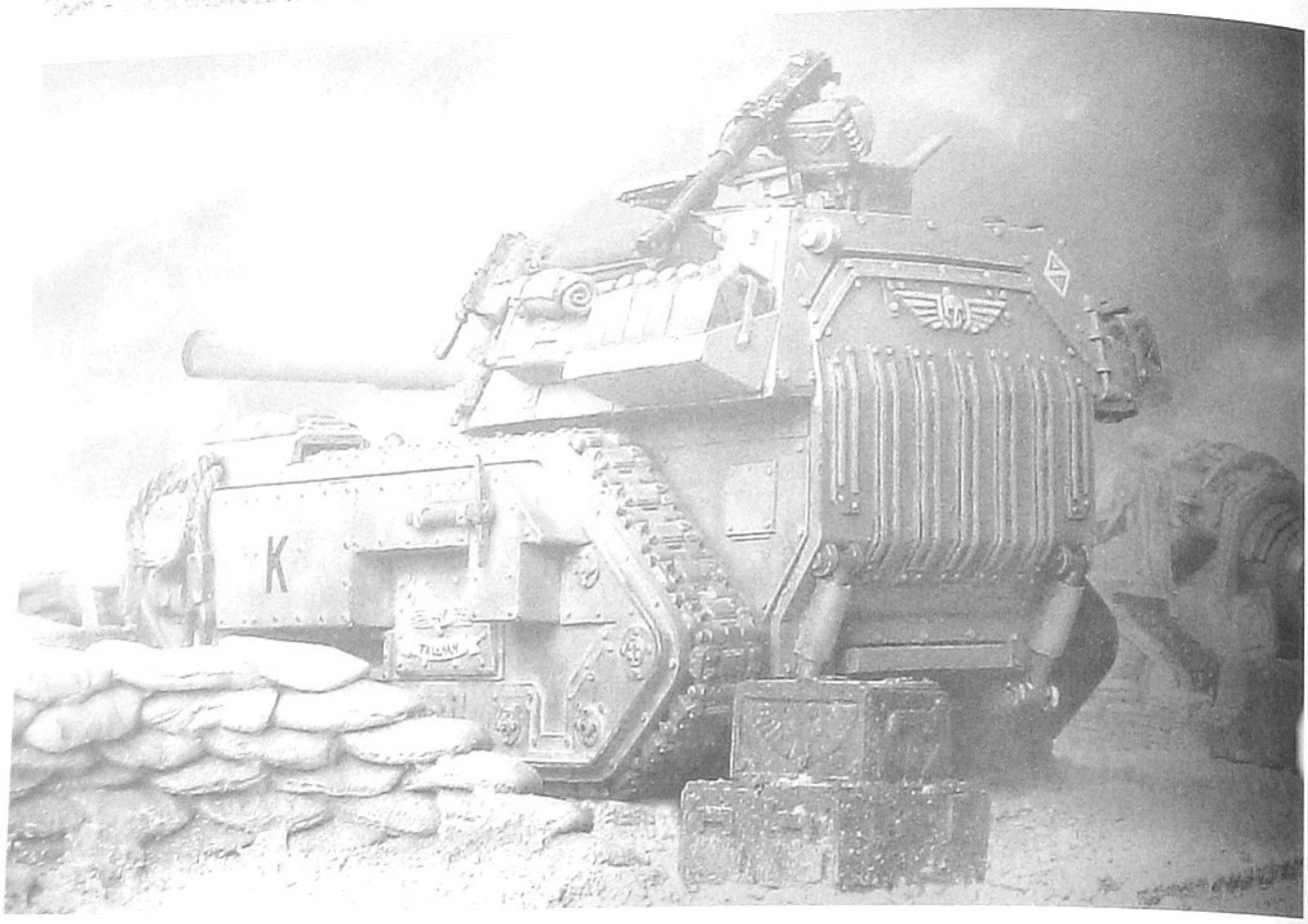
The Fire Warrior's one-piece coveralls are constructed of a composite nanocular thread, which has a microscopic, super-dense mess of fibres that help prevent projectile punctures and slashing penetrations, whilst remaining flexible. The material the fatigues are constructed from is also chemically treaded to retard flames and the effects of most irritant gases or chemicals. The fatigues are hardwearing and suitable for most environments, and are issued in a variety of colours.

6. Evaporator Unit

This warrior also carries an unusual item, never seen before. The bulky container is believed to be a water evaporator and storage unit. Each team was issued one for the Taros campaign, to provide an emergency level of water in the desert conditions. A Tau's physical capabilities to resist the effects of dehydration are unknown, but believed to be far in excess of human norms.

This is Shas'ui Ta'she, leader of a Fire Warrior team of Shas'el K'irri's Hunter Cadre. He is shown equipped for a night-time raid on an Imperial Navy airfield. Although the mission was successful, Ta'she was killed in the action.





Top: *The 17th Tallarn regiment was the only Imperial Guard unit to include heavy siege mortars in their order of battle. Here the battery pauses during fighting against Kroot forces in the Phyyra Heights. The concussion from the guns has raised a lot of dust. To reduce this effect, crews would damp-down the area with water before firing, but due to supply shortages this practice was banned.*

Above: *Basilisk artillery in position to fire into the Phyyra Heights. The Kroot had no answer to the Tallarn's artillery, but the very rugged terrain drastically reduced the guns, effectiveness, allowing the primitive Kroot to stall the regiment's advance.*

The Battle for Taros System

At 537998.M41 the Tau fleet, coordinating their operation with the ground forces, arrived in the Taros system to begin their part in the campaign plan.

Since their arrival in-system, Imperial Admiral Kotto's invasion fleet had busied themselves with protecting the unloading operation and the supply convoys, now to-ing and fro-ing from the Taros system like worker bees collecting pollen. The *Righteous Power* remained in geo-stationary orbit over the landing zone, whilst the three cruisers were stationed in the outer reaches, positioned to provide a secure perimeter with maximum sensor coverage and the fastest reaction time for a cruiser to respond to any surprise Tau moves. The two light cruisers and most of the escorts provided close convoy protection for the important cargo vessels which now formed the 4621st Army's lifeline.

With the Space Marines not currently engaged on the surface, the *War Talon* had withdrawn and began patrolling the system as a rapid reaction force, ready to speed to wherever she was needed, or back to orbit should a fresh planetfall operation be called for.

Novem squadron's Firestorm frigates provided the outer piquet line, patrolling deep space as an early warning against Tau raiders.

The Tau fleet slipped into the Taros system unnoticed at first, disengaging etherdrives in deep space and creeping in system on the tail of the Imperial convoys. Running slowly and silently, the Tau fleet was about to begin a long game of the hide-and-seek with the more powerful Imperial vessels.

The Tau fleet was centred around its latest vessels, a Custodian class carrier *A'Rho*, and the twin Protector class starships *Io'Tar* and *Io'Phi* supported by four squadrons of Castellans and Wardens. In all, it was a fleet of twenty-six vessels, but in a straight engagement it could not hope to match the entire Imperial fleet arrayed against it. Instead, the Tau would hit and run, targeting the convoys and trying to split the Imperial fleet into smaller forces they could engage and defeat separately.

Upon arrival the Tau fleet divided into four groups and set different courses. The main group, led by the *A'Rho*, would strike deepest, acting as a decoy to draw Imperial vessels in pursuit of it. Meanwhile, the two Protector-led attack groups would strike at the supply convoys. The fourth group, consisting of a single squadron of five Castellans would be given free reign; their role was to create confusion, operating independently of the other squadrons with free reign to harass convoys or draw Imperial pursuit on a wild goose chase.

Indentified Tau Starships in Taros system

Vash'ya Or'es El'leath A'Rho (Custodian class *A'Rho*)

3 x Vash'ya Kir'la (Warden class)

Vash'ya Lar'shi'vre Io'Tar (Protector class *Io'Tar*)

Vash'ya Lar'shi'vre Io'Phi (Protector class *Io'Phi*)

5 x Vash'ya Kir'shasvre (Castellan class)

5 x Vash'ya Kir'shasvre (Castellan class)

5 x Vash'ya Kir'shasvre (Castellan class)

5 x Vash'ya Kir'shasvre (Castellan class)

Firestorm frigate *Novem 22* was the first Imperial vessel to identify part of the Tau fleet. Stationed on a patrol route through deep space, the frigate's sensors picked up an unidentified signal and moved closer to investigate. Closing cautiously, she was soon tracking four unknown vessels of escort size, moving in formation. *Novem 22* did not wait around to find any larger ships, she was already heavily outmatched. Instead she turned around and heading back in-system at full speed to report her finding to Admiral Kotto. On board the *Righteous Power* Kotto listened to the crackling, static-shrouded voice of Captain Renard commanding *Novem 22*. The Tau had finally arrived. In what numbers, and what vessels he did not yet know, but the threat must be countered. Kotto passed the report to the closest cruiser to Novem's location, the Lunar class *Hammer of Thrace*.

The *Hammer of Thrace* responded immediately to the first contact, and upon receiving orders from Admiral Kotto moved to rendezvous with the regrouping *Novem* squadron and then intercept the raiders and engage. He didn't know it, but Admiral Kotto had swallowed the bait. Free from the threat of the closest cruiser, the first Protector-led Tau attack group sped towards troop convoy Alpha-four, a small line astern of four transports currently inbound for Taros. The *Imperius Javalin*, *Anvil* and *Gauntlet* and the *Prince Maud* were well guarded by their convoy leader, the Dauntless light cruiser *Cerebus*, and *Errant* squadron, consisting of four Sword class frigates. Convoy Alpha-four was transporting part of XI Corp, the entire 8th Brimlock Dragoons regiment and their supplies, and was making its first return journey since taking part in the initial invasion. With no contact from the Tau so far the convoy was expecting an easy return trip. It was now in grave peril. With the *Hammer of Thrace* and *Novem* squadron already comitted in pursuit of the Tau escort vessels, the convoy was dangerously exposed.

Troop Convoy Alpha-Four

The first Captain Nomura on the bridge of the *Cerebus* knew of the Tau presence was the arrival of the *Io'Tar* and her escorting vessels in sensor range, racing towards the convoy. The Tau attack came as a total surprise on the bridge of the light cruiser, which reacted by immediately sounding battle-stations and requesting assistance from the *Hammer of Thrace*. Too late, the Lunar class cruiser was already under orders and moving away at flank speed. She could not help.

The *Io'Tar* opened the battle of convoy Alpha-four with a volley from her gravitic launchers, firing drone missiles which scattered the convoy and escorts as they swung hard to evaded the guided lock-ons. The five Castellans followed close behind, closing with their forward railgun batteries lashing the frigates of *Errant* squadron. Taken off-guard, the escorts responded as best they could, weapons batteries booming out huge cannon shells, trying to find their range on the closing Tau vessels. In those first fusillades the *Cerebus* was hit in the engines as she swung hard to starboard. A drone missile had locked on and could not be shaken; it found its mark. The explosion as the missile penetrated the *Cerebus'* stern flashed through the engine decks, incinerating engineers, servitors and ratings. Seriously damaged by the impact the *Cerebus'* main plasma core began to dangerously overheat, running out of control and threatening to

detonate the entire ship. Captain Nomura ordered the core shut down, but that left his vessel a drifting cripple at the mercy of the Tau gunners. The Tau gunners showed little mercy that day. As *Cerebus* was lashed by fire, Captain Nomura ordered all to abandon ship, but refused all advice to leave the bridge himself.

With their convoy leader disabled, the transports fled for safety. The cruiser *Black Duke* had been ordered to their aid, but was still too far away to intervene in the battle. The transports changed course to meet the incoming Dictator class cruiser, but their small engines where unable to outrun the pursuing Castellans, which now swarmed around them, ion cannons and railgun batteries blazing, overwhelming shield generators, buckling armour plates and puncturing hulls.

In the holds of their transports the Guardsmen of the 8th Brimlock Dragoons were powerless to aid in their own defence. They felt their ships roll and vibrate with each enemy near miss. They heard the engines straining at flank speed and the distant thunder of the transports own small cannons returning fire. The *Imperius Anvil* was hit amidst ships as one Castellan swept over her, a gravitic launched missile smashed through the thin side armour and into the packed holds. The massive explosion inside the cramped interior tore men apart, tossing bodies about and setting fires raging through the lower decks. In that first impact hundreds died, the fires would claims hundreds more. Fatally wounded, the stricken transport fell behind the others, stranding a third of the Brimlock regiment. Next the *Prince Maud* was critically hit, shields stripped away by the Tau fire, a railgun battery volley tore through the bridge and super-structure, killing the bridge crew to a man. Unknown to the Imperial Guardsmen in the holds below, their vessel was now drifting with no captain and no one to man the helm. She was easy pickings for the Tau.

To the rear *Errant* squadron was fighting bravely, but was now heavily outgunned by the *Io'Tar*. They traded bombardments, retaining the slim hope that the *Black Duke* would arrive to rescue them. The Lunar class cruiser was straining every engine and reactor, racing to the rescue, but too late. Convoy Alpha-four was being annihilated by the surprise attack, and with it the 8th Brimlock Dragoons. The last of the transports were hunted down and destroyed before the Tau vessels turned about and fled back the way they had come. The *Black Duke* was still some hours away, and would only arrive in time to begin rescue operations. There was little to salvage except the few lucky survivors.

Like wolves falling on the fold the Tau had torn the convoy apart. It is probable that they never realised that trapped within the transports thousands of guardsmen had perished as the bulk heads collapsed and hulls tore open, spilling silently screaming men out in the hard vacuum of space. The 8th Brimlock Dragoons were no more.

Before being destroyed the *Cerebus* had launched its lifeboats and many of these were picked up by the *Black Duke.* The survivors told the tale of the sudden surprise attack which had overwhelmed them. It was the first ambush of many.

The grim news of the destruction of convoy Alpha-four and the loss of an entire Imperial Guard regiment reached Admiral Kotto on the *Righteous Power* and Lord Marshal De Stael on Taros. It was a heavy blow for both, and Admiral Kotto set about making new plans and issuing new orders for increased protection of the convoys. The *Hammer of Thrace* was to continue her pursuit of the Custodian, a request was sent to the *War Talon* to aid the hunt. They were not to stop until the dangerous Tau vessel was destroyed. The *Star of Cassiopeia* and *Black Duke* would now be diverted to convoy close protection along with *Invincis* and *Omna* squadrons. The Tau would not find any more soft targets to ambush. The *Righteous Power* would remain on standby, acting as the Admiral's reserve, ready to leave orbit if required.

News of the destruction of the entire 8th Brimlock Dragoons caused Lord Commander Gustavus even greater concern. He immediately ordered the transportation of any other Imperial Guard regiments to Taros to cease, much to Marshal De Stael's displeasure. Whilst the Tau fleet threatened to reap such wanton destruction it was a risk Gustavus could not run. The 19th Kriegs Armoured regiment had just begun embarking for Taros, and that operation was halted. The regiment received orders to stand-down until further notice. Admiral Kotto was instructed to secure the supply lines before any more regiments would be risked in transit. Gustavus' order to the 19th Kriegs regiment was never rescinded and the regiment never made it to Taros. De Stael's XI Corp was left with only three regiments: the Sarennians, the Elysians and the Cadians.

The Tau's first attack had been a great success, but now they would need to attack a second convoy. The *A'Rho* was on the run, leading two Imperial capital ships on a long chase across the solar system. It was not until reaching the inner flare zone that she would be finally brought to battle.

In subsequent weeks the *Io'Tar* and *Io'Phi* continued to harass the supply convoys, risking the bigger Imperial vessels to pick off transports. During the attack on convoy Epsilon-six the super-heavy tanker *Empress of Svedeg* was crippled by drone missiles, along with her valuable cargo of water and fuel. It was a blow that would cost 4621st Army very dear when the water supplies started to run out. Every convoy now ran the gauntlet; some made it through, other arrived after being damaged, some transports were destroyed all together. Each time a ship was lost more vital supplies were lost.

Hunt for the A'Rho

Demand for the Raptors' assistance in the ground war on Taros meant the *War Talon* was forced abandon her hunt and Admiral Kotto had to commit the *Righteous Power* to the *A'Rho's* pursuit. Lord Commander Gustavus' decision was that the ground forces would get priority use of the Space Marine allies. The *War Talon* withdrew from the hunt and returned to orbit above Taros, ready for the Raptors deployment during *Operation Comet*. She was immediately replaced by the *Righteous Power*. The flagship's great engines slowly pushed the venerable battlecruiser out of Taros' gravity well and Admiral Kotto instructed Captain Rymus to set course to rendezvous with the *Hammer of Thrace* and *Novem* squadron. Like hounds on the scent, the Imperial Navy would relentlessly pursue their quarry.

After a long pursuit and several skirmishes, the Custodian class *A'Rho* and her Castellan escorts where finally run to ground. She had led her pursuers on a fourteen day dance around the system. Eventually, the renegade Tau

starship and her escorts pressed in close to the system's dazzling yellow sun, through the mercurial zone and deeper into the thickening radiation clouds. For the Imperium's ships tracking their target here would be difficult, and although out-classed by two Imperial capital ships, the big Tau vessel would have her best fighting chance in here. The fleet action around Taros was approaching its climax amidst the thick, irradiated dust clouds and coruscating solar flares which shimmered pink, yellow and purple in dense skeins throughout the inner flare zone.

It was an eerie place for a battle. Navy rating and deck hands have many old superstitions about flying so close to the sun. After three days of relentless pursuit directly into the inner flare zone, where temperatures soaring and scanner equipment burning out. Officers in shirt sleeve order and topless men sweated on every deck as the sun loomed ever larger and larger in the view screens. Eventually it filled the screens with a blinding glare that the reactive photo-chromatic view ports struggled to keep out. The vessels were all bathed in a bright light as they rumbled deeper and deeper into the gas clouds. Only now did the *A'Rho* chose to turned and fight.

Admiral Kotto was sleeping on a cot in his command post on the *Righteous Power's* flag bridge when a young ensign apologetically woke him. The Tau ship had been located, and it seemed she had come about to face them. Battle was imminent. Without pausing to put on his uniform the Admiral raced to the main bridge to conduct the engagement, bootless and still only dressed in his breeches and undershirt.

The *A'Rho* powered up her forward deflectors and launched her Wardens, Mantas and Barracudas. The Tau escorts formed into line abreast and opened fire with a salvo of railgun rounds. Despite having the advantage in firepower, this would be no easy victory for the Imperial Navy. With the sun's huge glare directly in their faces their scanner equipment was malfunctioning, the Tau vessels became ghostly images dancing upon the sensor screens. Shooting at the small escorts and bombers would be like trying to hit a flying sparrow with a boulder. The Imperial vessels returned fire, lance turrets firing furiously as the ships manoeuvred to bring their broadside guns to bear. The *Hammer of Thrace* narrowly threaded a spread of Tau missiles, close defence turrets blazing in all directions as flights of Mantas and Barracudas swarmed close to her, bombing and strafing. The Castellan escorts tore into battle like a pack of rabid dogs unleashed. They tangled with *Novem* squadron, guns booming left and right. Quickly two of each side's vessel became drifting wrecks.

Shells from the *Righteous Power's* big port batteries impact against the *A'Rho's* prow, the deflectors absorbing the energy. Return fire buckled the battlecruiser's armoured apron. One ion cannon blast burrowed into the forward lance turret, destroying it in a blossoming explosion, and killing all the gun crew inside. The *Hammer of Thrace* followed her flagship in, shells and plasma bolts flying thick and fast from her broadside guns. The *A'Rho* was taking damage, hits on the port launch bay disabled it. Wounded but unswerving the Tau vessel gave as good as she got, hammering out railgun and ion cannon rounds which puncture great rents in the Lunar class cruiser's starboard side. Deep inside the decks of the Imperial cruiser started to burn.

After that pass, the first engagement of the battle was over and both sides limped apart to assess the damage and lick their wounds. Every ship was now damaged in some way, the *Hammer of Thrace* worse of all. Attacks by the Mantas had silenced her lance batteries, ion cannon hits had set fires in the lower decks and she was listing heavily, 80% of her manoeuvring thrusters had been shot away. For two hours the great starships eyed each other warily and drifted on through the thickening radiation clouds. On board each vessel the crews worked feverishly to repair battle damage and contain fires.

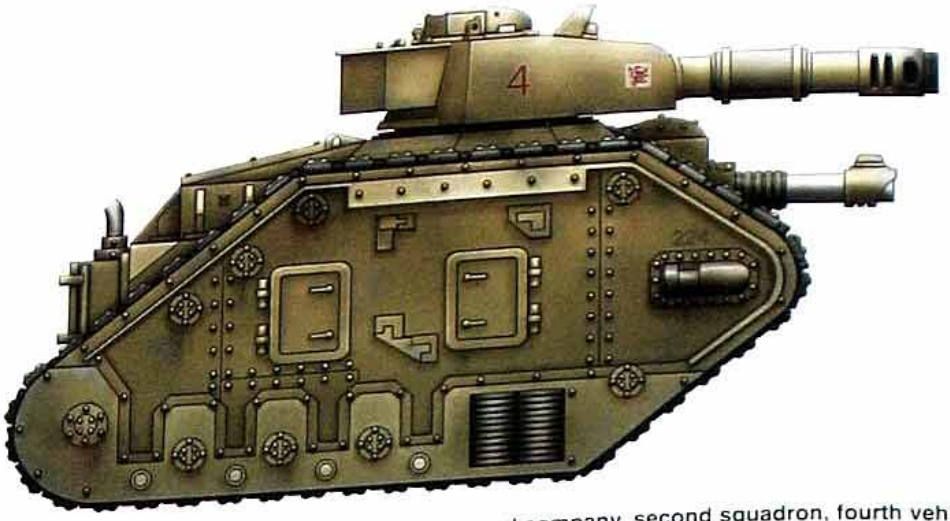
The second engagement of the battle only began when the *Righteous Power's* damage control teams had completed their work. Satisfied that his battlecruiser was still battle-worthy, Admiral Kotto ordered Captain Rymus to go directly at the *A'Rho.* "Load all torpedo tubes, and put the prow to the fore," he commanded, and the *Righteous Power* closed in again on her prey.

The *A'Rho* responded to the aggression with new, if reduced, waves of Mantas and Barracudas. The *Righteous Power's* first spread of torpedoes was intercepted and destroyed in detailed. Without their own fighter protection the Imperial ships were exposed to the Tau's return fire. Drone missiles swooped in, followed closely by the smaller Tau escorts. No longer able to avoid the incoming missiles the *Hammer of Thrace* was hit again, this time several missiles piled through her starboard flank before exploding within. Multiple explosions broke the back of the already weakened cruiser. She fell silent, crippled, drifting and out of the battle.

The survivors of *Novem* squadron accompanied their flagship, and again tangled with the Wardens and Castellans. More escorts died in an inflaguration of fire. By now the *Righteous Power* had fallen upon her foe, closing to point blank range and swinging hard to starboard to expose her broadside batteries. At short range the firepower was awesome, tearing into the *A'Rho,* round after round pummelling her flanks. The Tau's return fire could not match the battlecruiser's big guns, and the *A'Rho* attempted to disengage and flee. But Admiral Kotto was driven by vengeance for his lost ships, and would not let his prey go now he had them firmly in his sights.

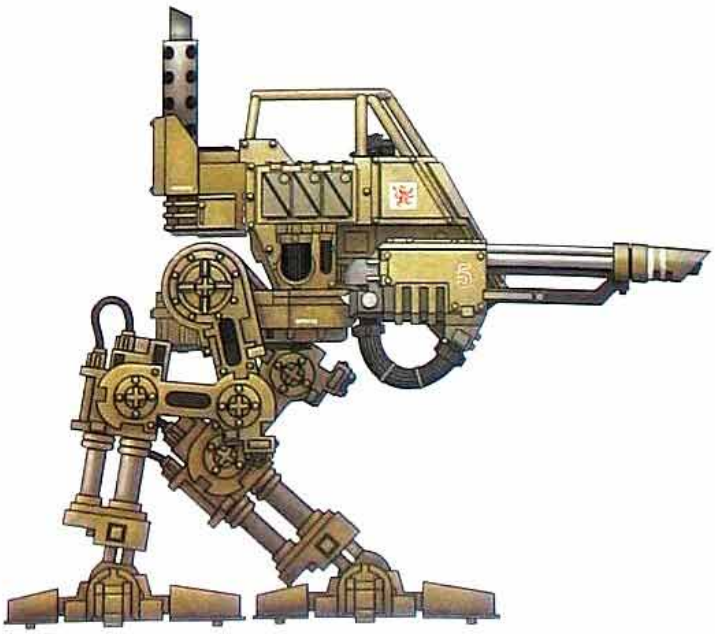
The battlecruiser came round in her tightest arch and raked the Tau vessel with a second broadside. The damage inflicted was terrible. The starboard wing of the Custodian was torn clean off, slowly drifting away from the hull in a cloud of debris. The bridge was destroyed. Fires burned along her length. The *A'Rho* was racked by internal explosions and helpless drifting. She was dead, there would be no survivors. The remaining Tau escorts, just two Castellans and a single Warden, fled.

The battle was over and both sides had paid a heavy price. The *Hammer of Thrace* and three Firestorm frigates of *Novem* squadron had been destroyed, leaving just the battle scarred *Righteous Power* and a single escort to return victorious to Taros. The threat of the *A'Rho* might have been eliminated but meanwhile the other Tau vessels had continued their convoy raiding.

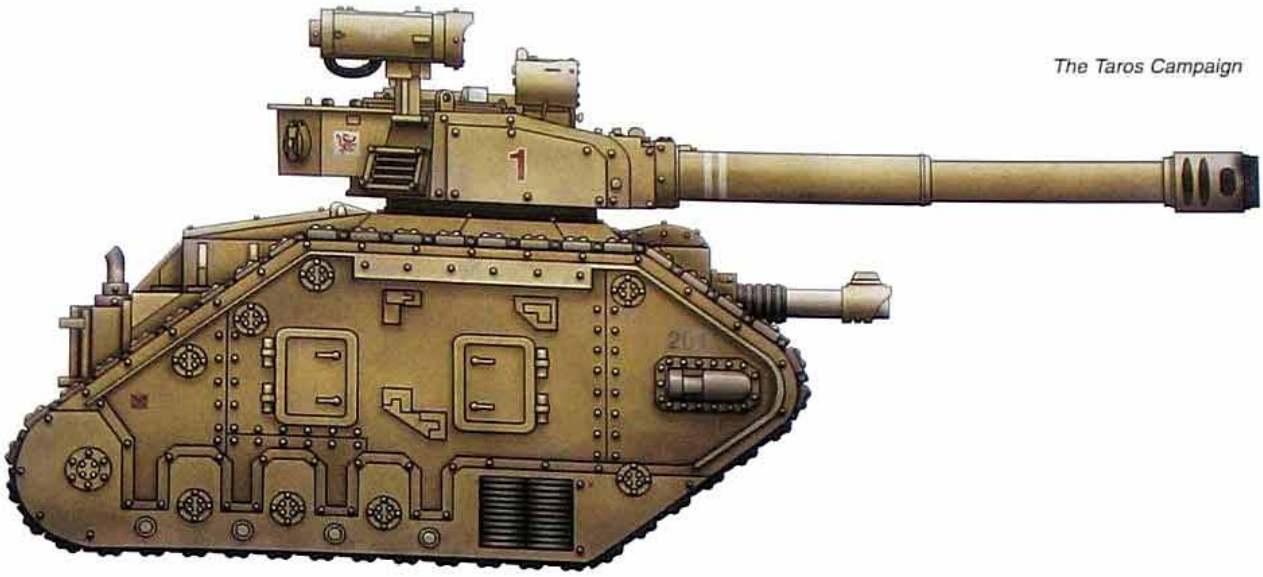


Leman Russ of the 17th Tallarn regiment. Second Armoured company, second squadron, fourth vehicle. It bears the regimental badge of a red lion rampant on the turret.

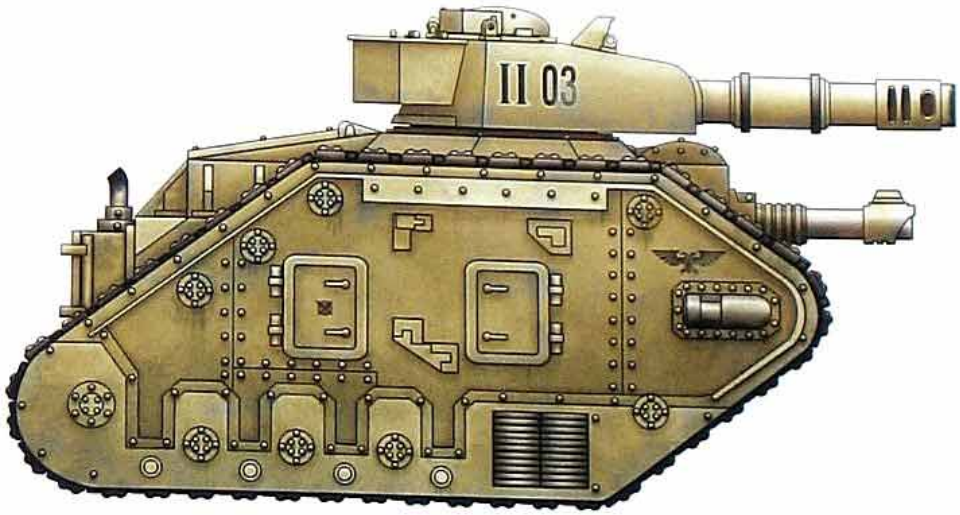
Basilisk of the 17th Tallarn regiment. The fourth gun of the regiment's first Artillery company.



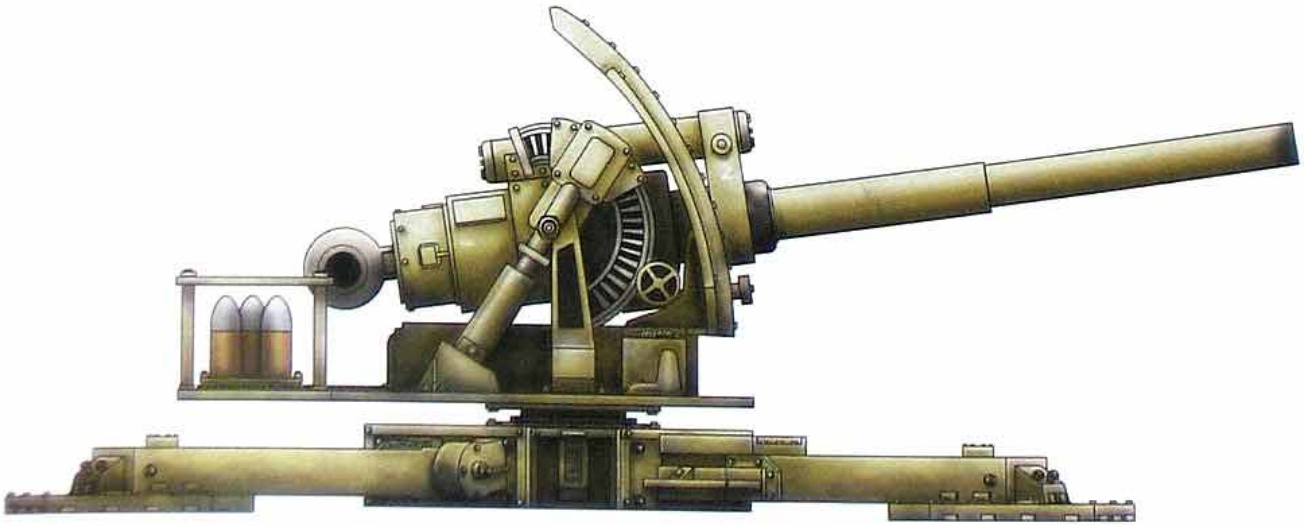
Sentinel Scout walker of the Tallarn 17th regiment. This is the regiment's standard reconniassance vehicle, and are also heavily deployed for rear-echelon security.



Leman Russ Vanquisher of the 17th Tallarn regiment. This is the command vehicle of second Armoured company. Its was destroyed during the Tau's counter-attack at Tungusta Station.



Leman Russ of the 12th Tallarn Armoured regiment, 2nd Armour company, 3rd squadron. Note it bears the crossed spears of the Taros Campaign badge.

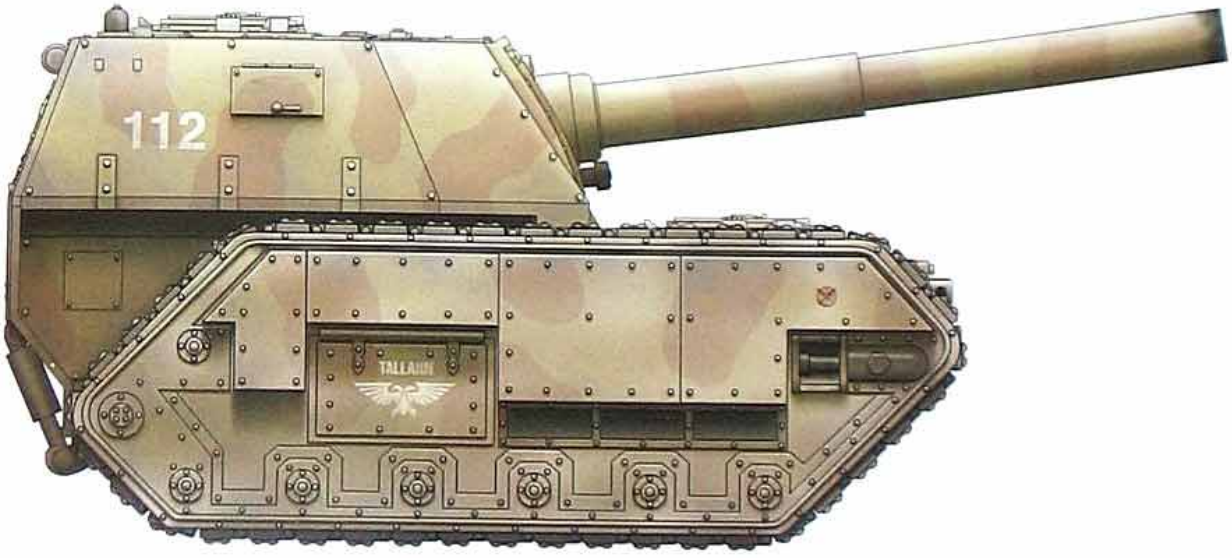


Earthshaker artillery platform of the 89th Tallarn regiment. Many of the Tallarn regiment's Artillery companies relied upon static weapons.

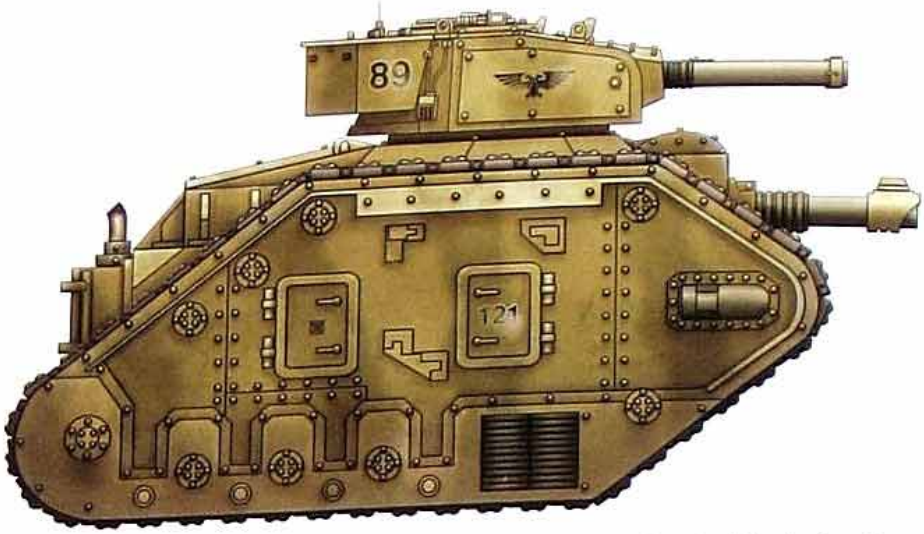
Baneblade of the Tallarn 409th Heavy Tank regiment, first company, attached to the 12th Armoured regiment for the duration of the campaign. A lack of fuel supplies dogged the Super-heavy tanks, reducing their effectiveness. Slow and ponderous, they played little part in the desert war.

Leman Russ of the 3rd Tallarn Armoured regiment. This vehicle, the first of third squadron, was engaged during the Battle of Giadamak, and subsequently abandoned due to lack of fuel during the regiment's withdrawal.

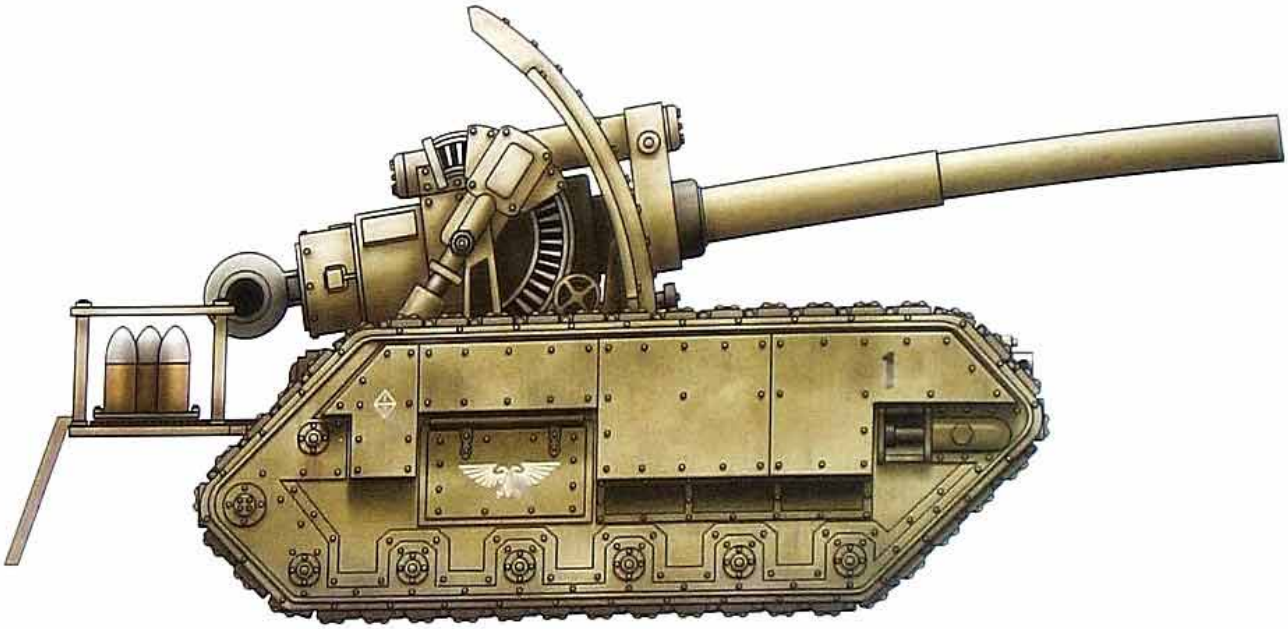
Chimera of the 17th Tallarn regiment. This vehicle is part of the regiment's first Infantry company (an Armoured Fist company). It is the second vehicle of third platoon.



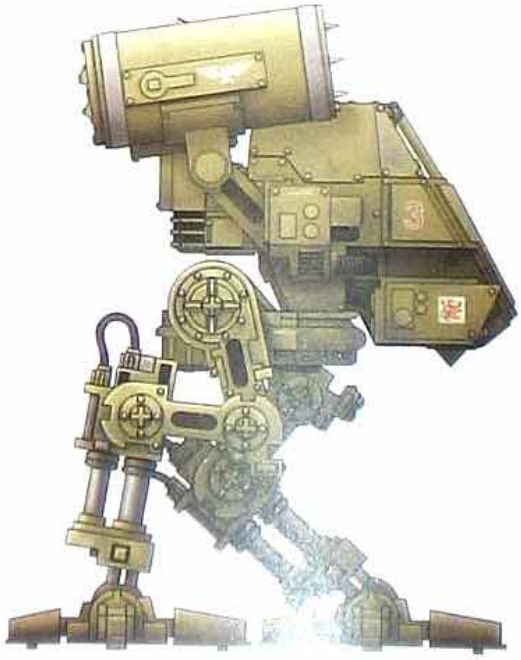
Basilisk of the 331st Tallarn regiment. The crew have added their own camouflage scheme.



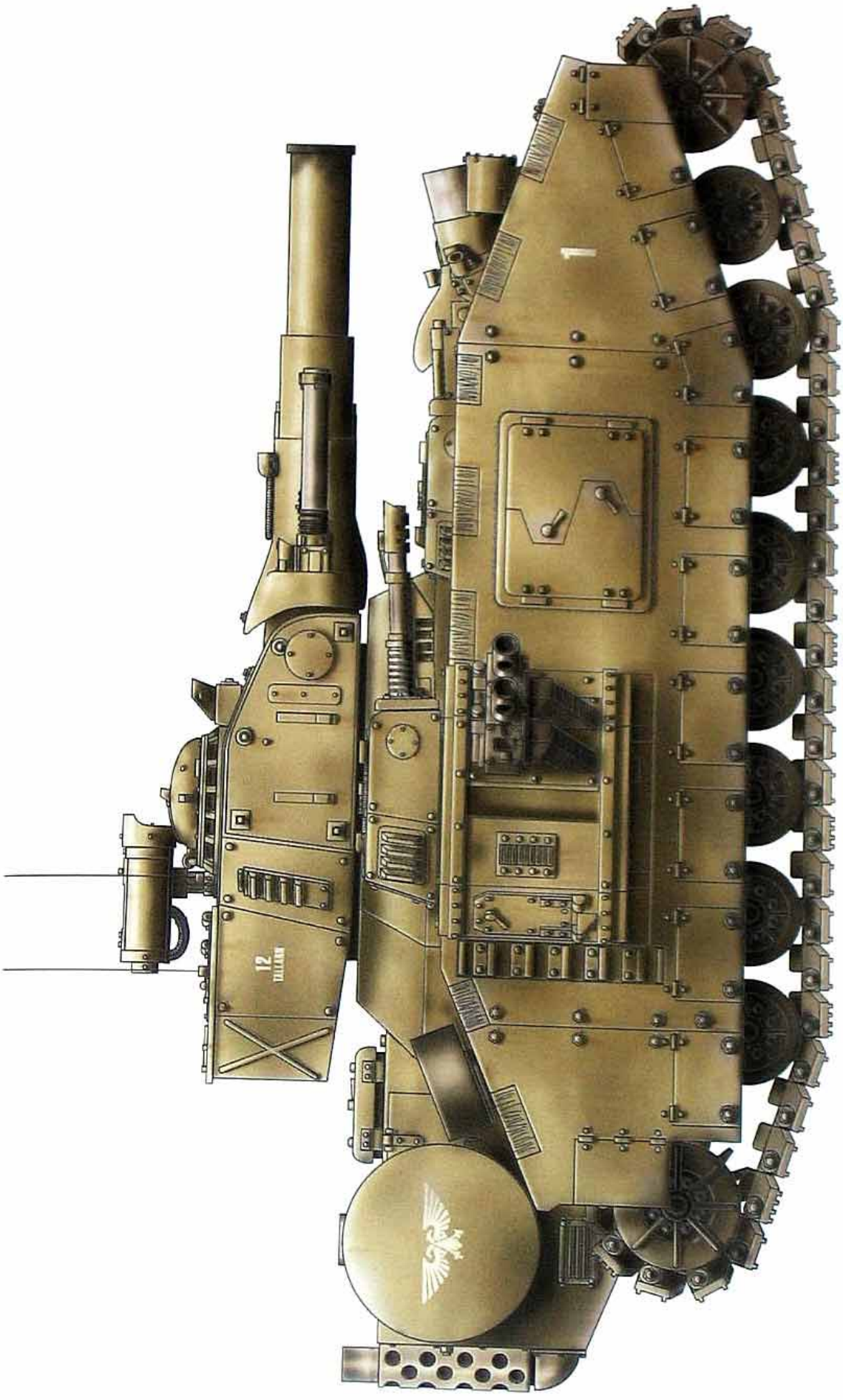
Leman Russ Exterminator of the 89th Tallarn regiment. Most of their Tallarn regiments listed a few Exterminators on their Orders of Battle, but given the nature of the terrain and the long ranges tank engagements took pace at, the Exterminator proved ineffective on Taros and was often relegated to convoy protection.



Basilsik of the 17th Tallarn Regiment. Batteries freely mixed the enclosed and unenclosed guns.



Support Sentinel of the 17th Tallarn regiment. Unlike other marks of Sentinels, these are not Scout vehicles, instead being deployed alongside infantry companies for direct fire support.

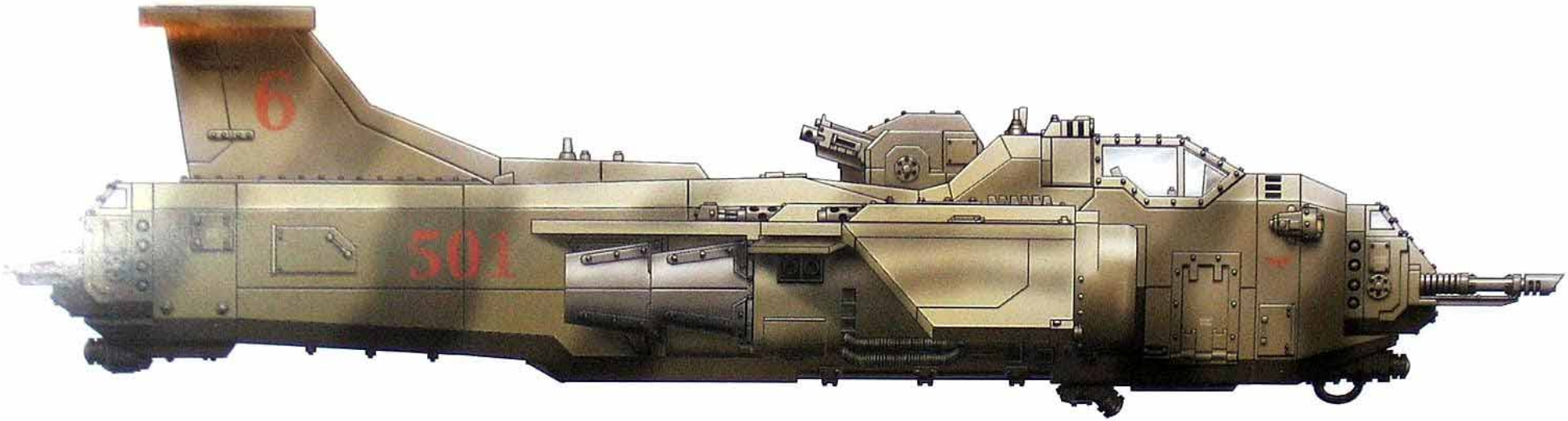


Baneblade of the 409th Tallarn Heavy Tank regiment.
This is the first vehicle of third company, one of nine Baneblades deployed on Taros.

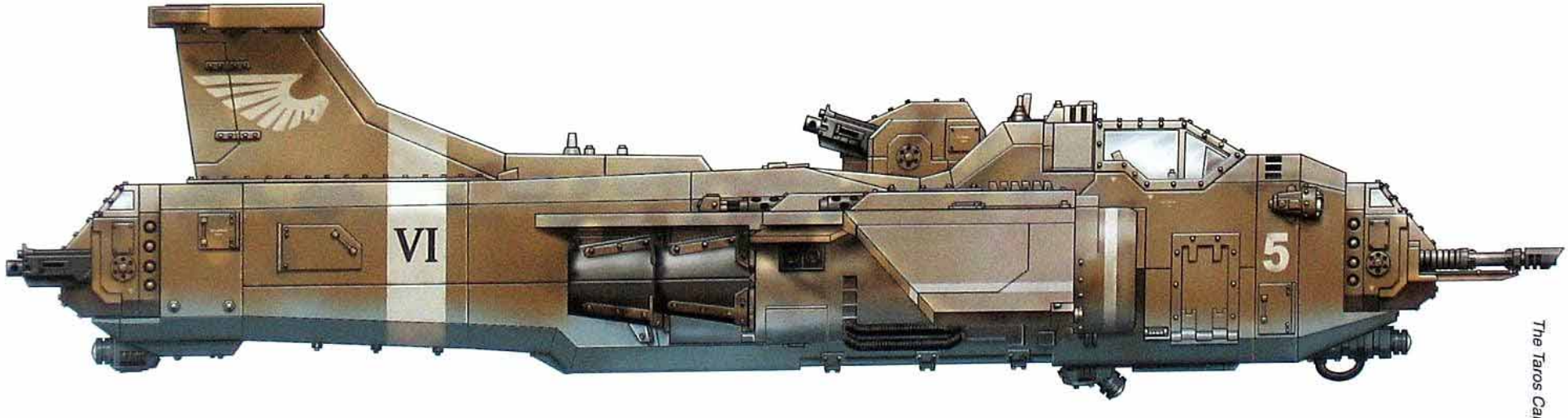
Thunderbolt heavy fighter of 83rd Fighter wing. This is the wing's fourth aircraft.

Thunderbolt heavy fighter of 386th Fighter wing. This is the eighth aircraft of 'T' squadron.

Thunderbolt heavy fighter of 1002nd Fighter wing. This is the wing's sixth aircraft.



Marauder bomber of 501st Bomber wing. The squadron's 6th aircraft.



Marauder bomber of the 2424th Bomber wing. This is the squadron's 5th aircraft.
The significance of the 'VI' symbol is not known.

Railgun armed Hammerhead with smart missile system, part of Shas'el Shi'Eldi's Hunter Cadre. The railgun armed Hammerheads formed the backbone of the Tau's defence.

Devilfish transport, part of Shas'el Shi'Eldi's Hunter Cadre. This vehicle was destroyed at Tungusta Station.

Ion cannon armed Hammerhead with smart missile system, part of Shas'el Phor'yinn's Hunter Cadre.

Sky Ray missile defence gunship with smart missile system, part of Shas'el Shi'Eldi's Hunter Cadre.
This vehicle was identified at Tungusta Station.

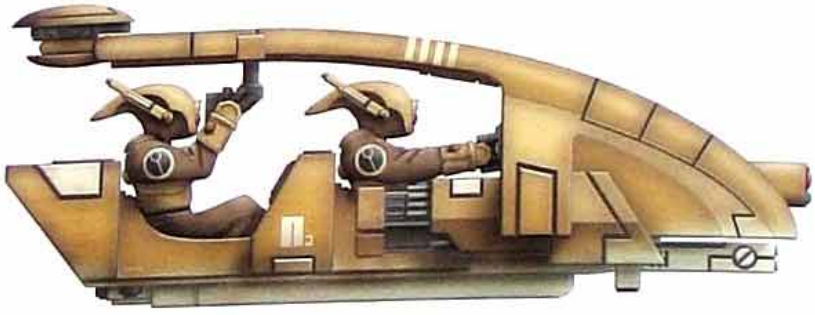
XV84 battlesuit, Commander Shas'el Shi'Eldi, as identified during the Tungusta Station counter-attack and in subsequent actions.

XV89 battlesuit, Commander Shas'el Phor'yinn, armed with fusion blaster and burst cannon. This is a personalised Commander suit and colour scheme.

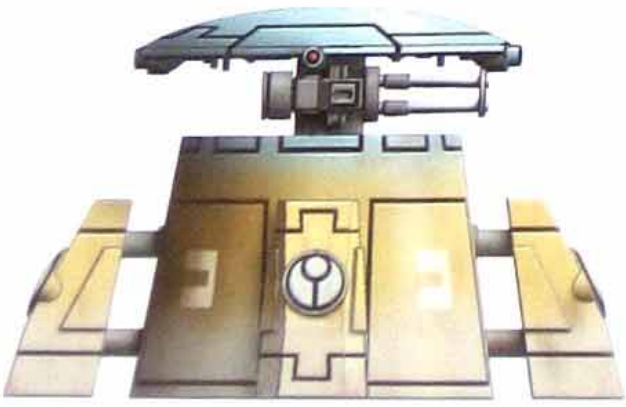
Devilfish troop transport of an unknown Hunter Cadre. This was a Pathfinder transport vehicle, it was destroyed during the Battle of Giadamak.

Barracuda superiority fighter. The mainstay of the Tau's Air Caste forces on Taros.

Tetra Scout speeder of an unknown Hunter Cadre, identified operating in the Aestus desert by the 89th Tallarn regiment.

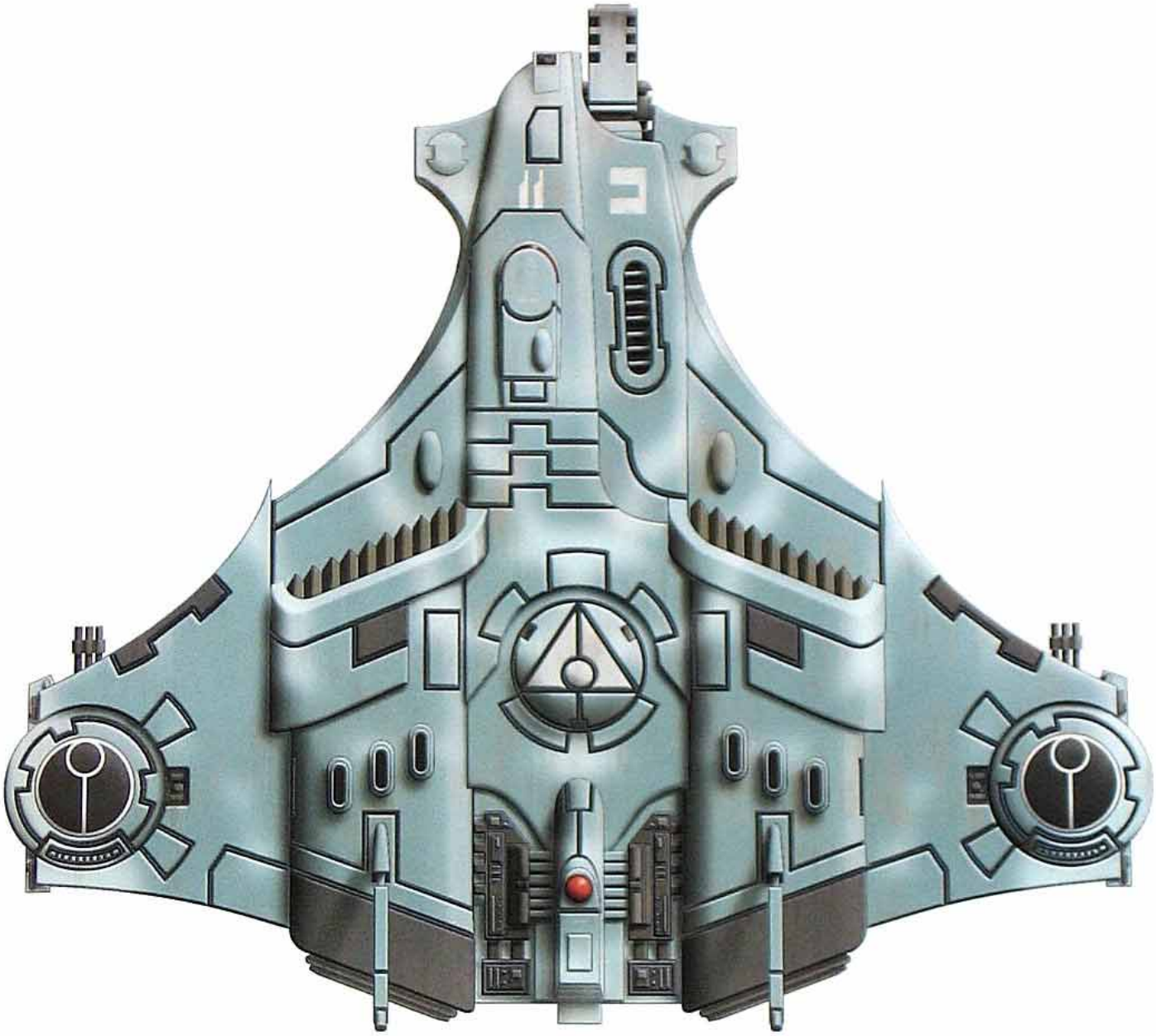


Tetra Scout speeder of Hunter Cadre Shi'Eldi.

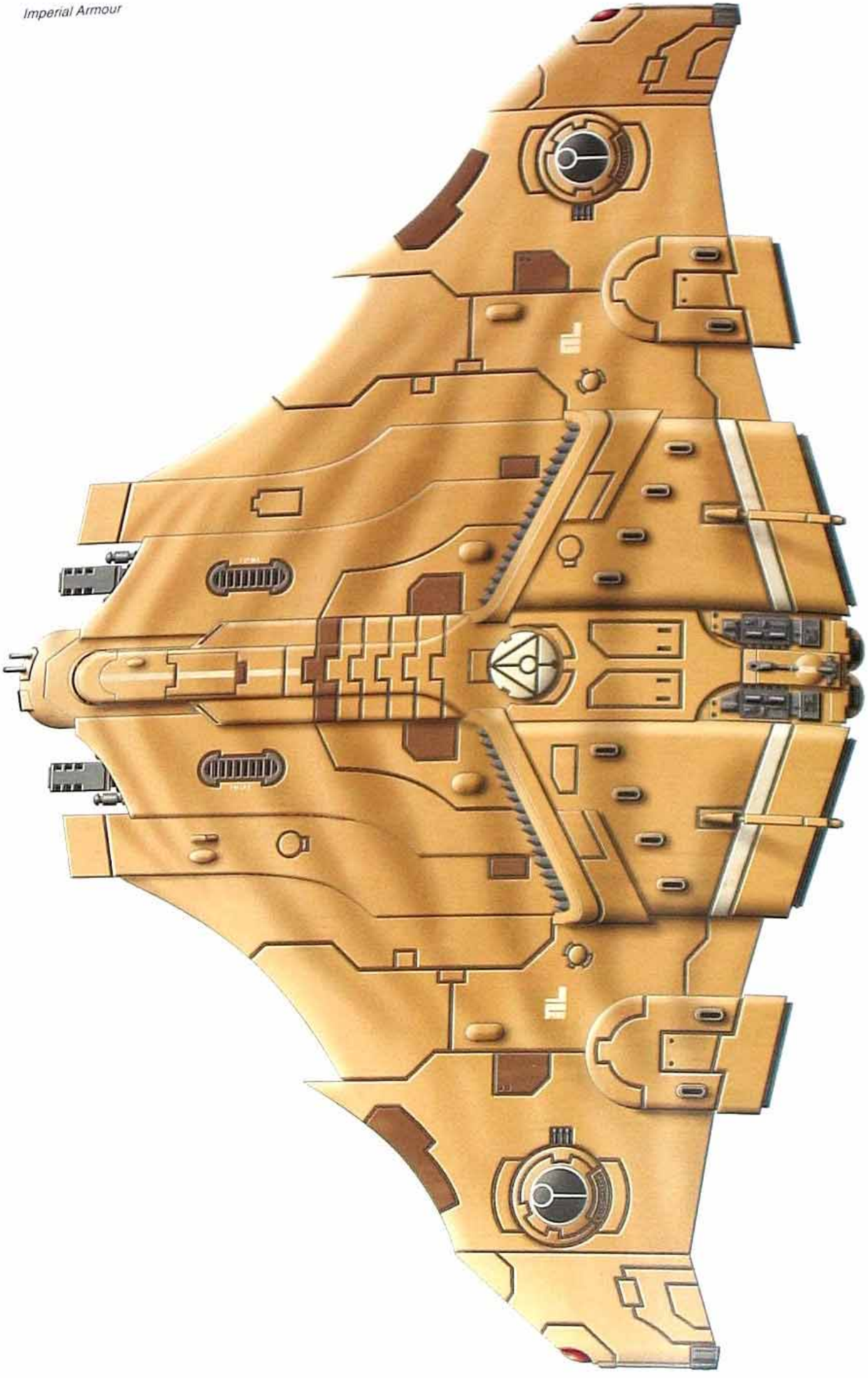


Drone sentry turret encountered by the 12th Armoured Regiment. It is camouflaged for deployment against a skyline.

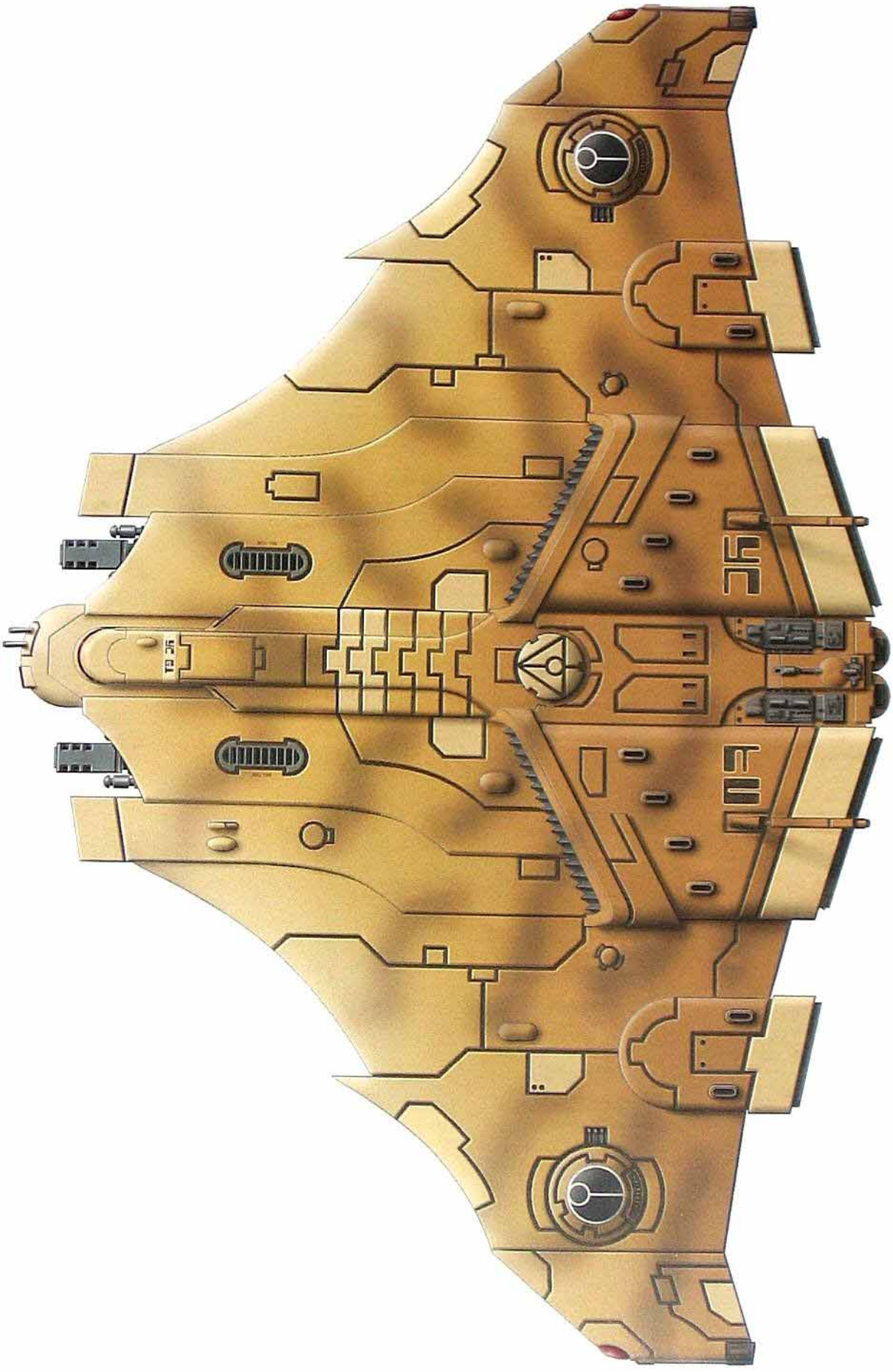
Heavy Gun Drone of Hunter Cadre K'irri, destroyed during a Tau's raid on an Imperial Navy airbase.



Barracuda superiority fighter, camouflaged for night-time operations.

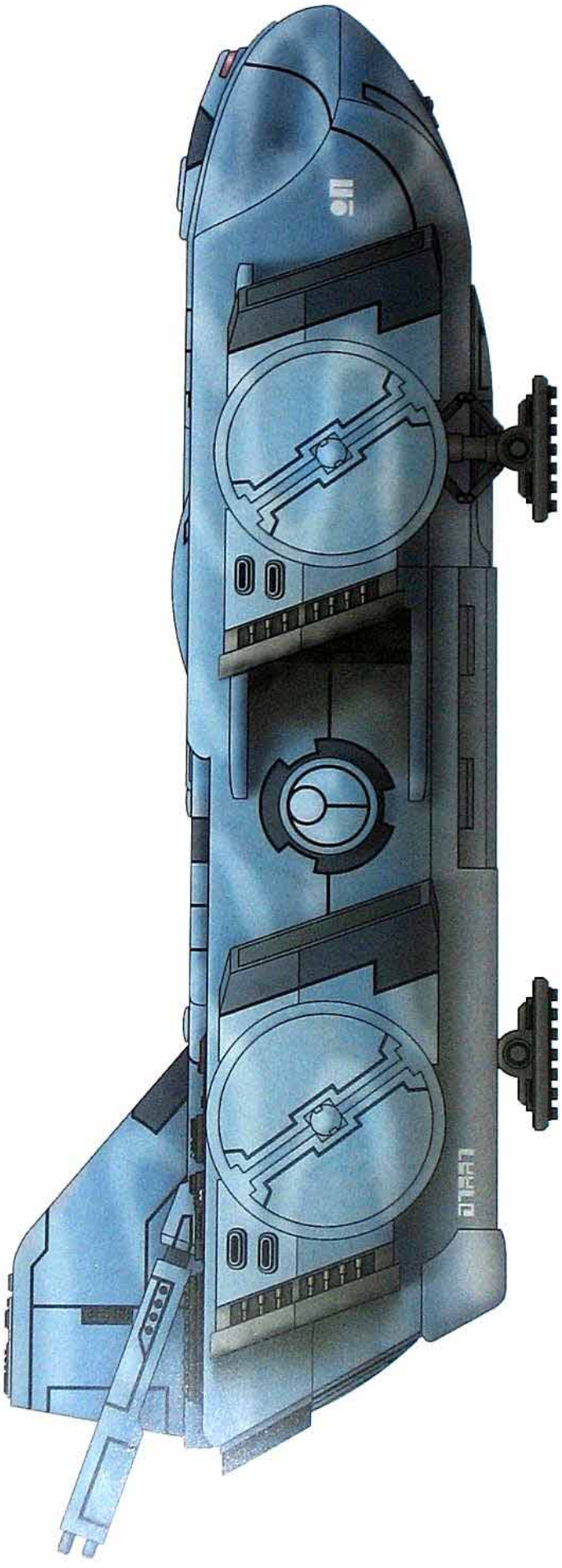


Tiger Shark identified over Hydro-Processing Plant 23-30 during Operation Comet.

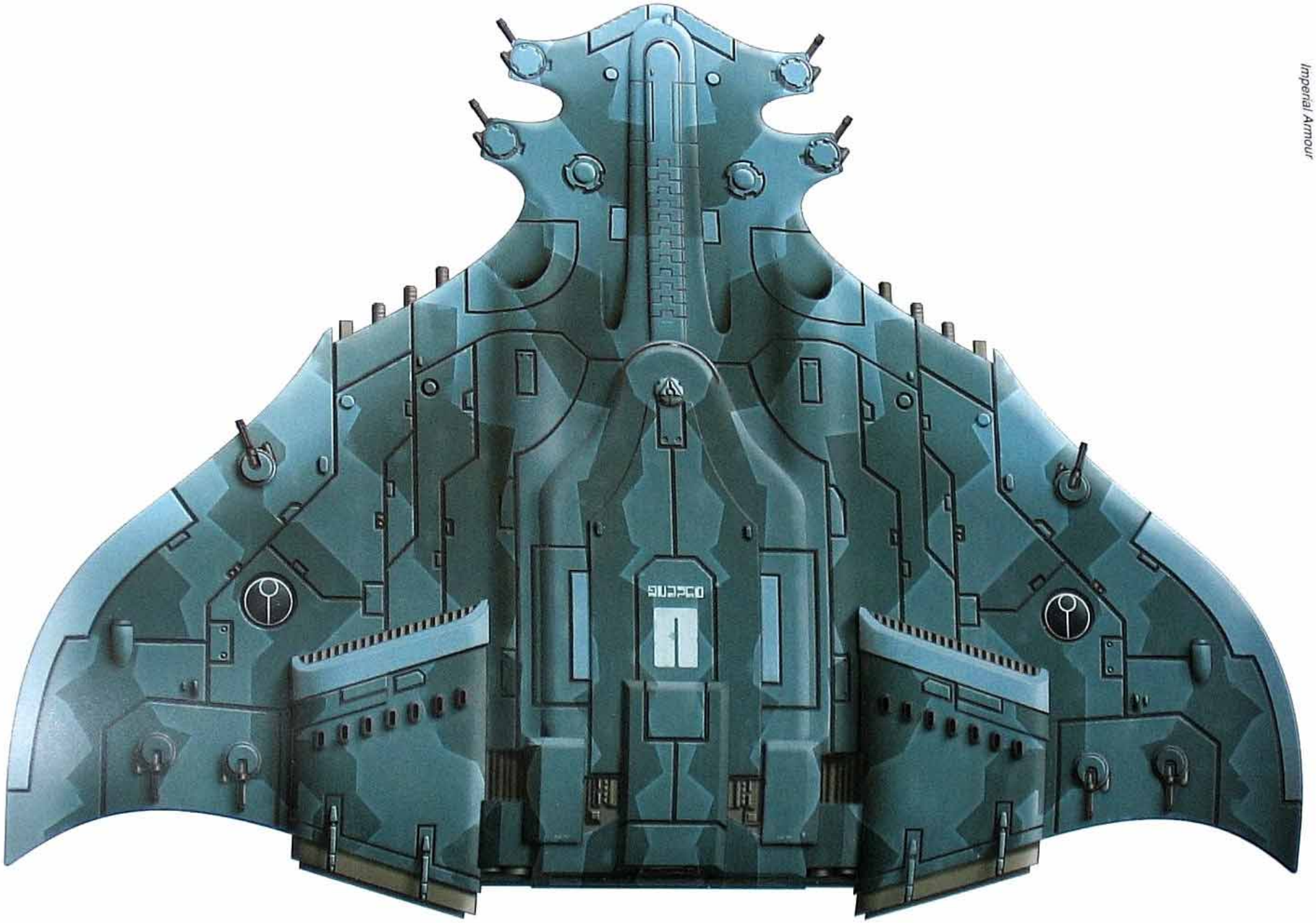


Tiger Shark, the Air Caste heavy combat aircraft, used to support Hunter Cadre front line operations in the desert.

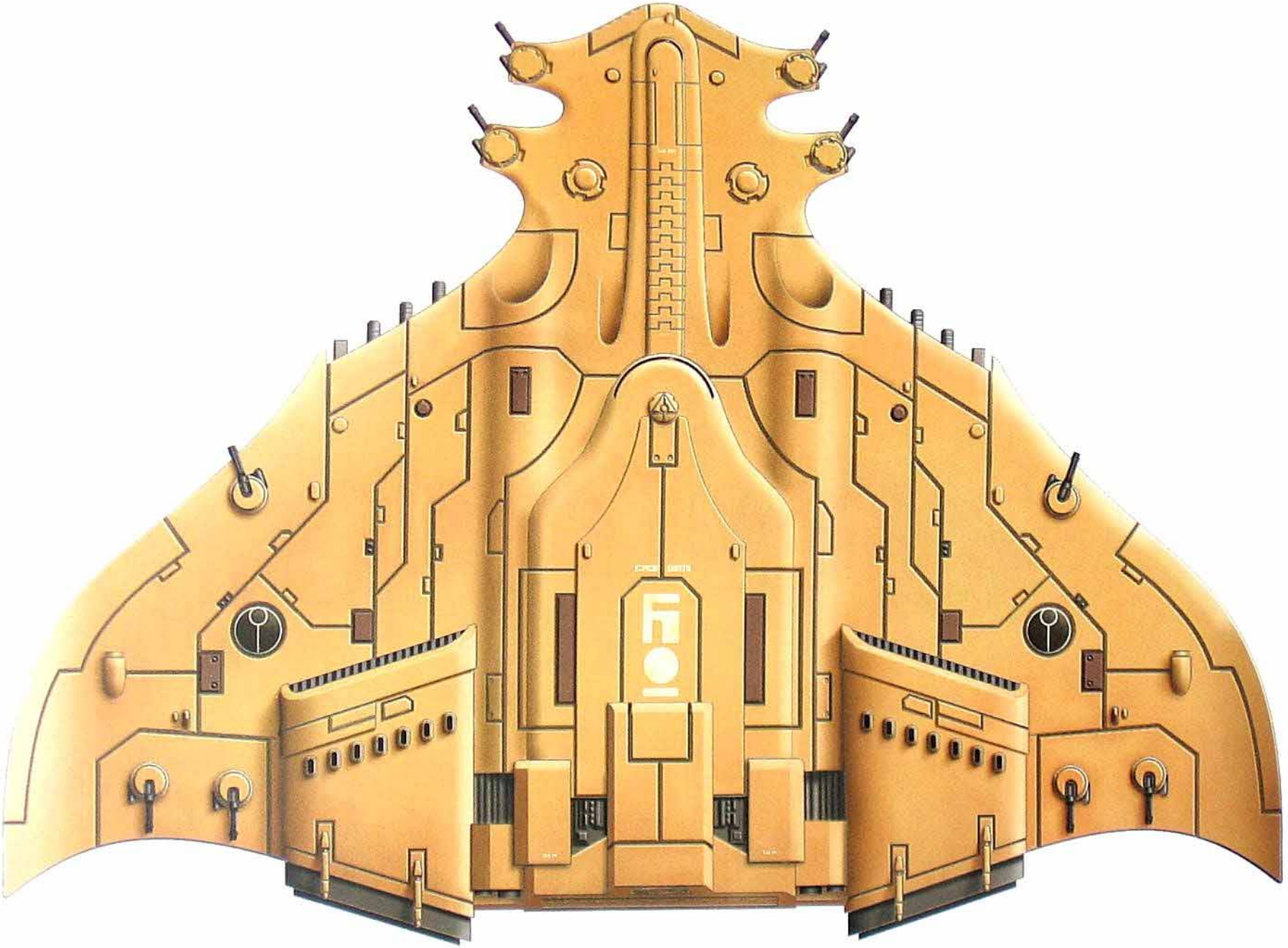
Orca transport, used to infiltrate Pathfinders and Stealthsuit teams into the Imperial Guard's rear area.



Orca transport, camouflaged for night operations. This aircraft was destroyed during a Tau raid.

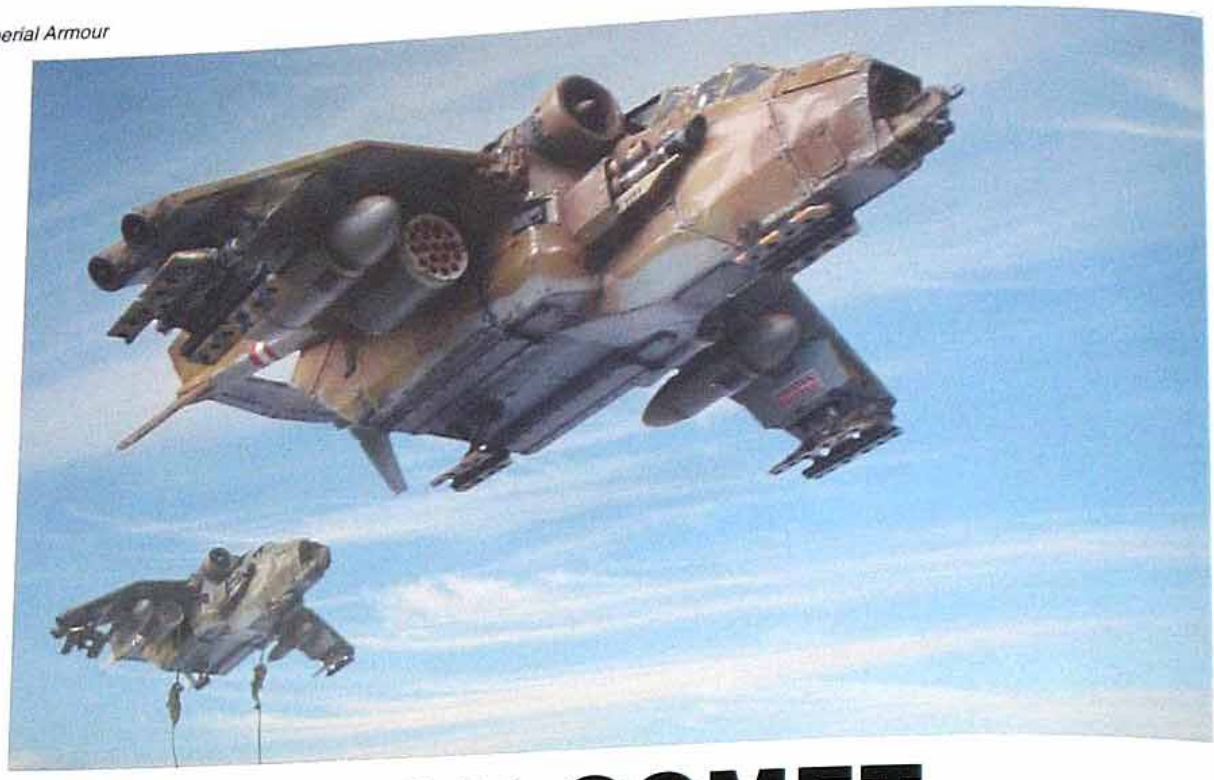


Manta. This craft was spotted over Tarokeen before the Tau's attack upon the Governor's Palace. It is camouflaged for night-time operations.



Manta. Aircraft such at this were a common sight as they deployed Hunter Cadres to block the Imperial Guard's advance. Mantas were not usually risked in combat unless absolutely necessary.

Imperial Armour



OPERATION COMET

THE BATTLE FOR HYDRO-PROCESSING PLANT 23-30

CHAPTER 6

Above: *Storm Troopers of 709th company lead the way. Arriving over their targets and deploying by fast rope, part of the Storm Troopers' mission was to place the homing beacons for the following wave of Elysian Drop Troops.*

"Situation Deteriorating"

By 639998.M41 the war on Taros had been continuous for forty two days. The deserts were littered with the debris of the many battles. De Stael's men were now starting to feel the effects of the Tau strategy biting. They were weary and morale was low after weeks of daily raids, ambushes, strafing runs and counter-attacks. The Tallarn regiments were drained of men and equipped, and there was no longer any secure supply lines. The stockpiles of food, fuel, and most importantly water, were now low, with no prospect of quickly building them up again due to the Tau fleet's blockading actions.

A lack of fuel supplies had stalled the offensive. The Leman Russes and Chimera were now strictly rationed, with each regiment trying to husband its dwindling supplies. The tanks may be immobile, but worst still was the lack of water. In the cruel heat of the day the men could not operate without water. The men of Tallarn had greater tolerance for dehydration than most, and knew how best to conserve their water supplies, but even they could not go for days in such high temperatures with empty canteens. Under the burning sun, men started to drop from the effects of dehydration. Growing numbers of casualties were further affecting the fighting strength of all regiments. For the commanders, it was an ominous sign of worst to come. The situation was bad now, but it would only get worse unless a secure supply of water could be found. Soon the Guardsmen would be faced with the prospect of dying of thirst in the desert, or surrendering to the Tau and relying on their mercy. Such a prospect could not even be considered, especially within earshot of a Commissar, but unless drastic action was taken soon De Stael's X Corp would have no regiments left. A logistical crisis was engulfing the staff of 4621st Army, it was becoming critical.

On 640998.M41 a staff meeting was held onboard De Stael's Leviathon command vehicle, present were all the regimental commanders of the army, along with representatives from Lord Commander Gustavus' High Command. Senior officers and staff crowded into De Stael's map-filled briefing room. Up for discussion was how to best continue the war given the supply restrictions.

Amongst heated debate, it was General Syckava of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment that proposed the initial idea for Operation Comet (as it was later to be christened). His idea was to seize Taros' means of producing water and turn it to their own use. As well as the small hydro-farms the Tallarn regiments had already captured (many of which had been destroyed by the Tau), some of which were still able to supply small amounts of water, Syckava argued that the 4621st Army should change its objective and target the hydro-processing plants. The coastal areas of the Aestus region were the location of the planet's largest hydro-processing plants, which drew the highly alkaline sea water and converted it

Top: *Operation Comet gets underway. Valkyries transporting the first lift take-off from their airbase.*

Above: *During the initial landings Elysian Drop Troops faced fierce attacks from the Kroot garrison. Note the incoming Vulture gunship providing the squad's heavy firepower.*

into clean water before pumping it down pipelines to Tarokeen. The largest processing facility on Taros was Hydro-Processing Plant 23-30, situation towards the eastern end of the Iracunda Isthmus. Capture the plant intact and the army would have enough water to press on to Tarokeen.

Syckava's Plan

The task was of massive importance to the continuation of the war, and was entrusted to General Syckava's men. The long-idle drop troops were impatient for action. De Stael had already turned down three separate requests from Scykava for drops to aid the advance, but the deteriorating situation at the front now demanded the Lord Marshall committed his carefully husbanded reserves. The Elysians were an elite, highly-trained, well-equipped regiment and General Syckava was keen to see them get involved. Operation Comet would be his chance. He was given a three-day deadline to plan and prepare the attack, which would see his entire regiment dropped to capture the hydro-processing plant. The 23rd regiment would then hold the facility whilst a new offensive to push through onto the Iracunda Isthmus moved to link-up with the Elysians.

This new ground offensive to breakthrough onto the isthmus would force De Stael to turn to the last fresh forces he had. Firstly, there were the Raptors Space Marines. From orbit they could directly aid the Elysians, but, being independent and separate from 4621st Army's supply problems they would be better deployed on the ground, as an armoured breakthrough force to lead the attack. Neither the 3rd or 12th Tallarn Armoured regiments currently in the field were judged to still have the required combat power for the breakthrough.

In support of the Space Marines would be the Warhound Titans of Legio Ignatum. They had arrived late and as yet not been committed, but now these great war machines would lend their considerable weight to the attack. Their firepower and speed would drive them through the defenders and allowing a fast moving relief column to reach Hydro-plant 23-30 quickly. It was unlikely the Tau had anything capable of stopping the Warhounds.

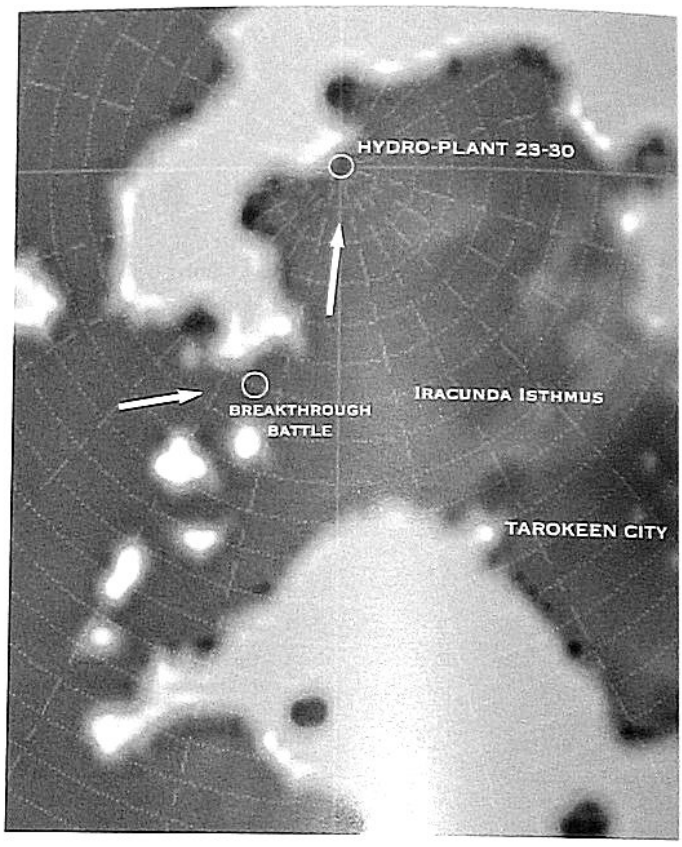
The obvious choice for the relief column itself was the 114th Cadian regiment, an entirely mechanised unit. As yet the Cadian's had seen no combat on Taros, but the Chimera-borne infantry would be well suited to a rapid advance. Colonel Stranski, the regiment's commanding officer, was given his orders. The Cadians were the last of De Stael's reserves from XI Corp, but if he did not commit his remaining forces to battle now, then he would surely lose the war. For the operation, De Stael ordered that the 114th be given top priority for fuel supplies, and the Tallarn regiments should turn over remaining stockpiles as well, leaving them with only emergency fuel. This order effectively ended the five Tallarn regiments capability to conduct offensive operations. The Desert Raiders were now a static defensive force.

For the 23rd Elysian Drop Troops and General Syckava three days was a very tight deadline to plan the operation, but his regiment had planned and executed many such attacks before, and relied on that experience to get Operation Comet off the ground quickly.

The objective, as Syckava explained to his sub-officers was "to seize hydro-plant 23-30 by a lightning assault with pinpoint precision". The hydro-plant must be taken largely intact, with collateral damage restricted to a minimum. The plant would be of no use to the war effort if, in capturing it, it was reduced to scrap metal! After the attack, the regiment must hold the facility until the relieving ground forces reached them to take over.

To carry his forces to their objective Syckava' staff quickly developed an air-plan, with three distinct operations; transportation, protection and re-supply. This process started by assessing the available aircraft. The 23rd regiment was only as mobile as it had aircraft to carry it. The regiment had approximately enough Valkyrie airborne assault carriers to commit half the regiment in one lift, but not all the carriers could be dedicated to the transport mission. Some would be needed for the resupply mission, whilst the regiments own Vultures and the support of an Imperial Navy Fighter wing would provide the protection. The attack would have to be split into separate lifts. Essential heavy equipment, such as heavy weapons and Sentinels, would be included only on a strict priority basis. A loading schedule was quickly compiled, including everything from the initial assault platoons and their supporting heavy equipment, to extra ammunition, fuel and enough food and water for the men for an estimated three days in combat.

General Syckava was anxious that the second lift should take place as quickly behind the first as it could, preferably on the same day. He knew that with less than half his regiment deployed, and lacking much of their heavier equipment his men would be vulnerable to a swift Tau counter-attack. Once Comet commenced it must be assumed that the Tau would move quickly to eliminate the new threat. The second lift would be in a race against time. The General was well aware that the Tau could move their Manta-borne Hunter Cadres very quickly. Syckava pressed for his second wave to be loaded and launched on the same day, but it was not possible. The distance from the Elysian airbase to the target was 1,500 kms – the round trip would take between three and four hours. All the Valkyrie transports would already require extra external fuel tanks to get them to the target and back again. Once back, there



Above: *The Iracunda Isthmus. [illegible]ng the advance of the 114th Cadian regiment in suppo[illegible]he Elysian attack on Hydro-plant 23-30.*

23rd ELYSIAN DROP TROOP REGIMENT UNITS

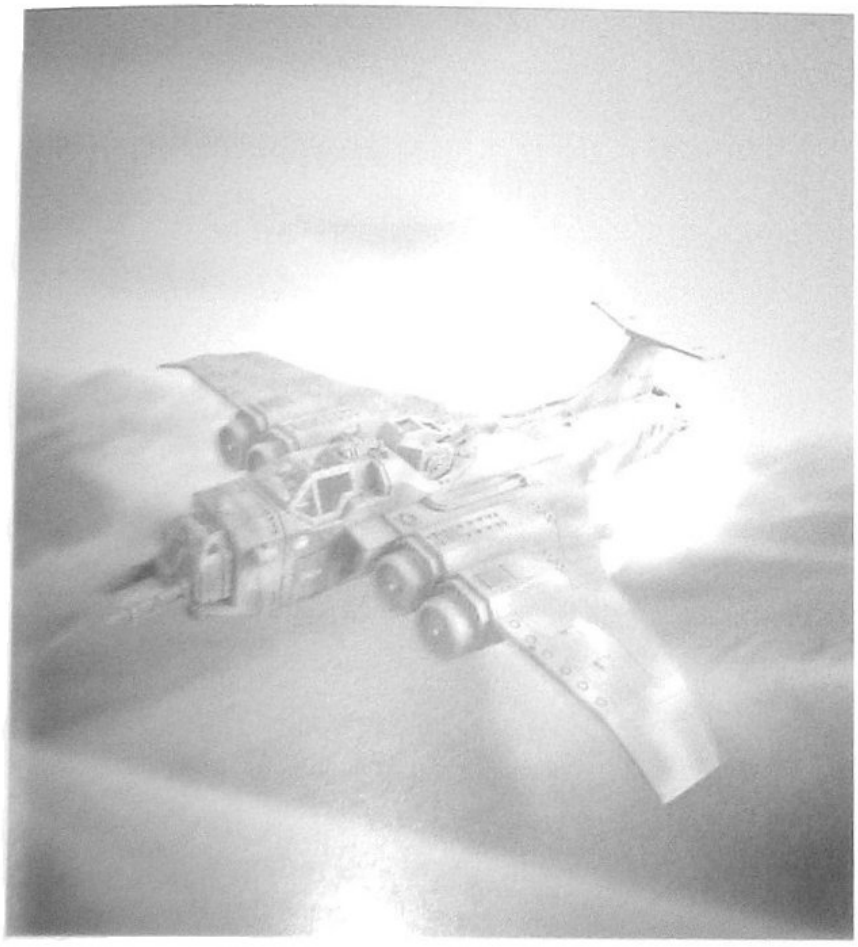
Regimental Command

Headquarters Staff
Medical Company
Signals Company
Service Company
Recon Squadron
Attached Commissars

1st Drop Infantry Company
2nd Drop Infantry Company
3rd Drop Infantry Company
4th Drop Infantry Company
5th Drop Infantry Company
6th Drop Infantry Company
7th Drop Infantry Company
8th Drop Infantry Company
9th Sentinel Company
10th Sentinel Company

permanently attached

709th Storm Trooper Company
1344th Storm Troopers Company
184th Imperial Navy Tactical Wing



would need to be maintenance and battle damage repairs carried out, refuelling and a new loading schedule executed. Inevitably, the loading schedule would be confused by the loss of aircraft and crews during the first lift. Two lifts in one day would not be possible, instead the second lift would have to follow on day two.

General Syckava's next decision was whether this should be a daylight or night-time attack. Night would help preserve surprise but would create extra problems for his men and pilots. Only a few aircraft were fitted with night vision equipment, and given the accuracy needed he could not allow his aircrews to attack the hydro-plant without night vision targeters. Their bombs and rockets would cause too much damage to the facility. Also, dropping into the area at night on grav-chutes would endanger the Assault platoons. The plant was a large industrial complex, not an easy place to land even in daylight. With restricted vision at night he would lose men as they hit obstacles on landing. By attacking in daylight his forces could do so with more accuracy. Night or day, losses in men and equipment were inevitable, but the advantages of daylight outweighed the advantages of a surprise night-time attack.

Amongst three days of hectic planning every task was urgent for the staff of the Drop Troop Regiment, but one important preparation for the attack was target reconnaissance. General Syckava's men needed to know what they would be facing when they hit the ground. Given the surprise nature of the operation the General could not afford to pre-empt the attack by dropping Reconnaissance squads close to the target. Should the squads be spotted or captured he might loose his surprise. There was no time to infiltrate squads on the ground. The only option was orbital surveillance and high-altitude aerial reconnaissance by a specially equipped Marauder bomber of 2424th Bomber wing. Neither of these risked alerting the defenders to the imminent attack. They could provide images of the target area, which could be turned into maps, but they could not not give details of any garrison force. Enemy strength would remain a mystery until the battle started. General Syckava believed that his entire regiment and their support would be enough to overwhelm any garrison.

Detailed planning for the attack was also hurried through and the officers to lead the assault were briefed. The priority targets of the first lift would be the central control complex, the lifting station, pumping stations 1, 2 and 3 and the holding tanks, which should already contain huge quantities of pure water. If the site was destroyed in the fighting, the holding tanks would still be a valuable consolation prize.

Left: *The 2424th squadron Marauder on its survelliance mission. Operation Comet suffered from a lack of good intelligence. Without time for proper reconnaissance theElysian's jumped into the unknown.*

Secondary targets would be the chlorination works, both the main and reserve pumping stations, and the generator house. All were to be captured by the first attack wave. The second wave would reinforce the first wave and throw a defensive perimeter around the entire complex to meet the expected Tau counter-attack. Upon landing with the second wave, the regimental Headquarters would be established in the administration block.

The deadline for launching Operation Comet had arrived. It was a daring plan, but fraught with dangers. Within the High Command many felt it was being conducted with too much haste and running too many risks. Was it hamstrung by a lack of aircraft? Did the two-lift plan compromise the attack? Worse still, did it leave the first lift too vulnerable to a Tau counter-attack? Comet also lacked good reconnaissance or intelligence information. There was also the risk of the relief forces breakthrough the Iracunda Isthmus being delayed or seriously defeated. Even bad weather could effect the Drop Troops' ability to resupply. The 23rd Elysian regiment could easily be heading for a disaster, and, given the stakes, a botched operation would cost the Imperium's forces the war and the planet.

Despite the strong objections, General Syckava felt his mission was accomplishable with the forces at his disposal. He was confident he could grab Hydro-Processing Plant 23-30 and hold it for three days against whatever the Tau threw at him. It was running no more risks than any drop operation ever faced. With a water supply firmly in their hands the 4621st Army's main supply headache would be solved. The advance to Tarokeen could then continue. Operation Comet was to be the turning point of the campaign.

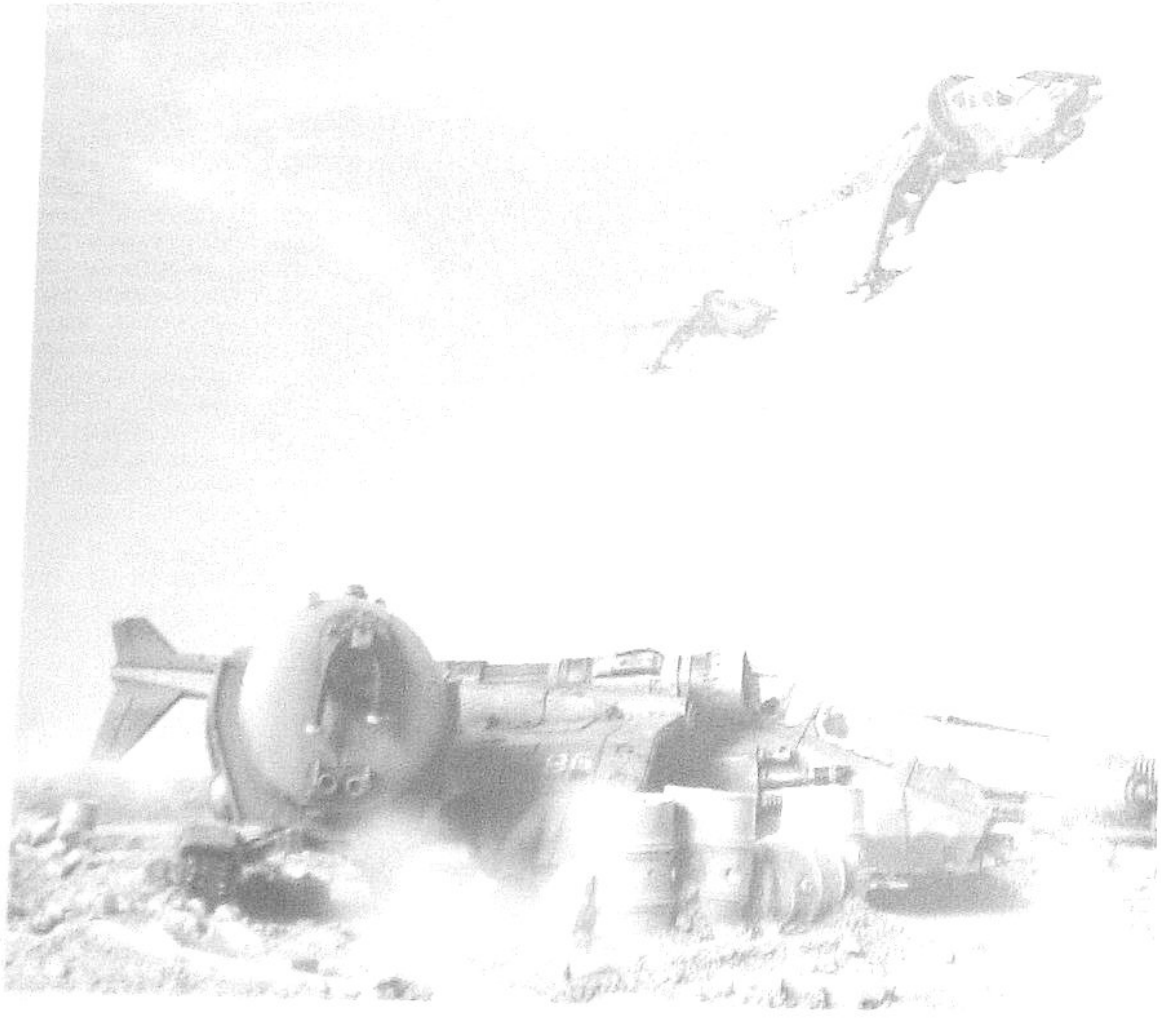
First Lift

At their barren desert airbase, surrounded by the small camouflaged shelter-tents that had been home to the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment for the past four weeks, the aircraft and men of the first lift were preparing for take-off. It was the first light of dawn, the low sun was burning off the last of the night's freezing cold. The Assault companies waited in neat rows, each man weighed down with his combat kit and grav-chute pack. Alongside them stood squads of burly Storm Troopers; these men would be the first to hit the ground.

Meanwhile pilots, co-pilots and door-gunners were mounting their Valkyrie carriers and Vulture gunships and running through final pre-flight checks, powering-up all systems. One after another they fired up their twin F75-MV afterburning turbojets, the din rising to a crescendo as the turbines accelerated to full speed. Engine tests completed, they powered down again, engines idling to a low rumble before lowering the rear access ramps, and awaited the mission launch codeword.

Squad by squad, platoon by platoon, company by company, the Drop Troops marched into their transports, up the ramps and into their seating positions. Once each squad was in and secure the sergeant hit the ramp close button, sealing the Guardsmen inside until the order to jump came. The atmosphere was tense, but this was it, after weeks of waiting in the deserts the Elysians were finally going to get into the war and fight the Tau.

For the men assigned to the second lift, cooly awaiting their turn, the take-off was an awesome spectacle. 160 Valkyries



Left: *A Valkyrie rearms and refuels, ready to transport the regiment's second lift. Overhead a Vulture gunship heads out on another sortie in support of those already in battle.*

and 30 Vultures simultaneously powering up their engines, creating a deafening roar that shook the ground and rolled out for miles across the flat desert sands. One after another the aircraft began to slowly rise, kicking up swirling sand and dust as they lifted clear. To the observers it was an unstoppable airborne armada. Wave after wave of Valkyries and Vultures climbed slowly to altitude and began to circle, awaiting the other aircraft of their formations, before synchronising speeds and racing away northwards. Flying in platoon formations, one behind the other in a single stream of aircraft, the carriers and gunships made for a marshalling point north of the airbase. There they would rendezvous with their air cover, fighters from 1002nd Fighter wing, whose job was to protect the vulnerable air convoy from enemy fighter attacks. Flying alongside and above the Valkyries fifteen Thunderbolts formed a shield around the Drop Troops.

Keeping low for maximum concealment from prying eyes, the entire armada swept over the desert floor at just 500 feet. On the ground the rumble of so many approaching engines soon became a roar that filled the sky with thunder. In the deserts below, Tallarn Imperial Guardsmen looked up to see the stream of aircraft race overhead, formation after formation. The Tallarn Guardsmen were not the only ones to see the Drop Troops heading north. From their hiding places, scatter Tau Pathfinder and Stealthsuit units also witnessed the air armada, and quickly report the sighting to their commanders. A major attack was imminent, but as yet the Tau did not know where the blow would fall.

For the Storm Trooper squads in the vanguard of the air-train the flight to target lasted two hours. The journey was not without incident. An accidental mid-air collision destroyed two aircraft. One Valkyrie carrier suffered engine failure and was forced to make an emergency landing in the desert. Twice during the journey aircraft where targeted by Seeker missiles, lock-on by Markerlights from the ground. Both times the missiles impacted, destroying a Vulture and forcing another Valkyrie (this one carrying Captain Lohgan, the commander of second company), to crash land. Escort fighters peeled away to seek out the ground targets. General Syckava had warned that losses were to be expected.

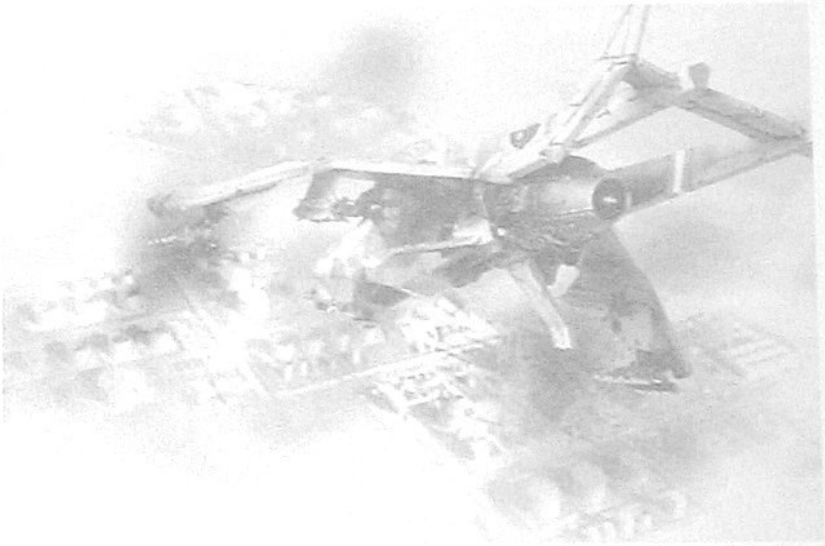
Ten minutes out from the target the Valkyrie carriers transporting the Elysian squads began to climb to jump altitude, the engine pitch rising as the aircraft strained upwards. Meanwhile, the Storm Troopers skimmed on low, they would deploy via fast ropes directly onto the ground and into battle, supported by Vulture gunships.

As the Valkyrie formations climbed higher, squad sergeants raised their men and readied them to jump. Each man checked his grav-chute was working, once, twice then a third time, just in case! Then each man secured his respirator and helmet visor in place. With a last

Above: *Hydro-plant 23-30 was defended by many Drone sentry turrets, along with a human and Kroot garrison. Here a turret is engaged by a Hellstrike missile as Kroot advance to engage the Drop Troops.*

Below: *Tau forces engage the surviving Drop Troops amidst the wreckage and smoke of the hydro-processing plant. Note the downed Valkyrie on the left.*

Below: *Smoke and dust enshroud the hydro-processing plant as a Vulture gunship descends to lend support to the ground troops. Vultures flew constant sorties in support of the Drop Troops.*



ELYSIAN DROP TROOPER

1. Helmet

The Drop Trooper's helmet is a type 5 pressure helmet. A bulky and infamously uncomfortable piece of equipment, it is worn for high-altitude drops. As standard it incorporates air lines which draw from dispensers in the trooper's grav-chute to stabilise the trooper's inner ear pressure. A dangerous aspect of high-altitude jumping is the rapidly increasing air pressure during the trooper's descent. This pressure needs to be continually equalized. Pressure-equalizing ear protectors prevent the rapid increase from bursting the troops eardrums which, although not fatal, is painful enough to render a Drop Trooper non-combatant.

The heavy helmet is constructed of reinforced plasteel, with extra armour protection incorporated into the front of the helmet. The basic helmet contains a tinted flash suppression visor and a short-range communications receiver. All vox-operators wear a variant of the type 5 helmet with coms-booster equipment built in.

2. Armour

The Drop Trooper's armour is constructed of cast, lightweight synthi-plas. This provides a good level of protection whilst keeping weight to a minimum. As Drop Troops will often operate for extended periods out of supply, they must carry a lot of extra equipment themselves. Weight saving is important, to reduce encumbrance during drops and to allow space for extra ammunition, grenades, ration packs etc.

Each troop is issued a chest and back plate, complete with respirator and air hose attachments for the air supply (required at high-altitude) and attached shoulder pads. Separate elbow pads and knee-pads give extra protection in combat and on landing. Some veteran troopers disgard these pads after landing to help reduce their overall weight, especially if operating in difficult terrain. Most troopers prefer the extra protection. On Taros all armour was painted codex grey.

3. Clothing

He wears a PT-38 jumpsuit, a one piece reinforced coverall made of hardwearing synthi-canvas. It is supplied in a variety of colours and camouflage schemes. On Taros a suitable sandy coloured jumpsuit was used. The jumpsuit can be worn with a thermal liner for high altitude drops, were temperatures in the upper atmosphere are sub-zero. On Taros, the lining was not issued due to the climate at ground level and the altitude of the jump. The jumpsuit is always worn with gloves and a respirator mask, which prevents wind-burn on exposed skin. Wind-burn is a side effect of rapid free fall, much like friction burns, but caused by fiction with the air.

The jumpsuit includes thick quilted pads on the upper arms and legs, referred to as the 'impact pads'. These pads help reduce the effects of blunt trauma from impacts and give additional protection during a collision or hard landing. The pads are filled with foam to absorb and distribute the energy of an impact. The jump suit includes a variety of pockets for extra storage space.

He also wears the distinctive tall jump boots, designed to give strong ankle support upon landing, and has his jump gloves, one is pushed through the belt.

4. Lasgun

The trooper's Accatran pattern, mark IV lasgun is a lightweight weapon manufactured on Accatran forge world and supplied to the 23rd Elysian regiment. Its overall length is shortened by its 'bullpup' design, with the powercell positioned behind the handle. This is ideal for Drop Troops who must crowd into the troop compartment of a Valkyrie, carrying all their kit into battle, often needing more spare ammunition, rations, water

etc to operate beyond supply lines, as well as wearing a bulky grav-chute. Extra carrying capacity and weight is always at a premium for Drop Infantry.

To conserve ammunition and reduce wastage the weapon only has a single shot setting and cannot be used for automatic fire. It uses a standard power pack, good for fifty shots, and operates in the 19 megathule range. The power pack can be recharged by exposing its thermal cells to heat or light. The recharging takes time, and cannot generally be done during combat, so extra power packs are always carried.

The Mark IVc variant lasgun include an auxiliary krak grenade launcher mounted under the barrel. This is a short-range, single shot weapon, issued to officers and NCO's for additional squad level close support. The lasgun also has a carrying handle and solar converter for power pack recharging. This model of lasgun does not include a bayonet lug. Elysian guardsmen must fight with their knife in hand if engaged in hand-to-hand combat.

Many Elysian regiments prefer to equip themselves with assault shotguns, for extra close-range hitting power upon landing. Although this is true, General Syckava (the commanding officer of the 23rd regiment), believes this drastically reduces the regiment's firepower in the longer term whilst defending an objective. Some veteran troops still choose a shotgun, but the rank-and-file are all issued lasguns as standard.

5. Equipment

The grav-chute (not shown here) is a complex piece of equipment issued solely to Drop Troop regiments and Storm Troopers for special missions. It is worn across the shoulders, above the backpack, and because of its weight and bulk is usually discarded immediately upon landing, freeing up the Drop Trooper to fight less encumbered. Grav-chutes only operate at a set altitude, the troops are in free fall until the grav-chute activates, controlling their decent with their body shape. The grav-chute slows the final descent, but impact with

This Elysian Drop Trooper wears the standard uniform, armour and equipment issued to all members of the 23rd regiment on Taros. This is Trooper Hyde of the first Fire Support squad, Heavy Weapons platoon, sixth company, seen here during Operation Comet. He was wounded in action on the third day of the battle, defending hydro-processing plant 23-30. It is currently unknown whether he was killed in action or became a prisoner of war.

the ground is still hard and upon landing troops must roll with the impact to absorb the shock. Drop regiments spend much of their time training to control the free fall descent, in collision avoidance and practicing landing procedure. Despite this accidents are not uncommon and grav-chuting is inherently dangerous. During a high level jump, from 10,000 feet, it will take approximately two minutes to reach the ground.

Part of each Guardsman's drop equipment is a respirator mask (worn on the chest plate), and a small oxygen tank (incorporated into the back plate) and used for high altitude deployments. The air supply is not large enough for it to be used in hostile environments. The mask covers the lower half of the face, not protected by the helmet. The entire respirator until is attached to the air supply via underarm pipes.

Other standard equipment issued for Operation Comet and worn here are: two ammunition pouches, a water canteen, two fragmentation grenades, a krak grenade, a combat knife and the Elysian's own tactical load-bearing backpack, worn under the grav-chute on the lower back, and complimented by to two side pouches. Rations and personal kit are stored here.

6. Drop Canister

Behind the trooper is a drop canister. These large containers are used to land a wide variant of equipment into a drop zone. For heavy weapons teams they will contain the heavy weapon itself (heavy bolter, missile launcher or mortar) and spare ammunition, which must be recovered by the crew before going into action. During an operation other drop canisters will be landed contain spare ammunition, rations, water, fuel, medical supplies and all manner of spare equipment.

Due to their size, Elysian Drop Troops maccabrely refer to drop canisters as 'coffins', and after a battle they are often put to this use!

7. Insignia

The regimental insignia of the 23rd Elysian Regiment is a winged spear in front of a sun. This Drop Trooper bears it painted onto his chest plate. The Taros Campaign badge has been temporarily stencilled onto the left knee-pad. This will be overpainted before the regiment's next deployment.

He wears his company number on the right shoulder pad. In this case sixth company. Regimental Command staff use the letter C. The left shoulder is blank for troopers and has a red stripe for veterans (with at least 8 combat drops). Officers have a more decortative left shoulder pad, the winged skull for low-ranking officers (sergeants and lieutenants), and laurel wreathed skull for high ranking officers (captains and above).

As a low ranking trooper this Guardsman's helmet remains codex grey. NCOs and officers use a system of stripes on the back of the helmet to identify themselves on the battlefield: sergeants use a white stripe, lieutenants use a yellow stripe, higher-ranking officers use a yellow stripe trimmed with red.

The cast skull badge worn on the left breast is an honourific. It is a regimental citation for the 23rd Elysian's part in the Assault on Fort Moros. It can be worn by all members of the regiment, whether they took part in the operation or not.

The scratch marks on the side of the helmet are a personal addition to the trooper's kit. Many members of the regiment record the number of combat drops they have made on their kit. Amongst the men it is an unofficial badge of seniority, the more drops survived, the more senior the trooper amongst his squad members.

ELYSIAN COMPANY/ RANK MARKINGS

Helmet Front.
Standard to all Drop Troops

Left shoulder pad: Veteran

Drop Trooper

Right shoulder pad: Company Number
Left shoulder pad: No marking

Sergeant

Right shoulder pad: Company Number
Left shoulder pad: Winged Skull

Lieutenant

Right shoulder pad: Company Number
Left shoulder pad: Winged Skull

Captain

Right shoulder pad: Company Number
Left shoulder pad: Wreathed Skull

Colonel

Right shoulder pad: Command 'C'
Left shoulder pad: Wreathed Skull

prayer to the Emperor mumbled over the whine of hydraulic pistons as the rear ramps open, they were now over the target. Jump lights turned green and the assault squads shuffled forwards and plunged out into the sky.

As the Drop Troops jumped, the vanguard of the attack was already arriving over Hydro-Processing Plant 23-30. The approaching aircraft had been met by ground fire as the garrison, alerted by the rising thunder of approaching jet engines, streamed out to meet the airborne attackers. Lasgun rounds and heavy bolter tracers were snaking up to meet the low flying Valkyrie and Vultures. Shots bounced off nose cones and engine cowling as the Valkyries slowed to hover over their objectives. From the wing, winch ropes descended, followed by the Storm Troopers sliding down directly into battle. Above them the Vultures were strafing targets, returning heavy bolter fire with their own heavy weapons. Because the Vulture gunners were under strict orders to minimise collateral damage they could not unleash their full firepower. It was mid-morning and the ordeal of battle had begun.

The hydro-processing plant's lifting station and first pumping station were the objectives of the 23rd regiment's third company, under the command of Captain Malik. Malik's orders were to capture both intact and hold them until relieved by troops from the second lift. His action to capture the objectives was typical of the battles fought throughout Hydro-plant 23-30 during the first assault. Two Storm Trooper squads would be the first wave, deployed directly onto the target from hovering Valkyries, with a Vulture gunship in close support. The elite squads would set up homing beacons and take the brunt of the initial fighting as the rest of Malik's company grav-chuted into the target area, guided by the beacons. Once those squads regrouped, the captain would lead his first platoon against the pumping station, whilst his second and third platoons attacked the lifting station. Fourth platoon would be held in reserve, waiting on the ground to reinforce the defences once both were captured. The company's Heavy Weapons platoon was split between the Infantry platoons, a Fire Support squad with second and third platoons, the mortars with the reserve squads, the Anti-tank teams with the captain for direct support during his main assault.

As soon as they landed the two Storm Troopers squads came under heavy fire from drone sentry turrets. The turrets, equipped with disruption-field generators, had not been detected by the aerial reconnaissance. Taking heavy fire, and with casualties mounting, the Storm Troopers deployed the beacons but were quickly pinned down. The turrets were only silenced by strikes from the supporting Vulture gunship, but already they had extracted a heavy toll on the elite troops. This left the pumping station still strongly held by a garrison force of human auxilaries.

As the Storm Troopers were engaging the enemy, Malik's men were hitting the ground, shaking off their grav-chute packs and reorganising into their squads. Each squad rallied on their sergeant. The hydro-plant was already echoing to sounds of gunfire, explosions and the roar of jet engines. Quickly regrouping, it was up to first platoon to clear the defenders. Leading from the front, with Commissar Graal alongside him, Malik closed on the pumping station. Engaging in a firefight he found the defenders were well entrenched and fought tenaciously. Exchanging heavy fire the Captain looked to break the deadlock and led first platoon's assault. Yelling the regiment's motto "From the skies!" Malik rushed in. As fragmentation grenades exploded all around, his assaulting squads set about clearing the pumping station in an intense close quarters fight, only to find the pumping station was also occupied by Kroot mercenaries. The assault had overrun the human defenders, but the bloodthirsty Kroot were a different proposition. With the captain fighting desperately in hand-to-hand combat, first platoon's squads were repelled, falling back before the savage aliens under the covering fire of frag and krak missiles. Captain Malik was killed during the confused withdrawal, his mutilated and half-eaten body was later found hanging from the pipe works.

Their first assault bloodily repulsed and with their commanding officer dead, Commissar Graal now took command of the Elysian attack. He set about rallying the forces, including the surviving Storm Troopers. Reports were arriving that the first Tau response to the attack, a flight of Tiger Shark bombers, was closing rapidly. The battle was intensifying and damage was mounting. The flight of Tiger Sharks over-flew the plant, streaking low and scattering clouds of drones in their wake. It seemed the Tau were deploying any forces they had available to defend the site. Reinforced by the drones the Kroot defenders continued to fire from cover. It would take another assault to clear them.

To prepare for the second assault, Commissar Graal sent a runner back to the Mortar squad. He needed the defenders softening up with a bombardment before attacking. Crouching in cover amongst the pipes, storage tanks and detritus the Elysian Guardsmen waited for the mortar barrage to do its work before, driven forwards by their Commissar, rushing the pumping station a second time.

It was hard fighting again, but the accurate mortar barrage had shaken the Kroot. The surviving guardsmen swept in and overwhelmed the remaining defenders, capturing the pumping station. Graal immediately called forwards fourth platoon to reinforce his hold. The Kroot rallied and tried to charge back, but too many Guardsmen were now waiting for them. Most of the aliens were cut down by lasgun fire. The battle for pumping station 1 had been costly. Over half of first platoon and the Storm Troopers were dead or injured. The objective itself had taken severe damage in the attack and mortar shelling.

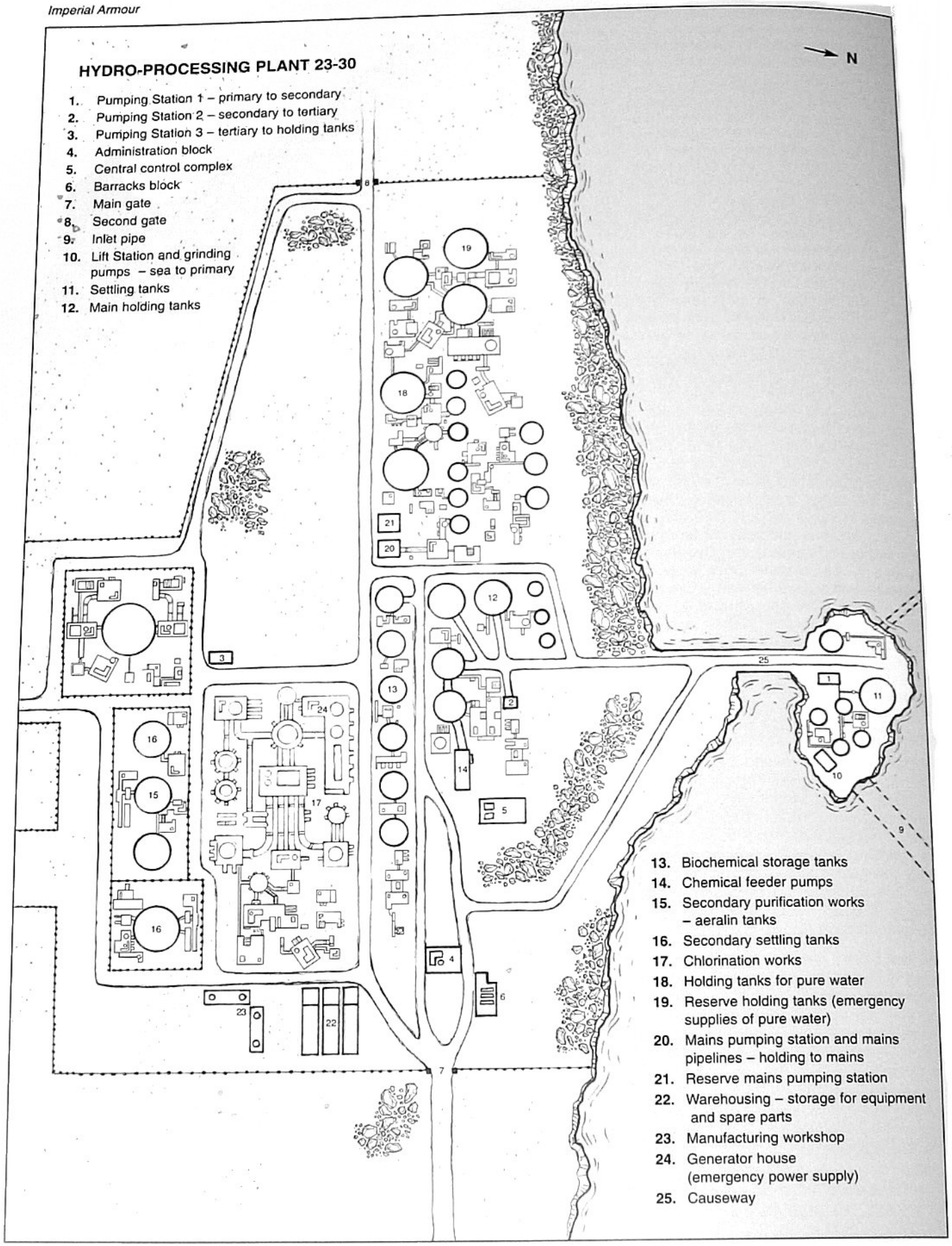
By dusk, after a day of combat, hydro-processing plant 23-30 was captured. All the primary and secondary objectives were in the hands of the Elysian Drop Troops. There were still some enemy stragglers and snipers hiding out amongst the industrial debris, and Drop Trooper squads were cautiously patrolling through the holding tanks and pipelines hunting them down. The fighting had been fierce and the garrison had given a surprisingly strong account of themselves. Outnumbered and outgunned by the Elysianair-mobile firepower the garrison could have easily broken and run, but instead they, along with their Kroot allies, had fought hard all day. Many locations had been badly damaged because of their strong defence.

Day Two – Crisis of the Second lift

The entire lift process was repeated again on the second morning, with the second wave being loaded and lifting-off to reinforce the first lift. Over night the hydro-plant had been secured, stragglers had been rounded up and a perimeter established around the base. The men of the second lift would now jump into that perimeter and move to reinforce it.

Unlike the first morning the element of surprise had been lost, and the Tau were now waiting. They were also mobilising to re-take hydro-processing plant 23-30, their Manta's loading up fresh Hunter Cadres.

The first lift had bypassed the Tau defences relatively unscathed, but the second lift had a far harder task. The Tau diverted their available Barracudas to intercept the air train.


HYDRO-PROCESSING PLANT 23-30
1. Pumping Station 1 – primary to secondary
2. Pumping Station 2 – secondary to tertiary
3. Pumping Station 3 – tertiary to holding tanks
4. Administration block
5. Central control complex
6. Barracks block
7. Main gate
8. Second gate
9. Inlet pipe
10. Lift Station and grinding pumps – sea to primary
11. Settling tanks
12. Main holding tanks
N
13. Biochemical storage tanks
14. Chemical feeder pumps
15. Secondary purification works – aeralin tanks
16. Secondary settling tanks
17. Chlorination works
18. Holding tanks for pure water
19. Reserve holding tanks (emergency supplies of pure water)
20. Mains pumping station and mains pipelines – holding to mains
21. Reserve mains pumping station
22. Warehousing – storage for equipment and spare parts
23. Manufacturing workshop
24. Generator house (emergency power supply)
25. Causeway

The Valkyries and Vultures, although potent weapons in their own right, were no match for high performance jet fighters in a dogfight. Flying in formation they were vulnerable. The Imperial Navy continued to provide fighter protection, and as the second lift approached the target they encountered the incoming Barracudas. Thunderbolts and Barracudas twisted and turned, strafing with autocannons and burst cannons as they wrestled for air superiority. By now, the two sets of pilots were old foes, many had learnt the others tricks. As dogfights raged around them, the transports raced on towards the target, but those Barracudas that broke through created havoc amongst the formations. Scattered like sheep before wolves the Valkyries tried to escape the Barracudas, but seven were quickly shot down. The scattering of the formations would also cause problems over the target. Many units were expecting to be reinforced, but confusion now reigned as squads became lost and intermingled. Despite the unexpected losses, the remaining Valkyries bravely flew on.

Above: *A Drone sentry turret burns as Drop Troops fight in the smoke-blackened inferno of the wrecked hydro-plant.*

On the ground dawn had seen the start of the Tau counter-attack. Weary from yesterdays combat and with many units low on ammunition, the Elysian platoons now dug-in around the hydro-plant saw the great winged shadows of the dreaded Mantas approaching over the desert. Shimmering in the morning heat hazy the Mantas began to deploy their cargoes. The Tau attack would come soon.

All around the perimeter – from buildings turned into heavy weapon strong points, on walkways, behind barricades of steel piping, from slit trenches dug in the sand or behind sandbagged positions – tense, dusty, hollow-eyed Drop Troopers await the inevitable Tau attack. Isolated in their small airhead, they were now surrounded on three sides, with their backs to the sea. When it came, the Tau attack could come from any directions. As they checked their weapons or sharpened knives one last time, the men were heartened by the thought of the second lift winging its way closer by the minute. Following that drop would be the Imperial Guard relief column, even now rumbling across the desert towards them. The Elysian Guardsmen had to fight hard and hang on until the reinforcements arrived.

The morning's battle started with a wave of Tiger Shark bombers. Just as yesterday the Tau bombers raced in low. This time rather than dropping more drones, they unleashed missiles and ion cannons, blasting the hydro-processing plant with massed fire. Regardless of the damage they were inflicting on the facility the Tau pounded the Elysians, preparing for their ground attack. As explosions mushroomed about them, all the Guardsmen could do was hug their cover closely and wait for the ordeal to end. As the noise of the aerial bombardment faded the whine of approaching jet engines grew. From all directions came Devilfish transports and Hammerhead tanks. Fire Warriors with their distinctive long pulse rifles could be seen scurrying forwards into range, with them came the battlesuits. It had started. The Tau attacked with a calm, ruthless ferocity, blasting the Elysians with heavy weapons and massed pulse fire in a long ranged firefight. The Tau outgunned the Guardsmen, but the Elysians were not powerless to respond. Their own heavy weapons, mortars and Sentinels returned fire. Rounds slashed across the no-man's land between the two forces, but the Drop Troops held their positions as the firefight intensified. Well dug-in and concealed the Elysians could not be moved by firepower alone. They would have to be rooted out with grenades and in bloody hand-to-hand combat. Their attackers were reluctant to use such methods – yet.

With the firefight still raging around the perimeter the Valkyries and escorting gunships of the second lift came into view over the southern horizon. Climbing to jump altitude the men inside were already waiting to deploy directly into the battle. Reinforcements had arrived to even-up the odds.

The second lift jumped directly into the battle, but were exposed to the Tau's heaviest fire as they fell. Looking down from the rear ramp of his Valkyrie, General Syckava could see the panorama of battle laid out beneath him. He could see the Tau armoured vehicles and infantry and hear the hail of fire that now waited to greet his men. A few moments later he was out of the door and falling through the weaving curtain of fire thrown up by the Tau forces. As he fell he saw one Valkyrie, both engines gushing flames, plunge towards the ground and impact in an orange fireball in the desert.

Another was hit by a missile and nose dived into the sea. In their attempts to avoid the Tau's anti-aircraft fire the pilots of the Valkyries took emergency evasive action, but as the transports maneuvered the carefully planned formations of Drop Troops were being scattered across the desert surrounding the target. Some fell within the perimeter, other plunged into the toxic sea and died screaming. Others fell amongst the surrounding Tau forces, shot down as they fell.

Above: *Chimeras of the Cadian 114th regiment advance towards the Iracunda Isthmus along with Legio Ignatum Warhound Titans. This Titan would later be destroyed during the battle.*

The second lift had jumped into a storm of fire. Already it was scattered and taking heavy losses. On the ground the firefight had paused whilst the Tau turned every gun they had on the second lift. Defenceless men were being killed in mid-air, bodies tumbling down to hit the ground dead. For the men of the first lift it was a respite from the heavy fire, but a heart-breaking disaster for the operation's chances of success. Hammered in the air the men of the second lift now had to try and regroup, find their way to defensive positions and get into the fight.

General Syckava hit the ground within the perimeter on the southern edge of the hydro-plant. He ran for cover, still bearing the weight of his grav-chute. As he ran a stray pulse round stuck him through the arm and knocked him off his feet. Other men ran to aid their General and dragged him to safety out of the line of fire. A medic was called for, but as the battle unfolded the regiment's commanding officer was seriously wounded and out of the fight.

The surviving Valkyries sped away, many peppered with holes or limping on single engines. The Vultures had tried to respond to the Tau, swooping in to unleash rockets and autocannon rounds, but their fuel tanks would only allow them to linger for so longer before having to return to refuel. The pilots did what they could for the defenders before following the Valkyries back to base.

The regiment's second-in-command, Colonel Balach, was informed of Syckava's wound and that he was now in charge of all the ground forces. From his position on top of the administration block, watching the Vultures flitting about the desert, dodging fire then popping up to launch salvoes of missiles, the Colonel realised that air support was the key to keeping the Tau at bay and surviving the cauldron of fire that the regiment was now trapped in. He needed more air support – fast. Colonel Balach sent a priority communication to General De Stael's headquarters making just such a request. "Holding objective. Surrounded by enemy forces in great strength. Urgently require air support to sustain perimeter. Please advise on likely ETA of relief force."

The message was heard loud and clear, by both Lord Marshal De Stael and the Tau commanders, who were listening in from within their Manta. As the Imperial Navy scrambled a fighter wing to join the fray, so the Tau Barracudas were vectoring in to intercept them. Now the effects of the Tau's earlier daring raid on the airbase were felt. Already most of the navy's fighters were in the air supporting the relief column and protecting the surviving air train returning to base. This third request stretched the Imperial Navy's remaining resources. They had received no replacement aircraft since the campaign had started, and fuel supplies were starting to run low. In all, only six air-worthy Thunderbolts could be found for the new mission. It wasn't enough. The six Thunderbolts encountered twelve Barracudas as they approached the target, and after four aircraft were shot down, the surviving Thunderbolts found themselves fleeing back to base. Colonel Balach did not get his air support, he was on his own.

At hydro-processing plant 23-30 sporadic firefights continued for the rest of the day and throughout the night. The Tau were happy to sit back and besiege the defenders, wearing them down with their long-ranged fire. The Tau were husbanding their forces for a final assault to clear the Drop Troopers from the plant.

Day Three - The End at 23-30

With the Imperial Navy unable to assist, the 23rd Elysians had to rely on their own Vultures. After returning to base the gunships re-armed and refueled and set off again back to the battle. The gunships would provide constant rolling air cover for the men on ground, but the distance between their base and the battle meant they could never stay long. Still, throughout the day and night the Vulture gunships skimmed in and unleashed their firepower before returning to base. The night was illuminated by the fiery streaks of missile launchers and the distant crump of warhead impacts.

After two days and nights of fighting Hydro-plant 23-30 had been pounded into a shambles. Tau heavy weapons and Elysian counter-fire was reducing the area into a growing pile of junk metal. It was a ravished landscape, pitted

by mortar craters, covered with the wreckage of twisted and charred pipes, littered with the splintered steel, ash and the bodies of the dead. Tracks were barricaded with the husks of burned-out Sentinels. Half demolished water and chemical storage tanks, their contents long since spilled into the sand, stood sentry over the battlefield. Within this steel jungle crawled the survivors, crouching in cover, their uniforms ragged, dirty and bloody. They were all tired, exhausted from two days and nights of constant fighting. The skirmishing and threat of a renewed Tau attack in the night had kept them all awake. There had been little rest for anyone.

After yesterday's long-range bombardment the surrounding Tau forces now closed in to finish the job. Well aware of the relief column closing in, the Tau set about reducing the perimeter quickly. When dawn broke, the Tau mercilessly unleashed their biggest weapon. A Manta swooped in over the hydro-plant, casting a shadow over the Guardsmen beneath like a great bird of prey. The Elysians had no answer to the Manta's firepower. Its drone-controlled burst cannon turrets raked the site in a cascade of fire. With the Guardsmen pinned down by such heavy fire the battlesuits moved in, followed by Fire Warrior teams.

It was a confused third day of fighting in the ruins of hydro-plant 23-30. Under the wings of their Manta support the Tau final closed in and used their heaviest weapons at point blank range. The Elysians fought back hard, but even with their Vulture air support attacking the Manta they could not hope to win an uneven battle. Slowly the Tau cleared the ruins, section by section. The Elysians fought bravely, then fell back or died, until only small pockets of resistance remained around the control complex and holding the causeway to the primary treatment centre. In the mid-afternoon the Tau commander requested a ceasefire and asked that the remaining defenders surrender. He informed Colonel Balach that there was nothing to be gained by continuing the pointless slaughter. The battle was lost, his relief was not coming – to die now was to die in vain. Colonel Balach, now wounded himself, refused to surrender and vowed to fight on. By nightfall he was dead and the 23rd Elysian regiment was all but annihilated.

The Tau Fire Warriors rounded up the survivors and wounded, including General Syckava, disarmed them and loaded them into the holds of their Mantas. More of the huge transports landed and began to collect the Hunter Cadres for redeployment. They left behind a twisted, smoke enshrouded battlefield, littered with wreckage and the dead. Operation Comet was over – it had been defeated.

Above: *A Piranha comes under heavy mortar fire as it harries the Imperial Guard relief force's advance.*

Below: *Land Raiders of the Raptors Chapter and a Warhound Titan of Legio Ignatum spearhead the breakthrough into the Iracunda Isthmus.*

Breakthrough on the Iracunda Isthmus

Since the offensive towards Tarokeen had stalled there had been little fighting between the Tallarn regiments and the Tau. The Tallarns had made small, local advances and continued harassing artillery fire but, short on supplies and critically short of water, they had started to dig-in to conserve what supplies they had. They set about laying minefields and razorwire in front of their positions. Whilst the Imperial Guard were not advancing the Tau did not counter-attack. With the Imperial Guard marooned in the desert the Hunter Cadres conserved their own strength for the battles still to come.

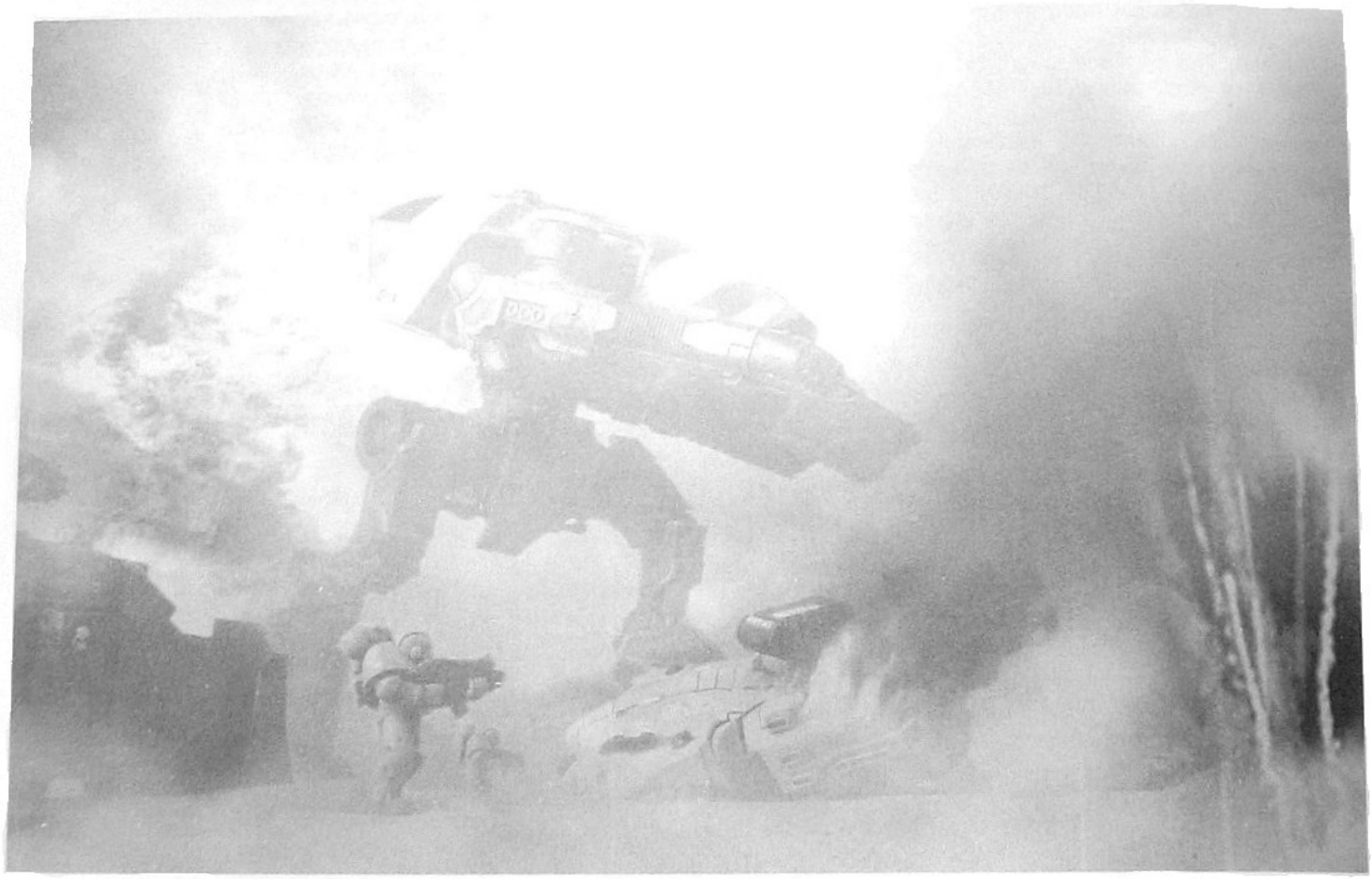
It was critical to the success of Operation Comet, and maybe the outcome of the war, that a relief forces reached the Drop Troops at hydro-processing plant 23-30 in three days. Before any relief force could makes its advance a breakthrough had be made through the western end of the Iracunda Isthmus. The ground forces would have to break into the Iracunda Isthmus, using the narrow strips of land between the small seas and lakes in the area. Channelled by the terrain, any attack would have to be directly into the teeth of the waiting Hunter Cadres' firepower.

The Tallarn regiments were no longer fit for the offensive. They had lost many men and most of their tanks in the long drive north. The war was entering a critical phase, much rested on Operation Comet succeeding. De Stael turned to the best troops he still had. Firstly, the Raptors Space Marines. Captain Orelius' battle brothers had seen little ground action; it was time to commit them again. The Space Marines would be the spearhead of the thrust, supported by the Titans of Legio Ignatum. The Warhounds were the Imperium's largest war machines on Taros, it was unlikely the Tau had any answer to them. Between these two forces they would smash through the narrow terrain, sweeping aside any resistance and clearing the way for the mechanized 114th Cadian regiment to strike north to reach hydro 23-30. The breakthrough operation would begin on the same day as the Elysians launched Operation Comet.

Captains Orelius and Kaedes oversaw the Space Marines preparations for the attack. Thunderhawk transporters started their work, transferring Land Raiders, Predators, Whirlwinds and Rhinos from the *War Talon* to the surface. Techmarines armed and blessed the vehicles. The battle brothers of 2nd and 6th companies mustered for an armoured engagement. Thunderhawk transporters plunged from orbit to land at the assigned assembly area, just west of the northern end of the isthmus entrance. On board the transporters were Land Raiders, Predators, Whirlwinds and Rhinos, all carrying the squads of 3rd company. The attack would come swiftly, giving the Tau minimum time to respond, and it would come in overwhelming force. It would be spearheaded by the armour of the Raptors Chapter, supported by the firepower of the Warhound Titans, with the 114th Regiment awaiting the breakthrough to begin their own mission – the relief of hydro 23-30.

While the Space Marines assembled, the Warhound Titans of Legio Ignatum were stalking north to join them, striding through the deserts accompanied by the sprawling Chimera formations of the Cadian regiment. For the first time in the campaign the Tau would experience a true army of the Imperium, the combined weight of the Imperium's fighting forces committed as one.

Eight hundred kilometres to the south, the Valkyries and Vultures of the Elysian Drop Troop Regiment were just taking off as the Space Marines and Warhounds went into battle. Their target area was at the northern end of the entrance to



Above: *Wreckage of the Tau defenders litters the desert as the Titans and Space Marines advance.*

the isthmus. Their objective was to clear all Tau forces, punching a gap for the Imperial Guard to race through.

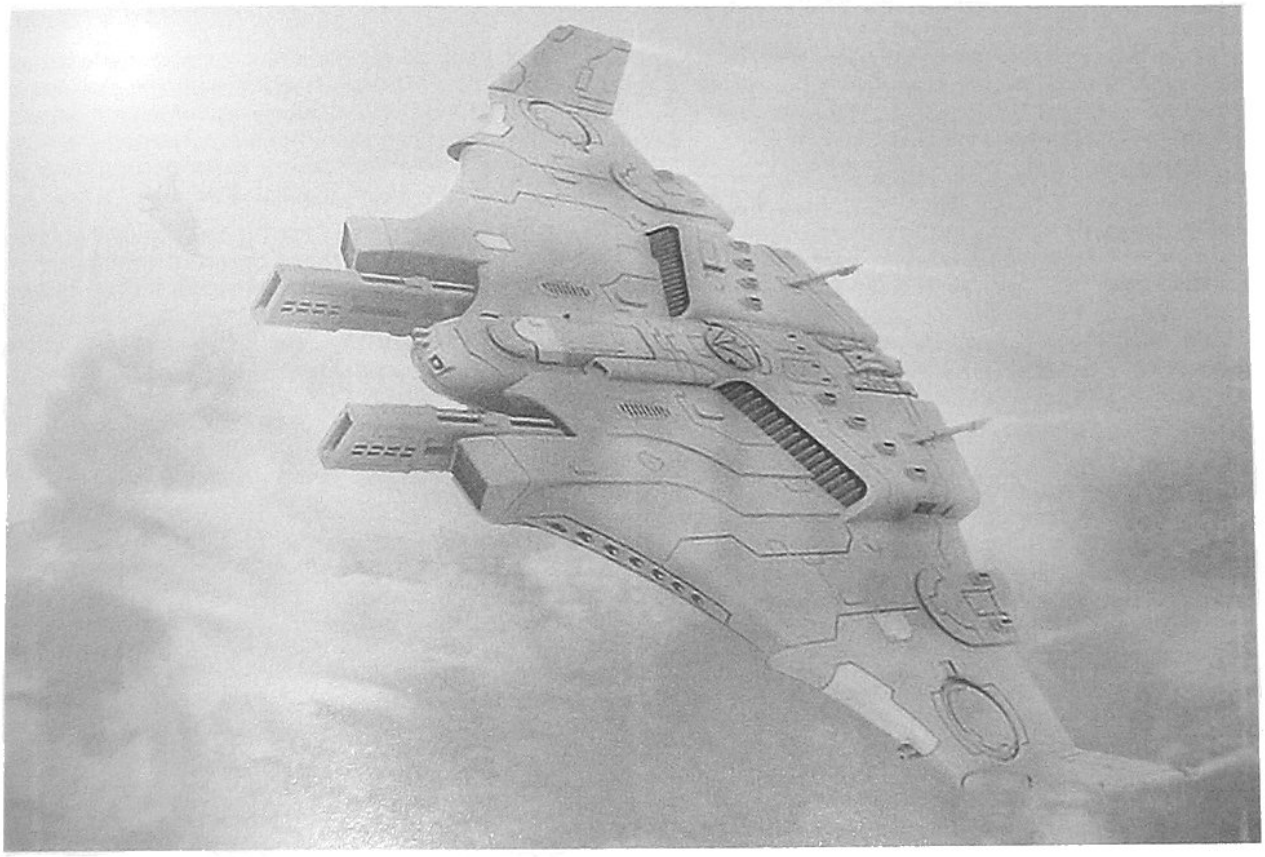
The Tau's Pathfinder forward observers must have seen the Warhound Titans, standing fourteen metres tall above the desert, as they stalked forwards. The Tau were prepared for an attack and, as ever, their Hunter Cadres responded quickly to the call from their forward scouts. In earlier engagements the Tau had always been able to make the most of their long-ranged weaponry to pick off Leman Russes and Chimeras. Now they faced Titans, equipped with huge weaponry and protective void shields, the advantage lay with the Imperium. This would be a different battle.

The Warhounds engaged the Hammerheads at maximum range, blazing away with massive turbo-lasers. The Space Marines sped forwards, Land Raiders leading the way, Whirlwinds in close support, Predators on the flanks. Hoping to halt the assault the Tau could no longer simply give ground before the attack, they had to stand and fight. This was to the Space Marines' advantage. The Raptors strike force could close the distance and start to engage with their highly accurate lascannons. Conducted with speed, accuracy and their trade mark aggression, the Space Marine tore into the Tau defenders, deploying Devastator squads from Rhinos to lend their fire support. Suddenly the Tau were suffering heavy losses. With void shields flaring against railgun hits, the Warhounds strode forwards, obliterating entire vehicles with a single hit from their weaponry, and stomping on the wreckage as they advanced. For the first time on Taros the Tau fell back having had the worst of the engagement. The desert was marked by tell tale columns of smoke rising from the burning hulks of Tau vehicles.

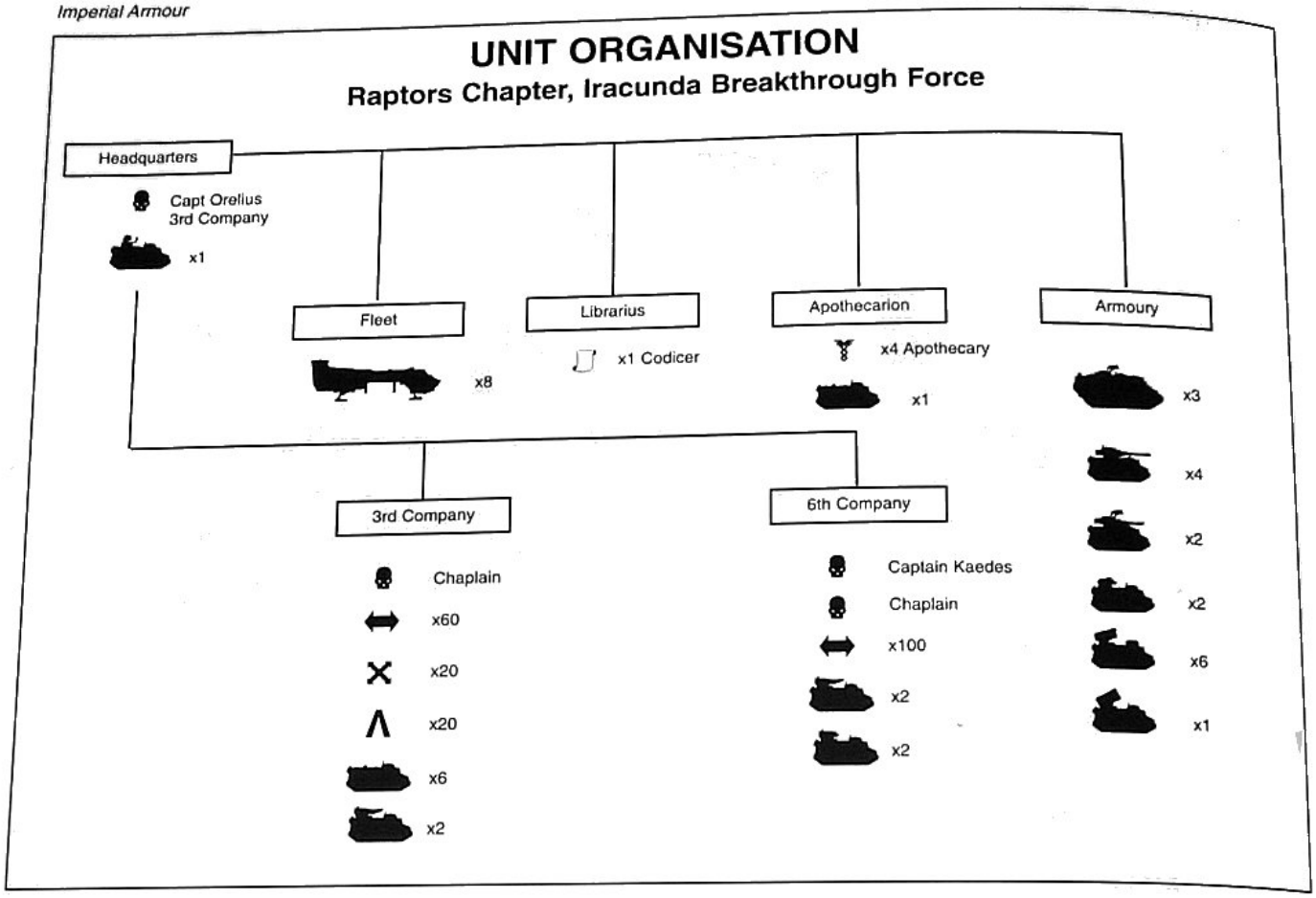
The Warhounds continually stalked forwards, obliterating anything in their path, along with the Space Marines, now advancing about their feet, the combined force thrust a sword clean through the Tau defences and opened the way onto the Iracunda Isthmus. The Tau rallied, and the arrival of a fresh Hunter Cadre saw the fighting intensify again. This time the Tau would deploy a new weapon. No Imperial commander had ever encountered this new mark of Tiger Shark before. The aircraft came in fast, skimming the desert so low it kicked up a dust cloud, before climbing over a shallow rise to open fire. Missiles rippled from the aircraft's wings, flaring bright against Warhound *Advensis Primaris*' void shields. The explosions overpowered the generators which cut out. The following shots from the Tiger Shark's twin railguns struck the Warhound squarely in the hull. With devastating power two hyper-sonic shots tore through the thick armour plates in an explosion that showered the surrounding desert in molten shrapnel. Critically wounded the Warhound staggered backwards under the impacts, tottered and, to the astonishment of all, fell.

Where once Imperial Commanders had thought the Titans untouchable to all but a Manta's firepower, suddenly the Tau had a new tactical weapon capable of killing the mighty war machines. The wreckage of *Advensis Primaris* lay billowing oily smoke as the sand settled over her. Inside the crew lay dead at the controls, including High Princeps Jernay, killed by the agonised screams of pain that fed directly into his brain from the Titan's mind-impulse controls. It was a bitter and unexpected loss. The remaining three Titans withdrew rather than face another strafing run. Their mission was already complete, the 114th Cadians were now able to begin their strike northwards, further Titan losses would be for no further gains.

The Space Marines and Warhounds had advanced the required fifty kilometres in just a day of fighting. Skirmishing



Above: *The Tau unleash their secret weapon. Experience facing Titans had caused the Tau to develop Titan-killing firepower for the Tiger Shark. After the surprise loss of a Warhound, Legio Ignatum withdrew their battlegroup.*



continued in the area all day, with Space Marine patrols hunting down any alien stragglers or Pathfinder teams bold enough to return to the battlefield. Behind them the 114th Cadians roared their engines into life.

Despite the victory, the loss of *Advensis Primaris* was a worrying development. The Tau had learned from their previous experiences fighting the Imperium's greatest war machines. In the past Hunter Cadres had been roughly handled by Titans, now the Tau had developed a weapon capable of fighting back. The new Tiger Shark had been upgraded to carry two heavy railguns, sacrificing its standard payload and ion cannons for the kind of firepower usually only mounted on Mantas or spacecraft.

114th Relief Column

The completion of the Raptors' attack was the signal for the 114th Cadian regiment to begin its part of the operation. The regiment's mission was to relieve the Elysian Drop Troops who were already fighting to secure the hydro-plant. The Chimera-borne mechanised regiment was to dash to link up with them. They had two days to cover 150 kilometers of hostile desert.

The Space Marines and Warhounds had cleared the way, now the Imperial Guard, under the direction of Colonel Stranski raced forwards. Leading the way were reconnaissance troops, squadrons of Salamander scout vehicles. Behind them came the bulk of the regiment, Infantry platoons advancing in formation in their own Chimera armoured carriers. Lastly was the regiment's artillery support, Griffon mortar carriers replacing the far slower Basilisks. Colonel Stranski had already decided that the Basilisks should not take part in the operation. The artillery pieces could not keep up with the pace of the advance, indirect firepower would have to be provided by the mortars and the Imperial Navy, whose aircraft were again overhead protecting the Chimera columns. The Elysians could not afford for the Cadians to be delayed by anything. This mission was a race against time.

The grinding tracks and rumbling engines of the Chimeras raised tall dust columns as the armoured infantry formations sped northwards – tall dust columns that the Tau could easily spot and track. The Tau had suffered their heaviest losses yet fighting the breakthrough, and had already started to load Hunter Cadres into Mantas to move against the Elysian drop zone. The Chimera columns now driving deep into their territory could not be stopped. The Tau faced a difficult tactical problem, where to commit their available troops? Should it be into stopping the column or overwhelming the Drop Troops? If the column was attacked then the Elysians might hold out. If the Elysians were destroyed then the Chimera columns would arrive to finding nothing to relieve. So the Tau let the Cadians advance. They would not seek to halt or destroy the 114th's armoured columns, only to delay it long enough for the battle at the hydro-plant to be won. For delaying actions they would use light forces of Pathfinders support by Piranhas and Devilfish-mounted Fire Warriors. These would harass the column with ambushes and sniping, but were not to engage in open battle. As the flying column of Chimeras roared across the desert flats, Pathfinder squads on Tetra speeders raced into the area ahead of the advance to observe the troop movement and prepare the ground with Orca dropped Remote sensor towers. Meanwhile the main Hunter Cadres moved their full force against hydro-processing plant 23-30, with instructions to

overwhelm the defenders in a maximum of two days.

Riding in the cupola of his command Chimera, Colonel 'Snake' Stranski could watch his regiments advance, arrayed company behind company, with a reconnaissance screen in front. It was a majestic sight, Chimera after Chimera gunning its engines and pounding headlong across the sands. Overhead the contrails of Imperial Navy Thunderbolts criss-crossed the sky. His advance had started well. For the first day, his men saw little of the enemy.

On the second day, that changed. His scouts and vanguard platoons came under surprise attack from well-hidden Tau forces. For the first time, Imperial Guardsmen encountered distinctive tall, thin observation towers, which seemed to contain sensor equipment. Following the sightings several Chimeras were destroyed by Seeker missile strikes, seemingly launched out of nowhere. Each time the Tau attacked it caused the threatened units to halt, disembark troops and begin to hunt down the foe. It caused delays, and the Colonel ordered only units that came under direct attack to engage the enemy. Following units should bypassed them and move forwards, the regiment would become strung out but it would keep the advance going.

On that second morning alone there were six separate ambushes, each one causing losses and a delay. What had been a glorious headlong charge yesterday was now a stop-start running battle, and the 114th was

being stalled. For Colonel Stranski it was a frustrating day. The delays caused the 114th regiment to fall behind schedule, by nightfall they were still thirty kilometers short of their destination. News from the hydro-plant was not encouraging. That evening ,communications with Colonel Balach and his beleaguered defenders had been lost. 4621st Army Command no longer had any idea what was happening on the ground at hydro - plant 23-30.

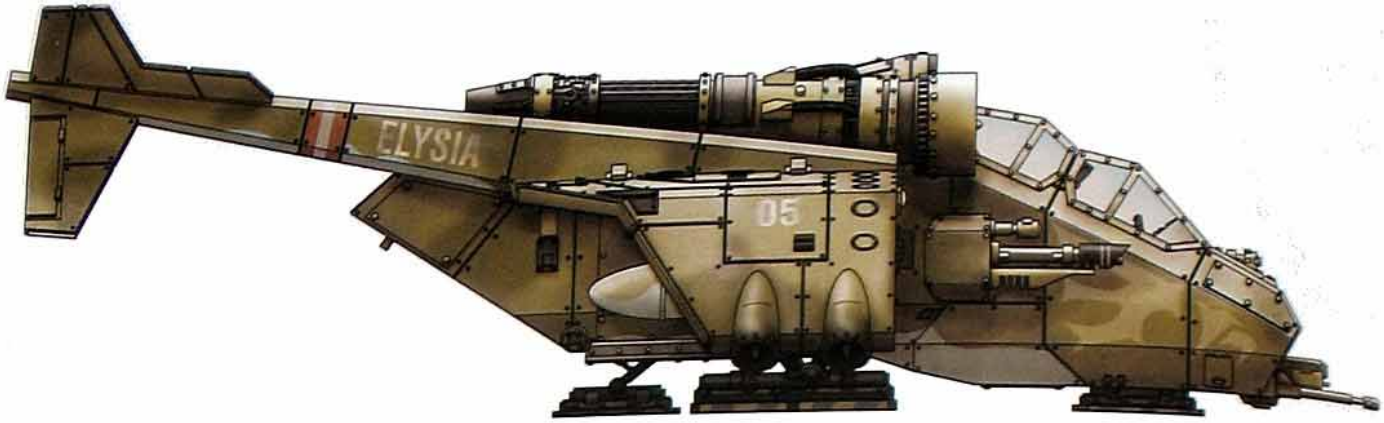
That night, in desperation, Stranski organised a long-range patrol to strike out ahead of his main units. Under cover of darkness they must reach hydro-plant 23-30, regardless of the cost. Using only his fastest vehicles, the Salamanders, he would personally lead the mission.

The eight Salamander patrols reached the hydro-plant before dawn, speeding across the desert on their over-powered engines. In the end, the lead units of the 114th were only four hours late, but it was four hours too late. As first light broke, Colonel Stranski and his Cadian reconnaissance crews were the first witnesses to the battlefield. The hydro-plant was a smouldering, blackened ruin of pipes and storage tanks. Thick smoke and dust hung in the air over the shattered detritus of battle. Crunching through the rubble they found burnt-out Sentinels, Valkyrie crash sites, destroyed heavy weapons, wrecked Tau Devilfish and battlesuits, and the dead of both sides. Fires still burnt, but it was eerily quiet.

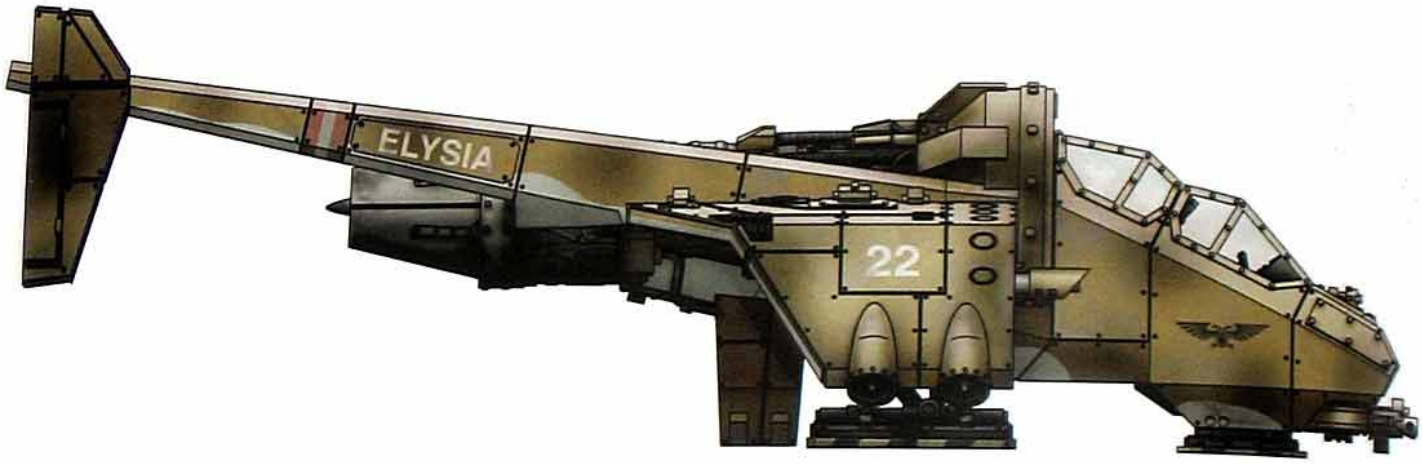
The main body of the 114th began arriving a few hours after dawn, and the Cadian Guardsmen searched the ruins for survivors. None where found. The Tau had already done the job thoroughly. By mid-afternoon Colonel Stranski ordered his regiment to mount-up and withdraw back to the Tallarn lines. Their was no point in holding the shattered ruins, no water could be supplied from here. His men had fought over 150 kilometres for nothing. The mission had failed.

Top: *A forward patrol of Cadian Salamanders race across the deserts towards the hydro-plant.*

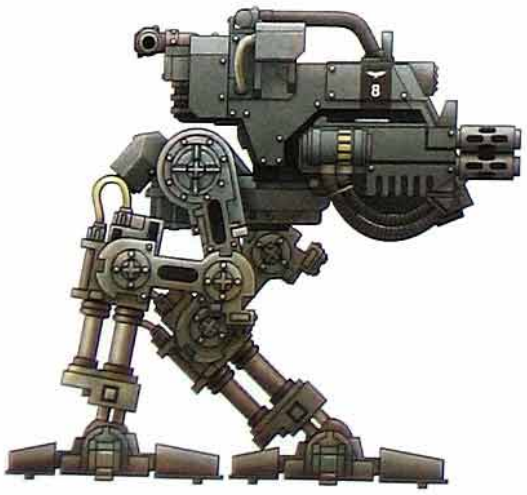
Left: *The Cadian's Chimeras come under attack during the relief operation.*



Valkyrie airborne assault carrier of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment.
This is the regiment's fifth aircraft, camouflaged for Operation Comet.

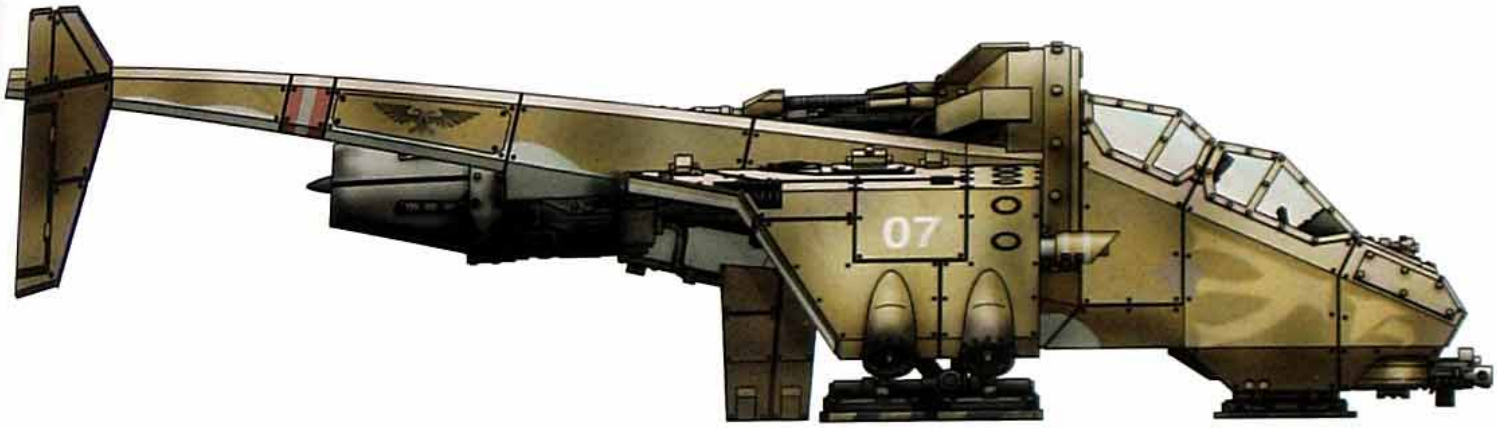


Vulture gunship of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop Regiment.
This is the regiment's twenty-second aircraft, camouflaged for Operation Comet.

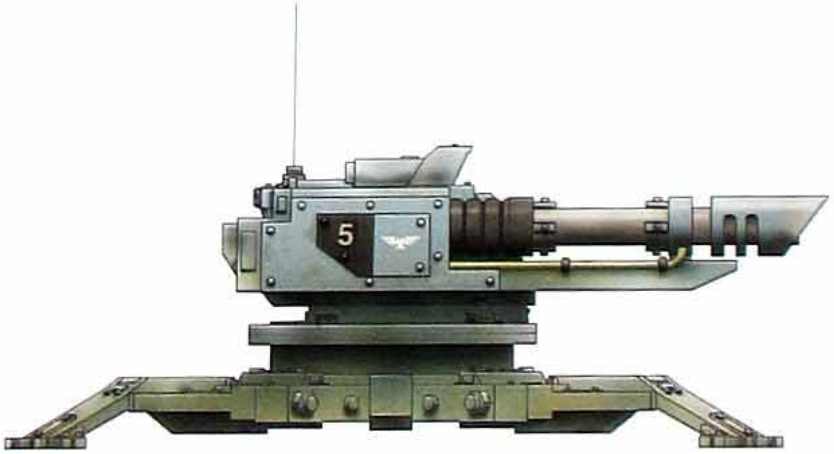


Drop Sentinel of the 23rd Elysian Regiment, armed with a multi-melta. This vehicle is in Codex grey; others were given camouflage by their pilots.

Valkyrie airborne assault carrier of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop Regiment.
This is aircraft 141, shot down during Operation Comet.



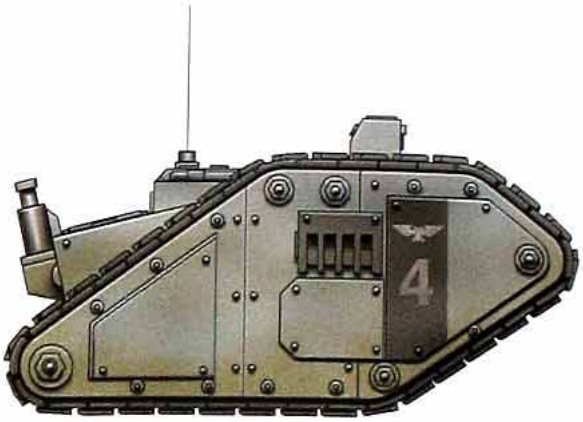
Vulture gunship of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop Regiment.
This is the regiment's seventh aircraft, camouflaged for Operation Comet.
Note that it has the 'diving eagle' nose art, an unofficial addition to many aircraft by their crews.

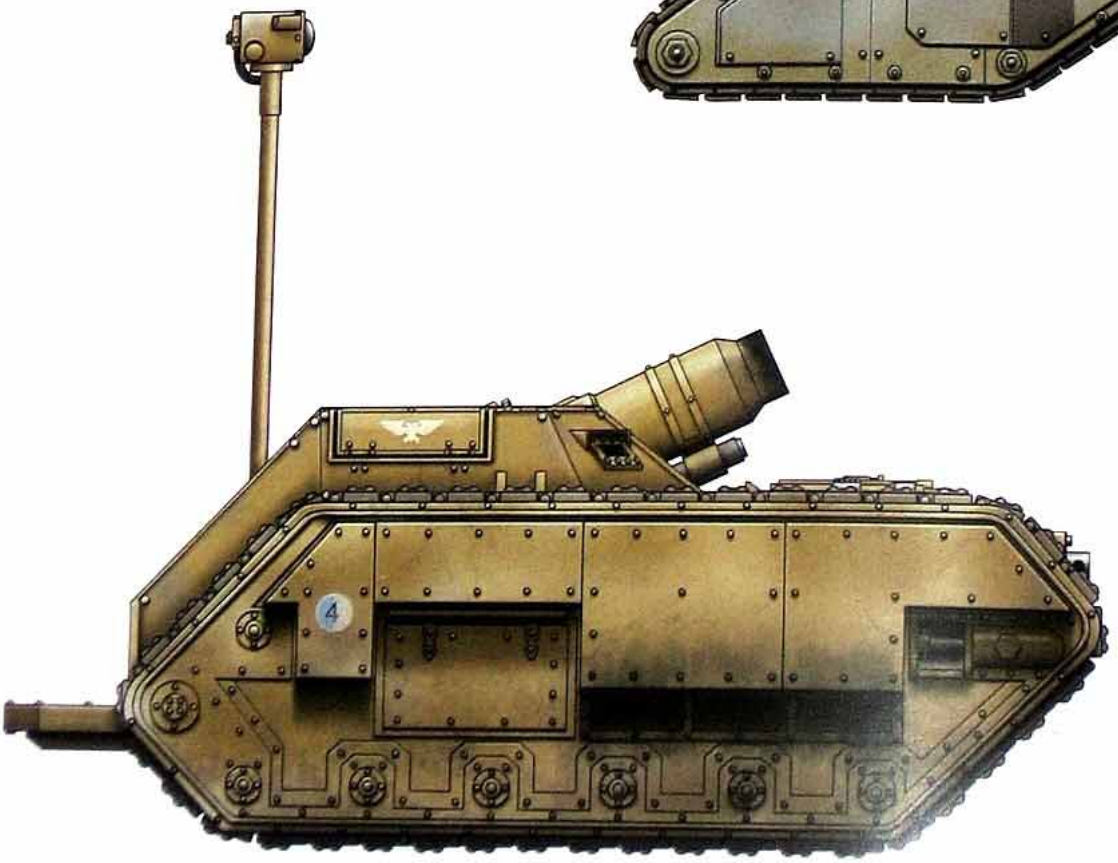


Tarantula sentry gun, with lascannons, of the 23rd Elysia Drop Troop Regiment. Small enough to be carried in a Valkyrie, sentry guns added valuable heavy weapons support to the regiment's defensive perimeter.

Valkyrie airborne assault carrier of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop Regiment.
This is the regiment's twenty-fourth aircraft, camouflaged for Operation Comet.
Due to the objectives' distance all Valkyries had to be equipped with additional fuel tanks.

Cyclops, remote-controlled demolition vehicle. Another small vehicle capable of airborne transportation, only a few Cyclops were deployed during Operation Comet.

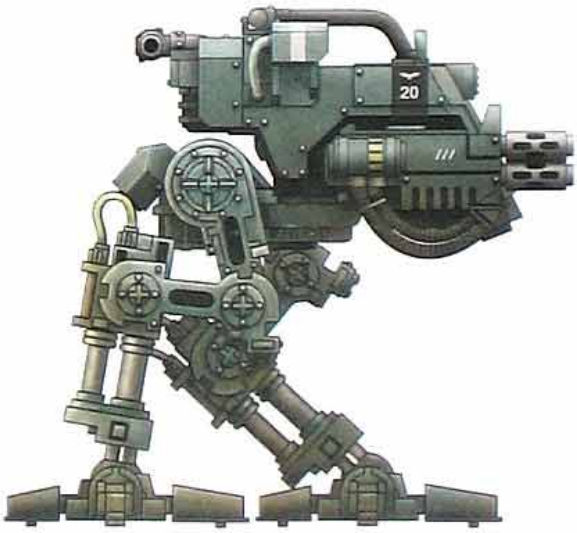




Griffon mortar carrier of the Cadian 114th Regiment. Due to their speed, Griffons provided the regiment's main artillery support during the drive to hyr[illegible] plant 23-30.

Chimera of the 114th Cadian Regiment, A company, during the Relief of Hydro-plant 23-30.

Salamander Scout vehicle of the 114th Cadian Regiment, E company,
Leading the way, this vehicle was amongst the first to reach the Hydro-plant.

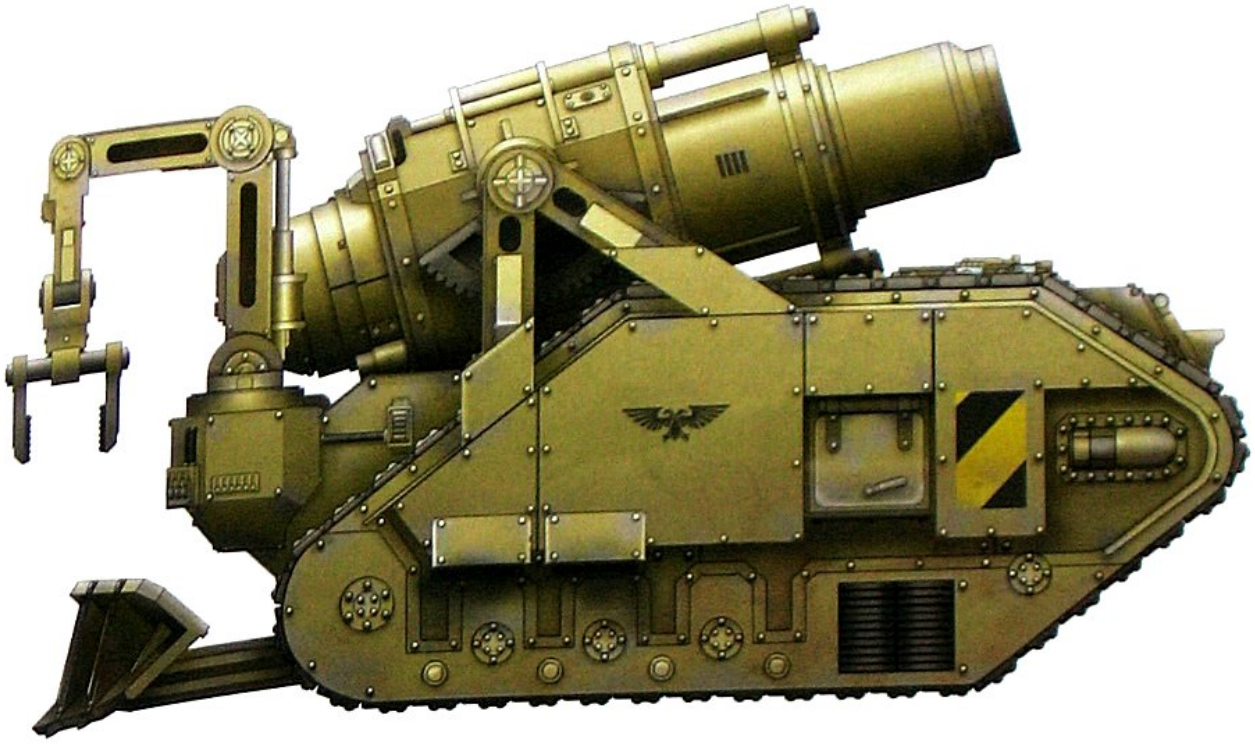


Drop Sentinel of the 23rd Elysian Regiment. This is vehicle number 20. All 42 of the regiment's Sentinels were destroyed or captured during Operation Comet.

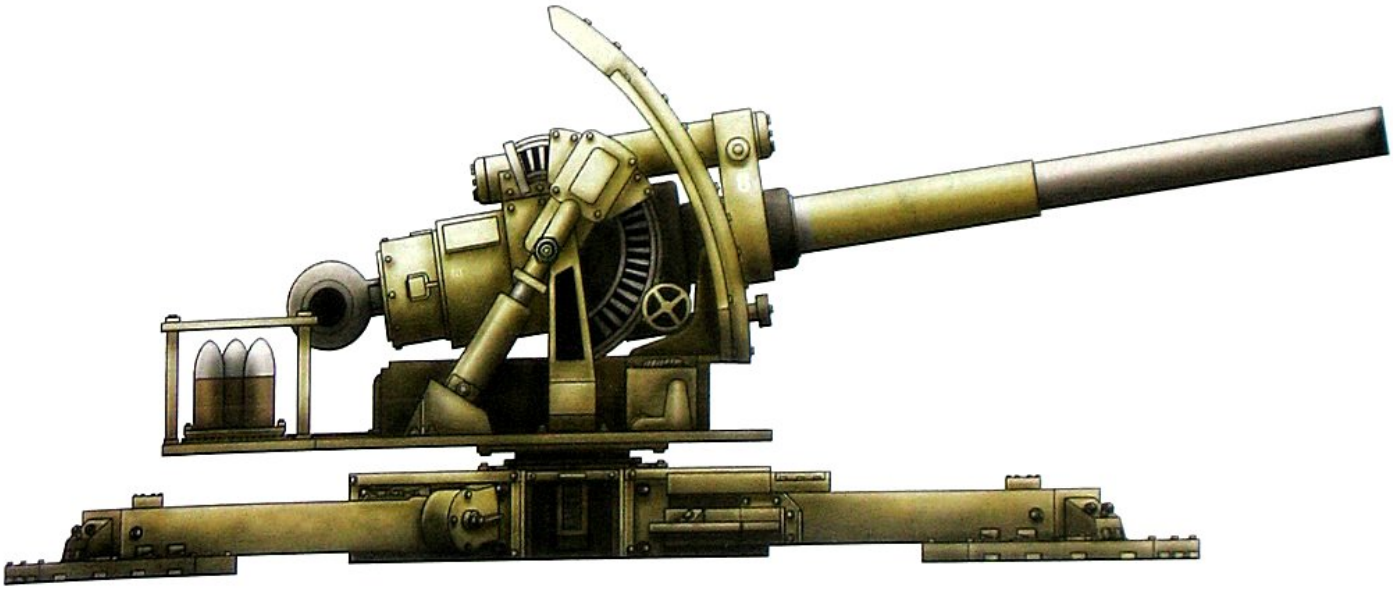
Chimera of the 3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment, during the Battle of Gladamak.

Salamander scout vehicle of the 12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment.

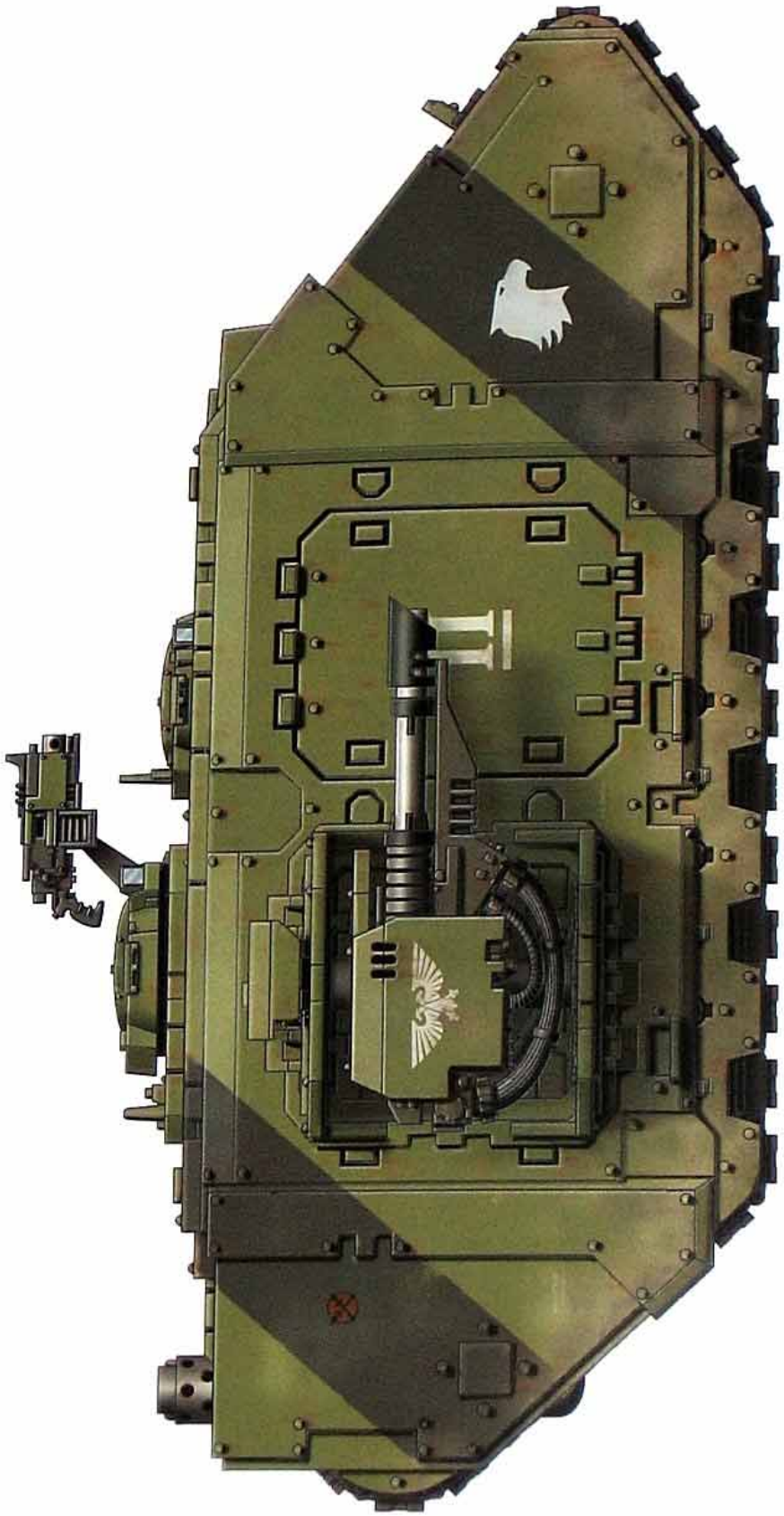
Salamander Command vehicle of the 409th Heavy Tank Regiment.
One of three vehicles of the regiment's HQ section.



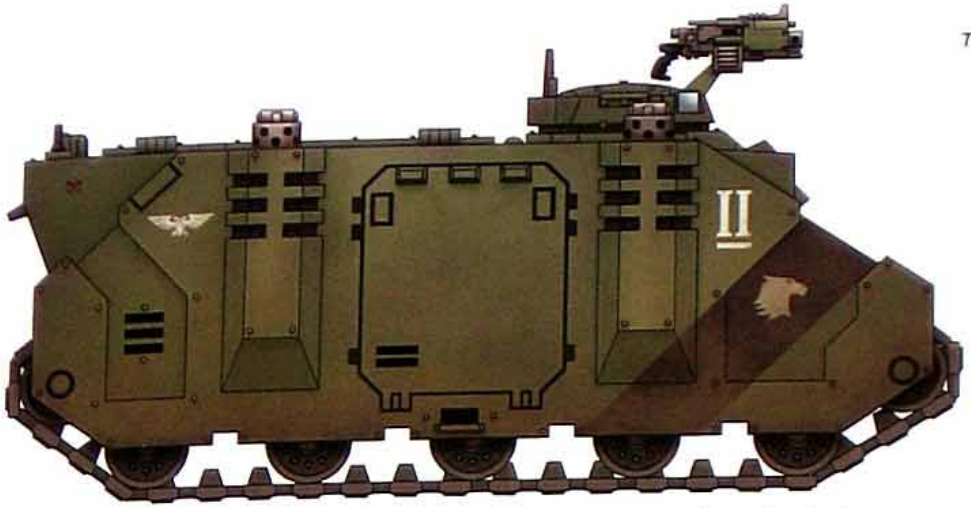
Bombard Heavy Seige Mortar. The 17th Tallarn regiment included a single heavy artillery company of 6 Bombards, which saw sustained action during fighting in the Phyyra Heights.



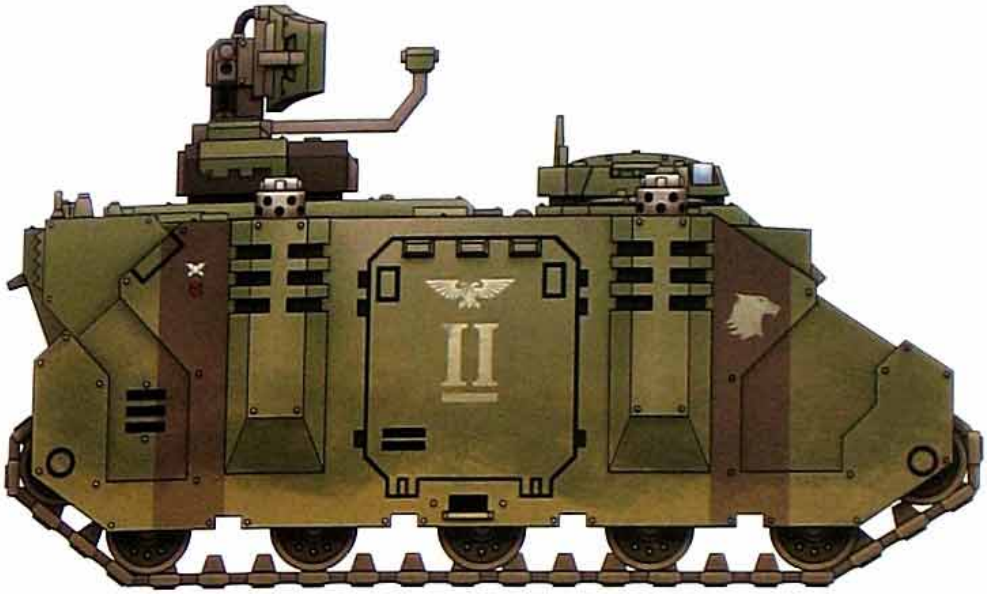
Earthshaker Platform of the 17thTallarn regiment. Note the replacement barrel, as yet unpainted, an indication of heavy use during the regiment's advance.



Land Raider with additional spaced armour, as deployed for the Iracunda Breakthrough.



Raptors Chapter Rhino of 2nd Company, bearing the Taros Campaign badge.



Damocles Command Rhino of 2nd Company, used to coordinate the Chapter's ground operations throughout the campaign.

Predator Destructor with extra armour of the Raptors Chapter, deployed during the Iracunda Breakthrough.

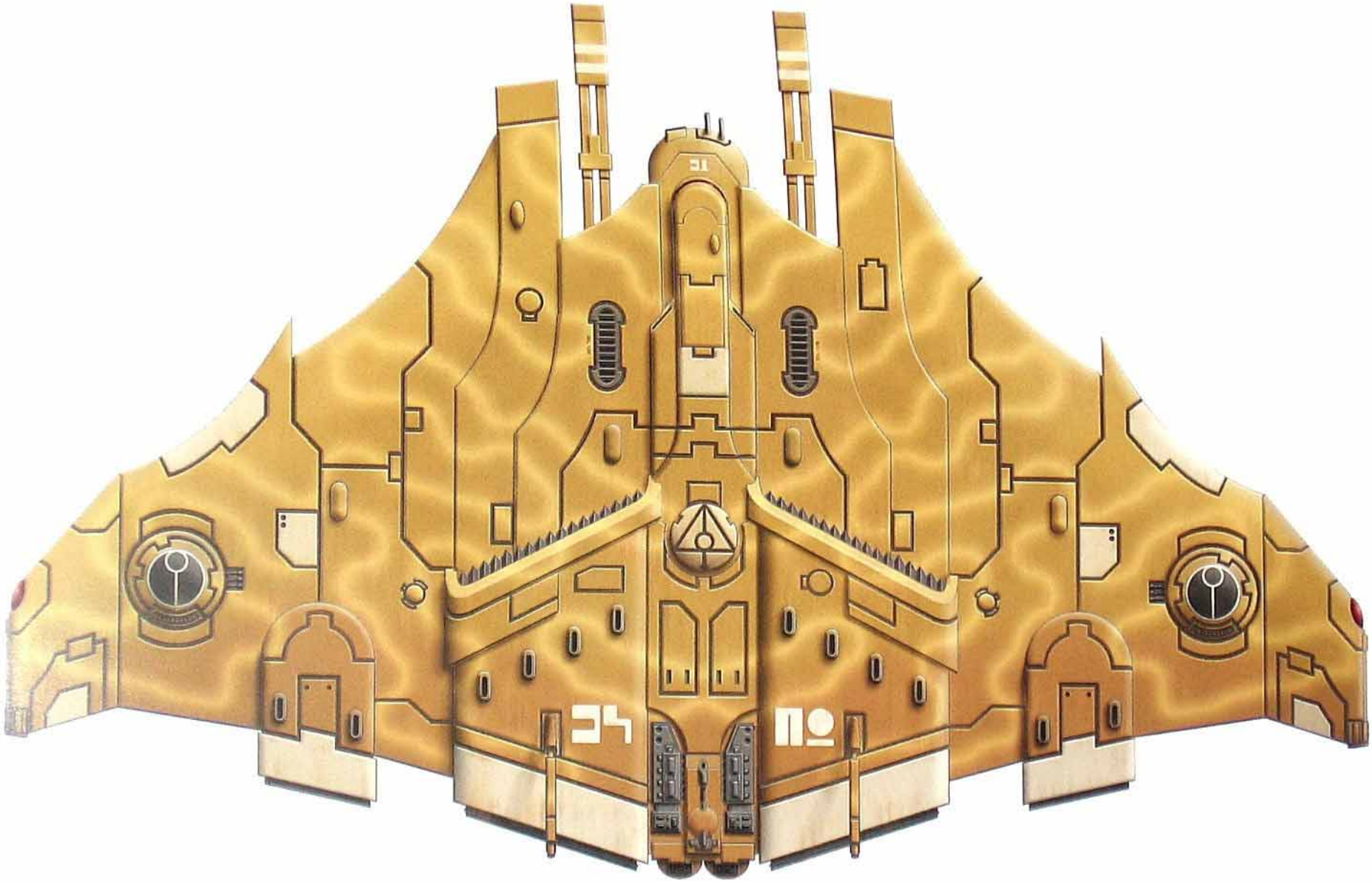
Warhound Titan *Advensis Secundus* , armed with a plasma blastgun and Vulcan mega-bolter, as deployed for the Iracunda Breakthrough.

Details of the Warhound Titan's head and torso. Note, the Titans name embossed on the head armour and the purity seals.

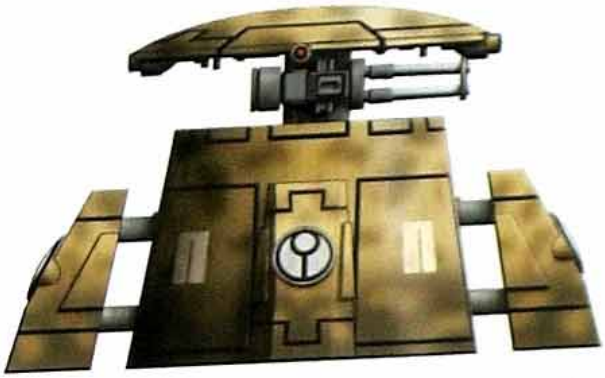
Detail of devotional artwork adourning the Titan's leg armour. Over the course of their long service, ancient Titans can become covered in such baroque art.

Hammerhead gunship, armed with twin missile pods. This vehicle belongs to an unknown Hunter Cadre, but took part in the attack on hydro-plant 23-30.

Devilfish transport, part of the same Hunter Cadre.
This vehicle was destroyed during the Tau's final assault.



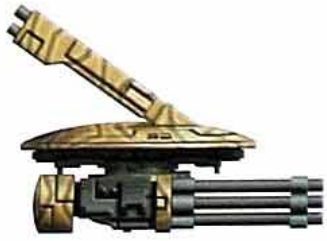
Tiger Shark A-X-10, the very ltest in Tau ground attack aircraft, unleashed with devastating effect for the first time on Taros. So far only a single aircraft of thsi type has been identified.



Drone sentry turret with burst cannons. Encountered and destroyed by the 114th Cadian Regiment.

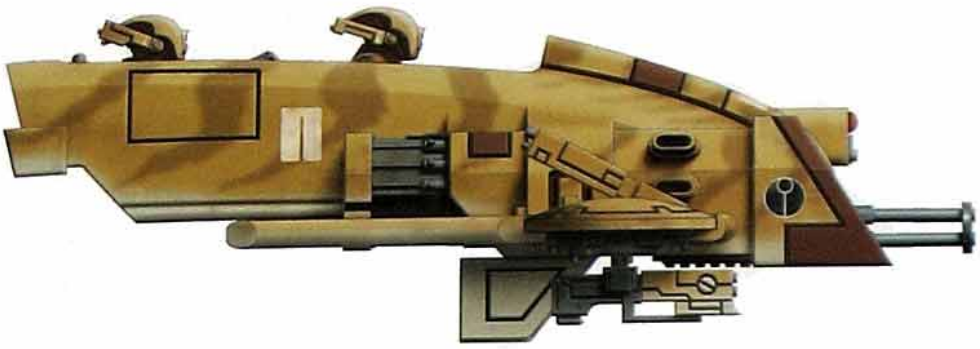
Drone sentry turret with missile pods, encountered by a Sentinel scout patrol of the 89th Tallarn Regiment.

Heavy Gun Drone with Markerlight and a burst cannon. Part of the attack on at hydro-plant 23-30.

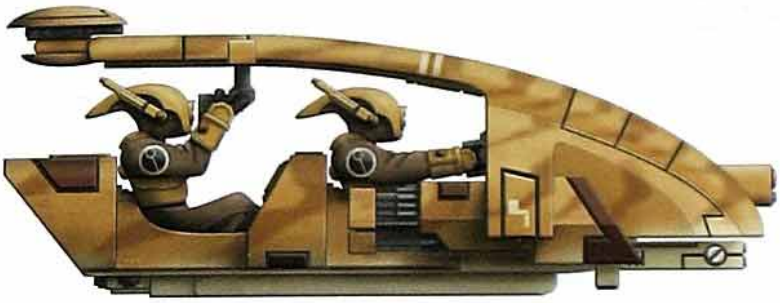


Heavy Gun Drone with twin burst cannons. Also part of the attack on at hydro-plant 23-30.

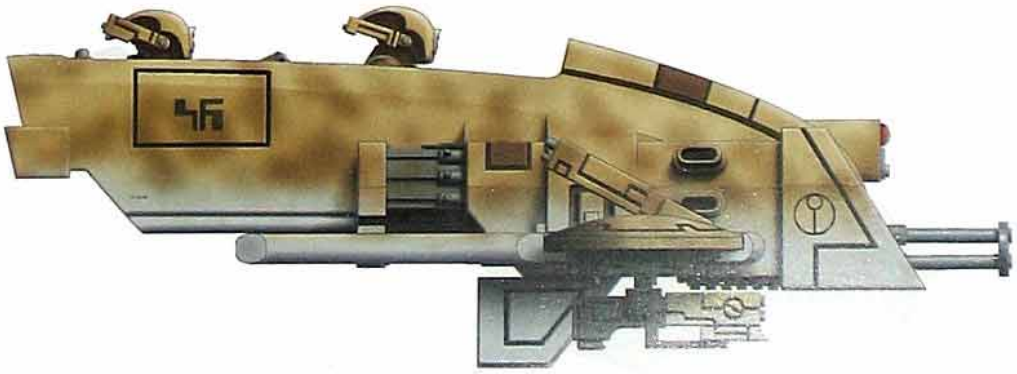
Remote Sensor Tower with sky line camouflage, destroyed by the 114th Cadian Regiment.



Piranha with a burst cannon, identified during the 114th Cadian Regiment's drive north.



Tetra scout speeder, again part of the Tau forces harassing the 114th Cadian Regiment's advance.



Piranha of Hunter Cadre Shi'Eldi, destroyed by the Tallarn 17th Regiment.

Left: The storm approaches. Under the wings of their Manta transports, Tau forces move towards hydro-processing plant 23-30 to begin the two-day battle that would ultimately decide the outcome of the war on Taros.

THE EVACUATION

CHAPTER 7

Above: *Tallarn Rough Riders on dawn patrol in the Phyyra Heights. Their Mukaali mounts were superbly adapted to desert conditions, allowing them to range far further afield that horse-mounted squadrons.*

The defeat of Operation Comet sent Lord Commander Gustavus' High Command into a fury of distressed action. The war on Taros had taken a turn for the worse, perhaps a fatal turn. The failure of the airborne operation had wide reaching effects, most immediately within the command structure of 4621st Army.

On board the *Righteous Power,* Commissar-General Mordred Van Horcic arrived to see Gustavus, interrupting a Navy briefing meeting with his insistent demands to be allowed to see the Lord Commander immediately. The sentries on the door tried to bar his path, but the Commissar would not be delayed. Threatening to have any man who got in his way arrested, Van Horcic barged in. The briefing was suspended. Imperial Navy officer scurried from the room to avoid the Commissar-General's wrath. Gustavus sat impassively whilst the Commissar-General delivered instructions for the removal of the staff of 4621st army. They had failed in their duty to the Emperor, and whilst losses were acceptable, failure was not. The surface campaign had become a shambles and Taros was slipping from the Emperor's grasp. Lord Marshal De Stael was to be replaced, by the Commissar-General himself.

Unknown to the Commissar-General, Gustavus had been well aware of the situation long before Van Horcic made his dramatic entrance. One of Colonel Scheja's informers had leaked the news of Van Horcic's intentions, and the Lord Commander was prepared. Gustavus knew that Commissar Van Horcic was well within is rights to take command of the failing operation, but Marshal De Stael had been a loyal and dutiful servant of the Imperial Guard and deserved better than the summary execution that now awaited him at the hands of Van Horcic.

That morning, Colonel Scheja had been dispatched to the surface with secret orders for De Stael. It informed the Lord Marshal that he was to be relieved of his command, and that he faced two stark choices. Turn himself over as a prisoner to Colonel Scheja, who would accompany him to the brig onboard the *Righteous Power* to await trial, or, take command of a front line platoon and lead an immediate counter-attack against the Tau, from which he should not return. Exhausted from his work and stung by the defeat of Operation Comet, De Stael removed his spectacles and asked Colonel Scheja to await his decision outside, he would be just a few moments. In the cramped corridor of the Leviathon command vehicle Scheja waited patiently. The dim hum of the Leviathon's generators was broken by the sudden discharge of a laspistol from within the office. Rather than face execution or be disgraced and condemned to a Penal Regiment, Lord Marshal De Stael had found his own solution and taken he only way out which kept his martial honour intact.

The arrival of Commissar-General Van Horcic and his aides saw much of the other top brass

of 4621st Army arrested. In a day of turmoil and confusion six officers were executed after resisting arrest. 62 other officers and aides would be given a chance to die well in the service of the Emperor, after being transported to a Penal Regiment. After his purge Commissar-General Van Horcic was now in supreme command of all Imperial Guard and Departmento Munitorum operations on Taros. It was his task to salvage something from the faltering campaign, if only as many men and as much material as possible.

The turmoil amongst the High Command did little to help the fighting men on the ground. The supply situation was critical. Losses to dehydration were now far exceeding those in combat. Without new water supplies fast the remaining regiments would soon disintegrate. When Van Horcic oversaw his first briefing, reports from all the regimental commanders stressed that without new supplies their regiments could not last more than another week, ten days at the most. Any sudden Tau attack might shatter them completely.

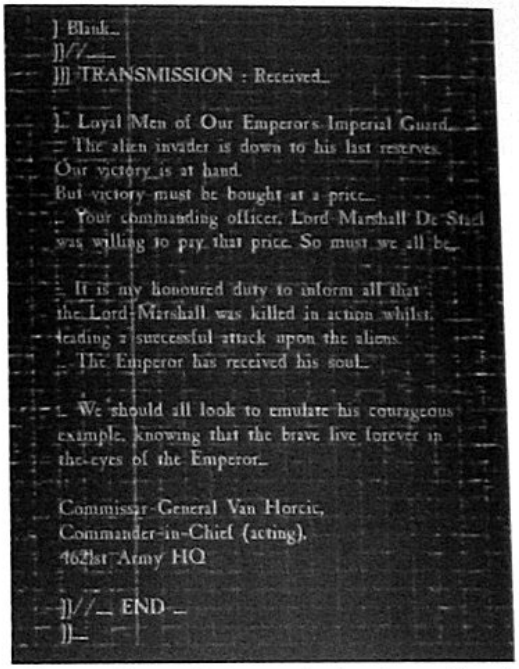
Van Horcic first order was to shorten the over-stretched supply lines. It would mean a retreat, but better that than total destruction. At the moment it was taking a Trojan and fuel trailer on average three days to reach the front line, all the time risking a gauntlet of roving Stealth teams and strafing Barracudas. The trails worn through the desert that passed as supply routes were now lined with the burnt-out and rusting hulks of Trojans and trailers, evidence of the Tau's strategy of attacking the support elements.

All the regimental commanders were given licence to withdraw back towards the landing zone. Equipment that could not be moved must be abandoned and destroyed. Rough Rider squadron, were ordered to slaughter their animals to conserve water. Next Van Horcic summoned Fleet Admiral Kotto and informed him that his fleet would be required to find new transports and escort a new series of convoys into the Taros system, carrying more water, fuel and new replacement equipment, especially aircraft for the fighter squadrons. Should these fail to arrive, the Admiral would also be replaced. The ultimatum was simple, break the Tau blockade, or face a firing squad.

"We will fight you every step of the way."

Seriously wounded and then taken prisoner by the Tau, General Scykava of the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment was the highest ranking Imperial officer capture during the Taros campaign. His regiment had been all but annihilated at hydro-processing plant 23-30, but he survived. Because of his rank, the General was singled out from the other prisoners, given medical treatment on his shattered arm and transported under guard to the headquarters of the Tau supreme commander on Taros, Shas'o R'myr. Tau operations were being conducted from a compact command complex situated in old mine workings underneath a non-descript cluster of old mine buildings just west of Tarokeen. The bloodied and dusty General was led down to meet his nemesis. Within waited the Shas'o, alongside him stood his advisor in long priestly robes. Another civilian, a diplomat or negotiator, was also present to act as an interpretor, as were three wary bodyguards eyeing the human General closely.

The Shas'o commended Syckava on his regiment's courage and bravery, but he must now realise that the war on Taros was lost. He assured the General that Taros would soon be part of the Tau empire. After questioning the General about the Imperial Guard's remaining strength, and their future intentions (all questions which the General stoically refused to answer), the Ethereal asked if the General if would act as an emissary to his superiors. The Ethereal had an ultimatum for the Gue'la, a ceasefire offer to end the bloodshed and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]_ Loyal Men of Our Emperor's Imperial Guard_
_ The alien invader is down to his last reserves.
Our victory is at hand.
But victory must be bought at a price_
_ Your commanding officer, Lord Marshall De Stael was willing to pay that price. So must we all be_

_ It is my honoured duty to inform all that the Lord Marshall was killed in action whilst leading a successful attack upon the aliens.
_ The Emperor has received his soul_

_ We should all look to emulate his courageous example, knowing that the brave live forever in the eyes of the Emperor_

Commissar-General Van Horcic,
Commander-in-Chief (acting).
462lst Army HQ

]]//_ END _
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Above: *Copy of a transmission issued to all Imperial Guard units by 4621st HQ.*

allow the humans to withdraw unmolested, if they disarmed. The Tau would allow transport ships free access to Taros to evacuate their soldiers and personnel under the ceasefire agreement, as long as the largest war ships withdrew from the system. The Ethereal also offered to turn over the renegade Planetary Govenor Aulis, whom they had under close guard, in a prisoner swap for all the Tau captives the Emperor's forces were holding.

In return for his assistance the General would be assured a new position commanding the human auxilaries now under the Tau's control on Taros. With the Emperor's forces defeated the post of 'Commander of the Taros Garrison' would be his for life, an honoured position with all the attendant wealth and status human commanders seemed to crave – if he helped the Tau now.

General Syckava flatly refused the Ethereals offer. To act as an emissary and offer terms to his higher commanders would turn him into a traitor to his Emperor. He would not be a messenger and broker a ceasefire, even if it bought him a future life of luxury. If the Tau wanted the Emperor's forces off Taros, they would have to eject them. He finished by assuring the Tau commanders, "We will fight you every step of the way."

Rebuffed, the Shas'o sent the General back to rejoin the other prisoners. There would be no swift end to the war. It was a lapse in security that would cost the Tau dearly. The other prisoners were divided up and sent as new labour to distant mines. Despite his severe wound, all the time he had been a prisoner General Syckava had been observing, taking-in details. As a high-ranking officer he had had access to maps and secret information about Taros and the overall campaign plan that the other prisoners had not. He would put that knowledge to good use. From his observations he had a good estimate of the location of the Tau command post, and from his transport's flight path a good idea of which mine he was en-route to. General Syckava had been a loyal servant of the Imperium all his life, he was still one, and he would not lie down whilst the Tau completed their ultimate victory. He planned to escape, or die in the attempt.

Gathering a small group of Elysian prisoners about him, men who were still loyal to their former commander, Syckava made a plan to escape from the mine and strike out for the nearest Imperial Guard lines.

He did not wait long to act. On the first night at the mine Syckava and five men overwhelmed three human guards, stole weapons and water canteens and struck out into the desert. The escapees split up to confuse pursuit. Using his inside knowledge Syckava headed westwards, to where he believed the 331st Tallarn regiment's lines were positioned.

The guards did not bother to organise any pursuit. There was nowhere to run, and without supplies nobody could survive the deserts for long. The escapees were dead men.

They were almost right. After three days under the merciless sun Syckava was on his last legs. Stumbling westwards, down to the dregs of his water, face and hands blistered by the heat he finally collapsed. By a last desperate act of will power, rather than lie down and die he scraped a vague outline of a large Imperial eagle into the sand, and prayed to the Emperor that somehow somebody would see it. Fate intervened, or perhaps the Emperor heard his prayers, because a Thunderbolt fighter on a reconnaissance sweep over the desert noticed the strange shape in the desert and swooped in for a closer look. There were no friendly forces operating in this sector. After his pass the pilot reported his sighting and a long-ranged infantry patrol from the 331st Tallarn regiment was diverted to take a closer look. The Desert Raiders squad found the unconscious General lying face down not far from his improvised sign. He was close to death. The squad called for a Valkyrie to evacuate the mysterious stranger and themselves. General Syckava had made it back to his own side. None of the other four escapees were ever found.

Recovering on an Ordo Hospitaller field-hospice pallet the General report his tale in full. By a combination of bravery, faith and blind luck he had survived. Now he reported everything that had happened including the location of the Tau headquarters he had visited. When Commissar-General Van Horcic received the new intelligence he realised it was an opportunity too good to miss. Here was information that could change the momentum of the war.

General Syckava later recalled the entire escapade, including his meeting with the Shas'o and Ethereal and his subsequent escape to Ordo Xenos interrogators, before undergoing pyscho-corrective surgery and being placed in the hands of the Adeptus Mechanicus for cybernetic enhancement. After his re-education, General Syckava entered service with Ordo Xenos Inquisitor Varius.

Operation 'Deathblow'

By a miracle the Emperor had delivered the location of the Tau supreme headquarters into Van Horcic's hands. Now he planned to launch a strike that might change the outcome of the war in one blow. For the mission he would need the aid of Lord Commander Gustavus, Colonel Scheja and the Officio Assassinorum.

Gustavus agreed to the plan, on the concession that Van Horcic put the entire operation in the capable hands of Colonel Scheja. The Colonel would organise, plan and execute Operation Deathblow. His mission would be to wipe out the Tau commanders in one strike. Colonel Scheja used top secret codes to send a priority astro-telepathic message, requesting that an Officio agent be dispatched to Taros. The instrument of Commander 'Longknife's' destruction would be a servant of the Eversor temple. The attack would a suicidal assault. The agent was not expected to survive, neither were the Tau.

Armed with the location of the headquarters, Scheja planned his mission. It would involve two strike teams. Red team would be the assassin, dropped into the desert, then moving to the location, breaking in and destroying anything or anybody inside the headquarters. Blue team would be a hand picked platoon of Storm Troopers from the 2378th Storm Trooper company. They would be flown in Valkyries to launch a diversionary attack. Under cover of the attack Red team would get close to its targets. The Storm Troopers would all be volunteers, because deep in enemy territory and attacking such a sensitive target this was likely to be a one way trip, do or die. Colonel Scheja asked to lead Blue team himself. Even the aircraft crewmen from 71st Tactical wing would be volunteers, because to reach the target area meant their would not be enough fuel for a return trip, instead the Valkyries would have to be ditched in the desert. The crews would destroy their aircraft before striking out on foot. Each crewman would be issued a survival kit to get them back to Imperial lines, but it was still likely that Tau patrols would find them and pick them up.

Operation Deathblow would begin as soon as Red team arrived and could be prepared, programmed with target information, then deployed. Meanwhile, Scheja visited 2378th Storm Trooper company and gathered thirty volunteers.

At 684998.M41, as part of a fresh supply convoy, the transport *Son of Jucha* successfully avoided the Tau blockade and delivered its cargo of war materiel, fuel, and a special container, attended by four Adeptus Mechanicus Techpriests, to the *Righteous Power*. It was a bio-statis tank inside which, suspended in amniotic fluids, was one of the most dangerous weapons in the Imperium's massive arsenal, an Eversor assassin – a pyschopathic, one-man killing-machine. Once awoken the drug-induced killer would hunt its target remorselessly. Preparations began immediately. The Eversor was programmed via hypno-suggestion, detailing its mission, the location and its targets. Once programming was complete the still slumbering Eversor was equipped with its weaponry; power sword, neuro-gauntlet, executioner pistol with its poisonous needles. The new poison had been developed by the Eversor temple specifically to effect the Tau's nervous system; it killed in seconds. Finally the self-destruct mechanism surgically implanted into the assassin's chest was armed. Should the assassin's bio-readouts drop below a certain level then it would detonate, killing the assassin and anybody close by. Even in death the Eversor was lethal. All systems checked out. With a final litany from the Techpriest attendants the bio-statis tank was carefully inserted into a drop pod and launched into the deserts of Taros.

The drop pod made secret planetfall about 60 kms from the target. Whilst still in mid-air unseen lights inside the statis pod winked into life. The life-support systems began to breath life into the Eversor trapped within. Slowly a neuro-gauntleted hand flexed into a fist. Crashing undetected into the desert sands the drop pod cracked open. Fluids drained from the bio-tank, which then opened with a sudden hiss as remote restraining bolts exploded. Umbilical cords and sensors needles retracted from the figure within. As if animated from death, the assassin carefully step out into the sunlight. Pausing only to survey the surroundings for threats the Evesor set off across the sand, moving lithely at a cautious trot, keeping low to the ground, pistol always at the ready. Red team was closing on the target as planned, by nightfall he would have arrived.

That night Colonel Scheja's Storm Troopers were winging their way over the dark deserts, three Valkyries flying low, all

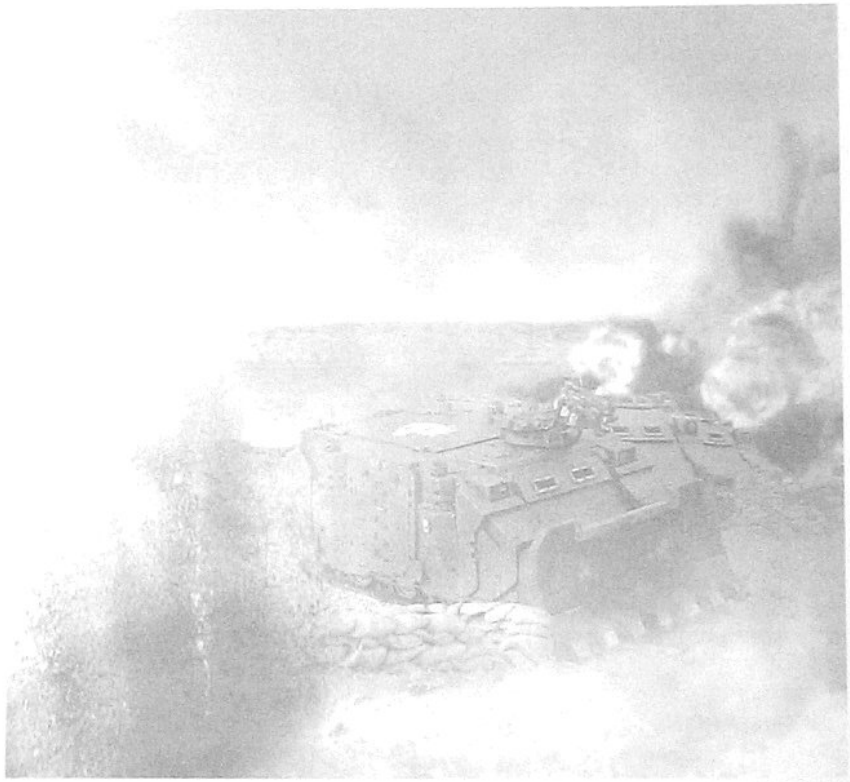
lights blacked out. The men within had orders to attack the target with everything they could, and keeping pressing the attack for as long as possible. They were unaware that the real assault would be coming in the dark form of the Eversor assassin.

Skimming over the desert in darkness the Valkyries had escaped notice, until a drone controlled early warning sounded in the Tau headquarters. The surprised security teams rushed to man the defences. The three Valkyries swooped down, flared and hovered briefly as Storm Trooper squads leap clear, one trooper after another falling three of four metres before hitting the sand and rolling clear. Spotting their attackers in the darkness the Tau opened fire. Storm Troopers returned fire. The darkness was illuminated by the vivid flash of pulse rounds and tracers. Crouching low and pressing forwards the Storm Trooper braved the bullet whipped ground, faced by searing fire from pulse rifles as the defenders fought desperately to protect their leaders. The Valkyries blasted away, circled and swooped back down, multi-lasers blazing a trail of lights across the darkness, soaring overhead, engines roaring.

Colonel Scheja led his squad towards the buildings, dodging through pulse rifle fire to find cover behind the first. There he pulled a grenade from his harness, armed it, and flung it through an open window. He followed up the explosion with a burst of plasma pistol fire. His men surged in through the doors, capturing the building. Outside confusion, noise and a black-clad terror reigned in the night.

Above: *Valkyries of 71st Tactical wing draw fire as they approach the target area. Within they carry members of 2378thStorm Trooper company on a suicidal diversionary attack.*

Below: *Raptors Rhino caught in the opening salvos. With the Space Marines on the defensive, these Rhinos are parked towards the rear, ready to move forward if required.*



OPERATION DEATHBLOW FORCES

Red Team – Eversor Assassin

Blue Team – 2378th Storm Trooper Company
Volunteer Platoon under the command of Colonel Scheja
Squad 1 – 10 men
Squad 2 – 10 men
Squad 3 – 10 men

78th Imperial Navy Tactical Wing
3 Valkyrie airborne assault carriers.

Passing like a black shadow, an unseen figure slipped quietly towards the compound. One Tau Fire Warrior looked up from reloading his rifle to be faced by a black figure with a deathly pale skull mask. Swift as a cat's strike, the assassin plunged the needle-like spikes of its gloved hand into the warrior's neck. The Tau guard died in silent convulsions before he could react, nervous system shredded, eyeballs melting. Without a second glance the Eversor moved on. Driven by its thirst for violence and unhindered by the darkness, it soon found the target entrance. As the battle raged about it, the Eversor placed a melta-charge on the doorway, set the timer and stepped back. As the charge detonated it bursting into a sudden sprint, slamming through the flaming, ruined doorway and springing down the ladder within. Inside the Tau were taken completely unawares. A sustained burst of needle pistol fire stitched two of the surprise aliens against the far wall, where they slumped, dead in an instant from the toxins coursing through their blood. The assassin rolled forwards, under the hasty return shots, and rose firing again. A third and fourth Tau crashed to the ground dead. Its magazine now empty the Eversor discarded his pistol. Moving along the low corridors two desperate defenders rushed the black-clad figure, who ducked low under their fire to sweep the first off its feet. It lunged forwards to impale a sixth through the stomach with its gleaming power-blade which had suddenly appeared in its hand as if by teleportation. The Eversor's attack was an orgy of swift destruction. Leaving its slaughtered victims gurgling wetly on the floor, the Eversor step through the next door, into the Tau command centre.

Within stood the slim, robed figure of the Ethereal and a two bodyguards. The Eversor sprang forwards, power sword in one hand, neuro gauntlet ready to strike on the other. For the Tau priest there was nowhere to run and no chance of escape. Without hesitating the assassin struck. Whip fast again the neuro-gauntlet slashed forwards and then back, cutting the bodyguards down, writhing in dreadful pain. Just the Ethereal remained, he backed away from his gore-spattered assailant.

At that instant more bodyguards burst into the control centre to rescue their revered leader. In a blaze of pulse fire the Eversor was hit, and knocked sprawling sideways by the impact. But the assassin only had eyes for his target. It reached out its deadly gloved hand to grab the Ethereal as he tried to dodge away. Tripped by the attack, the Ethereal cried out and fell. The wounded Eversor sprang onto him, pinning the Ethereal to the floor like a great cat going the jugular. The bodyguards rushed in and fired again, striking the Eversor square through the chest, spraying blood across the walls and floor. The deathly skull mask gave a howl of pain and anguish as the Eversor's life-blood pumped away, but with grim, hate-filled determination it hung onto the shrieking Ethereal. With its last rattling breath the Eversor almost seemed to be laughing.

The compound was rocked by a sudden explosion from within the control centre. From his position outside Colonel Scheja felt the heat of the fireball rising from the door, then he ducked into cover as debris rained down about his men. The Tau paused to look back in horror and dismay. The command centre was an inferno, gouting flames and smoke, everybody inside must be dead.

Colonel Scheja and his Storm Troopers fought on, but Tau reinforcements were on the way, and the fight did not last until dawn. Fighting hard to the last, the Colonel and his men were all killed – this time the attackers were offer no mercy by the vengeful Tau.

Operation Deathblow had been a suicidal mission, and it had almost worked. The Ethereal, Aun'Vre, was dead, but Shas'o R'myr had survived. When the Eversor struck he had already been outside, personally leading his bodyguard squad against the Storm Troopers. Commander 'Longknife' had been wounded in the fighting, but he had not been inside the control room when the Eversor self-destructed. For the Tau this was only a small mercy in a night of terrible horror. The loss of their precious Ethereal sent the entire Taros Coalition force into shock and grief. For many days the Hunter cadres were stunned into inactivity by their loss. After the grief came a growing feeling of rage against the men who had plotted this heinous attack. It was an anger that swelled inside each Tau warrior into a vengeful wrath that the humans would soon feel the full weight of. There could be no mercy now, only vengeance. The new Tau battle-cry was no longer "For the greater good!", it was "For Aun'Vre".

Evacuation

After a week of stunned inactivity and grief the Tau turned their anger against the Imperial Guard regiments now falling back through the desert. Thier defensive operations were replaced by a new offensive, aimed at shattering the Imperial Guard and ending the war swiftly.

Shas'O R'myr set about reorganising his surviving Hunter Cadres for the offensive. The Imperial forces had been severely weakened but they were not defeated yet.

With the Imperial Guard forces in no shape to fight back, the evacuation of all the Emperor's forces on Taros was ordered at 718998.M41 by Lord Commander Gustavus. The campaign had lasted just ninety days, since the first ships arriving in-system, but it had failed. Commissar-General Van Horcic was outraged by Gustavus decision, but recognized that he had no hope of victory. The order stood. All that was left for him to do was quickly salvage what forces he could before they lost everything.

With the Tau now on the offensive the withdrawl of the Tallarn regiments soon became a rout. With the threat of Tau and Kroot forces now breathing down their neck, whether imagined or real, the Imperial Guardsmen fell back pell-mell towards the landing zones. What had been an army was in danger of becoming a disorganised rabble. The desert became a dumping ground as Guardsmen abandoned their vehicles and equipment. Hundreds of Chimera and Leman Russ hulls littered the desert. Officers tried to impose order and keep their squads, platoons and companies together. Commissars warned that any man who had thrown away his weapon would be treated as a deserted and shot. Such rigid disciple helped, but still Guardsmen tossed away heavy weapons, mortar tubes, spare ammunition and grenades, anything that slowed them down. Long columns of marching men tramped south through the dry desert, there were very few vehicles still running now. Rations and water canteens were the only prized item. Men rooted through the hulks of tanks and Chimeras in search of forgotten water cans and

looted canteens from the dead of previous battles, shaking out the last few drops in desperation. Tormented by thirst the entire of X Corp streamed south over ground it had fought to win. It was a broken army, no longer capable of making a stand.

With their enemy in full retreat the Tau could now extract the revenge they so desired. The Imperial Guard were easy pickings, and Barracudas and Tiger Sharks took off to further torment the retreating guardsmen. Orca's landed combat teams, who mercilessly ambushed the retreating Tallarn Guardsmen, slaughtering them and rounding up the survivors as prisoners. With the Tau now attacking, and word of ambushes spreading, the retreat soon became a rout. After four days it was a shambles. Some officers tried to organise rearguards to fight the Tau, to buy the escapees time. It was a hopeless gesture, and those ad-hoc rearguard units were wiped out in futile firefights. In the wake of the evacuation order, the Tau simply mopped up, taking thousands of men prisoner and marching them away to captivity. For many capture was better than death from thirst under the merciless sun. Some stragglers made it through – most did not. To all intents and purposes four Tallarn regiments had cease to exist. Of X Corp only the 331st Regiment had managed to make their withdrawal in good order, and thousands of them would be evacuated over the following days. The 114th Cadian regiment also fared well, with their Chimeras piled high with men they raced southwards as far as their fuel would carry them, before abandoning their vehicles and marching the rest of the way. Most of the regiment made it, if not many of their Chimeras. The remaining Titans of Legio Ignatum also returned intact and, on Tech Magus Volta direct orders, were quickly whisked away to safety.

A lucky few retreating units were quickly rescued. The surviving Valkyries of 23rd Elysian regiment were put to good use ferrying units back the landing zone. High-ranking officers, command units and Stormtrooper squads were given preference, but after these had all been rescued Tallarn infantry started to pile aboard the airborne carriers for a fast trip back to the landing zone. On arrival they joined the growing queues awaiting a chance to board a landing craft for the trip into orbit.

The first stragglers on foot started to arrive at the landing zones at 752998M41. The evacuation had been ongoing for eleven days, and much of the most important equipment and personnel had already been moved into orbit. The end was in sight, but the Tau had one last concerted attack to make.

The Last Battle.

If the retreat had been a shambles, the evacuation was chaos. Disorder ruled the landing grounds as crowds of desperate men, fearful of being left to the mercy of the Tau, clamoured to get aboard transports. Commissars and Storm Troopers fought a losing battle to keep order, threatening the crowds with loaded weapons, and shooting those who broke through their cordon. High-ranking officers were the first to board, along with important Administratum officials. Much space was taken up by equipment, which would be harder to replace than manpower.

Above: *A target scan captures a Tau Shas'el as he directs his Hunter Cadre in the final attack.*

In order to protect the landing zone the Raptors had been called upon again. Captain Orelius' Space Marines had deployed back onto Taros and thrown a defensive perimeter around the landing grounds. In many places, he occupied the defences erect by the Tallarn regiments when they landed.

At 769998.M41 dawn broke as a yellow molten orb over the mountains, forewarning of another blistering day. Soon the heat haze was shimmering across the desert as the Raptors sentries looked out across the sand. With the yellow dawn came the distinctive swept wing shapes of Tau Mantas, approaching low like great birds, to hover in the dusty heat-haze and disembark their Hunter Cadres. The Emperor's forces were beaten, but the Tau's thirst for revenge was so great that Shas'o R'myr ordered one last attack, directly against the landing grounds. Any who did not escape now would be stranded here forever. Standing between the Tau and the landing zone were the Space Marines.

As the Tau ferried in their forces and mustered for the attack the Space Marines reinforced their defences with what reserves Captains Orelius and Kaedes had, and braced themselves for one last battle. Their job was to buy time for the evacuating troops. If the Space Marines' defences broke then the landing grounds would soon be overrun as well. The longer the Raptors could hold, then the more men would escape Taros to fight another day.

The first thrust came from the east, supported by long ranged fire from Mantas hovering on the distant horizon, huge railgun rounds started to impact about the defensive positions, tossing rock and earth skywards. Following close behind, Hammerheads and Broadside battlesuits joined the fusillade, rounds slamming into the Space Marine positions. Fire Warriors and battlesuits, led by Shas'o R'myr himself, closed in and the pressure grew. Space Marine heavy weapons and Whirlwinds responded. The Tau closed to within 200 metres of the dug-in Space Marines, but there the attack faltered. Hammerheads and battlesuits were burning, and Tau corpses littered the sand as they retreated.

A second assault came from the west, in greater force. Again the railgun rounds slammed home, again the Raptors stood firm, fighting hard to hold back the tide. A Manta closed in, raking the entrenchments with volleys of missiles. Captain Kaedes committed his last reserves, a sally of sixth company Land Speeders swooped overhead racing out to attack the Manta at close range. The little skimmers dodged and weaved as heavy bolters rattled and multi-melta's roared. Three were destroyed in the battle, but the Manta withdrew rather than risk further damage. As his losses built, Captain Kaedes strode from dug-out to dug-out, directing counter fire and urging his hard-pressed battle brothers on, until a plasma blast which immolated a Predator tank also critically wounded him, peppering him in molten shrapnel. Kaedes was dragged to safety, his upper torso and right arm horribly mutilated by the intense heat. The Apothecary stabilized his valiant captain, whose super-human physique barely kept him alive. He would not fight again, but upon returning to the Chapter fortress his valour would earn him the honour of being interred in an armoured Dreadnought suit.

By mid-afternoon the Tau forces were spent. They had battered at the Space Marine positions, but failed to break them. Meanwhile the last landing crafts had been hurriedly loading their cargoes. With the sound of the battle reverberating all around them hordes of Guardsmen crowded into the holds. Once full the ramps were raised and the great loading doors rolled shut. Anybody not aboard now would be left behind on Taros for good.

The lift-off of the last landing ship freed Captain Orelius to order the evacuation of his own forces. They had stood as the shield between the Tau and the evacuation all day, at great cost, but as night fell the Thunderhawks deployed to lift the battle brothers clear. The *War Talon* awaited their return. By the time the Raptors' evacuation operation was complete the remaining transports and their escorts were already retreating out of the system. The Raptors' battle barge would be the last ship to leave, bringing up the rear as the fleet made the warp-jump out of the Taros system. The Tau fleet did not pursue. New orders now stayed their hand. The prize was the Tau's, they had won Taros and expanded the empire. The campaign was over.

Epilogue

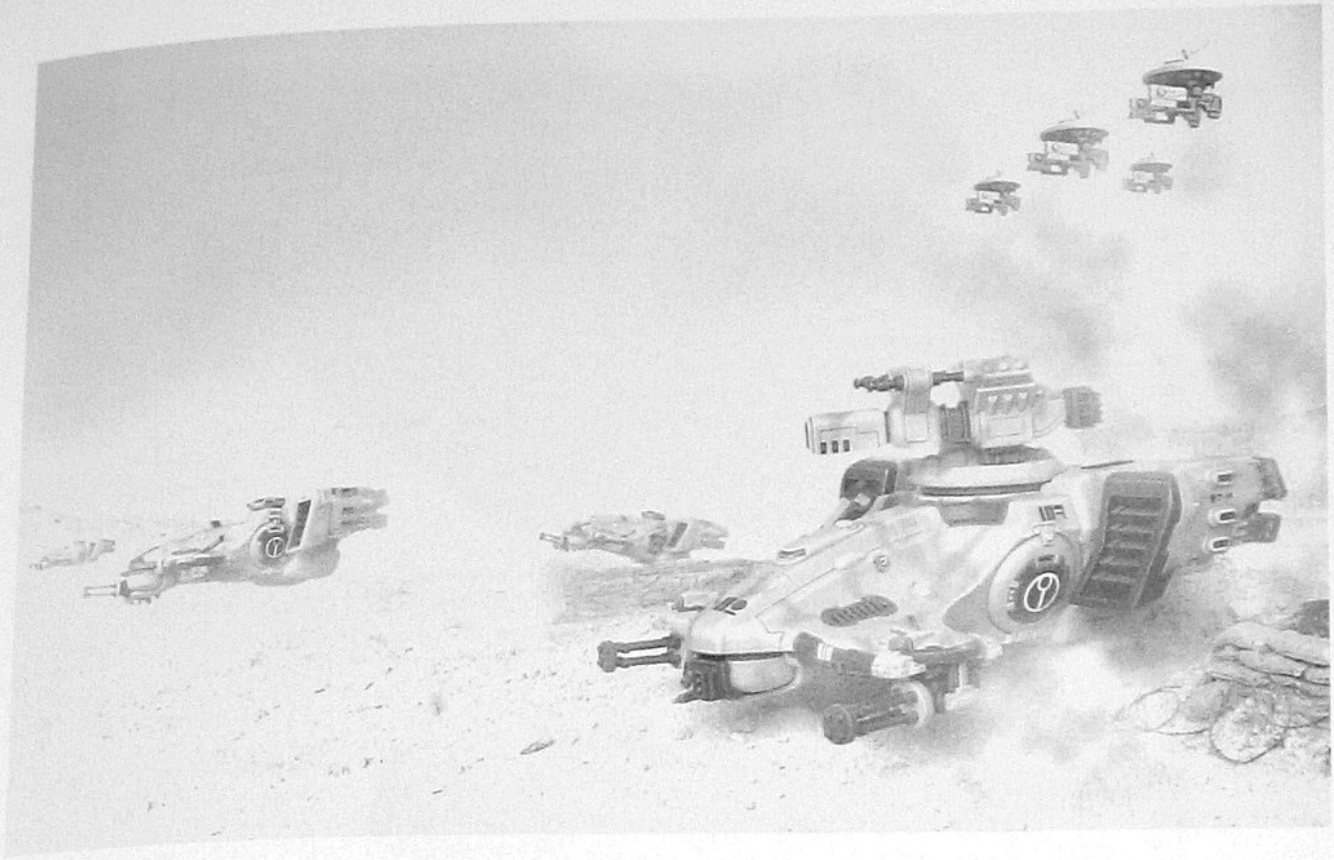
The war on Taros had cost the Imperial Guard in excess of five complete regiments. The 3rd and 12th Tallarn Armoured regiments had lost all their combat vehicles and much of their equipment. The survivors would be pooled together to reform an under-strength 3rd regiment, which could then be rebuilt. The 17th and 89th Tallarn regiments had ceased to exist as coherent forces during the retreat, most of their men were now Tau captives, condemned to labour in Taros' mines for the Greater Good. The remnants were given over to the 331st regiment, which had survived the campaign remarkably well. Now the 331st had its first campaign honour and a new core of veterans. It would go on to serve in other warzones. The 23rd Elysian Drop Troops had been all but annihilated during Operation Comet, although the regiment still retained over one hundred aircraft. The regiment would be reformed with a new recruitment of men from their homeworld, to rise and fight again. The 114th Cadian regiment had lost only several hundred men, but over 90% of its vehicles. It could be quickly re-equipped with new Chimeras mothballed as war reserves. It would soon be ready for redeployment to the Cadian Gate. Legio Ignatum lost one of its four Warhound Titans.

For the Imperium the death toll was large, and precise figures are not known. It was estimated at ten thousand killed in action and fifteen thousand wounded. As many as twenty thousand may have been captured by the Tau. Approximately three hundred and fifty tanks had been lost, over seven hundred Chimeras and two hundred artillery pieces. Aircraft losses totalled sixty eight out of seventy eight.

Fleet Admiral Koto's Taros Invasion fleet had lost the cruiser *Hammer of Thrace*, the light cruiser *Cerebus* and eight escorts. The battlecruiser *Righteous Power* was damaged, as was the *Black Duke*. Both would require work at Kar Duniash shipyards before returning to duty.

It was estimated that Shas'o R'myr commanded a Tau Coalition consisting of at least one hundred Hunter Cadres, a grand total of between eight and nine thousand Fire Warriors and maybe as many as five thousand Kroot allies. Added to this were in excess of eight thousand human traitors who fought in the Tau cause. Actual Tau numbers and losses remain unknown, but must have also numbered in the thousands. The Imperial fleet could confirm kills on one Custodian class carrier, the *A'rho*, and eight escort vessels.

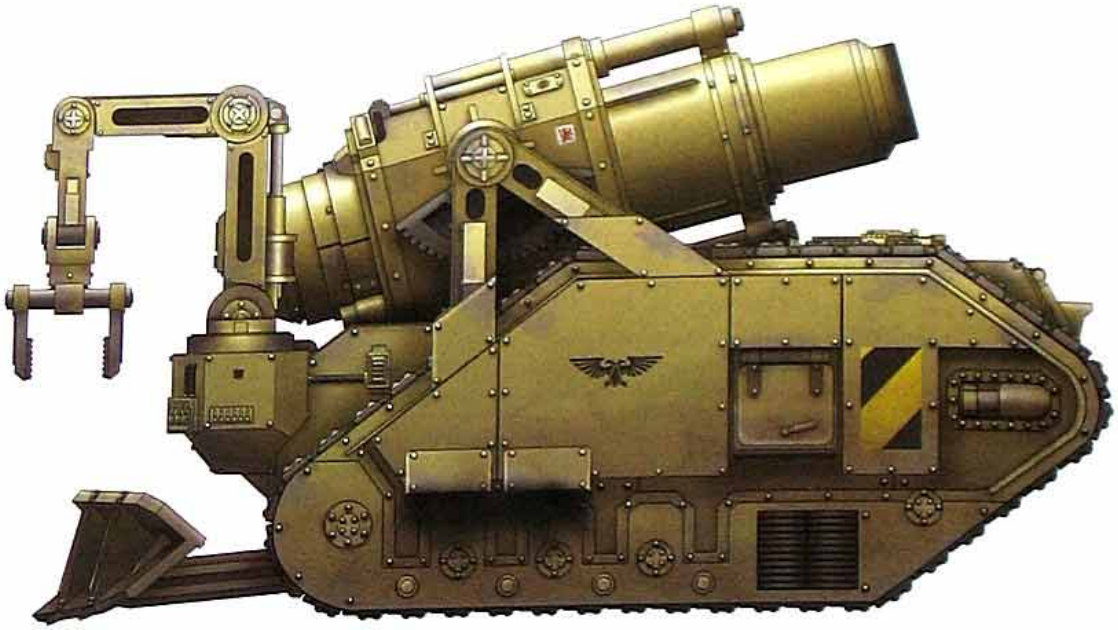
Following their victory, the planet and its mineral resources were now firmly in Tau hands. Over the following years the Tau would increase their grip on T'ros. Their young empire had been expanded, and ships from T'au and Dal'yth would soon be in orbit, loaded with alien colonists. Meanwhile the Imperium was powerless to strike back. Another invasion would require a far greater force than that sent to Taros under Lord Commander Gustavus, and it was just not possible at this time. There would be no second invasion for the foreseeable future. With T'ros secure, the Ethereal councillors on T'au shifted their gaze to the new borders of their Empire, and eyed the next world for conquest...



Top: *Tau forces arrayed for the final assault. A Hammerhead and three Devilfish prepare to begin the attack against the landing zones.*

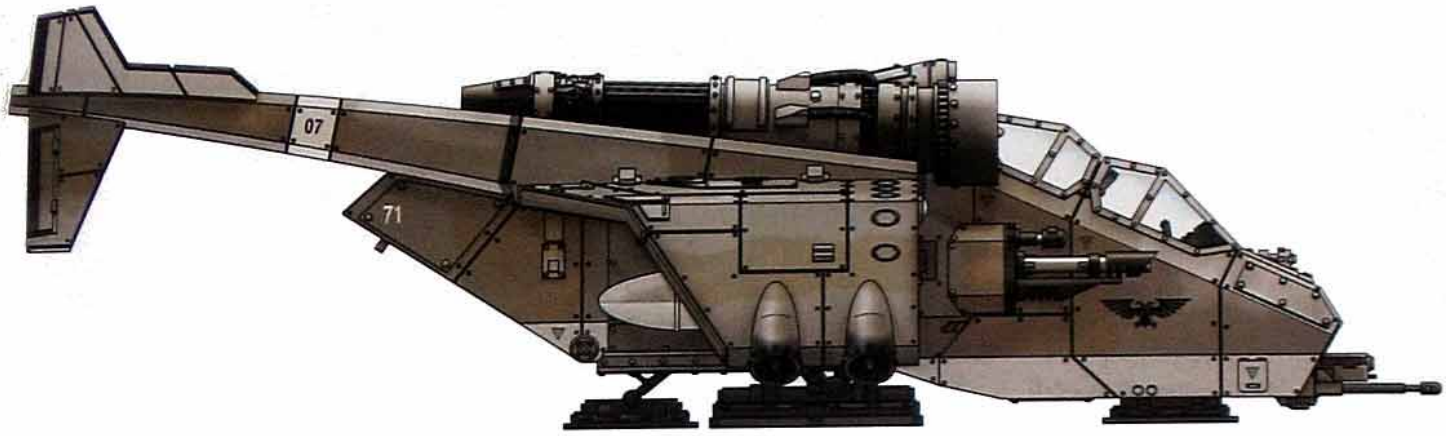
Above: *A Raptors' Land Raider engages the enemy during the final battle of the Taros Campaign. The Space Marines' rearguard action bought time for the last transports to reach orbit.*

Leman Russ of the 12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment. This vehicle is armed with a hull-mounted heavy bolter, from the usual pattern of heavy bolter. This seems to be a field replacement for a damaged lascannon.

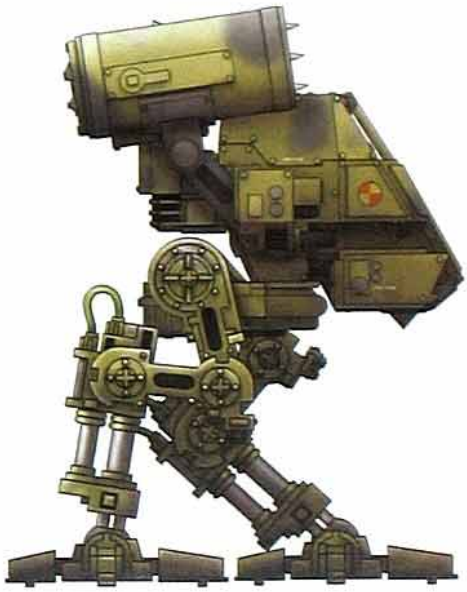


Bombard of the 17th Tallarn Regiment. Due to lack of fuel this vehicle was destroyed by the regiment when it received orders to withdraw from the Phyyra Heights.

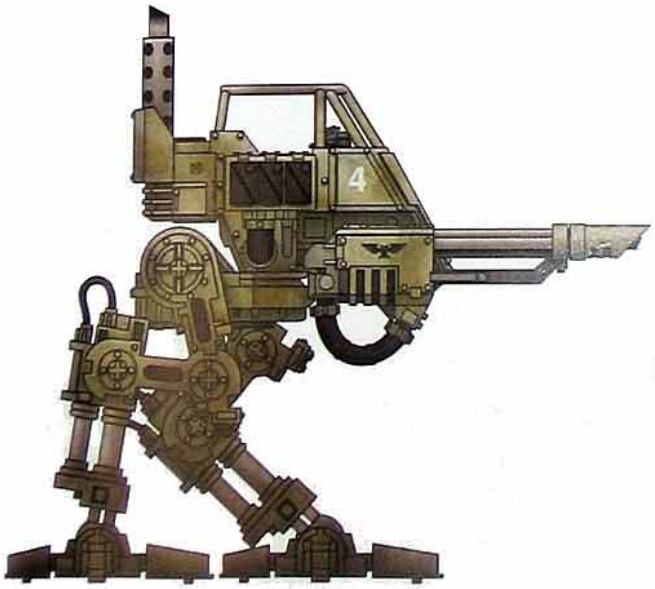
Tarantula sentry gun of the Tallarn 17th Regiment. These weapons were little use at the front line, but were deployed as part of rear area security, to protect supply dumps, artillery batteries etc, from infiltrators.



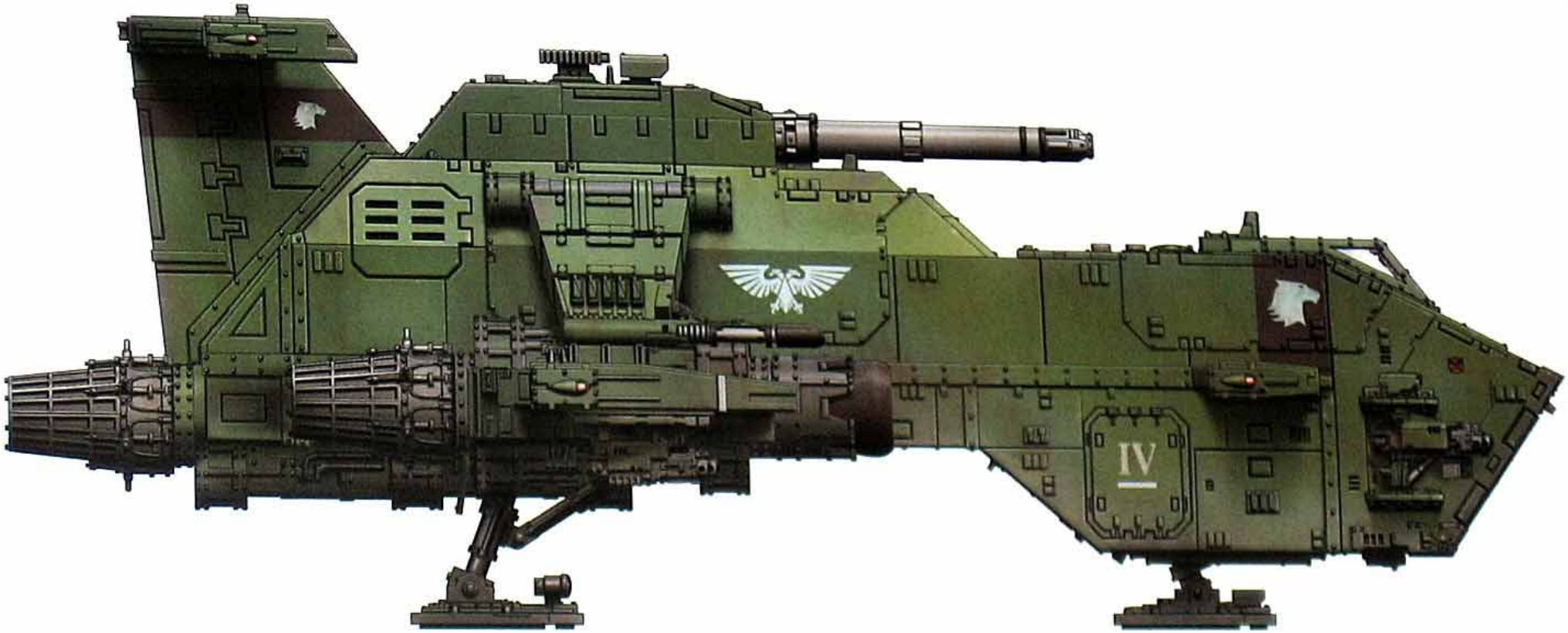
Valkyrie of the 71st Imperial Navy Tactical wing, used during Operation Deathblow. On its return journey this aircraft ditched in the desert; and its crew were never recovered.



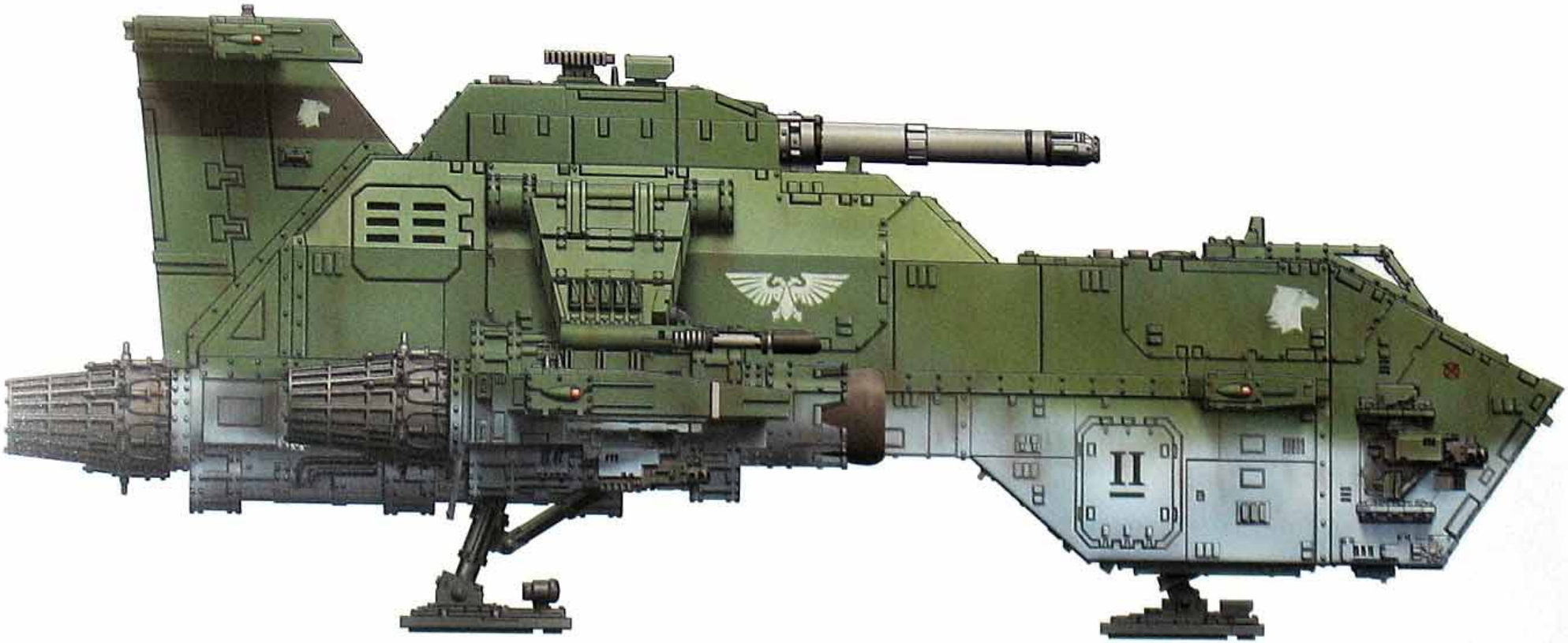
Support Sentinel of the 12th Tallarn Armoured Regiment. Lack of markings make it impossible to identify which company this vehicle belongs to.



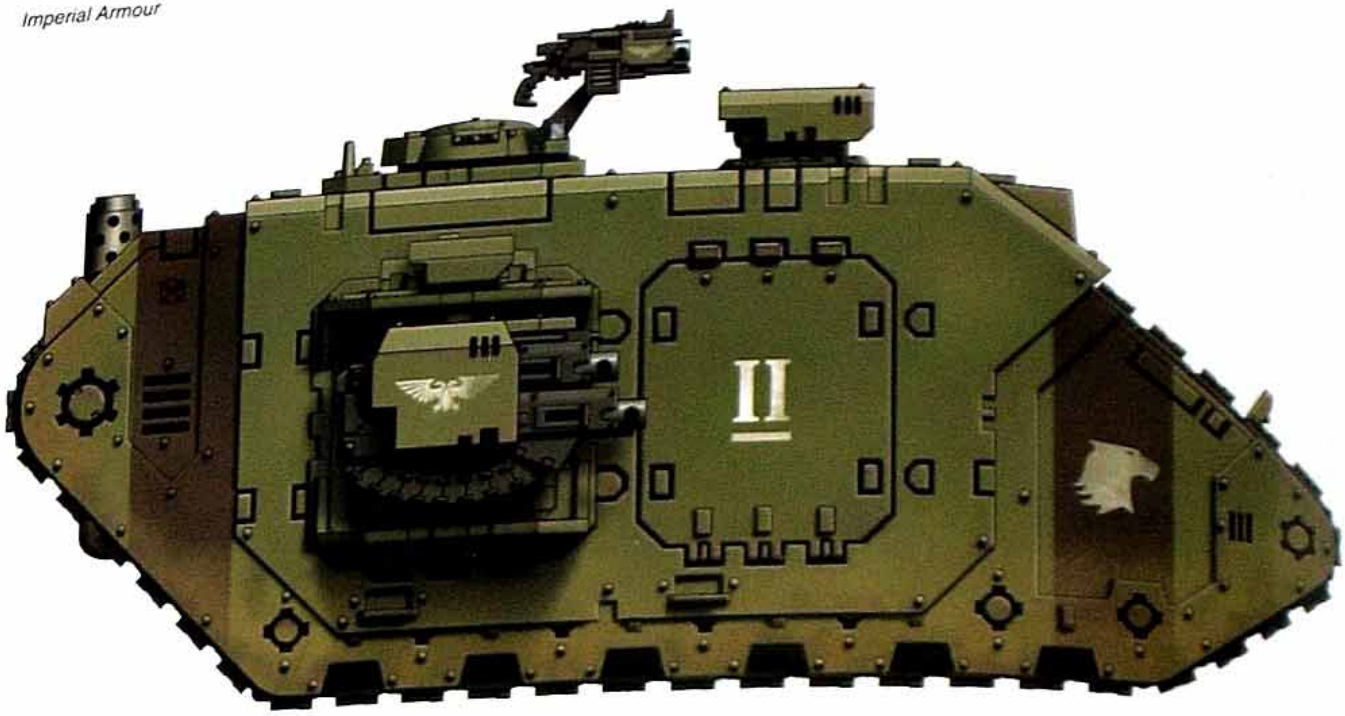
Sentinel Scout walker of the 17th Tallarn Regiment. This vehicle is from the reconnaissance squadron of the infantry regiment.



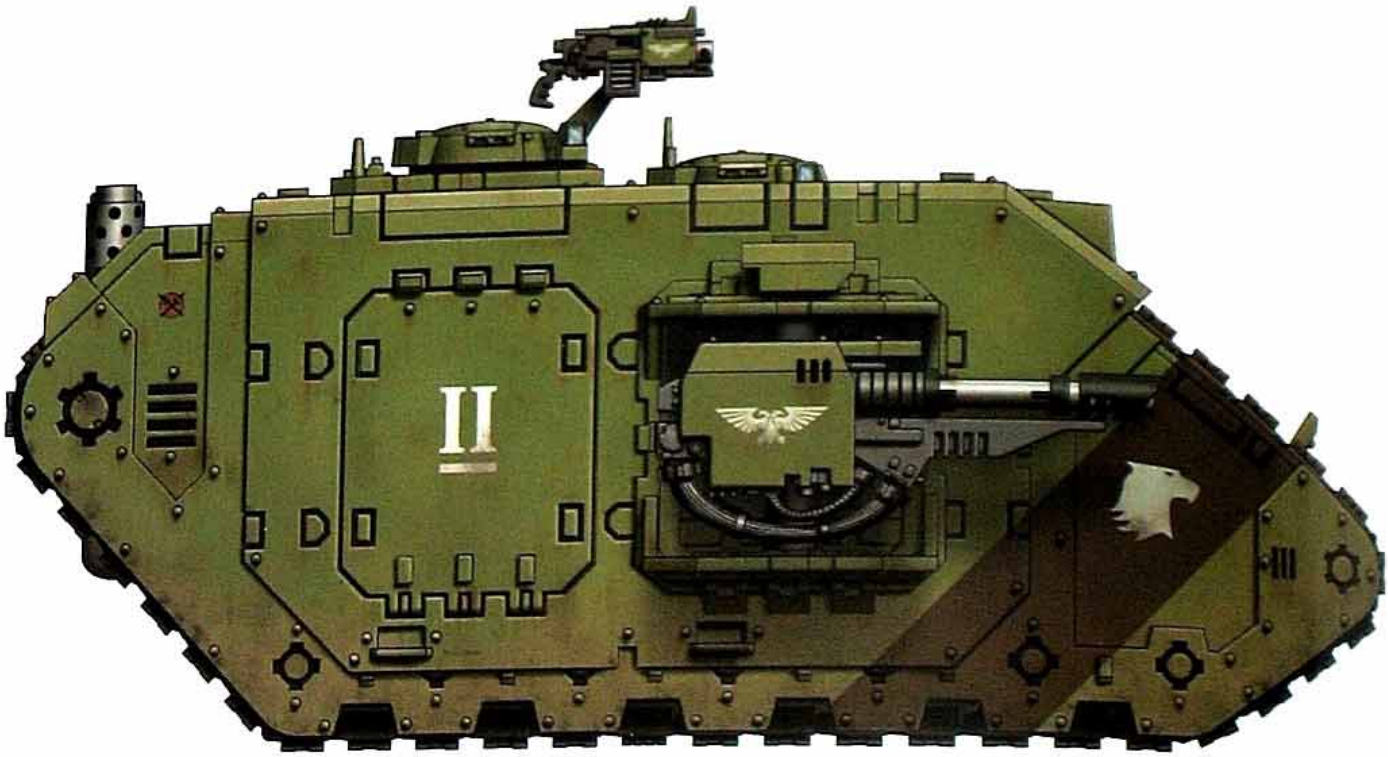
Thunderhawk gunship of the Raptors Chapter. This is the fourth Thunderhawk of the strike force, seeing action in all of the Chapter's engagements of the Taros Campaign.



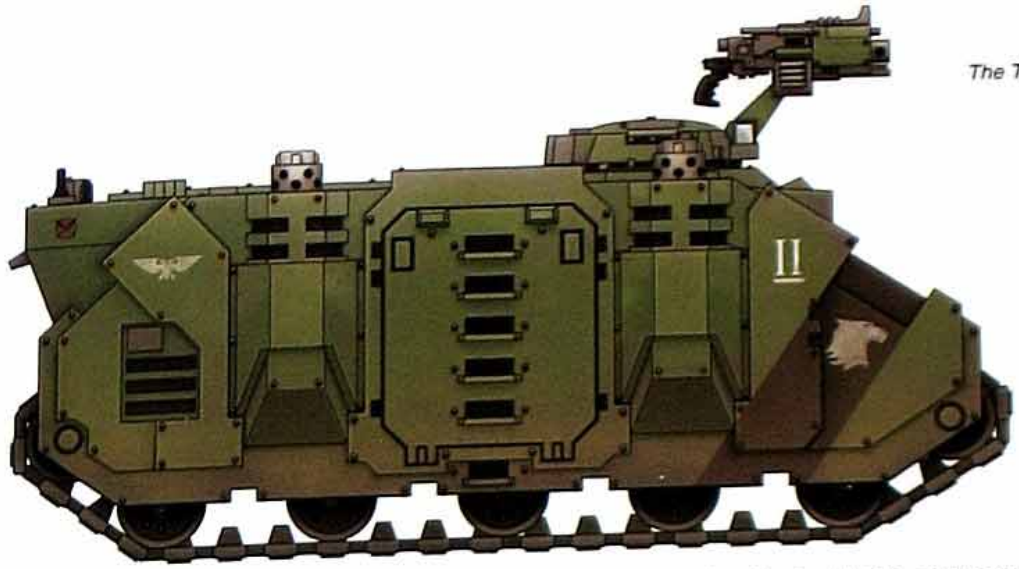
Thunderhawk gunship of the Raptors Chapter. This is the second Thunderhawk of the strike force. Due to careful planning and expert execution, no Thunderhawks were lost during the fighting on Taros.



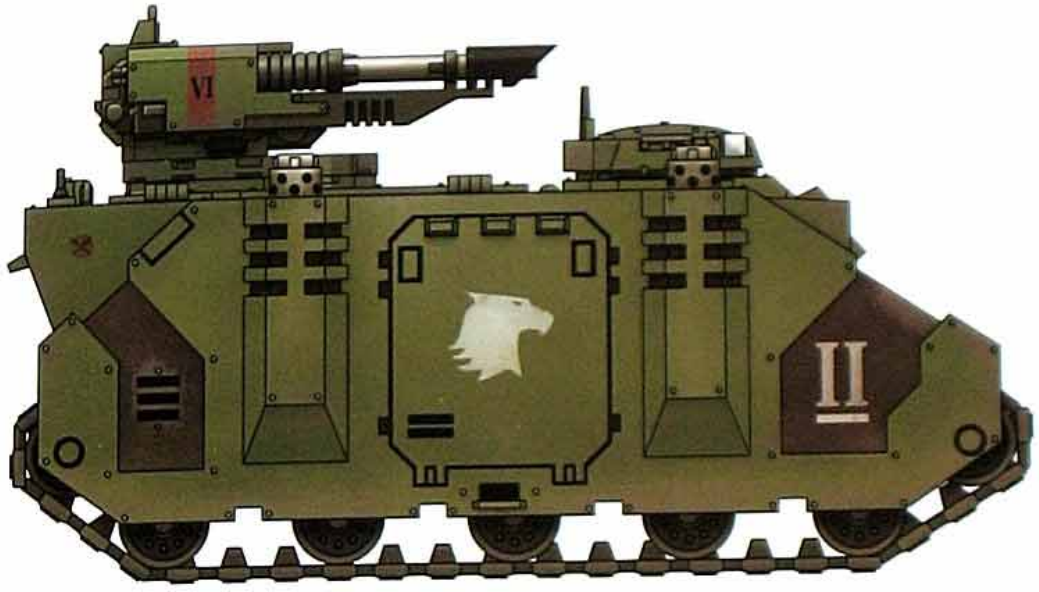
Land Raider Prometheus of 2nd Company. This was Captain Orelius' Command vehicle during the Iracunda Breakthrough, and was also deployed to defend the land zones during the evacuation.



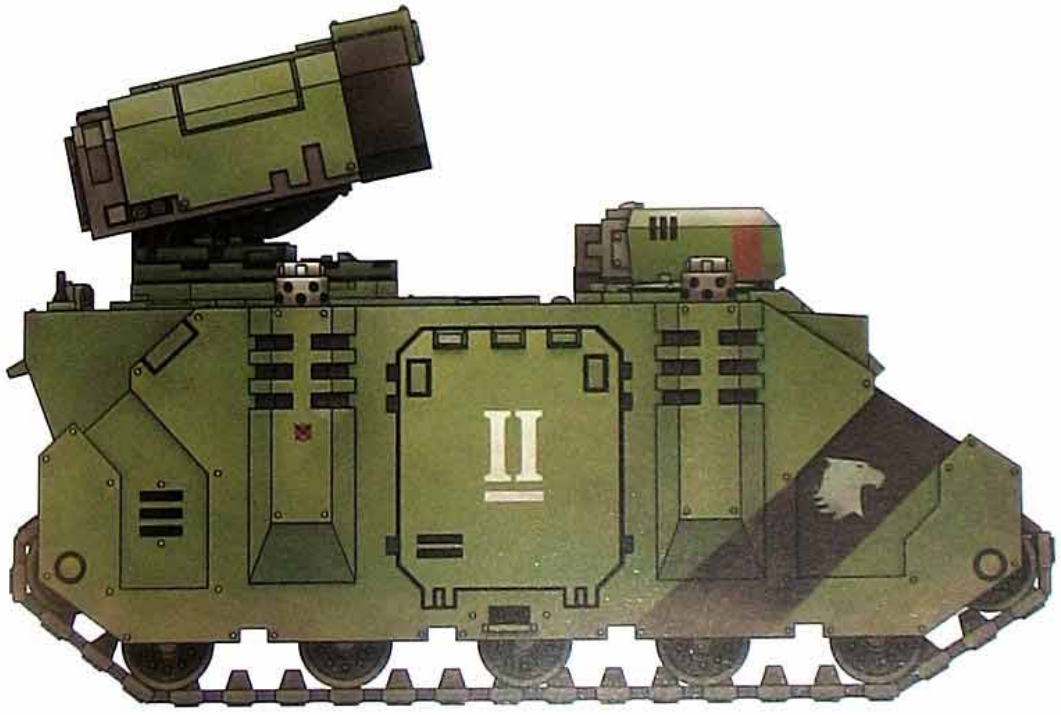
Land Raider of 2nd Company. This Land Raider was deployed to support all of the Chapter's engagments, and was severely damaged before being evacuated during the defence of the land zones.



Rhino with additional armour of 2nd company. This vehicle was destroyed during the final battle of the campaign.



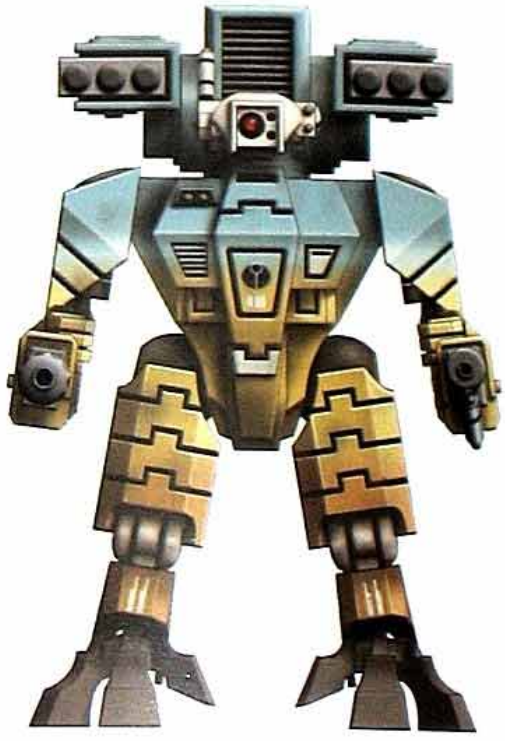
Razorback with twin lascannons of 2nd company.



Whirlwind of 2nd company, as deployed in support of the Iracunda Breakthrough.

Hammerhead gunship with twin plasma cannons of an unidentified Hunter Cadre.

XV89 Crisis battlesuit armed with a burst cannon and plasma rifle. The pilot's identity is unknown.



XV81 Crisis battlesuit armed with smart missiles, a plasma rifle and flamer.
This is Shas'el K'irri, killed leading a Tau raid.

Barracuda superiority fighter. Although exact figures are unknown, it is thought that the Tau deployed an estimated 150 such aircraft to Taros, and they played a major role in their ultimate victory.

Manta. One of several such aircraft that delivered Hunter Cadres to the Imperial landing zones and supported the Tau's attack with long-range fire.

VEHICLES OF THE TAU

XV81 Crisis battlesuit armed with smart missiles, a plasma rifle and flamer. Identity unknown.

HAMMERHEAD GUNSHIP

The Tau Fire Caste's main battle tank is codenamed the 'Hammerhead' gunship. First encountered by the Imperium during the Damocles Crusade, the basic Hammerhead has been the staple combat vehicle of Tau Hunter Cadres ever since, although variant weapons fits have been identified since.

The Hammerhead's versatile chassis can be armed with a number of different weapon fits to fulfil different battlefield roles. By far the most common is the fearsome railgun. The railgun is a linear accelerator, which uses super-conductive electrodes to accelerate a solid-shot round to hypersonic speeds. The vast kinetic energy generated by the round on impact with its target has devastating effects, even at long ranges. Such is the railgun's killing power that its reputation spreads fear amongst the Imperium's tank crews. The Hammerhead's railgun is also equipped with sophisticated sub-munitions. This is a bundle of smaller projectiles, used for suppressive area fire and against 'soft' targets, which a speeding solid round might pass straight through!

Other weapons commonly mounted in the Hammerheads turret are the ion cannon, burst cannons, missile pods and, first encountered during the Taros Campaign – plasma cannons and fusion cannons, which are the most recent developments. It has been speculated that these weapons are being field-tested on Taros.

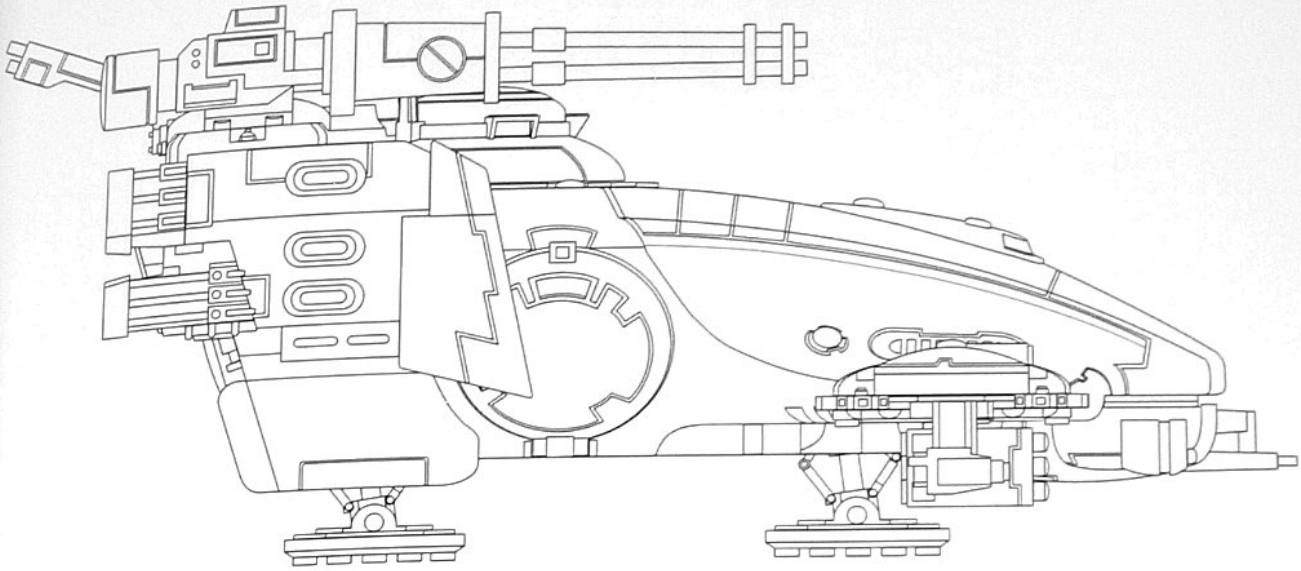
The rest of the gunship's interior contains the large capacitors and additional ammunition needed for the main weapons, as well as the gunship's other non-combat systems, such as climate control, comms etc.

Well armed and armoured, the Hammerhead is also a grav-tank, skimming low over a planet's surface by generating an anti-grav 'cushion' to float on, then being driven forwards by two powerful, multi-directional jet engines. By pivoting the engines downwards these help give the vehicle extra lift, to clear obstacles, by pivoting backwards they give a Hammerhead forward momentum. Compared to the Imperium's own jet engines the Tau's engines are reliable and efficient, although still noisy.

A Hammerhead has three crew. In the cockpit is the pilot, behind him sits the co-pilot, who controls many of the sensors, communications and navigation equipment, as well as secondary weapons systems. Finally there is the Hammerhead's commander, who sits in top turret, and is primarily in control of the main weapon system via the gunship's targeting array. The Hammerhead includes many automated override systems so any crewmember can take over another's role in the event of casualties. All the crew are from the Fire Warrior caste.

The Hammerhead also contains many other systems and equipment, from retractable landing skids (used when the anti-grav generators are turned off), to navigational, communications, tracking and targeting sensors, most of which are mounted in the gunship's chin-turret. One notable feature is the Hammerhead's Markerlight receiver, which reads information from Markerlights and relays this to the gunship's targeting array, which automatically zeroes-in on the illuminated target. This means a Markerlight operator on the ground can accurately direct the gunship's fire.

Hammerhead with burst cannons



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 164054.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-9083119

Designation : GUNSHIP

Vehicle Codename : HAMMERHEAD

Vehicle Type : GRAV-TANK

Crew : 3. PILOT. CO-PILOT. COMMANDER

Weight : 24 TONNES

Length : 8.25 M

Width : 6.8 M

Height : 4.1 M

Max Recorded Speed : 70 KPH

CLASSIFIED

Main Armament : TWIN BURST CANNONS

Secondary Armament : SMART MISSILE SYSTEM

Traverse : 360°

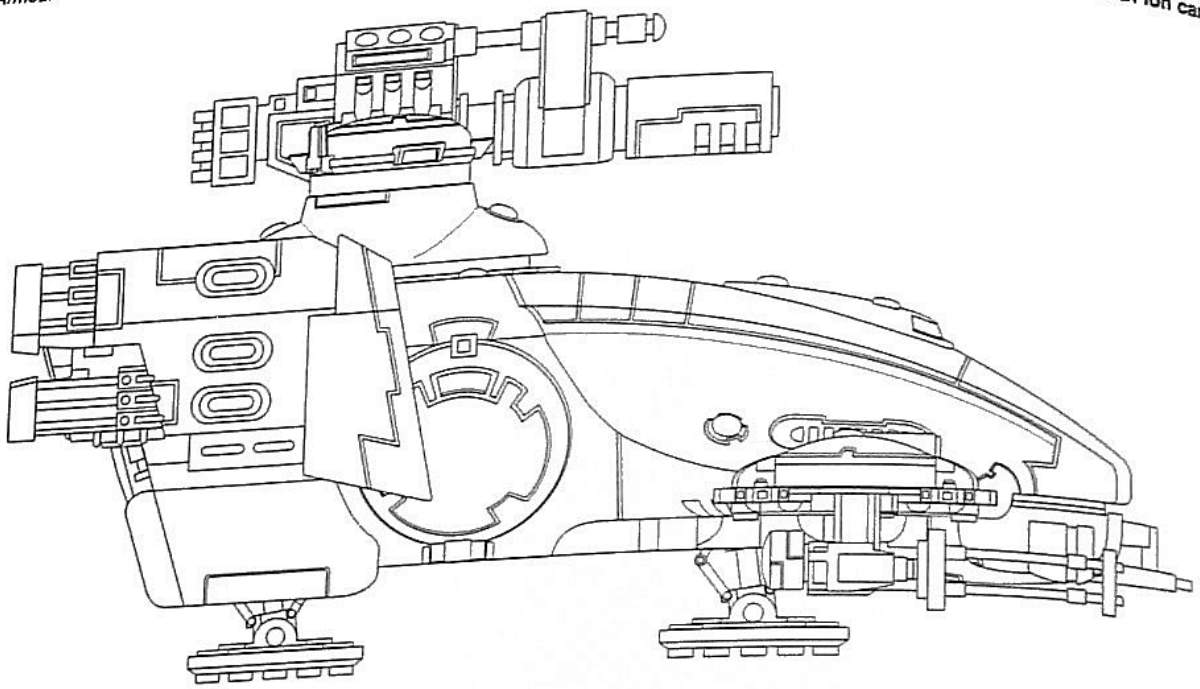
Elevation : + 28° TO -10°

Ammunition : UNKNOWN

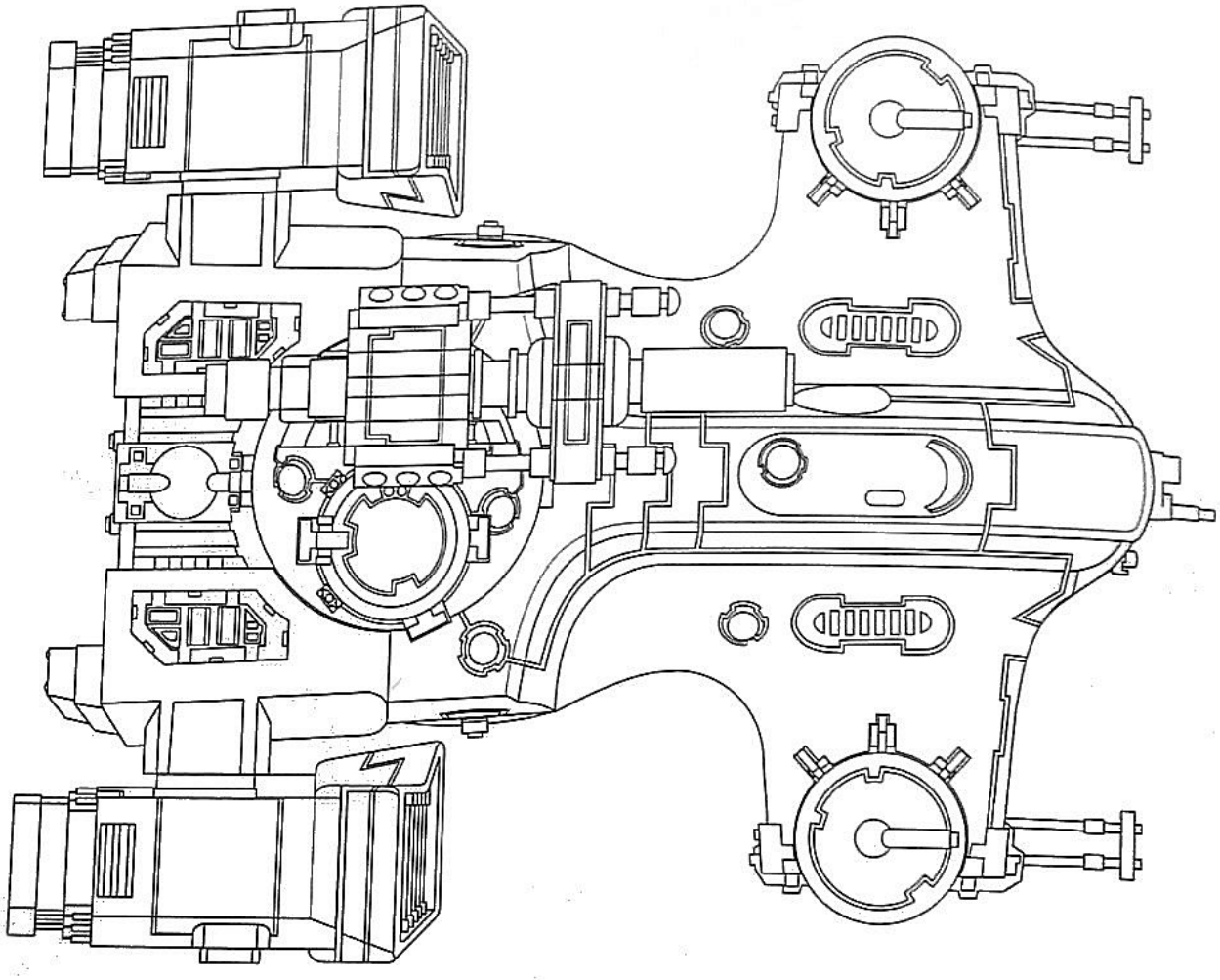
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : FRONTLINE BATTLE TANK. MAIN ARMAMENT ALSO INCLUDES ION CANNON, RAILGUN, MISSILE PODS, FUSION CANNONS, PLASMA CANNONS.

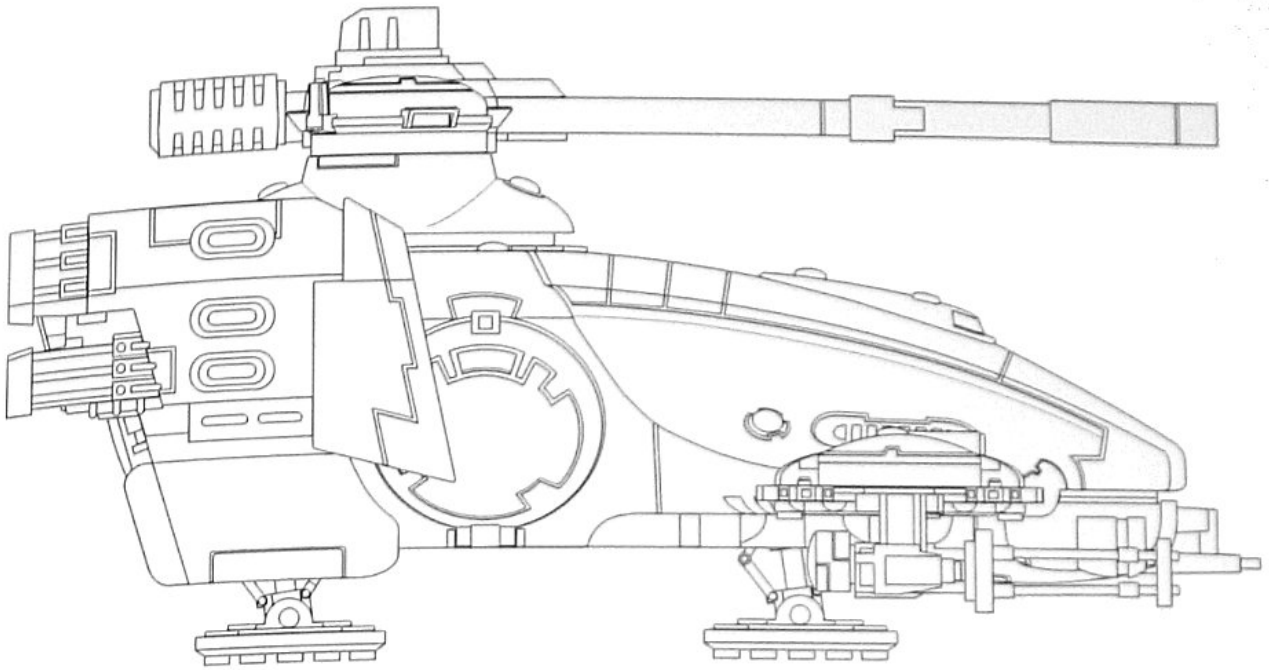
Hammerhead with ion cannon



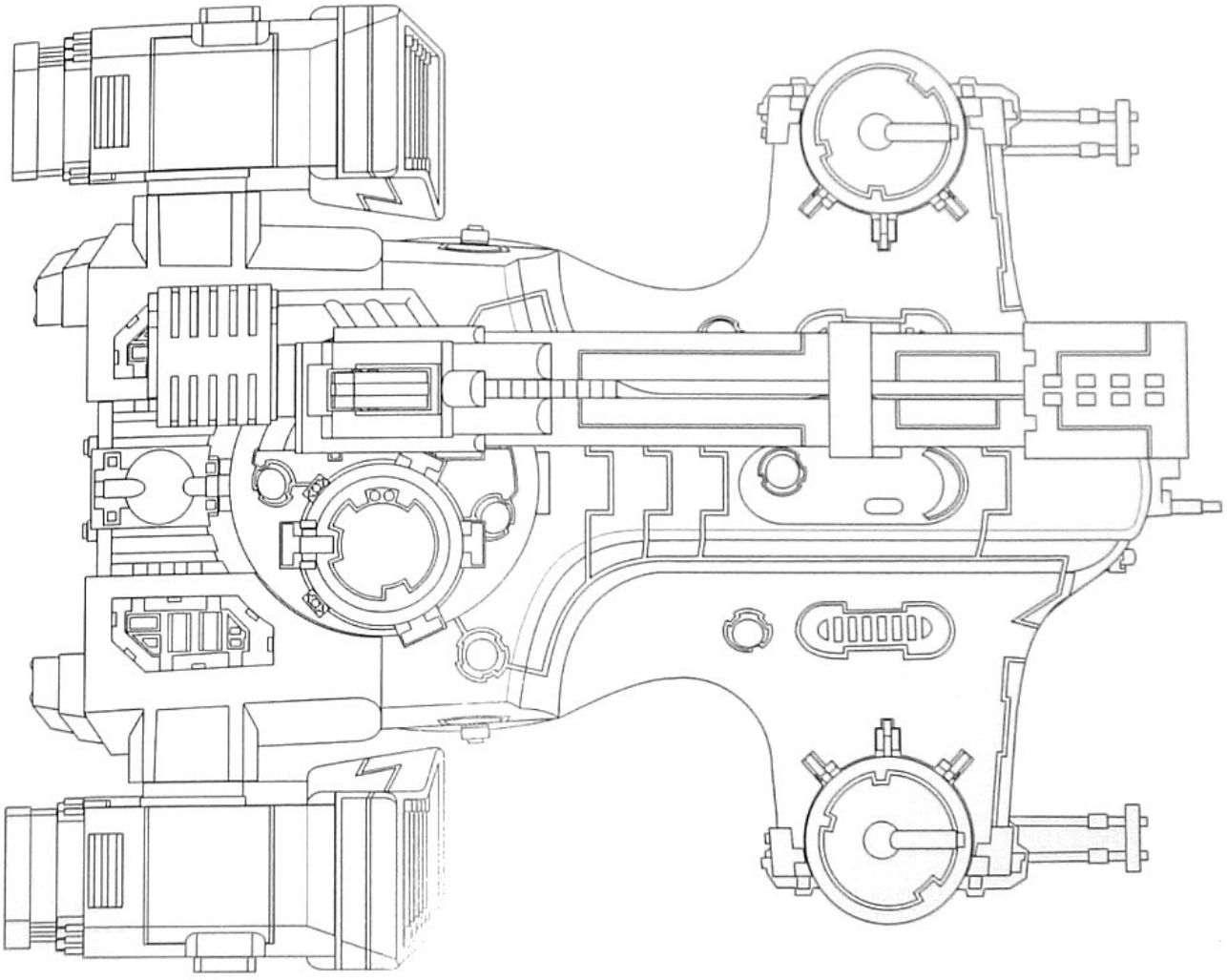
Hammerhead with ion cannon – plan view



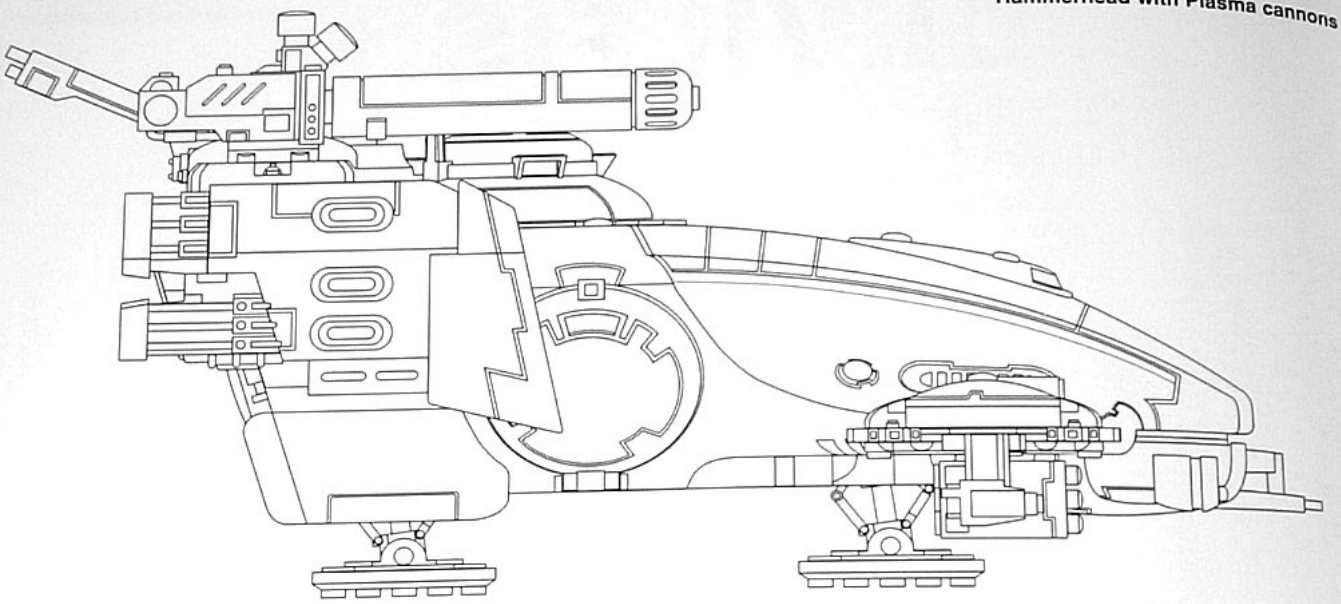
Hammerhead with railgun



Hammerhead with railgun – plan view



Hammerhead with Plasma cannons



HAMMERHEAD GUNSHIP					
	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Hammerhead	90	13	12	10	3 (4)

Thought for the day:
Go forth and vanquish the foe.

Type: Tank, Skimmer

Crew: 3. Tau Fire Caste

Weapons: A Hammerhead is armed with a primary weapons system and a secondary weapons system.

The primary weapons system must be one of the following; twin-linked long-barrelled burst cannons +20 pts; ion cannon +30 pts, missile pods +30 pts, twin-linked fusion cannons +30 pts, twin-linked plasma cannons +35 pts, a railgun +50 pts.

The secondary weapons system is either two burst cannons at +10 pts, a pair of Gun Drones at +20 pts, or a smart missile system at +20 pts. Note the burst cannons are not twin-linked and fire separately.

Options: The Hammerhead may be given any of the following from the Tau Codex: Sensor spines, Multi-tracker, Blacksun filter, Target lock, Flechette discharger, Disruption pod, Decoy launcher, Seeker missiles (up to 4 per vehicle). It is always equipped with a Targeting array (already added to the BS) at no extra points cost.

Heavy Support: A Hammerhead is a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

Primary Weapons

Twin-linked Long barrelled burst cannon
Range: 36" **Str:** 6 **AP:** 4 **Type:** Assault3

Ion Cannon
Range: 60" **Str:** 7 **AP:** 3 **Type:** Heavy3

Missile Pods
Range: 36" **Str:** 7 **AP:** 4 **Type:** Assault4

Twin-linked Fusion Cannon
Range: 24" **Str:** 8 **AP:** 1 **Type:** Heavy1,blast **Notes:** At under half range (12") roll 2D6 for Armour Penetration like a multi-melta

Twin-linked Plasma Cannon
Range: 48" **Str:** 7 **AP:** 2 **Type:** Heavy2 **Notes:** Does not suffer from overheating

Railgun
Range: 72" **Str:** 10 **AP:** 1 **Type:** Heavy1 **Notes:** Or may choose to fire sub-munitions instead
Range: 72" **Str:** 6 **AP:** 4 **Type:** Heavy1/ Ordnance blast

Landing Gear: Though they utilise advanced anti-gravitic technology, Tau vehicles are fitted with basic landing gear in case they should suffer malfunction. In any turn that the vehicle does not move, it may choose to no longer count as a skimmer until it moves again. This benefit does not apply on the first turn of the game.

DEVILFISH

Since the Imperium's first clash with the Tau Empire, the Devilfish troop carrier has been the workhorse of the Tau Fire Caste's ground forces. It can transport up to twelve fully armed and armoured Fire Warriors into battle in relative safety, and provide heavy fire support for the team once disembarked. The Devilfish gives a Hunter Cadre its core of fast and mobile infantry to support the Hammerhead tanks.

The Devilfish is armed with a burst cannon mounted in a chin turret for suppressive fire, and two independent Gun Drones. These drones are carried on the forward lift-fins to provide additional firepower, but can also separate from the Devilfish and join with the Fire Warrior team as they attack their objective. The drones provide close support or act as lead scouts for the team, relaying information back to the Devilfish and the Tau team leader.

The Devilfish has a single crewman, who pilots the vehicle and fires the burst cannon (the drones control their own weapons), and the vehicle's other communications and tracking systems. Many systems onboard Tau vehicles are highly automated or drone controlled, allowing the Tau to generally reduce crew numbers in their vehicles.

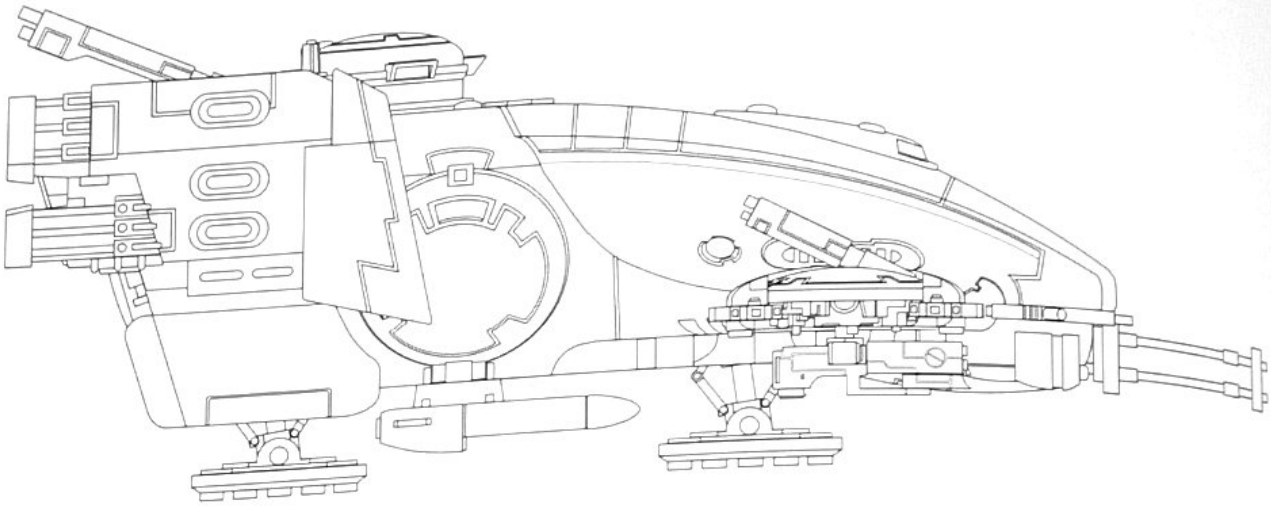
The basic Devilfish is usually augmented in battle by various additional systems, assisting its fighting capabilities. Primary amongst these are Seeker missiles. A Devilfish can carry up to four of these Markerlight-controlled weapons. Once a Markerlight illuminates a target it will send a message to the Devilfish, which will automatically launch a missile at the target in response. The pilot has no control over when, or at what, Seeker missiles are launched, instead the Devilfish just transports the missiles to the battlefield. Other additional systems found on Devilfish include improved sensor and tracking equipment, night-fighting filters for the pilot and flechette dischargers to counter infantry assaults. These are mounted on the Devilfish's prow and discharge clouds of high-velocity flechettes into any enemy in close proximity.

The Devilfish is powered by the same complex dual anti-grav/jet-propulsion motive system as the Hammerhead and seems to have very similar characteristics for acceleration, handling and top speed.

The Devilfish is constructed of dense nanocrystalline metals. These advanced metallic compounds are lightweight, malleable, strong and corrosive resistant. How the Earth Caste manufactured these alloys is unknown, but for their weight and depth they have remarkable protective properties, and help reduce the vehicle's weight, assisting its speed and flight characteristic.

Up to four fully loaded Devilfish can be transported in the lower hull of a Manta, for moving between a Tau fleet in orbit and a planet's surface. Being Manta-borne means a Hunter Cadre can react very rapidly to enemy threats, and the Tau rely on this manoeuvrability in battle. It means they do not have to occupy ground or static defensive positions, instead a Shas'el can withhold his forces and launch counter-attacks or quickly position blocking forces to intercept enemy moves.

Devilfish with Seeker missile rack



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 164954.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908325

Designation : TROOP CARRIER

Vehicle Codename : DEVILFISH

Vehicle Type : GRAV-TANK

Crew : 1. PILOT

Weight : 14 TONNES

Length : 8.25 M

Width : 6.8 M

Height : 3.2 M

Max Recorded Speed : 75 KPH

Main Armament : BURST CANNON IN CHIN TURRET

Secondary Armament : DRONE CONTROLLED 4 X PULSE CARBINES

Traverse : 160°

Elevation : + 30° TO -15°

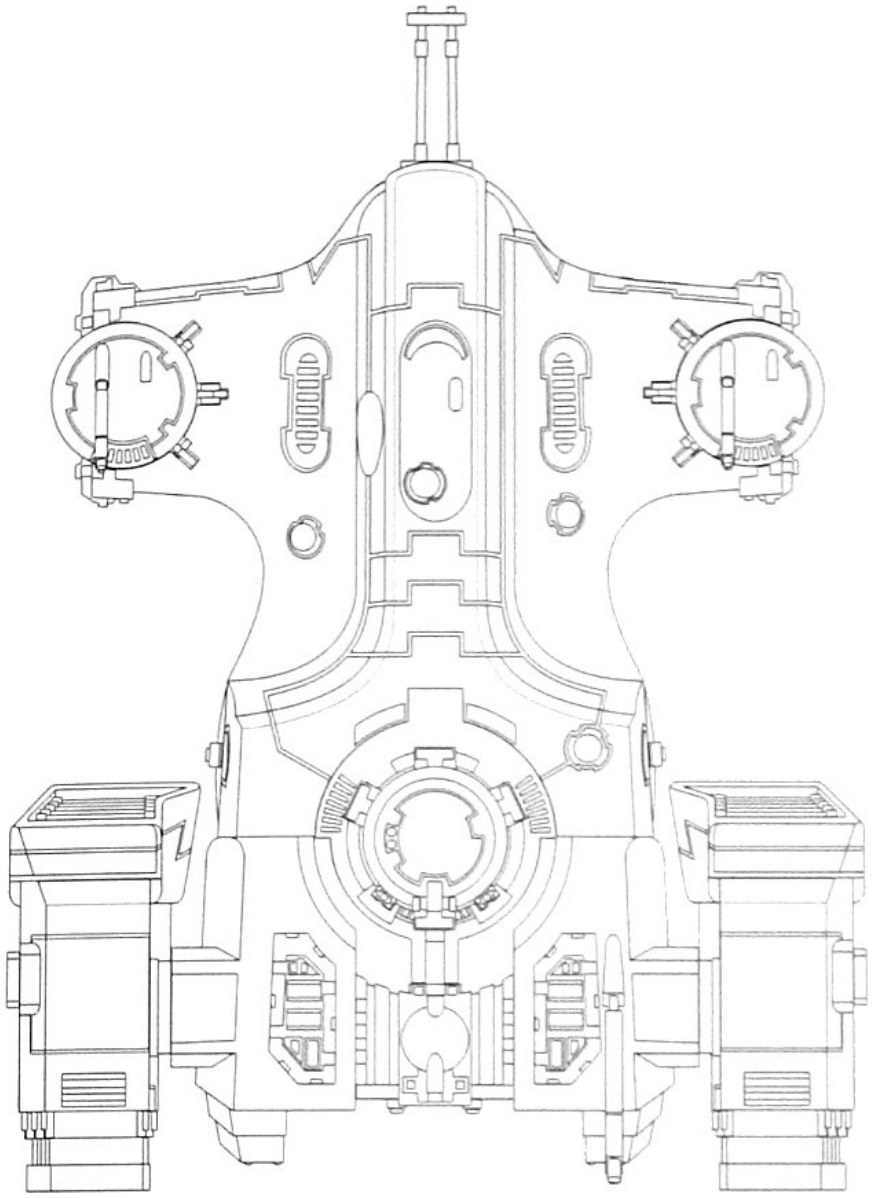
Ammunition : 2000 ROUNDS

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

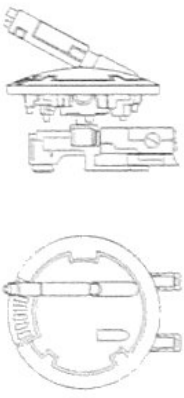
CLASSIFIED

Summary : ARMOURED TROOP TRANSPORT, HOLDS TWELVE. ALSO MOUNTS SEEKER MISSILE RACK

Devilfish – plan view



Gun Drones



DEVILFISH TROOP CARRIER

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Devilfish	80	12	11	10	3

Type: Tank, Skimmer

Crew: 1. Tau Fire Caste

Weapons: The Devilfish is armed with a burst cannon.

The Devilfish always has the Gun Drone vehicle upgrade at no additional points cost.

Options: The Devilfish may replace its Gun Drones with a Smart missile system at a cost of +20 pts.

The Devilfish may be given any of the following from the Tau Codex: Sensor spines, Targeting array, Multi-tracker, Blacksun filter, Target lock, Flechette discharger, Disruption pod, Decoy launcher, Seeker missiles (up to 4 per vehicle).

Transport: The Devilfish can carry up to twelve models. It may not carry any troops in XV battlesuits.

Transport Option: The Devilfish is a Transport option for Tau Fire Warriors and Pathfinders.

Access Points: 3. The Devilfish has two side and one rear hatch, any of which can be used as access points by the passengers.

Fire Points: 0

SPECIAL RULES

Landing Gear: Though they utilise advanced anti-gravitic technology, Tau vehicles are fitted with basic landing gear in case they should malfunction. In any turn that the vehicle does not move, it is not counted as a skimmer.

Thought for the day:
There will be no victory
without your sacrifice.

SKY RAY
MISSILE DEFENCE GUNSHIP

The Sky Ray is a specialised variant of the Hammerhead gunship. It is the Tau's heavily armed missile gunship, carrying a turret array of six Seeker missiles, either guided by the vehicle's own Markerlight target designators or by an independent ground operator.

It is believed that the Sky Ray was developed by the Earth Caste, after the Damocles Gulf Crusade, as direct response to the Imperium's air power. During the crusade the Tau learned many lessons about the Emperor's military forces, and the Tau quickly adapted their new knowledge to practical battlefield uses.

In the field, the Sky Ray's twin Markerlights sweep the skies to find and lock-on to approaching enemy aircraft, before efficiently guiding their missiles to the target. The Sky Ray's automated systems quickly gauge how many missiles to launch at a target, anywhere between one and the full six. This is dependant on range, target speed and type. So fast and accurate are the Seeker missiles that many enemy pilots are hit and downed before they realise they are under attack or can take evasive manoeuvres.

Since their first deployment, the Sky Ray has been continually developed to improve its battlefield performance. It is believed that early versions where required to find and lock-on to their own targets. On Taros it seems that the Sky Ray had been integrated into the wider Markerlight control network, and that Pathfinders were now using their Markerlights to target a Sky Ray's missiles. This upgrading has led to the Sky Ray becoming a far greater threat that it was previously thought to be.

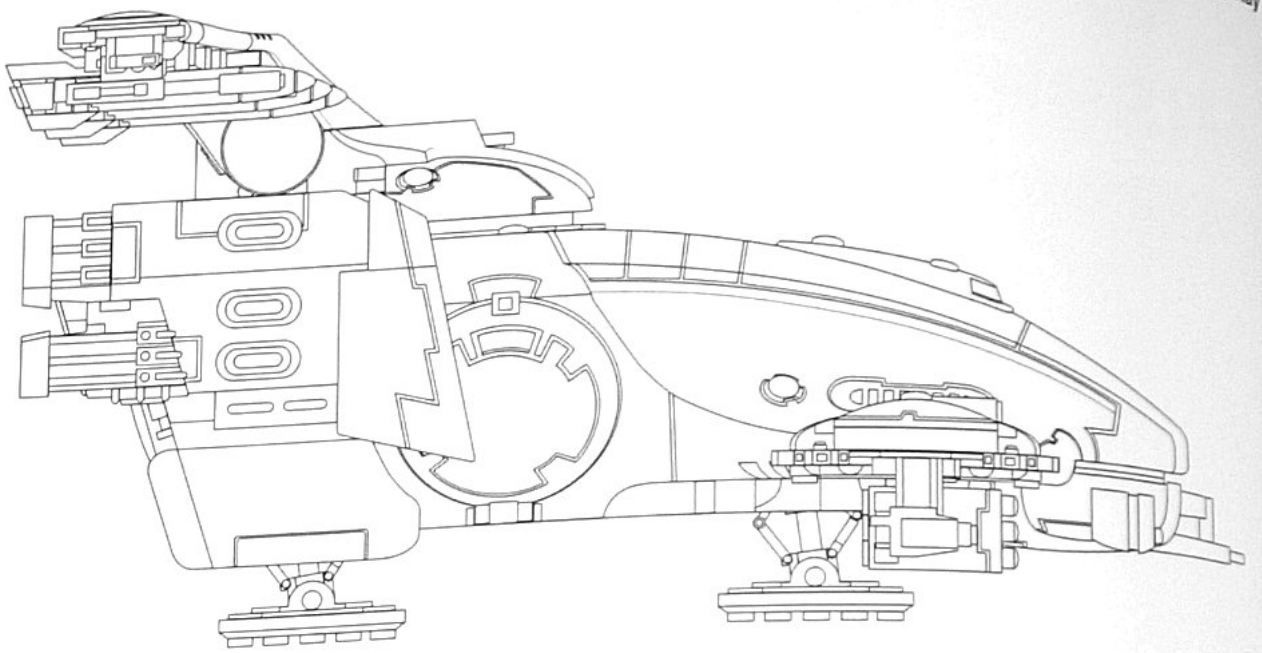
During the Taros Campaign such was the Sky Ray's effectiveness that Imperial Navy pilots came to despise it, and any confirmed Sky Ray kill was highly prized amongst Imperial Navy crews. Such was the grav-tank's infamy it has earned the common nickname of 'Stinger' amongst those men who had to face it.

When required it has been known for Sky Rays to be used in a ground combat role, but their lack of ammunition means they cannot operate effectively for long, and most wise Tau commanders avoid using them instead of Hammerheads, due to their lack of armour protection and ammunition restrictions.

For all their effectiveness, Sky Rays are rarely encountered in large numbers. Generally a single vehicle will be attached to a Hunter Cadre. Important or vulnerable locations, such as Tau airbases or headquarters, will often include a Sky Ray as part of its defence force.

On Taros, Sky Rays were a common addition to the mobile armoured Hunter Cadres operating in the desert, and proved a highly effective weapon in both air defence and against ground targets. Deployed behind a skirmish screen of Pathfinders their multiple Seeker missiles would often be the opening volley of an engagement, directed by Pathfinders' Markerlights onto the Imperial Guard columns, utilising the Seeker missiles very long range to good effect.

The Sky Ray is crewed by two Fire Warriors – a pilot and a weapons operator.



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 1835490.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908457

Designation : MISSILE DEFENCE GUNSHIP

Vehicle Codename : SKY RAY

Vehicle Type : GRAV-TANK

Crew : 2. PILOT. GUNNER

Weight : 24 TONNES

Length : 8.25 M

Width : 6.8 M

Height : 5 M

Max Recorded Speed : 70 KPH

CLASSIFIED

Main Armament : 6 SEEKER MISSILES

Secondary Armament : SMART MISSILE SYSTEM

Traverse : 360°

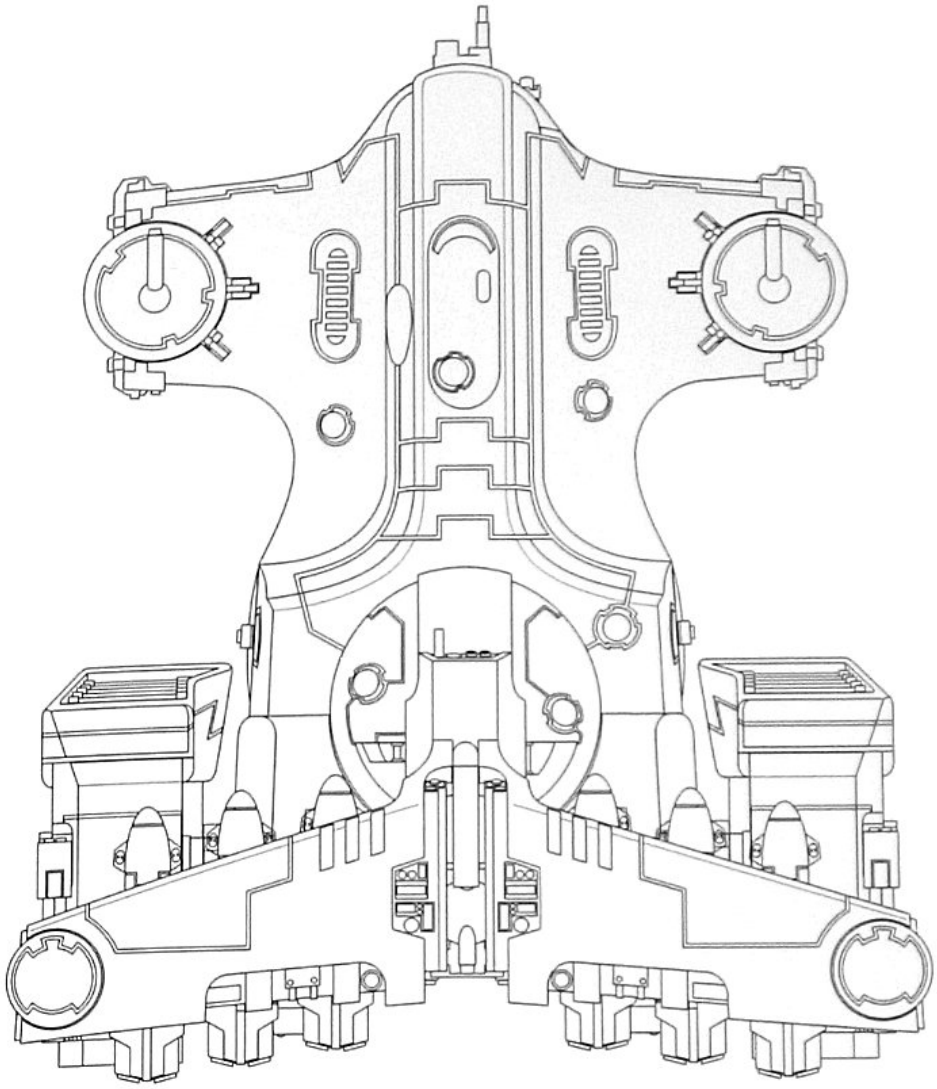
Elevation : + 70° TO -0°

Ammunition : 6 MISSILES

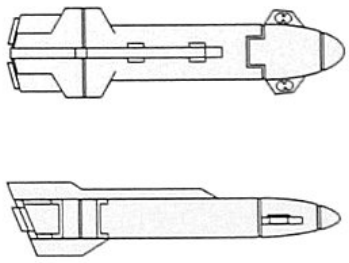
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : AIR DEFENCE VEHICLE, ALSO DEPLOYED FOR GROUND COMBAT

Sky Ray – plan view



Seeker missile



SKY RAY MISSILE DEFENCE GUNSHIP

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Sky Ray	125	13	12	10	3

Thought for the day:
The question not is when,
but how, will I die!

Type: Tank, Skimmer

Crew: 2. Tau Fire Caste

Weapons: The Sky Ray is armed with six Seeker missiles, 2 networked Markerlights and a Target lock (meaning it can launch its own missiles, potentially at two different targets per Shooting phase). It is also equipped with a secondary weapons system.

The secondary weapons system is either two burst cannons at +10 pts, a pair of Gun Drones at +20 pts, or a smart missile system at +20 pts. Note the burst cannons are not twin-linked and fire separately.

Options: The Sky Ray may be given any of the following from the Tau Codex: Sensor spines, Targeting array, Blacksun filter, Flechette discharger, Disruption pod, Decoy launcher. The Sky Ray always has a Targeting lock.

Heavy Support: A Sky Ray is a Heavy Support option for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

AA Upgrade: One of the the Sky Ray's roles is to engage enemy aircraft. The Seeker missile and Markerlight array may be upgraded to an AA mount for +30 pts.

To attack aircraft the target must first be hit by a Markerlight. This can be the Sky Ray's own Markerlight (at BS3), or any other Markerlight in the Tau force (at 6s for hitting an aircraft). If the target aircraft is hit then any number of the Sky Ray's Seeker missiles can be fired at the target. Each missile hits on a roll of 4+. An aircraft that has not first been hit by a markerlight cannot be fired at.

Once all six missiles have been fired then the Sky Ray is out of ammunition and can only fire its secondary weapon system for the rest of the game.

As an anti-aircraft weapon the Sky Ray cannot fire any other weapons whilst engaging aircraft. The Sky Ray must remain stationary to engage aircraft. With the AA upgrade a Sky Ray may still engage ground targets as normal.

Landing Gear: Though they utilise advanced anti-gravitic technology, Tau vehicles are fitted with basic landing gear in case they should suffer malfunction. In any turn that the vehicle does not move, it may choose to no longer count as a skimmer until it moves again. This benefit does not apply on the first turn of the game.

CRISIS BATTLESUIT

Those Fire Warriors that prove themselves in battle can earn the right to bear the title Shas'ui and wear a Crisis battlesuit. These Fire Warriors are experienced and tough fighters; they have faced the deadliest of foes and triumphed. Shas'ui are the best troops a Tau commander has at his disposal, loyal and brave beyond question, they will often be found were the fighting is heaviest. In combat they are the cutting edge of a Hunter Cadre's attacks. In turn, the best of the Shas'ui are honoured by being elevated to a commander's personal bodyguard, bearing the title Shas'vre. Eventually a Shas'vre may rise into the higher ranks of Tau commanders, to become Shas'el and Shas'o.

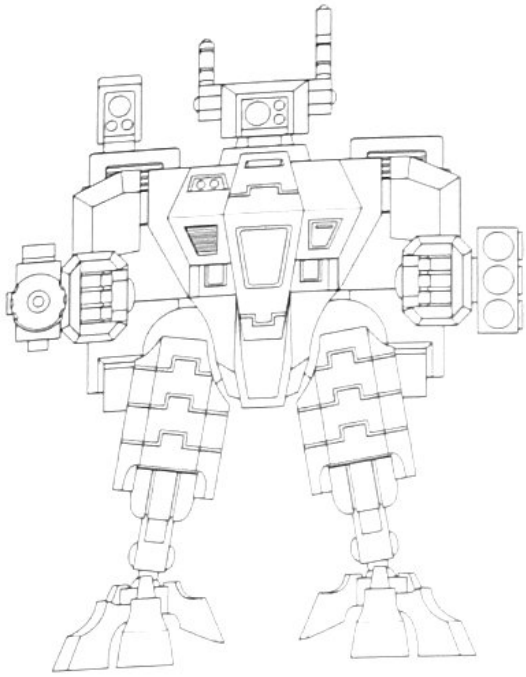
The standard battlesuit worn by all these elite troops is the XV8 Crisis battlesuit. Large, heavily armoured, carrying multiple weapon systems and include many advanced systems like jetpacks, recoil absorbers, sensors and targeting arrays, drone controllers and shield generators, this makes them efficient and lethal weapons of war. The sensors allow a battlesuit to detect hidden enemy units and movement, information that can be transmitted back to Tau command units.

Battlesuits are protected by dense nanocrystalline alloy armour. These advanced alloys have an impact resistance structure, as well as helping to keep the suit's weight down. This reduced weight means it can operate effectively using its Tau jetpack for manoeuvrability and dropping from transport aircraft, like the Orca and Manta. The jet pack combines anti-gravitic and jet technology to make the battlesuit extremely agile for its size.

Each Crisis suit has three hardpoints for weapons or support systems. The variety of weapons available to the suit makes them very versatile. Operating in teams of three, called Ta'ro'cha (three minds as one), they can be equipped for a variety of battlefield roles. Many Fire Warrior Septs have developed their own battlesuit tactics and preferred weapon fits. These techniques are taught in the Sept's military academies, where respected Shas'vre pass on their knowledge. Some examples of these are the Vior'la 'Death Rain', 'Sun Forge' and 'Burning Eye' configurations, or the T'au 'Fireknife' and 'Blinding Spear' patterns.

On Taros, several variants of the standard XV8 battlesuit were also identified. One, the XV88 Broadside was already well known. Other seemed to be personalized suits used by Tau Hunter Cadre commanders in battle. These were coded as the XV81, the XV84 and XV89, and all incorporate non-standard systems, as well as most of the standard systems. The Tau, being a young and dynamic race, and faced with growing threats to the borders of their Empire were obviously seeking to improve the performance of their battlefield technology. As yet, only the most honoured commanders had access to the latest weaponry and technical developments.

XV8 with plasma rifle and missile pod



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Date : 16/4/954.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908158

Designation : XV8

Vehicle Codename : CRISIS

Vehicle Type : BATTLESUIT

Crew : 1 PILOT

Weight : 2.5 TONNES

Length : 1.7 M

Width : 1.9 M

Height : 2.8 M

Max Recorded Speed : 50 KPH ON JETPACK

Main Armament : PLASMA RIFLE

Secondary Armament : MISSILE POD

Traverse : 120°

Elevation : + 90° TO -90°

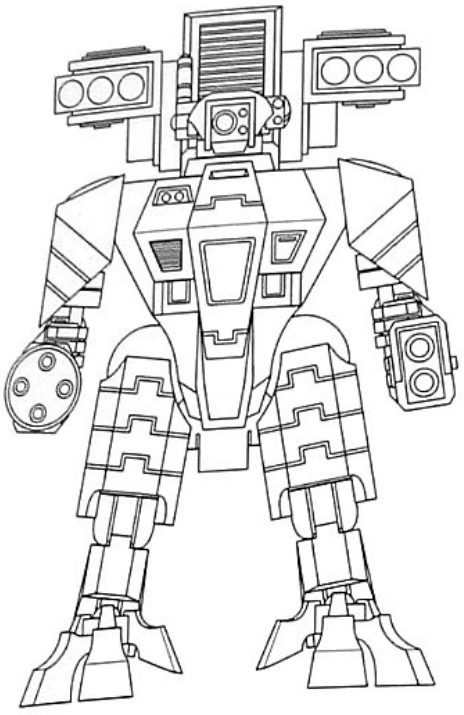
Ammunition : VARIABLE

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

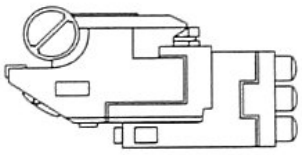
Summary : ALSO CAN EQUIPPED WITH TRACKING EQUIPMENT, SHIELD GENERATOR OR DRONE CONTROLLER

CLASSIFIED

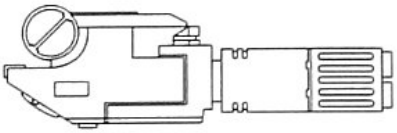
Pax Imperialis



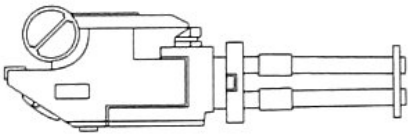
XV81 with burst cannon, fusion blaster and smart missile system



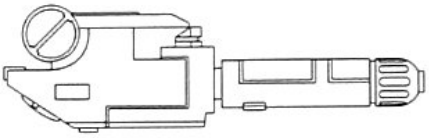
Missile pod



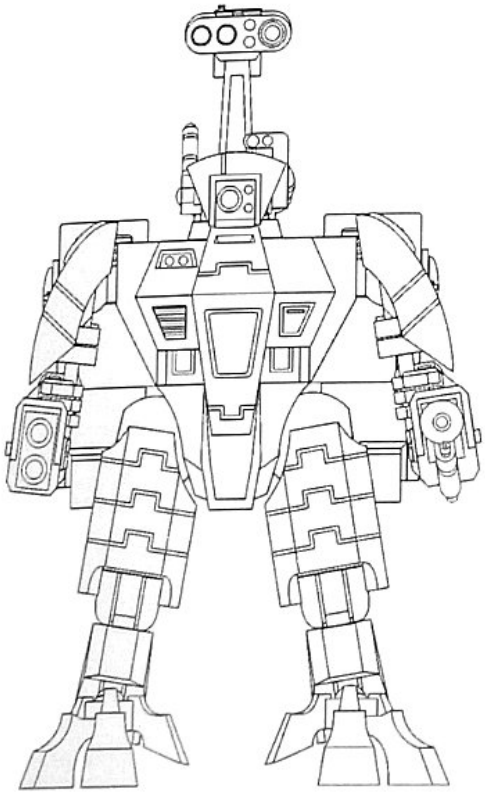
Fusion blaster



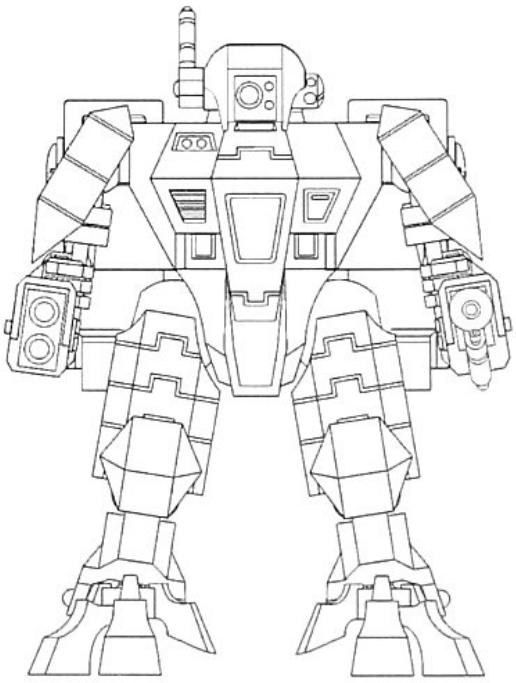
Burst cannon



Plasma rifle



XV84 with fusion blaster and flamer



XV89 with fusion blaster and flamer

XV8 CRISIS BATTLESUIT

	Points	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Shas'ui	25	2	3	5	4	2	2	2	8	3+
Shas'vre	35	3	3	5	4	2	3	2	8	3+
Shas'el	50	3	4	5	4	3	3	3	9	3+
Shas'o	75	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	10	3+

Thought for the day:
Victory is simply greater Perseverance.

Team: A Battlesuit team consists of 1-3 Shas'ui.

A Commander team consists of 1 Shas'el or Shas'o accompanied by 0-2 Shas'vre bodyguards.

Crew: (1) Tau Fire Warrior.

Equipment: The entire team is equipped with XV8 Crisis battlesuits. The above profiles have been ammended to include the suit's enhancements.

Character: One Shas'ui per team may be designated as the team leader at +5 pts. They may select items from the Tau armoury. A Shas'ui team leader can be upgraded to a Shas'vre for an additonal +5 pts. Any member of a Commander team may select equipment from the Tau armoury.

Elites: A Crisis Battlesuit team is an Elite Choice for a Tau army.

Headquarters: A Commander team is a HQ choice for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

Independant Character: Unless accompanied by a bodyguard, a Tau Commander is an Independent Character.

XV8 CRISIS BATTLESUIT HARDPOINT OPTIONS

Each suit has three hardpoints You must fill all three hardpoints chosen from the following lists.

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Flamer . . . . . .+ 4 pts. +6 pts if twin-linked*
Burst cannon . . . . . .+8 pts. +12 pts if twin-linked*
Plasma rifle . . . . . .+20 pts. +30 pts if twin-linked*
Fusion blaster . . . . . .+12 pts. +18 pts if twin-linked*
Missile pod . . . . . .+12 pts. +18 if twin-linked*

** occupies two hardpoints if twin-linked.*

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Multi-tracker* . . . . . +5 pts
Target lock* . . . . . .+5 pts
Shield generator . . . . . .+20 pts
Targeting Array . . . . . .+10 pts
Blacksun Filter* . . . . . .+3 pts
Drone controller * . . . . . .+ 0 pts
plus from 1 to 2 Gun Drones . . . . . .+10 pts per drone
plus from 1 to 2 Shield Drones . . . . .+15 pts per drone
plus from 1 to 2 Marker Drones . . . .+30 pts per drone

** may also be taken as a hardwired support system, and as such does not take up a hard point.*

CRISIS BATTLESUIT COMMANDER VARIANTS

Only a Shas'o or Shas'el in a Commander team can utilise these personalised variants of the standard XV8 battlesuit.

0-1 XV 81 BATTLESUIT: includes a shoulder-mounted smart missile system, for +20 pts.
It must also select two hardpoint weapon systems choices from the XV8 list above.

0-1 XV84 BATTLESUIT: in addition to normal options includes a Markerlight and a Target lock, for +15 pts.
It must also select three hardpoint choices from the XV8 list above.

0-1 XV89 BATTLESUIT: the heaviest of the Crisis variants includes extra armour plating.
This increases the suit's Save to 2+, but reduces the suit's assault move from 6" to D6", for +25 pts.
It must also select three hardpoint choices from the XV8 list above.

0-1 SHAS'O R'MYR'S BATTLESUIT: Shas'o R'myr's personal battlesuit is the very latest development of the Crisis suit. Worn during the final days of the campaign, as yet it has not be codified by the Imperium's forces.

It must be armed with a double-barrelled plasma rifle (**Range:**24" **Str:**6 **AP:**2 **Type:** Assault2) and a shield generator (invulnerable save 4+ vs firing, 3+ in close combat). It has the following support systems; a flechette discharger* and ejector system. He also has a hardwired drone controller and target lock. Shas'o R'myr may be accompanied by 1 or 2 drones for the pts costs given above. Shas'o R'myr must have the above options, they cannot be altered.

Shas'o R'myr costs 160 pts + drones + bodyguard.

If accompanied by a bodyguard team, the team may be equipped with any of the command variant battlesuits above.

(*Any model attacking Shas'o R'myr in close combat will be wounded on a roll of 4+ before resolving its attacks).

BROADSIDE BATTLESUIT

The XV8 Crisis battlesuit is by far the most common battlesuit encountered, but as far back as the Damocles Crusade the XV88 Broadside variant was identified by the Imperium's forces. The XV88 foregoes mobility and manoeuvrability in favour of heavy firepower, armed with its distinctive long-barrelled twin railguns. Unlike the Crisis suits, which bear the brunt of Tau attacks, the Broadside supports Tau Fire Warriors with long-range firepower.

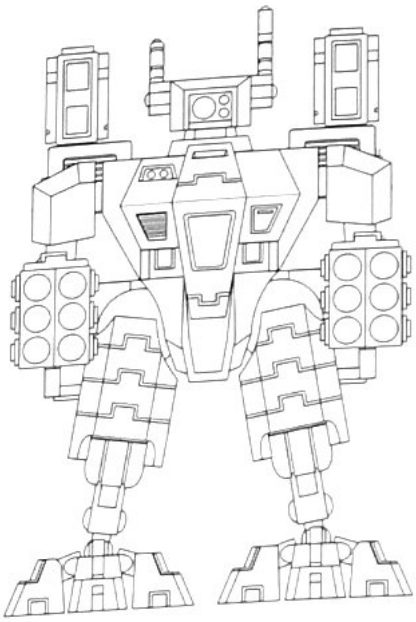
Those Fire Warriors that have progressed to the ranks of Shas'ui and been trained in the use of the XV8 can choose to transfer into XV88 suits for additional training. Within the Fire caste's military academies it is regarded as important that a Shas'ui should have experience on the XV88 before he can be promoted to the rank of Shas'vre. Some Crisis teams that have performed the Ta'lissera will transfer together and form a complete, bonded, Broadside team. After serving their time piloting the XV88 a team will either return to the XV8 to complete their training or, if they have performed exceptionally well, they might be promoted straight to Shas'vre.

On the battlefield, the Broadside is a tank-hunter. Its railguns can cut through almost any armour, and it is small enough to utilise cover well. The distinctive whip-crack sound and hyper-sonic speed of a railgun round became synonymous with the desert fighting on Taros.

Carried in Orcas or Mantas, once deployed Broadsides, lacking jetpacks, are slow, so they must be deployed with care and only when an engagement was imminent. For accurate deployment Broadsides relied on good information from forward Pathfinder teams.

On Taros, Broadsides were widely deployed in support of Hunter Cadres on the defensive. They could not be deployed as part of the fast moving Pathfinder raiding forces, or armoured counter-attack forces which might be required to operate in the deserts for many days, fighting then quickly withdrawing, then moving to attack again. Instead, when an engagment was imminent, the Orcas or a Manta would quickly move the Broadsides into position, usually holding a ridgeline or an area of higher ground with good fields of fire. The Broadside could then target the enemy at maximum range, singling out enemy tanks and troop carriers, before being picked-up again. Using these rapid deployment tactics, the Broadsides could lend their potent fire support, but not slow an armoured Hunter Cadre down as it raced to new positions for the next battle.

XV88 Broadside with twin railguns and twin missile pods



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Date : 1644954.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-9081588

Designation : XV88

Vehicle Codename : BROADSIDE

Vehicle Type : BATTLESUIT

Crew : 1. PILOT

Weight : 3.8 TONNES

Length : 1.7 M

Width : 1.9 M

Height : 2.8 M

Max Recorded Speed : 15 KPH

Main Armament : 2 X RAILGUNS

Secondary Armament : 2 X SMART MISSILE SYSTEM

Traverse : 120°

Elevation : -5° TO +70°

Ammunition : VARIABLE

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

CLASSIFIED

Summary : FIRE SUPPORT VARIANT OF 'CRISIS' SUIT. IS NOT EQUIPPED WITH A JETPACK.

XV88 BROADSIDE BATTLESUIT

	Points	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Shas'ui	70	2	3	5	4	2	2	2	8	2+
Shas'vre	+10	3	3	5	4	2	3	2	8	2+

Team: A team consists of 1-3 Broadside Shas'ui.

Crew: 1. Tau Fire Warrior.

Thought for the day:
The weapon slays where the hand wills.

Equipment: The entire team is equipped with XV88 Broadside battlesuits. The above profiles have been amended to include the suit's enhancements.

Character: One Shas'ui per team may be designated as the team leader at +5 pts. They may select items from the Tau armoury. A Shas'ui team leader can be upgraded to a Shas'vre for an additonal +5 pts.

Heavy Support: A Broadside Battlesuit team is a Heavy Support Choice for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

Bonded: The team may be bonded by the Ta'lissera at a cost of +10 pts for the whole team.

XV88 BROADSIDE BATTLESUIT HARDPOINT OPTIONS

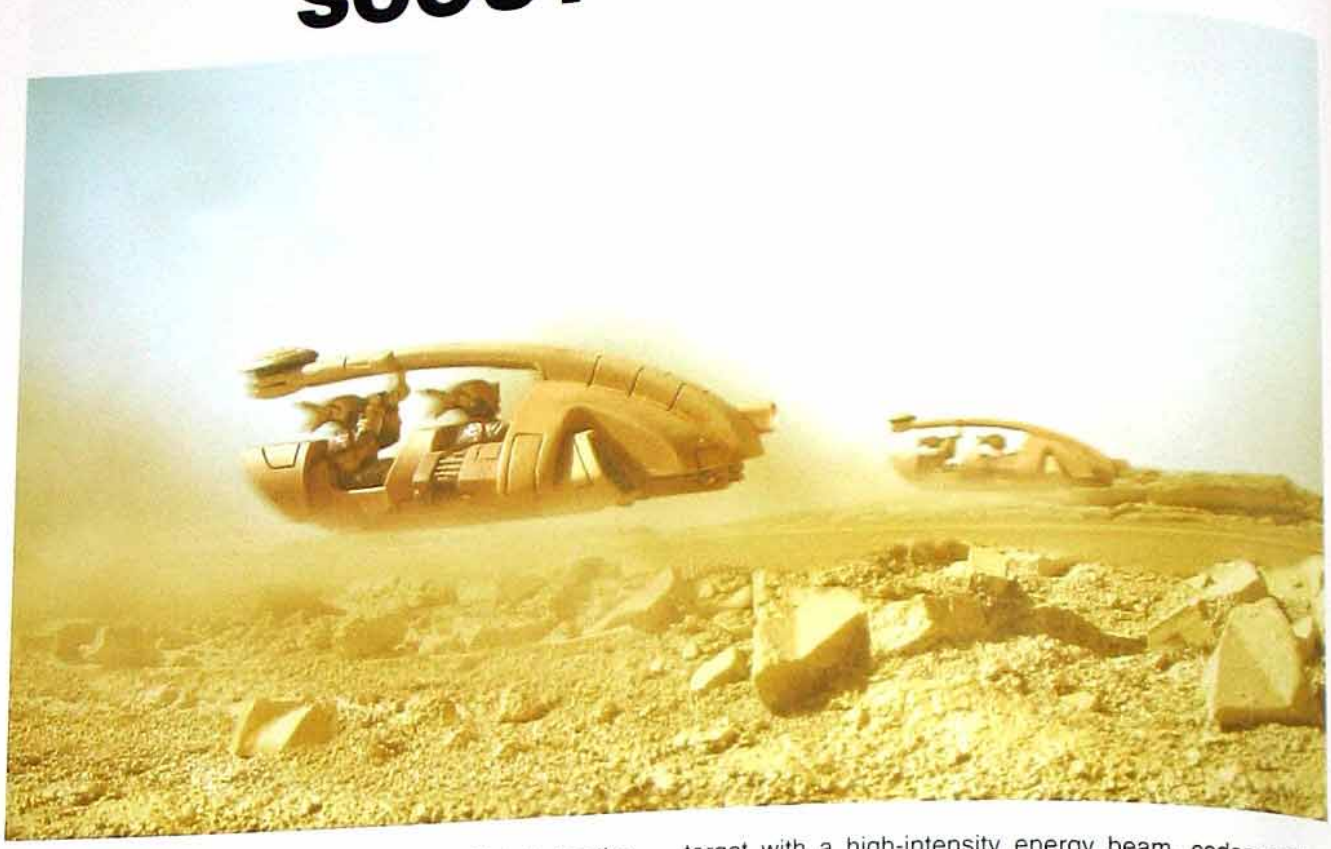
All Broadsides are armed with twin-linked railguns and a smart missile system.

The smart missile system may be replaced with twin-linked plasma rifles at +10 pts.

Choose one of the following support systems:

- Multi-tracker ..... +5 pts
- Target Lock ..... +5 pts
- Shield Generator ..... +20 pts
- Targeting array ..... +10 pts
- Blacksun Filter ..... + 3 pts
- Drone Controller plus from 1 to 2 Gun Drones .... +10 pts per drone
- Drone Controller plus from 1 to 2 Shield Drones .. +15 pts per drone
- Drone Controller plus from 1 to 2 Marker Drones .. +30 pts per drone
- Advanced stabilisation system ..... +10 pts

TETRA SCOUT SPEEDER



One of the many new vehicles first identified during the Taros Campaign was codenamed the 'Tetra'; a lightweight, fast, scout speeder used by Pathfinders for long-range infiltration and reconnaissance missions.

On Taros, Pathfinder squads often operated far in advance of their Hunter Cadre, using Tetras to get into position before dismounting, hiding their vehicles and operating stealthily on foot. Once a reconnaissance mission was complete, they would return to their speeders and race back to their own forces.

The Tetra is not a true combat vehicle. Lacking armour, and only armed with twin-linked pulse rifles for self-defence, a Tetra is not designed for surviving in the midst of a battle. As a reconnaissance vehicle itrelies upon speed and stealth. To assist in this it mounts a disruption pod, which distorts the vehicles image in both the visual and magnetic spectra, making it harder to spot and target at long range.

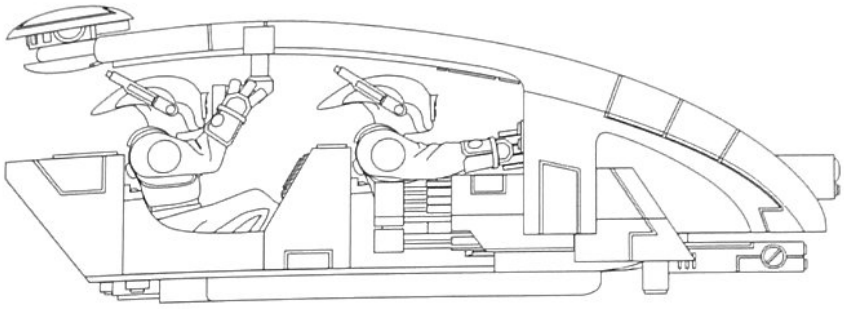
The Tetra's main weapon is its Markerlight, which it uses to designate targets for following vehicles carrying racks of Seeker missiles. The Markerlight and Seeker missile are sophisticated weapons systems which work together to lethal effect.

Each Seeker missile incorporates a Seeker array – a collection of diode receivers built into the warhead. The diodes are sensitive to Markerlight energy beams. For the missile to 'see' its target, a separate Tau operator, either in a Tetra or on the ground, has to lock-on to the designated target with a high-intensity energy beam, codenamed a Markerlight. The Markerlight reflects off the target, and the missile's Seeker array picks it up.

Each Markerlight has its own unique pulse pattern. Before launching, the Markerlight's operator tells the missiles central control system the specific pulse pattern being used (transmitted via a high-intensity flash download). The missile processes this information and feeds it into its inertial guidance system. Once complete, its jet engines ignite and it launches.

Once the Seeker missile is in the air its guidance system is only interested in Markerlight energy with the correct pulse pattern, it will ignore all other patterns. The guidance systems steer the missile, by adjusting its flight-fins, so that the correct Markerlight beam is continually hitting the warhead's diode array. This keeps the missile heading straight towards the target. The exceptionally high speed of the missile's processing and guidance systems make it very accurate, even over long distances.

As befits their forward role each Tetra is also equipped with additional powerful surveillance and tracking equipment as well as secure long-range communications. Each Tetra has a two-man crew, and usually operate in pairs, supporting each other and making a four-man Pathfinder team on the ground. On Taros, these four-man teams, armed with pulse carbines and Markerlights operated behind enemy lines, conducting surveillance, ambush and sabotage missions.



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 1502998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908325
Designation : SCOUT SPEEDER
Vehicle Codename : TETRA
Vehicle Type : LIGHT GRAV-VEHICLE
Crew : 2. PILOT. CO-PILOT
Weight : 1.8 TONNES
Length : 4.8 M
Width : 2.75 M
Height : 1.75 M
Max Recorded Speed : 350 KPH

Main Armament : 2 X PULSE RIFLES
Secondary Armament : NONE
Traverse : 0°
Elevation : + 0°
Ammunition : 1000 ROUNDS
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

CLASSIFIED

Summary : LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE VEHICLE

TETRA SCOUT SPEEDER TEAM

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Tetra	50	10	10	10	3

Type: Skimmer, fast, open-topped

Crew: 2. Pathfinders

Team: A team consists of between 1 and 4 Tetras.

Weapons: The Tetra is armed with twin-linked pulse rifles and a Markerlight.

Options: A Tetra may take the following vehicle upgrades from the Tau Codex: Sensor spines, Target lock, Targeting array, Blacksun filter, Decoy launchers. The Tetra is always equipped with a Disruption pod.

Fast Attack: A Tetra team is a Fast Attack choice for a Tau army.

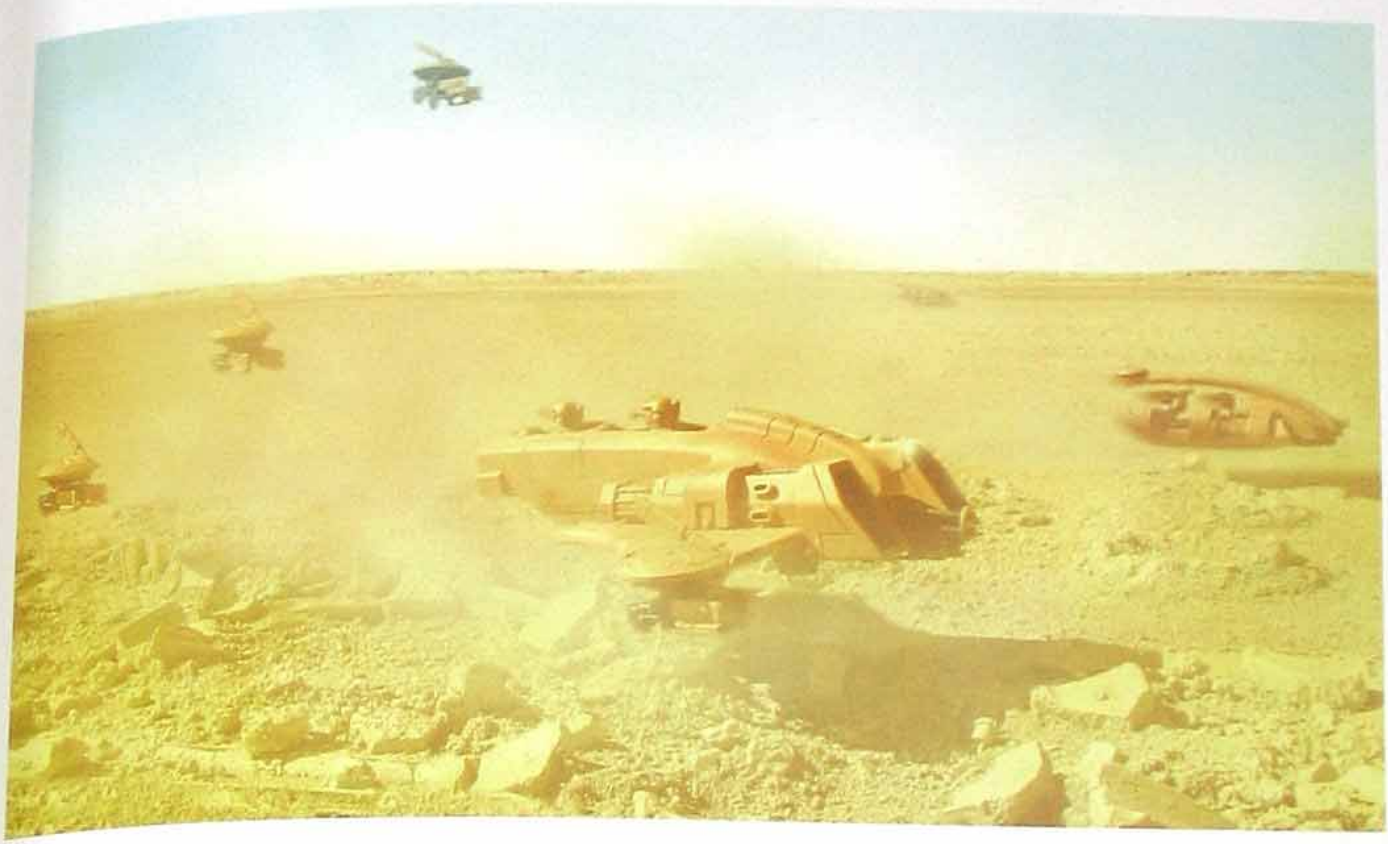
SPECIAL RULES

Disruption Pod: Weapons fired at the Tetra from more than 12" away count the vehicle as an Obscured Target.

Forward Scouts: Pathfinder operate ahead of the main Tau lines. In scenarios where some troops start on the table and others start in reserve, Tetras always deploy on the table. Tetra teams may make a normal move after deployment but before the first turn to get into a forward position.

Thought for the day:
The brave man always chooses danger.

PIRANHA
LIGHT SKIMMER



An open-topped skimmer similar in appearance to the Piranha was first identified during a diplomatic mission to Dal'yth in 884.M41 as an unarmed transport vehicle. On Taros for the first time this vehicle seems to have been given a military application as a light combat vehicle, and was subsequently codenamed the 'Piranha'. Why this should be is unknown, but from bitter experience during the campaign the Piranha has found its own niche with many Hunter Cadres. Since it was first identified the combat version has had armour and armament added, usually a chin-turret mounted burst cannon and independent detachable Gun Drones, identical to those mounted on a Devilfish.

On Taros, the Tau's new light combat speeder was employed for reconnaissance duties or as a weapons platform for launching Seeker missiles, often in support of Pathfinder teams. It was also used in many other battlefield roles. Versatile and nimble, it has been used to transport Tau commanders or dignitaries on the ground. In this way it seems to fulfil an 'armoured taxi' role, moving important individuals about without the need for a Devilfish or Orca dropship for every trip.

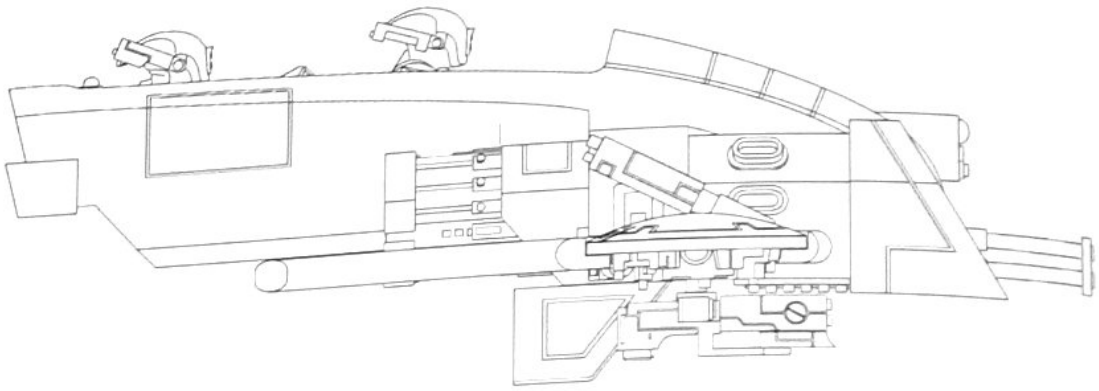
Other duties in which Piranhas have been identified include armoured support for teams guarding Tau airfields, where they act as a rapid response force. Piranhas also do a similar job acting as headquarters security, both roles in which a heavier combat vehicle is not generally required.

In a reconnaissance role the Piranha is a direct match for the Imperial Guard's Salamander. It is a light armoured vehicle capable of tackling other light vehicles, and as such is a desirable asset, since a Hunter Cadre's first contact with the enemy will often be a clash of the scout units. In this respect it maybe that the Fire caste has observed and learnt from the Imperial Guard's deployment of Salamanders, although this theory is pure speculation.

During the Battle for Hydro-Processing Plant 23-30 Piranhas where widely deployed in support of Remote sensor towers, providing Seeker missiles for the tower's drone-controlled Markerlights. The 114th Cadian regiment's relief column was constantly harassed by Piranhas using their long-range weapons to stand-off and snipe at the advancing Chimeras. The Piranhas and Chimeras fought a day-long running battle which delayed the relief column long enough for Hunter Cadres to overrun the hydro-processing plant. Piranhas also played an important part in the Tau's pursuit of the Tallarn regiments as they withdrew back to the landing zones.

It has also been speculated that that the Piranha was being field tested by the Fire Warrior Caste during the Taros campaign with a view to wider deployment in the future.

Piranha with burst cannon



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Date : 1508998.M40

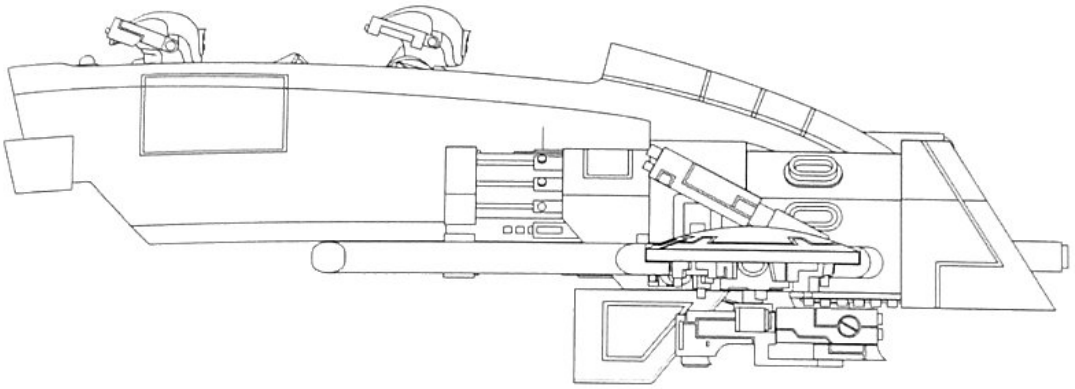
Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461
Designation : LIGHT SKIMMER
Vehicle Codename : TETRA
Vehicle Type : GRAV-SPEEDER
Crew : 2. PILOT. CO-PILOT
Weight : 4.5 TONNES
Length : 5.7 M
Width : 6.4 M
Height : 2.4 M
Max Recorded Speed : 160 KPH

Main Armament : BURST CANNON IN CHIN TURRET
Secondary Armament : DRONE CONTROLLED 4 X PULSE CARBINES
Traverse : 120°
Elevation : +5° TO -45°
Ammunition : 2000 ROUNDS
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : LIGHT COMBAT VEHICLE. ALSO MOUNTS FUSION GUN & SEEKER MISSILE RACK

Piranha with fusion gun



PIRANHA TEAM					
	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Piranha	60	11	10	10	3

Thought for the day:
We will not simply endure
- we will prevail!

Type: Skimmer, fast, open-topped

Crew: 2. Tau Fire Warriors

Team: A team consists of between 1 and 5 Piranhas.

Weapons: The Piranha is armed with a chin-mounted burst cannon and a pair of gun drones armed with twin-linked pulse carbines.

Options: The chin-mounted burst cannon may be upgraded to a fusion blaster for +5 pts.

A Tetra may take the following vehicle upgrades from the Tau Codex: Sensor spines, Multi-tracker, Target lock, Targeting array, Blacksun filter, Decoy launchers, Disruption pod, Seeker missiles (maximum of two per Piranha). The Piranha is always equipped with gun drones.

Fast Attack: A Piranha team is a Fast Attack choice for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

Gun Drones: The drones will move with the vehicle, contained in its specially designed recesses. During any Tau Movement phase, the drones may disengage in the same way as infantry dismount from a transport and form an independent unit. From then on, the drones function as a Drone squadron. The Drones may not rejoin the vehicle during the game. Each Piranha's drones act separately, they do not form up into one larger unit.

While attached, the drones may fire as part of the vehicle, using their own BS, in addition to any other weapons that would normally be permitted to fire, and are treated as passengers if the vehicle is damaged.

HEAVY GUN DRONES

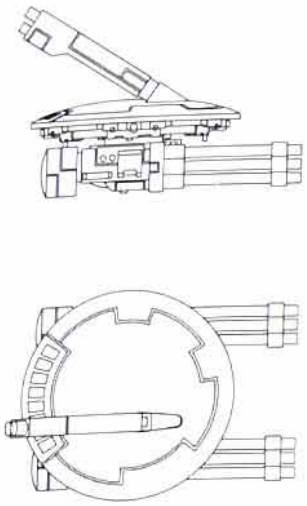
Unlike the Imperium, the Tau make extensive use of machine-intelligences, called drones. All drones consist of an advanced processor unit, which individually has only a basic intelligence (approximately that of a small animal). Notably, they always seem to have been programmed for self-preservation, and drones will flee rather than face certain destruction. Drones can be networked together into teams. This significantly increases the intelligence and processing speed of all the drones, and their ability for independent action. Normally a drone would require regular orders from its Tau master but several drones acting together become capable of acting independently for long periods.

Drones are conventionally disk shaped, well-armoured and equipped with small anti-gravitic and jet motors so they can hover and skim along. As well as being used by the Tau in civilian roles, as domestic servants, messengers etc, drones are commonly used by the Tau for many dangerous or tedious duties, making them perfect for many military applications.

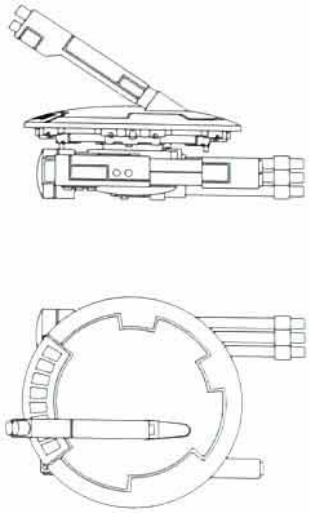
The Fire Caste regularly arm drones with a variety of weapons, shield generators, and other military equipment and uses squadrons of them alongside their Fire Warriors in battle. Despite their basic intelligence, the Tau do not treat drones as expendable forces, but as another useful weapon in their armoury. Most Tau units are accompanied by at least a couple of drones, to assist in mundane tasks. For Fire Warrior teams, these drones are usually carried by their Devilfish transport (the drone's small jet engines would not be able to keep up with a fast moving Devilfish), and these drones detach themselves in combat to act as additional fire support, move ahead as forward scouts for the team, or guard a flank. Tau commanders have personal drones to carry extra shields, sensors or communications equipment.

The largest drones yet identified are the Heavy Gun Drones. Far larger than the Gun Drones, they are large enough to carry multiple heavy weapons (usually burst cannons) to lend direct fire support to Fire Warrior teams. Other heavy weapons have also been mounted on these larger drones as well as a few carrying Markerlights and operating as forward spotters for Seeker missiles.

Heavy Gun Drones with burst cannons



Heavy Gun Drones with burst cannon and markerlight



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Date : 1508998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : HEAVY GUN DRONE

Vehicle Codename : NA

Vehicle Type : DRONE SKIMMER

Crew : NA

Weight : UNKNOWN

Length : 2.2 M

Width : 1.8 M

Height : .9 M

Max Recorded Speed : 40 KPH

Main Armament : 2 X BURST CANNON

Secondary Armament : NA

Traverse : 360°

Elevation : +20° TO -20°

Ammunition : 500 ROUNDS

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

CLASSIFIED

Summary : DRONE CONTROLLED HEAVY WEAPONS.MAY ALSO CARRY A MARKERLIGHT.

HEAVY GUN DRONE SQUADRON

	Points	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Heavy Gun Drone	25 each	2	2	3	4	1	4	1	7	4+

Squadron: A squadron consists from 2-6 Heavy Gun Drones.

Equipment: Each Drone is armed with twin-linked burst cannons.

Options: Any Drone may replace one burst cannon with a Markerlight, for free.

Jetpacks: Heavy Gun Drones are subject to the Jump Infantry and Jetpack special rules, as described in the Warhammer 40,000 Unit Types rules section and may be deployed using the Deep Strike special rule if the mission being played permits it (though they may not make the additional 6" move in the turn they arrive).

Heavy Support: A Heavy Gun Drone squadron is a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army.

Thought for the day:
Blessed is a closed mind
filled with faith.

DRONE SENTRY TURRET

A Drone sentry turret is an automated weapons system; each contains an advanced processor, giving it a basic intelligence much like a drone. A team of turrets are networked together to form an artificially intelligent defensive perimeter, capable of making its own decisions independently of its Tau programmers.

The turret itself consists of a cylindrical armoured hull with a pop-up gun turret. The turret only activates when a suitable target is identified. It rises up, levels its weaponry, fires until its targets are eliminated then lowers down into its safe position. Unlike Imperial Tarantula sentry guns, the drone intelligence is capable of making its own targeting decisions, and can differentiate between friendly and enemy units effectively, choosing to ignore some targets in favour of others.

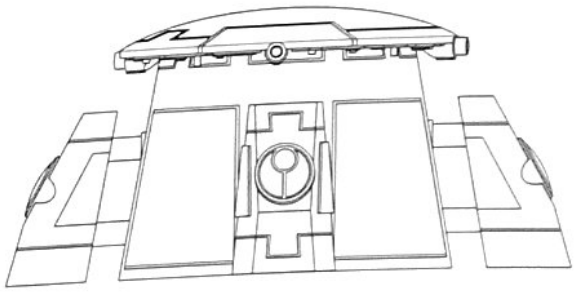
Drone turrets can be deployed onto a battlefield by aircraft dropping them into position. Pathfinder teams equipped with Markerlights will designate target points. An Orca or Manta will then drop the turrets, which incorporate a small Tau jetpack to direct and slow its descent into position. Once in place the turret will be activated, but remains dormant until an enemy is identified.

Tau strategic doctrine does not usually seek to hold ground, preferring a mobile form of ground warfare, but often it is necessary to defend strategically important locations. Rather than waste Fire Warriors' in static garrison duty, the Tau will use drones or drone sentry turrets instead. Drone sentry turrets will often be found protecting command posts, airfields or guarding routes that Pathfinder teams have identified as likely to be used by advancing enemy forces.

On Taros, sentry turrets were commonly encountered by all the Imperium's forces. The deserts were liberally seeded with them, equipped with disruption pods as ambush units. Tallarn scout units often found themselves under fire from a turret, which then had to be attacked and destroyed. hydro-processing plant 23-30 was defended by many turrets, all disguised with disruption pods, which the Elysians aerial reconnaissance failed to notice. As a result Storm Trooper squads leading the airborne attack came under heavy fire from these unidentified heavy weapons, and took heavy casualties in the initial landings.

The Imperium's records claim that, in total, over 200 turrets were encountered and destroyed during the fighting. This is likely to be an inflated figure but illustrates the wide use made of the turrets by Tau forces.

Drone sentry turret – closed



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 1508998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : SENTRY TURRET

Vehicle Codename : NA

Vehicle Type : DRONE CONTROLLED STATIC DEFENCE

Crew : NA

Weight : 3 TONNES

Length : 4.5 M

Width : 4.5 M

Height : 3.1 M

Max Recorded Speed : NA

Main Armament : 2 X BURST CANNON

Secondary Armament : NA

Traverse : 360°

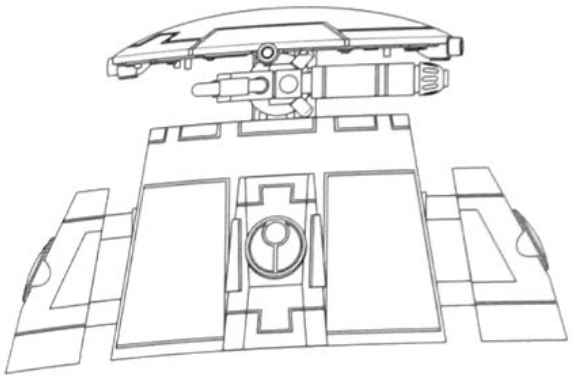
Elevation : +10° TO -5°

Ammunition : 2000 ROUNDS

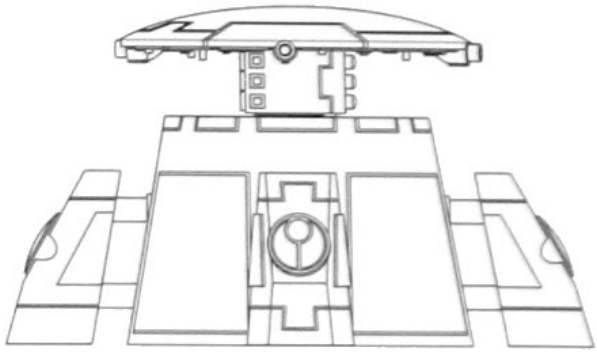
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : DRONE CONTROLLED STATIC DEFENCE WITH POP-UP TURRET.

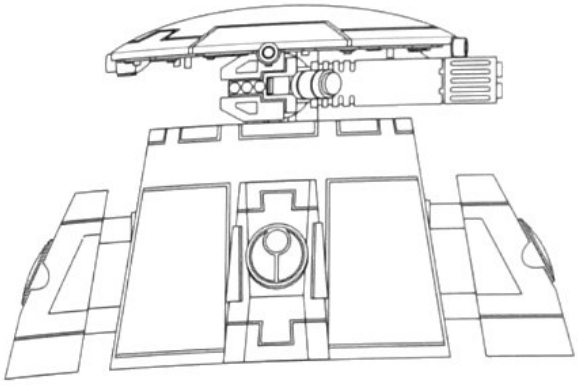
Drone sentry turret with plasma rifles



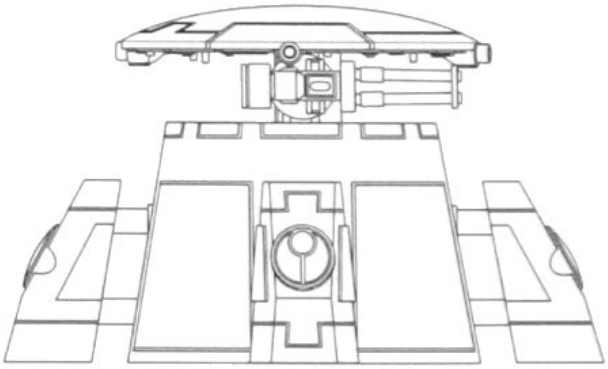
Drone sentry turret with missile pods



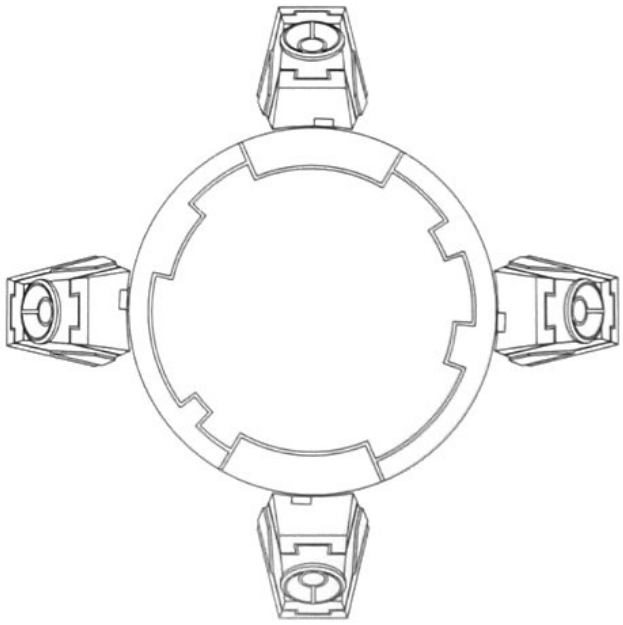
Drone sentry turret with fusion blasters



Drone sentry turret with burst cannons



Drone sentry turret – plan view



DRONE SENTRY TURRET TEAM					
	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Drone Sentry Turret	45	12	12	12	2

Thought for the day:
Within the dark and forgotten places
hide the enemies of the Emperor.

Team: A team consists 1-4 turrets

Type: Immobile, (open-topped if fired last turn)

Crew: Drone

Weapons: A Drone sentry turret is armed with twin-linked burst cannons.

Options: The twin-linked burst cannons may be upgraded to twin-linked missile pods for +6 pts; or twin-linked plasma rifles at +9 pts; or twin-linked fusion blaster at +7 pts.

Deep Strike: Drone sentry turrets may Deep Strike (dropped from Orcas or Mantas) at +1 pt per model, if the mission permits. Each turret should be positioned separately using the Deep Strike rules, they do not have to deploy together. If the turret lands on another vehicle then both vehicles take a glancing hit from the impact. If it lands on impassable terrain or deviates off the table then the turret is destroyed.

Heavy Support: A team of Drone sentry turrets is a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army. A team may be transported in an Orca or Manta.

Fortifications. If playing a scenario where the Tau can take fortifications then a Drone Sentry Turret team counts as a Troop choice. A Tau player may purchase Drone sentry turrets as part of the Defender's Armoury in a Cityfight game.

SPECIAL RULES

Pop-up Turret: A Drone sentry turret only counts as open-topped once it has opened fire. If a sentry turret fired last turn then it counts as an open-topped vehicle. If the Sentry turret did not fire last turn then it does not count as open-topped.

Damage: If the turret takes a Crew Shaken or Crew Stunned result (and can therefore not fire), then the turret will automatically close, this is part of the turret's defence against incoming fire. It will not count as open-topped in subsequent turns.

If the turret takes an Immobilised damage result, then this has no effect, but the turret still counts as damaged for the purposes of calculating Victory Points.

Markerlight Targeting: A model equipped with a Markerlight can designate a target point for a single deep striking Drone sentry turret. Nominate a target point within LOS and range of the markerlight and the Drone sentry turret will land on that point – do not roll for scatter. The model with the markerlight cannot move whilst designating the point, or fire another weapon in the Shooting phase.

Victory Pts: Drone sentry turrets may not claim Victory Points for occupying table quarters or other objectives.

REMOTE SENSOR TOWER

Another newly encounter piece of Tau equipment is the Remote sensor tower. It wasn't until late in the Taros campaign that any of the Imperium's forces encountered these strange devises. The vanguard of the Cadian 114th regiment met these tall, thin towers as they advanced towards hydro-processing plant 23-30. Soon afterwards, their columns came under attack from long-range Seeker missile strikes, losing several Chimeras in the process.

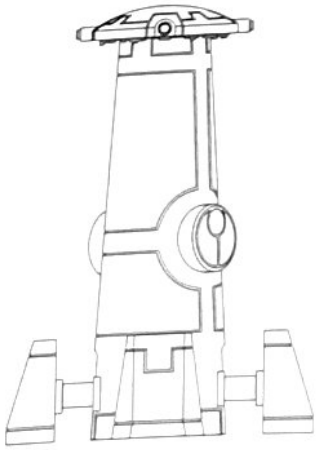
The Remote sensor tower is actually an information relay station, which scans the surrounding area and relays data on enemy movements to other Tau units in the vicinity. It incorporates advanced ground sensors, its own Markerlight system and targeting information, which is used to guide other attacks. The tower mounts no weaponry, but is considered expendable by the Tau.

The tower itself looks like a smaller version of the Drone sentry turret, but instead of weaponry inside it has a tall aerial which telescopes upwards to give the sensor equipment a higher vantage point for its scanning.

The Tau use the towers as an area denial weapon, making it difficult for the Cadian Chimeras to move without drawing immediate attack. In this way they acted much like a conventional minefield, slowing the enemy advance and making movement dangerous rather than being able to halt an advance on its own. Camouflage to match the desert they were difficult to spot, and supported by fast moving Piranhas, mounting Seeker missiles, the Tau were able to harry the Cadian columns and inflict losses far outweighing their own numbers. The resulting delays would mean the Elysian Drop Troops surrounded at the process plant were never relieved, and eventually their position was overrun.

As yet, the remote sensor tower's full functions are unknown, as none have yet been captured intact.

Remote sensor tower – closed



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Date : 1508998.M40

Signature

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : SENSOR TOWER

Vehicle Codename : NA

Vehicle Type : DRONE CONTROLLED STATIC DEFENCE

Crew : NA

Weight : 2 TONNES

Length : 2.4 M

Width : 2.4 M

Height : 6.2 M

Max Recorded Speed : NA

Main Armament : NA

Secondary Armament : NA

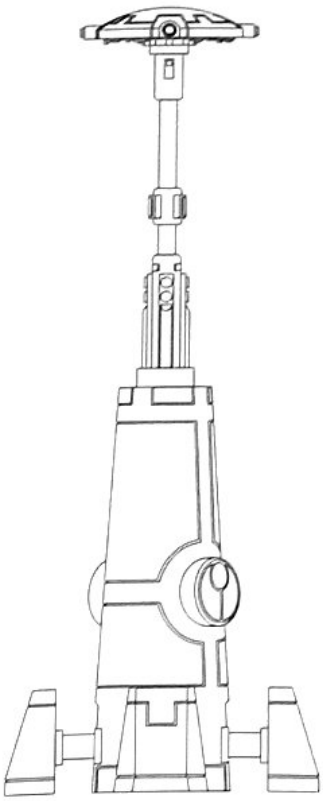
Traverse : 360°

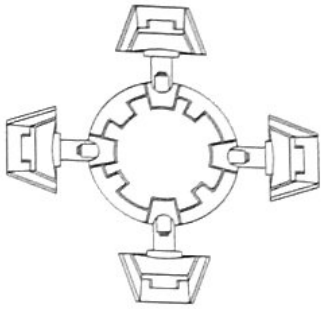
Elevation : NA

Ammunition : NA

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : DRONE CONTROLLED STATIC DEFENCE, SENSOR ARRAY AND TARGET INFORMATION RELAY





Remote sensor tower – open and plan view

0-1 REMOTE SENSOR TOWER TEAM

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Remote Sensor Tower	40	10	10	10	2(3)

Thought for the day:
In Nostra Manus - Progenies Futuris.

Type: Immobile

Crew: Drones

Team: A team consists of 1-3 Remote sensor towers.

Weapons: A Remote sensor tower has a Markerlight, Target Lock and a Sensor Array. A Remote sensor tower always has a Targeting Array.

Options: None.

Troops: A team of Remote sensor towers is a Troops choice for a Tau army.

Fortifications: A Tau player may also purchase Remote sensor towers as part of the Defender's Armoury in a Cityfight game.

SPECIAL RULES

Markerlight: This functions as a standard Markerlight, illuminating a target for another weapon or Seeker missile.

Target Lock: The Remote sensor tower can communicate information on potential targets directly to Tau vehicles in the area. At the start of the Tau player's Shooting phase choose a single Tau vehicle on the table, and it counts as having the Target Lock upgrade for that turn's firing only.

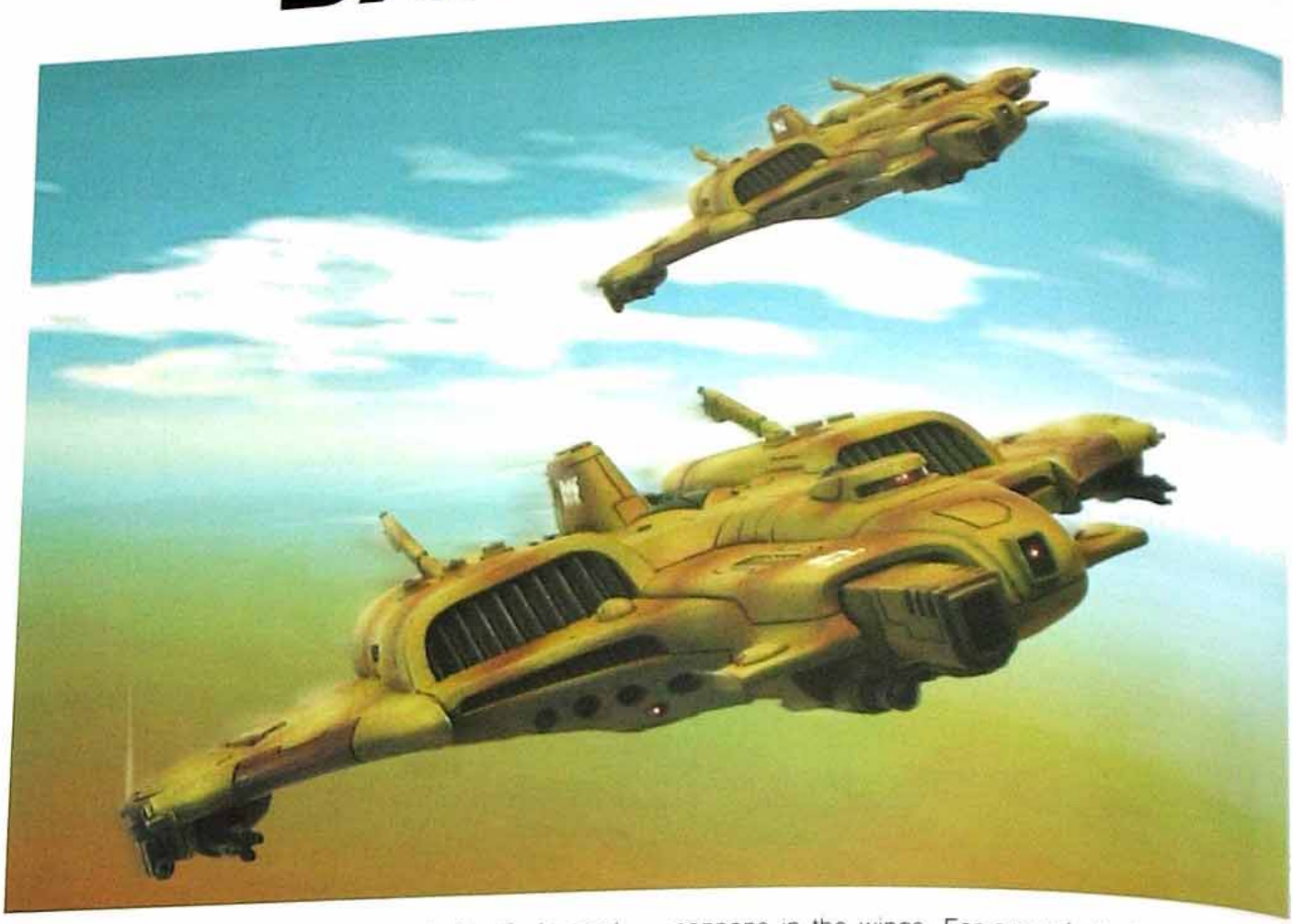
Sensor Array: The Sensor Array detects enemy activity in the vicinity of the tower, acting as a sentry. These sensors allow the tower to detect infiltrators and secret deployment. If enemy infiltrators set up within 4D6" of the tower then the tower may take a 'free' shot at them with its Markerlight (or sound the alarm in a raid scenario). If the Markerlight hits, then a Seeker missile can immediately be launched. These shots are taken before the battle begins and may cause infiltrators to fall back.

Damage: If the tower takes a Crew Shaken or Crew Stunned result (and therefore cannot fire), then it cannot use its Markerlight, Target Lock or Sensor Array.

If the turret take as Immobilised damage result, then this has no effect, but the turret still counts as damaged for the purposes of calculating Victory Points

Victory Pts: Remote sensor towers may not claim Victory Points for occupying table quarters or other objectives.

BARRACUDA



The Barracuda air superiority fighter is the Tau's most common atmospheric aircraft. Faster than the Imperial Navy's Marauder bomber, but lacking the flat out top speed of the Thunderbolt or Lightning fighter, it makes up for this due to its sophisticated electronic systems and pilots natural talents. In a dogfight, Thunderbolts and Barracuda are very closely matched, with the Thunderbolt having the edge in speed, and the Barracuda having the manoeuvrability. The Imperium's pilots often have a hard edge of combat experience that the Tau Air Caste find hard to match.

All Tau pilots come from the Air Caste. Air Caste members live almost exclusively off-world in orbital stations and habitats. Over time their long-term exposure to lower gravity has affected their physiognomy. This means that, even when operating in a gravity well, the Air Caste have developed superior three-dimensional awareness and marginally better acceleration and gravitational tolerances that their human opponents. Physically this makes a Tau pilot naturally better suited to the rigours of air-to-air combat than a human pilot, able to make tighter turns and hold them longer, and push the gravity envelope further. Utilising these advantages the Barracuda excels in air-to-air combat, but this is only part of its role. Ground attack is the second part, flying in direct support of Hunter Cadres.

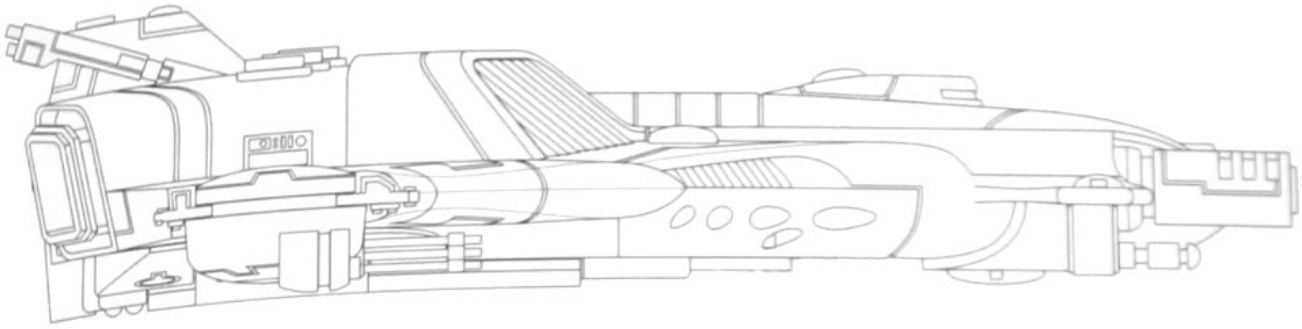
A Barracuda is armed with a nose-mounted, pilot aimed, ion cannon. This is the aircrafts primary weapon for use in dogfights, backed up by two drone controlled burst cannons in the wings. For ground attacks, it is primarily armed with wing mounted missile pods. When used in a ground attack role a Barracuda can carry additional armament of up to four Seeker missiles. These are not controlled by the pilot but by a Markerlight operator on the ground.

All Barracudas are equipped with escape pods. In the event that the aircraft sustains serious damage the pilot can eject. The entire cockpit capsule disconnects and has limited gravitic mobility to return the pilot safely to earth. Once on the ground the pilot must make his own escape.

Different Air Caste Septs have been identified operating slightly different versions of the Barracuda. Some are equipped with night-fighting filters, whilst other utilise disruption pods and decoy launchers for additional protection.

On Taros, the Tau Coalition included a large Air Caste contingent, which formed an integral part of their strategy. Winning the air war was vital to the Tau's plans, and Barracudas and Thunderbolts fought daily for control of the skies. Flying from well-concealed desert air bases on the Iracunda Isthmus the Barracudas eventually won the battle. As well as engaging in dogfights, the Barracudas also targeted the Imperial Guard's supply columns, operating in unison with infiltrating Pathfinder teams to destroy Trojans and the supplies vital to keeping the Imperial Guard fighting. They played a major role in this part of the Tau strategy.

Barracuda



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 1508998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : AIR SUPERIORITY FIGHTER

Vehicle Codename : BARRACUDA

Vehicle Type : AIRCRAFT

Crew : 1. PILOT

Weight : 7 TONNES

Length : 11.4 M

Width : 12.5 M

Height : 3.25 M

Max Recorded Speed : 2,100 KPH

Main Armament : NOSE MOUNTED ION CANNON
WING MOUNTED MISSILE PODS

Secondary Armament : DRONE CONTROLLED
BURST CANNONS

Traverse : 0°

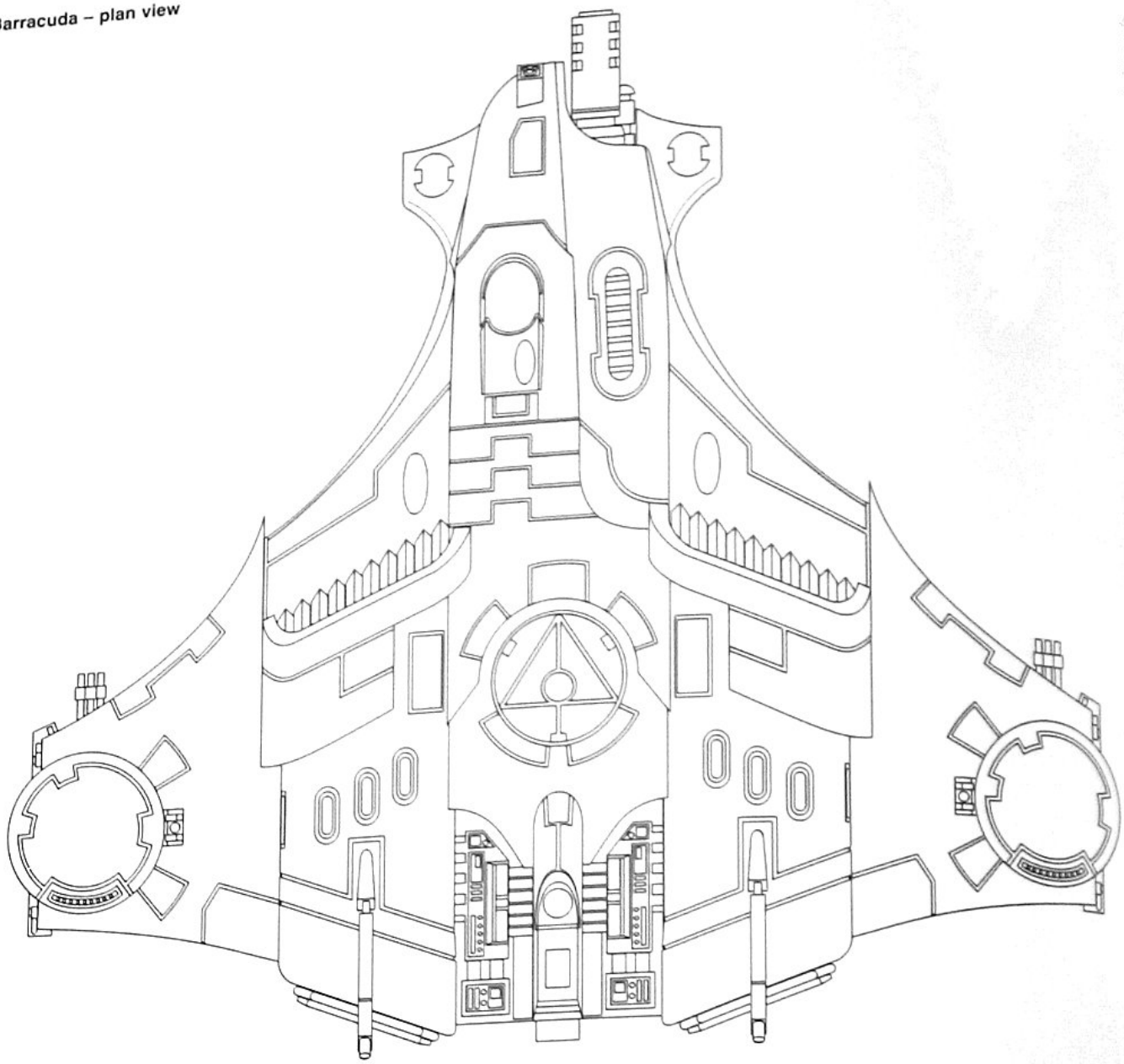
Elevation : +0° TO -0°

Ammunition : 8 MISSILES. 8000 ROUNDS

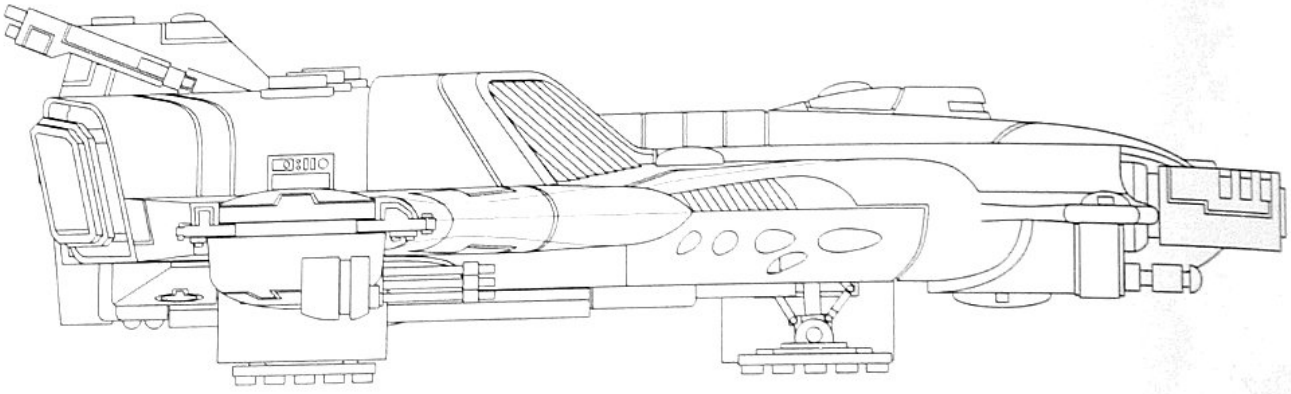
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY
COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

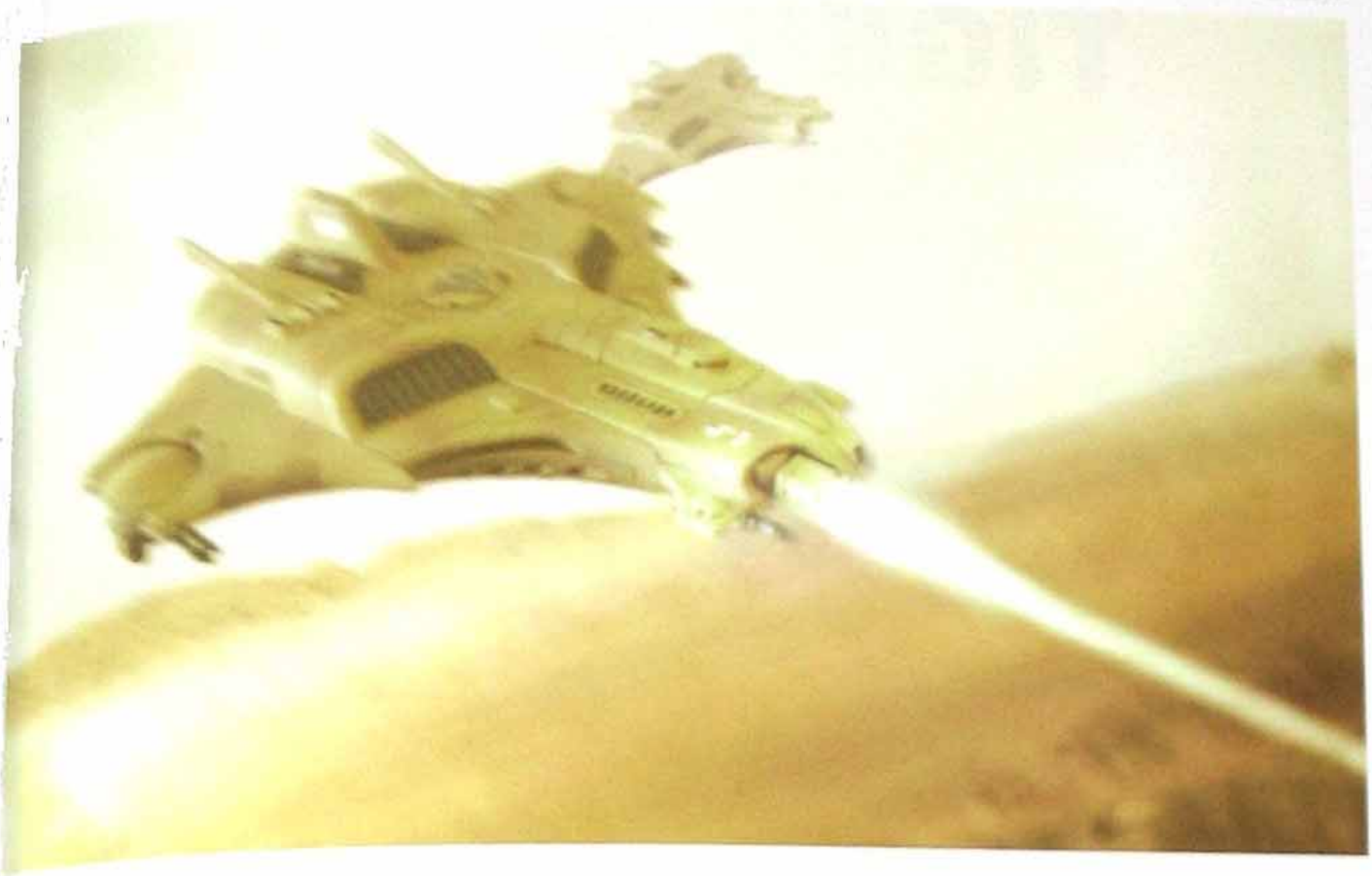
Summary : FRONTLINE COMBAT AIRCRAFT. ALSO CARRIES SEEKER MISSILE RACKS.

Barracuda – plan view



Barracuda – landed





BARRACUDA

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Barracuda	220	10	10	10	3 (4)

Thought for the day:
Obedience is the maker of armies.

Type: Flyer

Crew: (1) Tau Air Caste

Weapons: The Barracuda is armed with an ion cannon, two burst cannons and twin-linked missile pods. Note the burst cannons are not twin-linked and fire separately.

Options: The Barracuda can be upgraded to carry up to four Seeker missiles for +10 pts each. These can be controlled by any model with a Markerlight.

The Barracuda can take any of the following vehicle upgrades as described in the Tau Codex: Blacksun filter, Disruption pod, Decoy launcher and Target lock.

Heavy Support: The Barracuda is a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army.

SPECIAL RULES

Weapon	Range	Str	AP	Type	Notes
Ion cannon	60"	7	3	Heavy 3	-
Burst cannon	18"	5	5	Assault 3	-
Missile pod	36"	7	4	Assault 2	-
Seeker missile	Unlimited	8	3	Heavy 1	*1

*1 These weapons are controlled by any model with a Markerlight. Any model equipped with a Markerlight may request a single missile to be launched if they score a hit on the desired target with their Markerlight. The Seeker missiles can be fired as normal in the Tau's Shooting phase, after the Barracuda has arrived from being in reserve and been placed on the table edge, but before it makes its attack run. Seeker missiles are an exception to the rule that flyers may not fire in their own turn, only on an attack run in their enemy's turn.

TIGER SHARK

The Tiger Shark is the Barracuda's larger cousin. It is a large aircraft deployed in the fighter-bomber role. Often encountered flying in support of Tau Hunter Cadres during major operations, it is faster and more manoeuvrable than the Imperium's direct equivalent – the Marauder bomber – but the Tiger Shark lacks the large bomb payload.

Tiger Sharks are never as numerous as the Barracuda, but have many features and systems in common with it. All crew come from the Air Caste, giving them the natural advantage of superior three-dimensional awareness and tolerance for higher acceleration speeds, and more Gs in the turn, than a human pilot. Like the Barracuda, different Air Caste Septs operate slightly different versions. Other Tiger Shark variants have been identified armed multiple burst cannons and Seeker missiles.

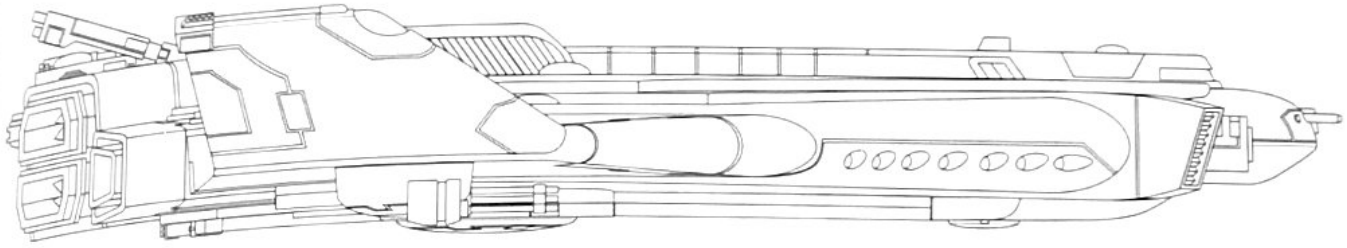
The Tiger Shark's main role seems to be the deployment of drones. Its drone racks can deploy a shower of remote weapons platforms anywhere over the battlefield, as well as strafing with its ion cannons and wing-mounted missile pods. It is armed with ion-cannons and missile pods for ground attacks, and drone-controlled burst cannons for defence against enemy fighters, although a flight of Tiger Sharks will usually also be accompanied by Barracudas as fighter cover.

The aircraft has two crew, a pilot and a navigator/ weapons operator. Their cockpit is also an escape pod, which can detach from the aircraft's fuselage and has limited gravitic mobility to bring the crew safely back to the ground.

On Taros, Tiger Sharks supported Tau operations as a rapid response force. Flying from well-hidden bases on the Iracunda Isthmus, Tiger Sharks were often the first Tau forces to respond to the Imperial Guard's advances, quickly seeding an area with Drone squadrons, whilst other Tau ground forces were moved into place. Tiger Sharks were the first Tau forces to reach hydro-processing plant 23-30 after the Elysian Drop Troops' surprise attack, quickly reinforcing the garrison with Drone squadrons.

On Taros, the Tau also deployed a new variant of the Tiger Shark. Codified as the AX-1-0, this heavily armed Tiger Shark replaced its drone racks and ion cannons with two heavy railguns and a Seeker missile array. These massive weapons, usually mounted on the far larger Manta, turn the Tiger Shark into a formidable ground attack weapon, capable of engaging and destroying super heavy tanks and Titans. It is believed that the AX-1-0 was developed as a direct response to the Imperium's largest Titans. Until the Taros Campaign the Tau had few weapons capable of stopping the Imperium's greatest war machines, but the Air Caste and Earth Caste had secretly developed the AX-1-0, and first fielded it on Taros.

During the breakthrough to the Iracunda Isthmus the Tau unleashed their latest weapon with alarming results. The sudden loss of the Warhound *Advensor Primaris* to a Tiger Shark attack caused the remaining Titans to be withdrawn from the front line.



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NOT FOR ARCHIVING

Date : 1508998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : BOMBER

Vehicle Codename : TIGER SHARK

Vehicle Type : ATMOSPHERIC AIRCRAFT

Crew : 2. PILOT. CO-PILOT

Weight : 25 TONNES

Length : 14.1 M

Width : 20.9 M

Height : 2.31 M

Max Recorded Speed : 2,100 KPH

Main Armament : 2 X ION CANNONS

MISSILE PODS - WING MOUNTED

Secondary Armament : DRONE CONTROLLED BURST CANNONS

Traverse : 0°

Elevation : +0° TO -0°

Ammunition : 12 MISSILES. 8500 ROUNDS

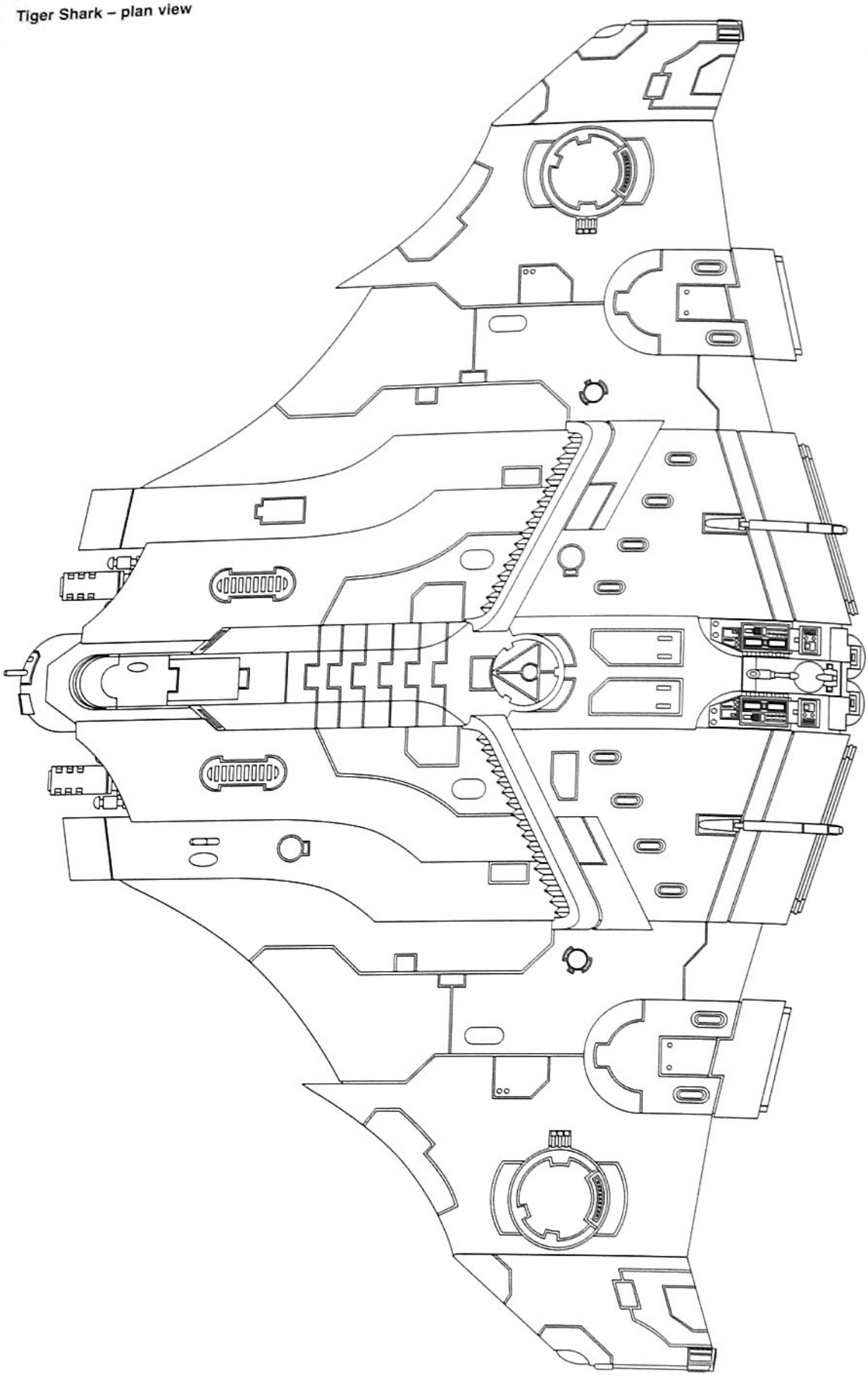
Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

CLASSIFIED

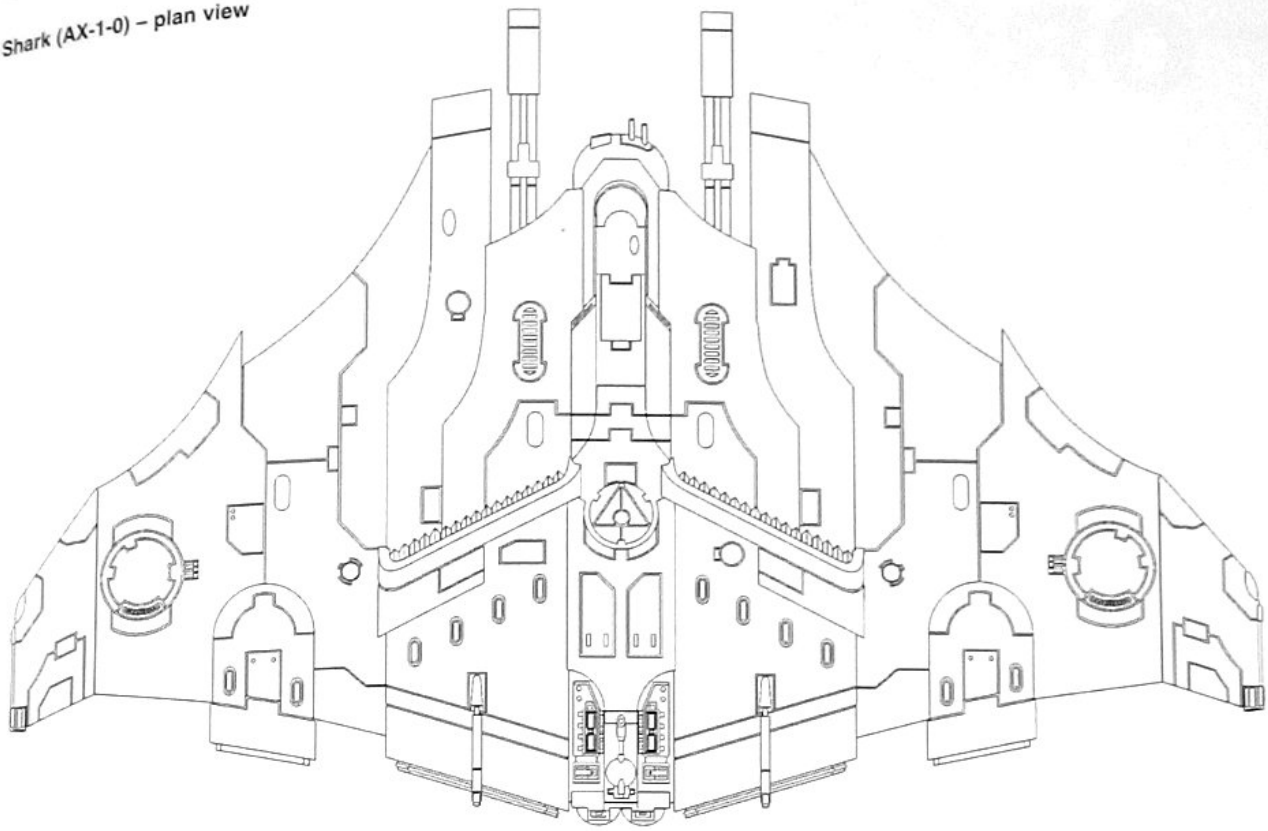
Summary FRONTLINE COMBAT AIRCRAFT. ALSO CARRIES PAYLOAD OF 14 GUN DRONES

RE-ARMED VARIANT REPLACES ION CANNONS AND PAYLOAD WITH HEAVY RAILGUNS

Tiger Shark – plan view



Tiger Shark (AX-1-0) – plan view



TIGER SHARK

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Tiger Shark	520	10	10	10	3 (4)

Thought for the day:
Our enemies cannot stop us.
They can only test our faith,
strength and courage.

Type: Super-heavy Flyer

Structure Points: 2

Crew: (2) Tau Air Caste

Weapons: The Tiger Shark is armed with twin-linked Ion cannons, two burst cannons and twin-linked missile pods. Note the burst cannons are not twin-linked and fire separately. The Tiger Shark has three drone racks carrying 14 drones in total.

The Tiger Shark is always equipped with a Targeting Array. It is also equipped with a Decoy launcher, as described in the Tau Codex. The points cost for these upgrades is included in the Tiger Shark's points value.

Options: The Tiger Shark may replace its twin-linked ion cannons and drone racks with twin-linked heavy railguns for +150 pts. It may also take a rack of 6 Seeker missiles and a networked Markerlight for +70 pts.

The Tiger Shark can take any of the following vehicle upgrades as described in the Tau Codex: Blacksun filter, Disruption pod.

Super Heavy Detachment: As a Super-heavy flyer the Tiger Shark must be taken as a separate detachment. A detachment consists of 1-3 Tiger Sharks.

SPECIAL RULES

Drone Rack: The Drone racks may be deployed on any attack run without the flyer having to land. The drones deploy by the normal rules for Deep Strike, but as they deploy during the attack run in the opponent's turn, they may move, shoot and assault normally in the Tau player's subsequent turn. Any number of squadrons can be deployed in a single turn.

Escape Pod: If the Tiger Shark is destroyed, nominate a point on the table and scatter the pod 2D6" as with the rules for Deep Strike. If the pod scatters so that it is off the table, it is counted as having escaped safely; see below. If not, place two Tau models within 2" of it (count as Fire Warriors with no weapons). The crew ar counted as being below half strength and are worth 0 Victory Points on their own, but their vehicle counts as only being damaged for Victory Points purposes whilst the crew are still alive or if they escape.

Heavy Railgun

	Range	Str	AP	Type	Notes
Railgun	108"	10	1	Ordnance1/ Titan-killer	
- sub-munitions	108"	7	3	Ordance1/ blast	

ORCA DROPSHIP

The Orca is a dedicated orbital transport vehicle – a shuttle for moving troops, equipment and supplies from spaceships in orbit to a planet's surface. Unlike the Space Marine Thunderhawk gunship, or the Tau's own far larger Manta, the Orca is not a front line combat vehicle, armed and armoured to take part in a battle. The Orca is only equipped for self-defence. Its primary function is transportation.

An Orca's large hold can carry up to 48 Tau Fire Warriors and their equipment. Two or three Orcas can transport an entire Hunter Cadre's worth of troops, drones and battlesuits onto a planet's surface. These would not usually be dropped directly in combat, more likely be inserted onto the planets surface some distance from the enemy to take up positions before a battle. During large planetary invasion operations the Orca provides important support to the Manta. Whilst Mantas transport the bulk of the Tau forces, Orcas allow a Shas'o to be flexible in the deployment of his Hunter Cadres, using the Orca for special missions. On Taros, this was deploying Pathfinders and Stealthsuit team into the deserts for scouting and sabotage missions. Orcas also carried Drone sentry turrets and dropped them in position in front of enemy units. Behind the lines, Orcas transport important personnel, such as the Ethereal, Water Caste Diplomats or the Shas'o commander himself, and their bodyguards.

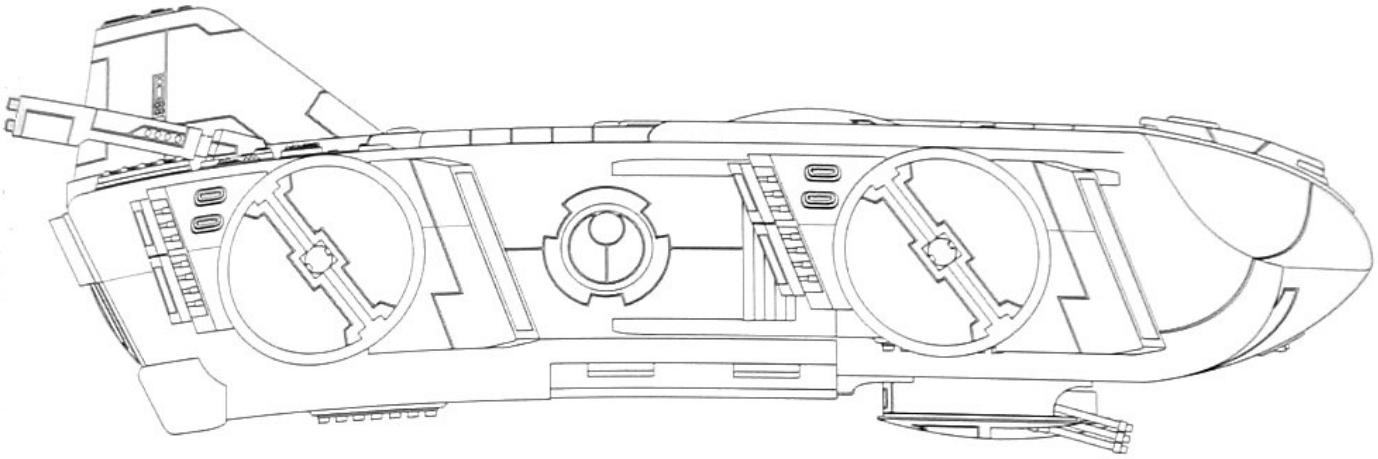
On dangerous missions, or if they have to approach a battlefield, a flight of Orcas will be defended by Barracudas, whose job is to intercept enemy fighters or engage ground targets that threaten an Orca and its cargo. The Orca's ventral, pop-down turret mounted weaponry is not well suited to dog-fighting, although it provides some protection from interceptors attacking from below, climbing to intercept the descending Orca. The weaponry's main use is for sweeping a landing zone with fire prior to a landing.

Using the Tau's anti-grav technology, and powered by quad ramjets, the Orca is fast and highly manoeuvrable for its size and bulky appearance.

On Taros, Orcas played an important role in the Tau's strategy. It was Orcas, often operating at night with blacksun filters, that inserted Pathfinder and Stealth teams deep behind enemy lines. It was from an Orca that Shas'el K'irri launched his daring raid on an Imperial Navy airbase, landing directly upon the runway. Orcas were also the workhorse of the Tau forces, moving troops and supplies to and from combat zones. It is estimated that at the peak of the fighting on Taros, Tau forces were operating in excess of 200 Orcas – but exact figures are unknown. There were unconfirmed reports of other variants of the Orca, armed with multiple missile racks and bomb bays, but none of these where positively identified during the Taros Campaign.

The Orca is crewed by a single Air Caste pilot, and its command centre is controlled by two Fire Caste operators. A Tau commander, or Ethereal, can oversee operations from here.

Orca – turret activated



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Date : 1508998.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : DROPSHIP

Vehicle Codename : ORCA

Vehicle Type : SHUTTLE

Crew : 3. PILOT. 2 X OPERATORS

Weight : 25 TONNES

Length : 21.45 M

Width : 14 M

Height : 4.95 M

Max Recorded Speed : 2,100 KPH

CLASSIFIED

Main Armament : 2 X BURST CANNONS

MISSILE POD

Secondary Armament : NA

Traverse : 360°

Elevation : +0° TO -90°

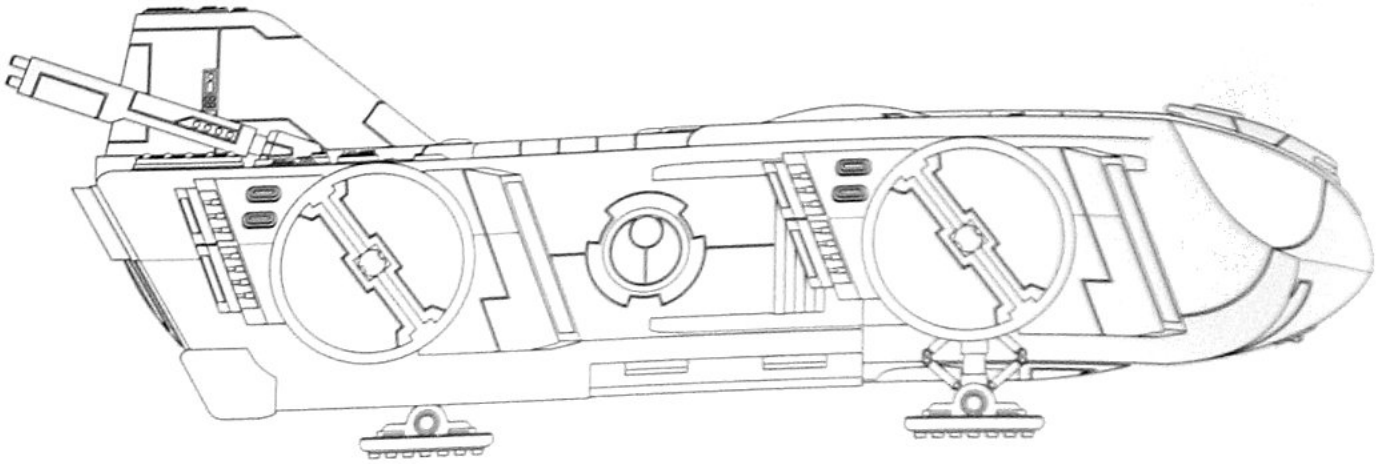
Ammunition : 12 MISSILES. 4000 ROUNDS

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY

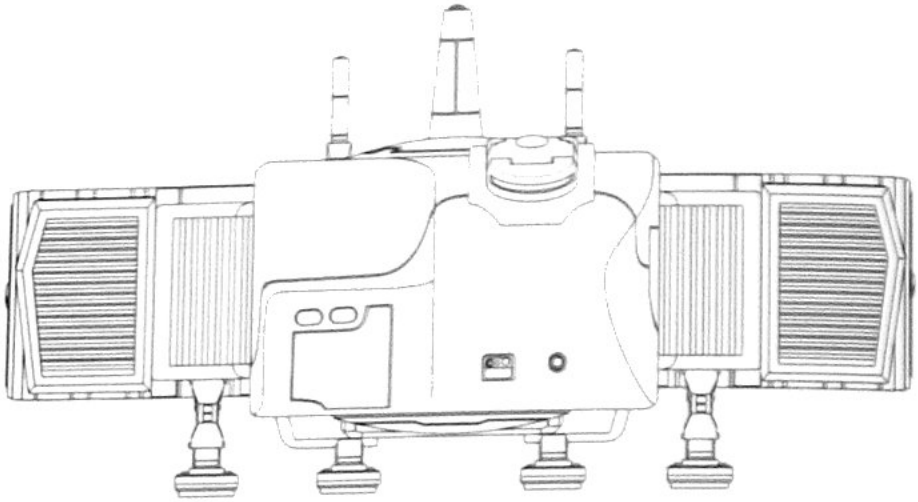
COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

Summary : TRANSPORT SHUTTLE CARRIES UP TO 48 PASSENGERS OR EQUIPMENT.

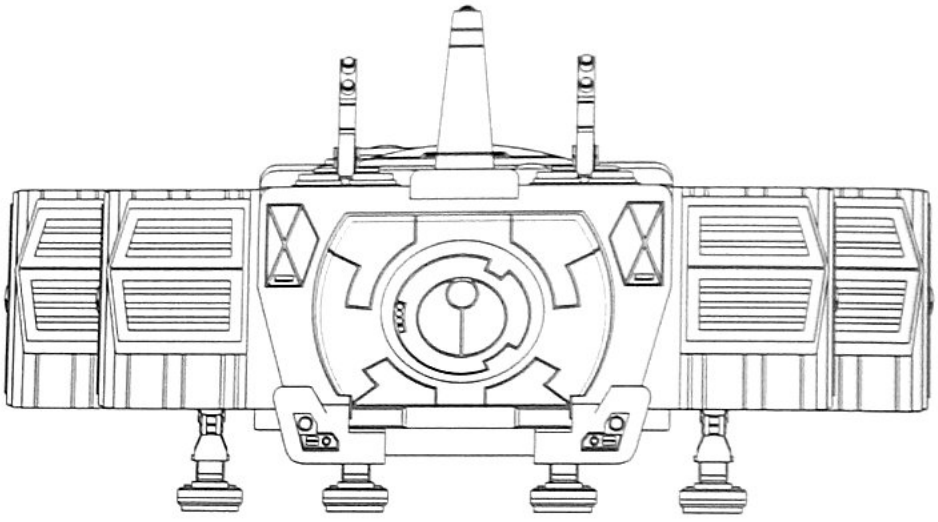
Orca – landing gear down



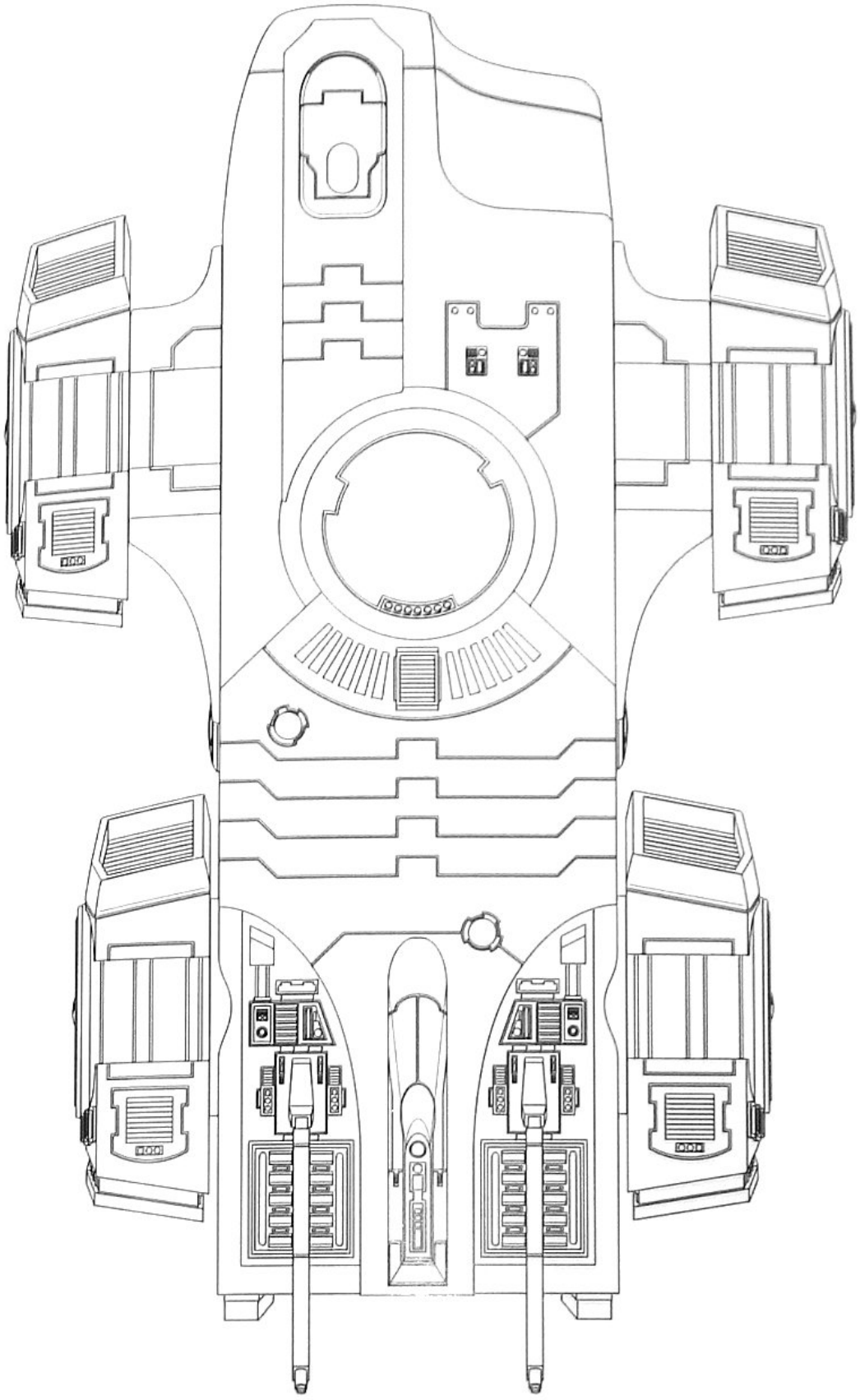
Orca – front view



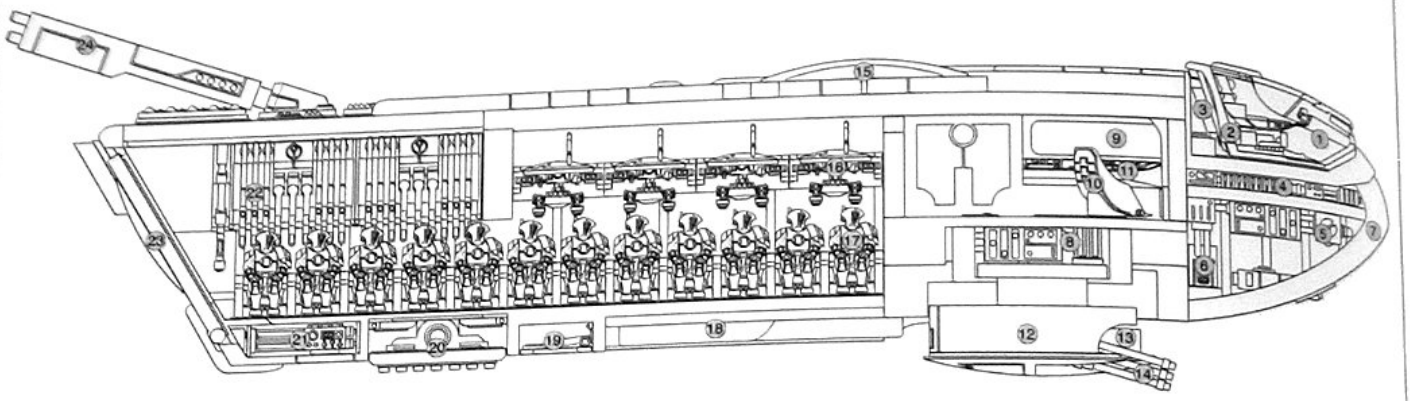
Orca – rear view



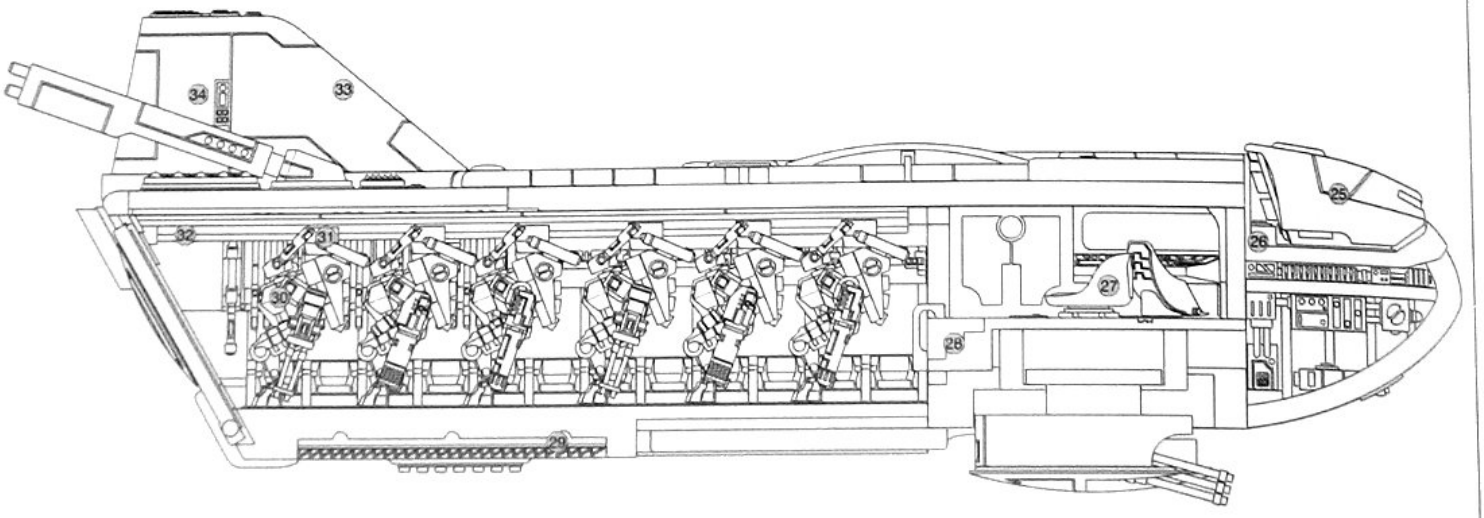
Orca – plan view



Orca Dropship
Interior Detail



1. Pilot's flight control panel
2. Pilot's seat
3. Escape pod boosters
4. Avionics processors
5. Navigational controls and instrument landing system
6. Engine and fuel control systems
7. Armoured nose cone
8. Fire control systems and turret mechanism
9. Tactical view screen
10. Operator's seat
11. Operator's system control panel
12. Ventral turret shroud and burst cannon ammunition storage.
13. Missile pod (pre-armed with 7 missiles)
14. Burst cannons (long barrelled)
15. Primary sensor bay
16. Drone transportation rack
17. Fire Warrior transportation station
18. Armoured fuselage and grav-plates
19. Airbrake
20. Rear landing pad (stowed)
21. Proximity sensors and rear ramp controls
22. Weapon stowage racks (for pulse rifles, carbines and rail rifle)
23. Rear ramp
24. Secure communications boom, exterior air data sensor and attack warning systems
25. Pilot's escape pod
26. Automated locating beacon
27. Commander's seat
28. Access steps to transport compartment
29. Grav-plates
30. XV8 Crisis battlesuit
31. Magnetic rail clamp
32. Automated battlesuit transportation rail
33. Tail fin
34. Maintenance control panel



ORCA

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Orca	390	11	11	10	3

Thought for the day:
Power does not reside with the Oracle, but with the Priests.

Type: Super-Heavy Flyer, Orbital Lander

Structure Points: 3

Crew: 3. 1 Air Caste, 2 Fire Caste operators

Weapons: The Orca is armed with twin-linked long-barrelled burst cannons and a missile pod.

Options: The Orca can take any of the following vehicle upgrades as described in the Tau Codex; Blacksun filter, Disruption pod, Decoy Launcher, Targeting array, up to 4 Seeker missiles.

Transport: The Orca may carry 24 Tau warriors*, up to 8 Gun Drones and 1 Ethereal.

In addition it can also carry up to 24 Tau warriors or Gun Drones.

or up to a maximum of 6 Crisis battlesuits (each battlesuit counts as 4 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 3 Broadside battlesuits (each battlesuit counts as 8 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 6 Heavy Gun Drones (each Heavy Gun Drone counts as 4 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 4 Drone sentry turret (each Drone sentry turret counts as 6 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 2 Tetra's (each Tetra counts as 12 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 6 Krootox (each Krootox counts as 4 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 12 Kroot Hounds (each Kroot Hound counts as 2 Tau warriors).

** Tau warrior includes Fire Warriors, Stealthsuits, Pathfinders, or Kroot.*

Super Heavy Detachment: As a Super-heavy Flyer the Orca must be taken as a separate detachment. A detachment consists of 1-3 Orcas.

Access Points: 1. The Orca has a rear ramp.

Fire Points: 0

SPECIAL RULES

Rapid Deployment: Rather than land on a dangerous, fire-swept, drop zone, the Orca can drop its passengers from the rear ramp without halting, skimming low over the ground whilst the squads, drones and battlesuits disembark via jetpacks. Instead of halting to deploy troops (like an orbital lander), squads can disembark from the back of the Orca anywhere along its flight path. This is treated just like normal disembarking from a vehicle. Place the models within 2" of the rear ramp before moving the Orca on to the next drop point. Troops which disembark do nothing else until the start of their next turn. Alternatively, the Orca can land using the Orbital Lander rules.

Escape Pod: If the Orca is destroyed, nominate a point on the table and scatter the pod 2D6" as with the rules for Deep Strike. If the pod scatters so that it is off-table, it is counted as escaped safely; see below. If not, place a Tau model within 2" of it (counts as a Fire Warrior with no weapons). The crewman is counted as being below half strength and is worth 0 Victory Points on his own, but the Orca counts only as being damaged for Victory Points purposes whilst the crewman is still alive or if he escapes off the table.

Decoy Launchers: If an Orca is equipped with a decoy launcher then instead of re-rolling an Immobilised glancing hit, you may re-roll an Engine Damaged glancing hit on the Super-heavy Flyers Damage tables. You may only re-roll the damage once, and the second result must stand.

Weaponry:	Range	Str	AP	Type
lb burst cannon	36"	5	5	Assault3
Missile pod	36"	7	4	Assault 2

MANTA

The Manta is the Tau's Super-heavy dropship, it is so large that it is actually a small spacecraft. The Manta is the Tau's closest equivalent of the Imperium's Titans or Ork Gargants, and carries comparable firepower. It is well armed and armoured for use in frontline combat, where it is expected to deploy and fight as an attack craft.

A Manta carries a fearsome amount of firepower. Its main weapons are twin heavy railguns. These guns fire a fin-stabilised round for extra lift (and therefore extra range) whilst in an atmosphere. The heavy railgun's sub-munitions shell is equipped with a drone processor, which is programmed to direct the shell to its target. This is mostly used during starship combat, to find weak points in the armour of enemy ships (sub-munitions lacking the penetrating power of the standard round), but is also useful in ground combat. As back-up to the main weapons, the Manta mounts twin ion cannon batteries in its wings. These provide shorter ranged saturation fire when in the thick of battle.

The rest of the Manta's arsenal consists of prow-mounted launch ports for up to ten Seeker missiles. These can be controlled by the crew, or by other Markerlight operators on the ground. The Manta's last weapons are its sixteen drone-controlled burst cannon turrets. These are positioned all around the Manta's hull for close defence whilst landed and as anti-aircraft weapons when in flight. The turrets are positioned so that all angles of approach are covered by multiple burst cannons.

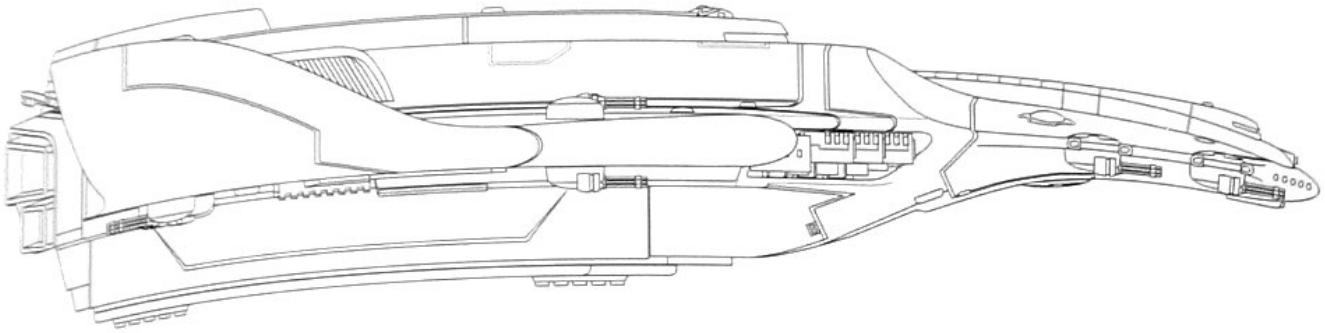
The Manta is the Tau's smallest interstellar capable spacecraft. It has limited etherdrive capacity, but because of its size a Manta can only make very short hops, restricting its use. For longer trips it must be transported inside the far larger carriers. As a spacecraft, Mantas are entirely crewed by members of the Air Caste.

As well as its firepower the Manta has a large transport capacity. The ships main body is split into two transport decks. The upper deck holds troops or battlesuits, whilst the cavernous lower deck can hold up to four (fully loaded) Devilfish or Hammerheads. The entire lower transport deck is an elevator, which is lowered to allow access. It can also be fitted to carry extra troops, battlesuits, Kroot, or just about any vehicle or equipment operated by the Fire Caste.

As well as its own cockpit, each Manta also contains a sophisticated command bridge. From here a Tau commander can oversee battlefield operations. This allows a Manta to act as a forward command post, fire control and communications hub.

On Taros, Mantas were widely used to transport the Hunter Cadres and their heavy equipment into the deserts, positioning the troops for counter-attacks and quickly extract them afterwards. Their fleet of Mantas gave the Tau forces superior strategic mobility over the ground-based Imperial Guard. This allowed the outnumbered Tau Hunter Cadres to match the Imperial Guard in equal force for local counter-attacks and battles.

Manta



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Date : 15/09/95.M40

Signature :

Serial Number : 85673-908461

Designation : SUPER HEAVY DROPSHIP

Vehicle Codename : MANTA

Vehicle Type : SHUTTLE

Crew : 8

Weight : 382 TONNES

Length : 32 M

Width : 52 M

Height : 8 M

Max Recorded Speed : UNKNOWN

CLASSIFIED

Main Armament : 2 X HEAVY RAILGUNS
6 X ION CANNONS.

Secondary Armament : DRONE CONTROLLED
BURST CANNONS X 16. 10 x SEEKER MISSILES

Traversе : 0°

Elevation : +0° TO -0°

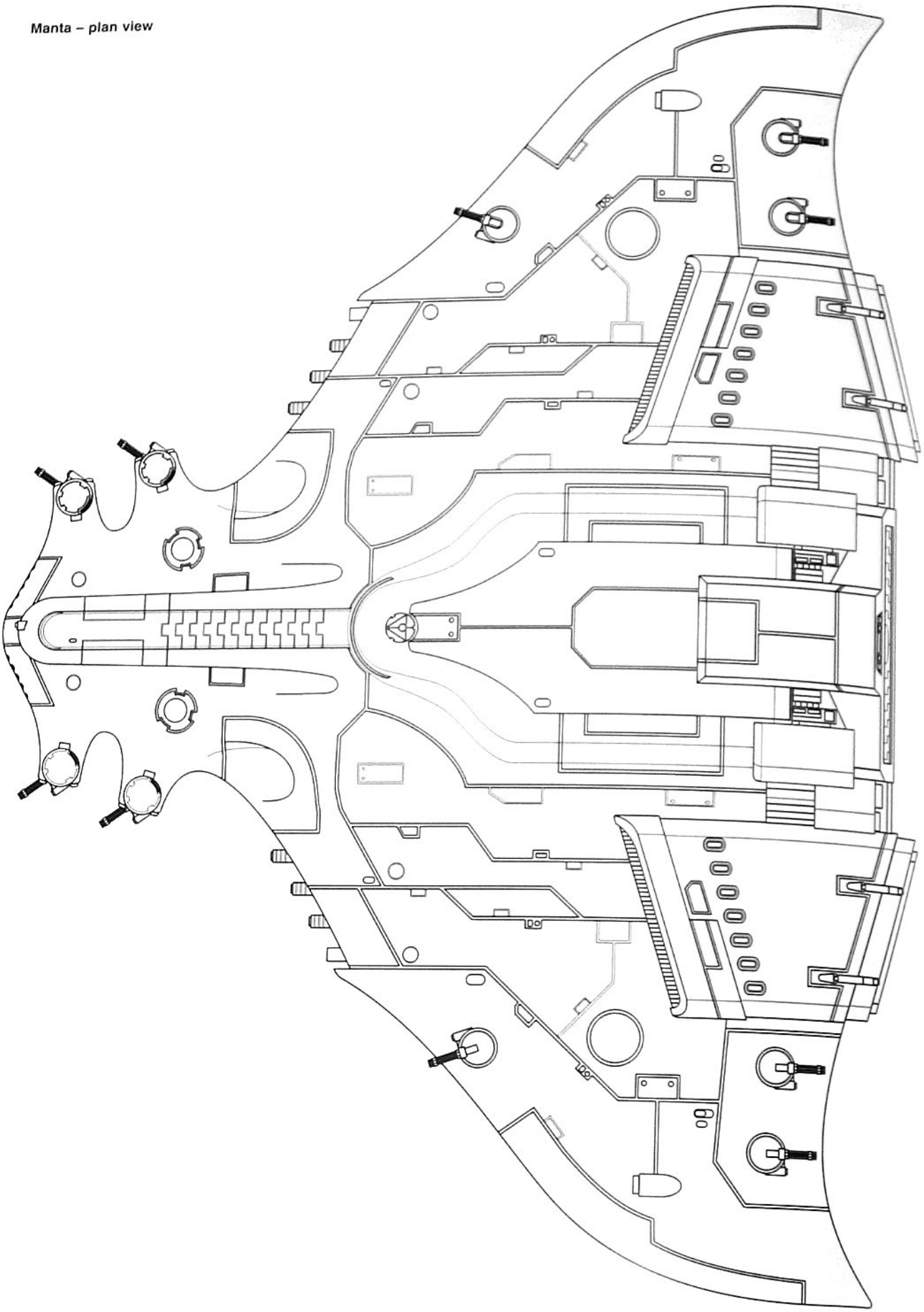
Ammunition : UNKNOWN

Armour Type : NANO-CRYSTALLINE ALLOY
COMPOSITION UNKNOWN

ENERGY SHIELDS - TYPE UNKNOWN

Summary : ALSO A SMALL SPACECRAFT

Manta – plan view



MANTA

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Manta	1980	13	12	11	(2) 3 (4)

Thought for the day:
By thy colours will the foe know thee.
By thy banners will the foe fear thee.

Type: Super-Heavy Flyer, Orbital Lander

Structure Points: 10

Crew: 9. Tau Air Caste

Weapons: The Manta is armed with twin-linked heavy railguns, 3 x twin-linked long-barrelled ion cannons, twin-linked missile pods,16 drone-controlled long-barrelled burst cannons (fired using BS2), 10 Seeker missiles (fire a maximum of 2 per turn) and a network Markerlight.

The Manta is always equipped with a Targeting Array for its main weapons. It also has an Energy shield, a Blacksun filter, Escape pod and Decoy launchers.

Options: None.

Transport: 188 Tau warriors* (see below).

Super-Heavy Detachment: As a Super-heavy Flyer the Manta must be taken as a separate detachment. A detachment consists of 1-3 Mantas.

Access Points: 2. The Manta's lower transport deck is an access elevator. It also has a rear ramp.

SPECIAL RULES

Upper Transport Deck Capacity: The Orca may carry 48 Tau warriors*.

or up to a maximum of 12 Heavy Gun Drones (each Heavy Gun Drone counts as 4 Tau warriors).

or up to a maximum of 24 Kroot Hounds (each Kroot Hound counts as 2 Tau warriors).

** Tau warriors includes Fire Warriors, Kroot, Stealthsuits, Pathfinders or Gun Drones. If a Pathfinder squad is deployed from a Manta they do not have to take a Devilfish troop carrier.*

Lower Transport Deck Capacity: The Manta may carry 140 Tau warriors* in its lower deck.

or up to a maximum of 4 Devilfish Troop Carriers **.

or up to a maximum of 4 Hammerheads or Sky Rays.

or up to a maximum of 4 Piranha.

in addition to the 4 vehicles, the lower deck may also carry up to 10 Crisis battlesuits or 5 Broadside battlesuits.

Alternatively, instead of vehicles the lower deck may carry;

or up to a maximum of 50 Crisis battlesuits.

or up to a maximum of 25 Broadside battlesuits.

or up to a maximum of 36 Heavy Gun Drones.

or up to a maximum of 12 Drone sentry turrets.

or up to a maximum of 12 Tetra speeders.

** Tau warriors includes Fire Warriors, Kroot and Kroot Hounds, Stealthsuits, Pathfinders or Gun Drones. If a Pathfinder squad is deployed from te lower deck of a Manta then they must take a Devilfish troop carrier.*

*** Additionally, Devilfish may also be pre-loaded with up to 12 Fire Warriors or Pathfinders.*

AA Fire: Due to its size, when firing at a Manta the enemy do not require 6s to hit, as with other aircraft, instead they can always use their own basic BS, just like firing at any other vehicles.

Energy Shield: The Manta is equipped with powerful energy shields and counter measures and has a 4+ Invulnerable Save against all hits.

Decoy Launchers: Decoy launchers are mounted near the engines of the Manta and fire clouds of reflective strips and tiny emitter drones to protect the vulnerable thrusters arrays. The Manta gains a 4+ Save against the effects of an Engines Damage result on the Super-heavy Flyer Damage tables. Roll a dice, on 4+ the result is ignored.

Drone Controlled Sub-Munitions: The Manta's sub-munitions are drone controlled for greater accuracy. When firing sub-munitions the Manta does not roll the additional D6 for deviation whilst moving, its rounds always deviate by a single D6.

Weaponry:	Range	Str	AP	Type	Notes
Ib burst cannon	36"	5	5	Assault3	
Ib ion cannon	90"	7	3	Heavy3	
Heavy railgun	108"	10	1	Ordnance1/ Titan-killer	
- sub-munitions	108"	7	3	Ordnance1/ blast	Drone controlled
Missile pod	36"	7	4	Assault2	
Seeker missile	unlimited	8	3	Heavy1	

THE TAU FLEET

It is believed that recent rapid expansion of the Tau Empire has placed massively increased pressure on the Tau fleet, the Kor'vattra. Since the dawn of the Tau Empire the development of the fleet has been given the highest priority by the Ethereal Caste. The Tau's leaders know that without a strong Kor'vattra the manifest destiny of the Tau cannot be realised. Over the past 1,000 years the Tau, as a race, have made remarkable progress in all areas of space travel, developing the necessary gravitic technologies, advanced metal alloys, weaponry etc to allow them to span interstellar distances and colonise worlds. Since the Tau's first contact with the Imperium in this process has continued at an ever-greater pace.

Intelligence sources report that the Tau fleet's experience during the Damocles Crusade is responsible for much of the urgency. The Kor'vattra's first major fleet engagements against the Emperor's ships, especially defeat in the Hydass system, were received as something of a disaster on T'au. The heavy loss of ships and lives probably sent shockwaves through the High Command. Air Caste crews reported being outgunned, out-manoeuvred, and out-thought by tactics they were unprepared to counter. Some of the Kor'vattra's ships and crews had performed well and did inflicted losses on the enemy, but it was now obvious that the Geu'la's ships presented a serious obstacle to the Tau's plans for continued expansion – an obstacle that must be met and overcome. Combined with this setback the Kor'vattra also made its first contact with another threat, outriders of the Tyranid hive fleets, and the Kor'vattra's performance and tactics against a new enemy were again called into question.

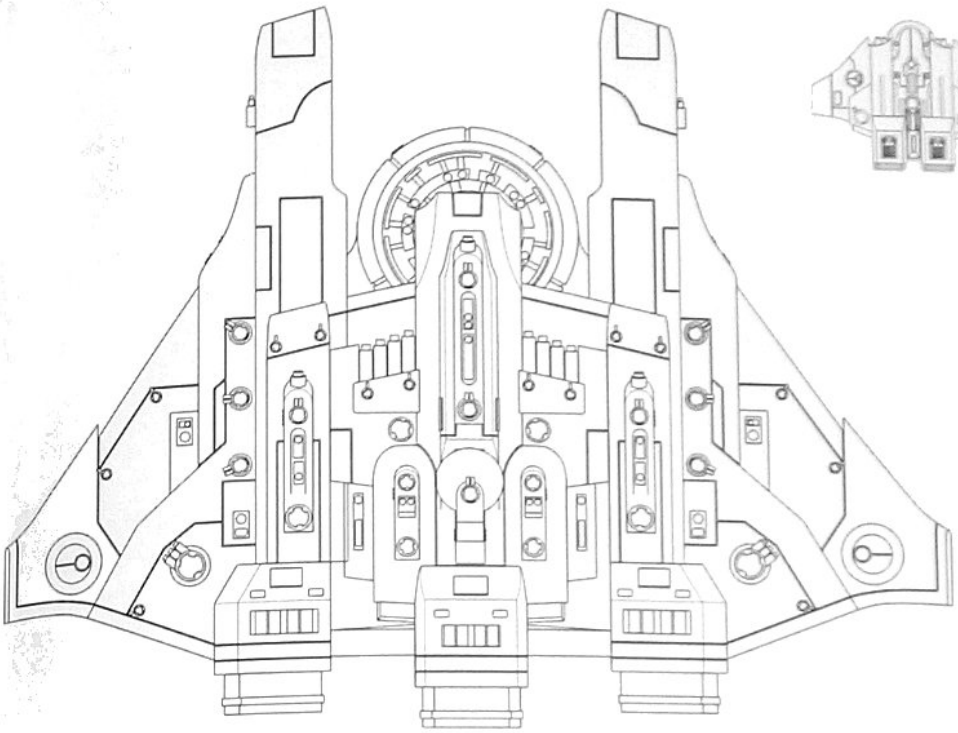
The problem wasn't yet a crisis, but the Ethereals and Air Caste saw its potential to develop into one. It seems they took swift action to correct it. To this end, the Ethereals, Air Caste and Earth Caste urgently re-thought their policies for the future development of the Kor'vattra.

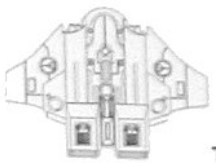
It is thought that the very best Earth Caste scientists of the T'au Sept were given whatever they needed to create a new 'experimental' fleet, incorporating all the lessons they had learn into new classes of ship. No effort was to be spared. The project was titled the Kor'or'vesh, and it resulted in a new wave of Tau ship designs.

The first of these new ships to be encountered was the Il'Porrui, and it seems it was quickly adopted by the T'au Sept's Water Caste. The Imperium first identified an Il'Porrui (codifying it as the 'Emissary' class), during fighting in the Dolumar system. The single vessel was eventually destroyed, but the new class of ship was noted amongst the Emperor's Admirals. Following the Il'Porrui, the Earth Caste of the T'au Sept were also soon testing Kir'shasvre, Kir'la, Or'es El'leath and finally the Lar'shi'vre vessels.

These vessels were first encountered in large numbers (as opposed to individual vessels) during the Taros Campaign. It seems that the T'au Sept used the border war as a testing ground. The arrival of these new ships in substantial numbers (up to this time they had been nothing more than anomalies), took Fleet Admiral Kotto by surprise. Given the Tau fleet's performance, their numbers may increase as the Kor'vattra of other Septs seek to adopt the new classes.

OR'ES EL'LEATH (CUSTODIAN) CLASS CARRIER ..... 310 pts





The Custodian is the largest of the next generation of Tau vessel yet encountered. It is a huge carrier transporting squadrons of attack craft and Mantas which fly in support of the rest of the Tau fleet. As well as its own protective firepower, the Custodian also transports three dedicated escort vessels, codenamed Wardens. The Wardens small size limits their etherdrive capability, so in order to operate effectively they are carried by their mothership and launched upon arriving in system. Their role is to protect the mothership, so they rarely stray too far.

The Custodian class carrier, *the A'rho*, was perceived to be the main threat to the Imperial fleet around Taros, and as such was remorselessly hunted down and eventually destroyed by Fleet Admiral Kotto.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Battleship/10	20cm	45	2	5+	5

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow gravitic launcher	20-40cm	4	Front
Port railgun battery	45cm	4	Front/left
Starboard railgun battery	45cm	4	Front/right
Port ion cannon	30cm	1	Front/left
Starboard ion cannon	30cm	1	Front/right
Port launch bay	Barracudas: 25cm Mantas: 20cm	4 squadrons	–
Starboard launch bay	Barracudas: 25cm Mantas: 20cm	4 squadrons	–
Ventral grav-hooks	–	Cap: 3 Wardens	–

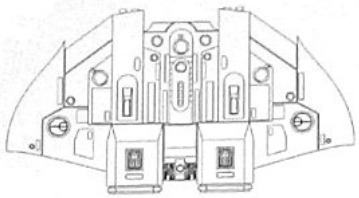
All Custodians are fitted with a prow deflector to raise their front armour to 6. This is disabled if the ship suffers a prow critical hit.

KIR'LA (WARDEN) CLASS CARRIER ESCORT ..... 30 pts

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Escort/1	20cm	90	1	5+	1

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow ion cannon	30cm	1	Front/left/right
Prow railgun battery	30cm	2	Front

KIR'SHASVRE (CASTELLAN) CLASS HEAVY ESCORT . . . . . 50 pts

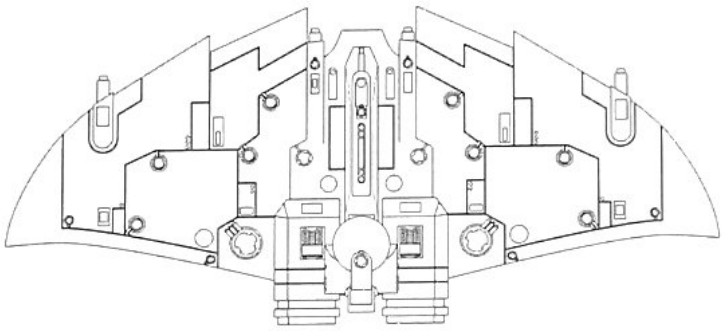


The Castellan is the Warden's larger cousin, capable of independent action and equipped for starship combat. It is deployed in the role of a traditional escort vessel, and is directly comparable to the Imperial fleet's Sword and Firestorm class frigates. Around Taros the Tau fleet deployed Castellans in large numbers in support of their larger vessels.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Escort/1	20cm	90	1	5+	2

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow gravitic launcher	20-40cm	2	Front
Prow railgun battery	30cm	3	Front/left/right

LAR'SHI'VRE (PROTECTOR) CLASS WARSHIP . . . . . 190 pts



The Protector is the Tau's main fighting vessel, designed and built solely for the purpose of engaging and destroying the enemy in fleet actions. It is heavily armed and versatile, carrying a full array of different weaponry to best meet any foe. A Protector is designed to meet Imperial cruisers on even terms, and whilst lacking the great bulk and structure of a cruiser, packs comparable firepower.

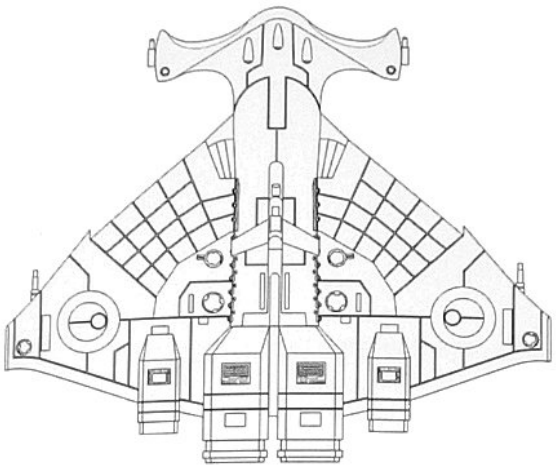
Two Protectors formed the fighting core of the Tau fleet around Taros, and inflicted heavy losses on the Imperium's transport ships.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Cruiser/6	20cm	45	2	5+	3

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow gravitic launcher	20-40cm	6	Front
Prow railgun battery	45cm	2	Front
Port railgun battery	45cm	2	Front/left
Starboard railgun battery	45cm	2	Front/right
Prow ion cannon	45cm	2	Front
Prow launch bay	Barracudas: 25cm Mantas: 20cm	2 squadrons	–

All Protectors are fitted with a prow deflector to raise their front armour to 6. This is disabled if the ship suffers a prow critical hit.

IL'PORRUI (EMISSARY) CLASS ENVOY SHIP . . . . . 130 pts



The Emissary is not a true fighting vessel, but a transport for Water Caste dignitaries, Tau commanders and Ethereals. Despite its size, the Emissary is well equipped and perfectly capable of looking after itself against all but the largest enemy capital ships.

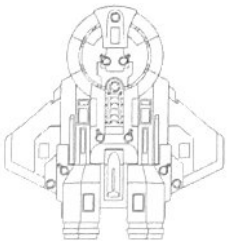
These ships are becoming common within the Tau Empire, and often rove out into the Empire's fringes on diplomatic missions to the Tau's neighbours. They are also used as large merchant vessels, and are becoming something of a workhorse within Tau space.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Cruiser/4	20cm	45	1	5+	2

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow gravitic launcher	20-40cm	3	Front
Prow railgun battery	45cm	4	Front
Port railgun battery	30cm	2	Front/left
Starboard railgun battery	30cm	2	Front/right
Port launch bay	Barracudas: 25cm	1 squadron	–
Starboard launch bay	Barracudas: 25cm	1 squadron	–

All Emissaries are fitted with a prow deflector to raise their front armour to 6. This is disabled if the ship suffers a Prow critical hit.

TAU TRANSPORT . . . . . pts: special

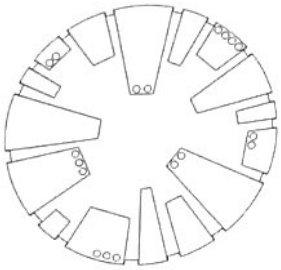


The Tau Empire thrives on the trade between its Septs, and transports are the workhorses of the trade routes. Small vessels, with limited crews, there have been many different types of transports identified, but all are similar in design. Transports are general only armed for self-defence and have a large hold for transporting goods.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Escort/1	20cm	90	1	5+	1

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Prow railgun battery	30cm	2	Front/left/right

SECURITY ORBITAL . . . . . 80 pts



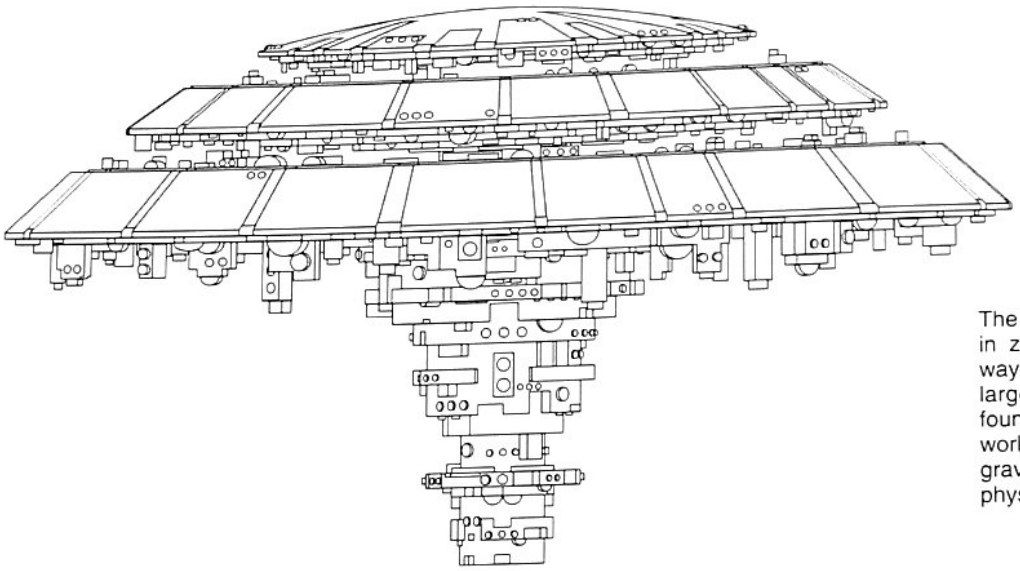
The Tau Empire is linked together by a network of small orbitals and waystations. These waystations fulfil many different roles, but all act as stopping-off points on long interstellar journies. They mark the main routes between Tau Septs and are used as communication relay points. They are operated and maintained by the Air Caste.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Defence/4	0	0	1	5+	3

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Railgun battery	45cm	4	All round
Ion cannons	30 cm	2	All round

The Security Orbital is fitted with tracking systems.

AIR CASTE ORBITAL CITY . . . . . 160 pts



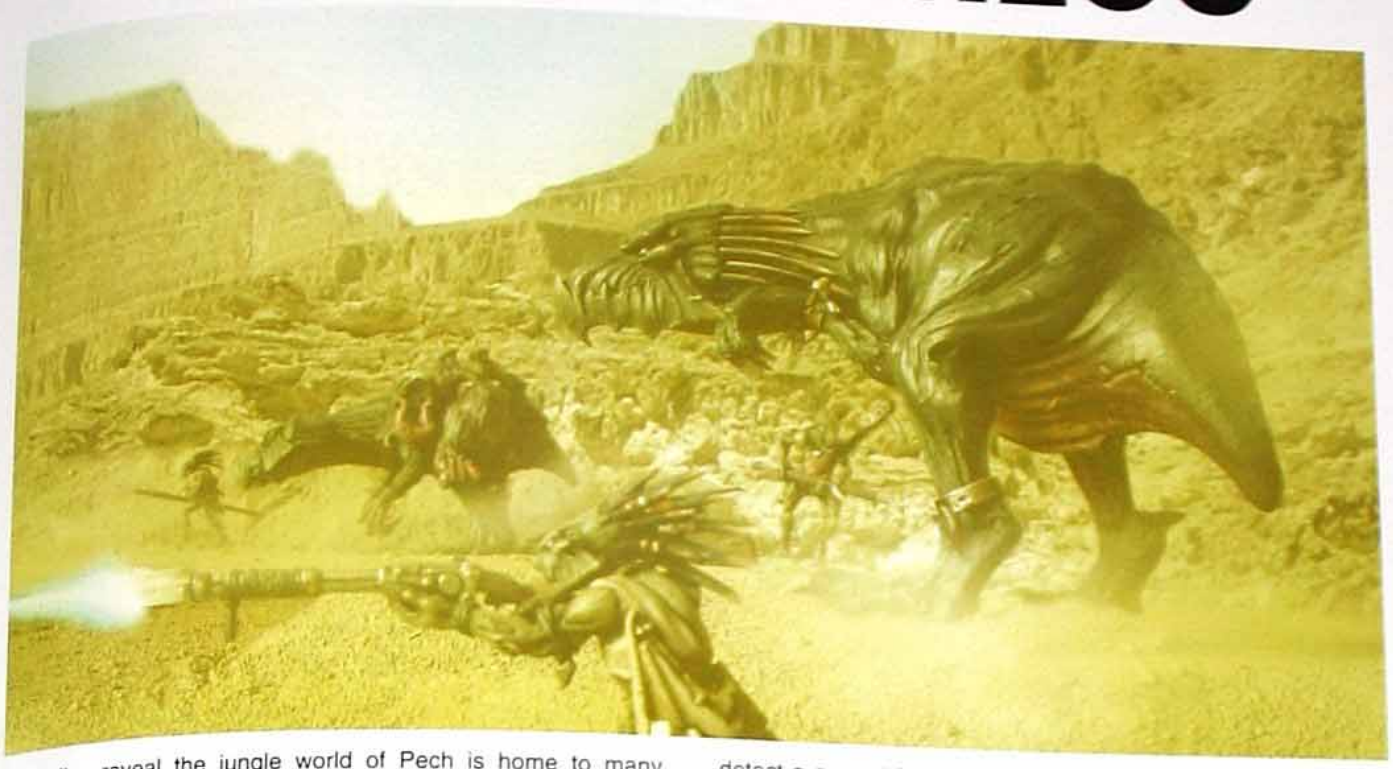
The Tau Air Caste live much of their lives in zero-gravity, either as spaceship or waystation crew, or in the Caste's own large orbital habitats, which can be found above most well-established Tau worlds. Tau of the Air Caste can enter a gravity-well, but the effects upon their physique is unknown.

TYPE/HITS	SPD	TURNS	SHIELDS	ARMOUR	TURRETS
Defence/12	0	0	4	5+	4

ARMAMENT	RANGE/SPD	FIREPOWER /STR	FIRE ARC
Railgun battery	45cm	12	All round
Launch bay	Mantas 20cm	4 squadrons	-

The orbital habitat is fitted with tracking systems.

GREAT KNARLOC



Studies reveal the jungle world of Pech is home to many creatures related to the native Kroot. The Great Knarloc seems to be, like the Krootox and Kroot Hound, an evolutionary dead end. It is an evolutionary strain that developed into a large, solitary predator. Its effectiveness in this niche would seem to be limited by many factors; by its small eyes, (needed to see prey), weak forearms (needed for holding live prey), huge legs resulting in relatively slow running speed (needed for pursuit), body size and light weight skeletal structure.

Given these drawbacks, it seems the Great Knarloc is lucky to have survived at all, except that its morphology has other advantages. Its muscular legs are built for travelling long distance and sustaining a good constant speed, this is due to its well developed hinge-like ankles. The creatures lower leg and claw structure mean it is capable of brief bursts of sudden speed, aided by its well developed Nymune organ, a trait still retained by some of the Great Knarloc's smaller relatives. It is capable of standing on its toes in the manner of many fast running creatures, helping it to spring suddenly from hiding onto an unwary prey. It is not capable of maintaining a top speed over long distances.

The creatures 'hands' are large, well-developed and dexterous, making them useful for foraging, picking fruit or digging, aided by long, thin, talon-like claws.

Whilst lacking any olfactory lobes, the beast's long tendrils, concentrated at the rear of the head (but also situated all over the body), provide superb sensory information to the creatures small brain. It may have difficulty seeing a prey but a Great Knarloc can efficiently track by scent and sound over long distances.

All these morphologically features point to a creature which is at home scavenging as well as hunting by a variety of methods. Whilst all carnivores are happy to eat dead flesh, they prefer fresh meat. The Great Knarloc seems to be the same, hunting on occasion, but at other times happy scavenging carcasses. It is also adept at foraging amongst the jungle growth for fruit or using its long, dexterous claws to seek out insects or even dig for grubs. Whilst the Great Knarloc is omnivorous, it has evolved to hunt by one of two means. Either lurking in dense undergrowth to suddenly ambush passing prey, or using its sensory organs to detect a prey at long distance. It can then utilise its stamina to remorselessly pursue its victim until exhaustion.

Like the Krootox, the Great Knarloc does not seem predisposed to violence unless hunting, threatened or goaded. It may be that a Great Knarloc spends most of its time alone underneath the jungle canopy, foraging for foodstuff and scavenging, suddenly exploding into extreme violence should a suitable quarry be encountered. Being a solitary creature, they have not benefited from the presence of other creatures and have not developed a pack hunter's cunning, intelligence or sociability. They remain dull-witted creatures and show none of the higher psychological traits of a Kroot Hound.

The Great Knarloc's natural characteristics make it useful to the Kroot in several ways, most commonly as a beast of burden. Large enough to carry heavy loads with great stamina over long distances but lacking intelligence, they are easily led once domesticated. The only drawback is the beast's sudden bouts of extreme aggression, making them unpredictable. It is noted that Great Knarlocs in domestic service are always kept muzzled and chained.

The most common use of the Great Knarloc on the battlefield is for its keepers to goad the creature into aggression, enraging it by the use of goad sticks and excreted chemicals. Once angered the beast is goaded towards the enemy. There is no subtly to this tactic, once angered the beast will attack anything that comes into range of its claws or sharp beak. The excretion of chemicals and pheromones means it is unlikely to attack a Kroot, as they are not the creatures natural prey, but its unpredictable nature means this is not a sure defence and many unwary handlers have become a Great Knarloc's next meal!

Less commonly, the creature's basically placid nature also make it useful as a riding beast. Several Kroot can mount the creature and use it as a stable weapons platform for mounting Kroot guns. Again this may be aided by the excretion of chemicals to calm a beast in battle.

Great Knarlocs accompany many Kroot Mercenary forces and have even been identified amongst Kroot contingents fighting along side their benefactors, the Tau.

Once captured (usually as newly born or very young), the Kroot rear and domesticate their Great Knarlocs for a variety of uses. Around Kroot settlements, Great Knarlocs are a common sight.

Great Knarlocs are most commonly used by Kroot forces as baggage animals, to carry heavy equipment and supplies whilst on campaign. These domesticated creatures are kept chained and muzzled for safety, but they are not expected to fight in combat. Occasionally a baggage column might be caught up in a battle, for example, if a Kroot column is caught in an ambush. In this case, the Goads and the Great Knarloc will be forced to fight to defend themselves.

Other Great Knarlocs are trained to fight, goaded into battle by their handlers whilst some Great Knarlocs, once old enough, are trained to carry riders and used to mount weapons, much like the more common Krootox. These weapon mounts are not as common as the herded beasts or those used to carry heavy loads, which are easier to train. They make effective assault troops supporting the Carnivore squads, able to provide heavy weapons fire, or quickly advance and join an assault, using the Great Knarloc natural predatory instincts in close combat.

The Kroot bolt thrower is a primitive but effective weapon, used by the Kroot since long before they encountered the Tau Empire. As with Kroot rifles and guns the Tau have aided their auxiliaries by using Tau technology to improve the Kroot's weaponry. Instead of the basic sharpened bolts the Tau provide impact fused explosive tips, making them far more dangerous. These tips are a smaller version of the warheads used in their own missile pods. The bolt thrower is fired by an ingenius hand-crank system which drops bolts from the magazine into position and quickly re-draws the bow string, allowing it to keep up a high rate of fire for little effort on behalf of the crew.

GOADED GREAT KNARLOC HERD

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Great Knarloc	60	4	-	6	5	5	3	3	7	6+
Kroot Goad	+ 10 each	4	3	4	3	1	3	1	8	6+
Shaper	+ 21	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	8	6+

Thought for the day:
Be just and fear naught.

Herd: Each Great Knarloc must be accompanied by 4-8 Kroot Goads. A maximum of one Kroot must be upgraded to a Shaper at an additional cost of +21 pts. Some Shapers carry weapons gifted by their employers and may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

Equipment: The Great Knarloc is armed with a large, sharp beak and claws. The Goads and Shaper are armed with a Kroot rifle and a goad-stick (used for prodding the Great Knarloc in the right direction).

Heavy Support: 1-3 Great Knarlocs and Goads are a single Heavy Support choice for a Kroot Mercenary army.

A single Great Knarloc and 4-8 Kroot Goads are a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army or any other army allowed to use a Kroot Mercenary force. The army may only include a Great Knarloc if it also includes at least one Kroot Carnivore squad.

For the purposes of mission objectives, a Great Knarloc with no remaining Goads cannot capture table quarters, hold objectives or count as surviving troops in a Meat Grinder battle.

SPECIAL RULES

Rending Beak: The Great Knarloc has a powerful beak, capable of crushing through armour and bone. Any close combat attacks which roll a 6 to hit automatically inflicts a wound with no Armour Save possible. Other attacks which hit must roll to wound as normal, and the victim receives their normal Armour Save.

If a Great Knarloc rolls a 6 for armour penetration against a vehicle, it rolls another D6 and adds the result to the total armour penetration score.

Feeding Frenzy: An angry Great Knarloc is a voracious creature. When rolling its 'to hit' dice in close combat, if the Great Knarloc rolls more 1s than 6s it gets carried away and eats one of its Goads. Immediately remove the closest Goad from play.

Hyperactive Nymune Organ: The Great Knarloc and its all its Goads are all affected by the Hyperactive Nymune Organ adaptation. This means that the entire unit counts as Fleet of Foot. In the Shooting phase you may declare that the unit is going to run instead of shoot. Roll a D6. The result is the distance the unit may move in the Shooting phase. This move is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Hits on the Squad: The Great Knarloc is far larger than its Goads and is more likely to be hit by incoming fire. Randomise any hits on the squad by rolling a D6. 1-3 the shot hits the Kroot Goads. 4-6 hits the Great Knarloc.

If all the Goads are killed then the Knarloc must make a Leadership test. If it passes it is enraged enough to fight on as normal. If it fails the Great Knarloc flees the battlefield, remove it from play.

Signature Evolutionary Adaptations: The Great Knarloc is not affected by signature evolutionary adaptations. The Goads and Shaper must take the same adaptation as the rest of the army.

Fieldcraft: The Great Knarloc benefits from the Kroot Fieldcraft special rule. They gain the +1 to their Cover Save in woods or jungles, and do not take Difficult Terrain tests when moving in woods or jungles. The Goads also benefit from the Fieldcraft special rule.

Great Knarloc

0-1 MOUNTED GREAT KNARLOC HERD

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Great Knarloc	70	4	3	6	5	5	3	3	7	6+

Thought for the day:
Attack, attack! No prisoners!

Herd: A herd consists of 1-3 Great Knarlocs, each with two Riders.

Equipment: A Kroot bolt thrower. The Great Knarloc is armed with a large, sharp beak and claws.

Options: The bolt thrower can be loaded with explosive bolts at +15 pts, or it can be upgraded to a twin-linked Kroot gun for +30 pts.

Heavy Support: 0-1 Great Knarloc herd are a Heavy Support choice for a Kroot Mercenary army.

A Great Knarloc herd is a Heavy Support choice for a Tau army. The army may only include a Great Knarloc herd if it also includes at least one Kroot Carnivore squad.

For the purposes of mission objectives, a Great Knarloc can capture table quarters, hold objectives and counts as surviving troops in a Meat Grinder battle.

SPECIAL RULES

Rending Beak: The Great Knarloc has a powerful beak, capable of crushing through armour and bone. Any close combat attacks which roll a 6 to hit automatically inflicts a wound with no Armour Save possible. Other attacks which hit must roll to wound as normal, and the victim receives their normal Armour Save.

If a Great Knarloc rolls a 6 for armour penetration against a vehicle, it rolls another D6 and adds the result to the total Armour Penetration score.

Hyperactive Nymune Organ: The Great Knarloc is affected by the hyperactive nymune organ adaptation. This means that it counts as 'Fleet of Foot'. In the Shooting phase you may declare that it is going to run instead of shoot. Roll a D6. The result is the distance the unit may move in the Shooting phase. This move is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Signature Evolutionary Adaptations: The Great Knarloc is not affected by signature evolutionary adaptations.

Fieldcraft: The Great Knarloc benefits from the Kroot Fieldcraft special rule. They gain the +1 to their Cover Save in woods or jungles, and do not take Difficult Terrain tests when moving in woods or jungles.

Weapon	Range	Str	AP	Type
Kroot bolt thrower	36"	4	-	Assault/1
Explosive bolt	36"	6	6	Assault/1, Blast
Kroot gun	48"	7	4	Rapid Fire

0-1 GREAT KNARLOC BAGGAGE HERD

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Great Knarloc	25	4	-	5	5	5	2	2	7	6+
Kroot Goad	+ 10 each	4	3	4	3	1	3	1	8	6+

Thought for the day:
Hate, hate, hate!
This is our mantra.

Herd: Each herd consists of 1-3 Baggage Great Knarlocs. Each Great Knarloc must be accompanied by 1-2 Kroot Goads.

Equipment: The Great Knarloc is armed with claws. The Goads are armed with a Kroot rifle.

Troop Choice: 0-1 Baggage herd is a single Troops choice for a Kroot Mercenary army. It may not be taken as one of the compulsary Troop choices, these must be filled with other Troops before a Baggage herd can be selected. If a Kroot army is being ambushed they may add a single Baggage herd to their force for free.

A single Great Knarloc and 1-2 Kroot Goads are a Troops choice for a Tau army or any other army allowed to use a Kroot Mercenary force. The army may only include a Great Knarloc if it also includes at least one Kroot Carnivore squad.

For the purposes of mission objectives, a Great Knarloc with no remaining Goads cannot capture table quarters, hold objectives or count as surviving troops in a Meat Grinder battle.

SPECIAL RULES

Hyperactive Nymune Organ: The Great Knarloc and all its Goads are affected by the hyperactive nymune organ adaptation. This means that the entire unit counts as Fleet of Foot. In the Shooting phase you may declare that the unit is going to run instead of shoot. Roll a D6. The result is the distance the unit may move in the Shooting phase. This move is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Hits on the Squad: The Great Knarloc is far larger than its goads and is more likely to be hit by incoming fire. Randomise any hits on the squad by rolling a D6. 1-2 the shot hits the Kroot Goads; 3-6 hits the Great Knarloc.

If all the Goads are killed then the Knarloc must make a Leadership test. If it passes it is enraged enough to fight on as normal. If it fails, the Great Knarloc flees the battlefield, remove it from play.

Signature Evolutionary Adaptations: The Great Knarloc is not affected by signature evolutionary adaptations. The Goads and Shaper must take the same adaptation as the rest of the army.

Fieldcraft: The Great Knarloc benefits from the Kroot Fieldcraft special rule. They gain the +1 to their Cover Save in woods or jungles, and do not take Difficult Terrain tests when moving in woods or jungles. The Goads also benefit from the Fieldcraft special rule.

KNARLOC RIDERS

Pech's jungles teem with exotic wildlife, ranging from small scavengers, to tree-dwellers, to larger ground-dwelling herbivores (the Krootox is the most common of these). There are also pack hunters like the Kroot Hound and Knarloc, to huge solitary predators like the Great Knarlocs. The Kroot use many of these creatures, either as game or for domesticating.

As the name suggests, Knarlocs are close relatives of the Great Knarloc. They are a smaller, more sociable, carnivorous hunter, also native to the jungles of Pech. The primitive Kroot utilise many of Pech's creatures in battle, and Knarlocs are highly prized as cavalry mounts.

In the wild Knarlocs are formidable predators. As would be expected the Knarloc has much on common with it bigger relative. They hunt in a similar way, spring ambushes or using their stamina in long pursuits. The major difference is they live and hunt in small packs. Living in groups of up to ten creatures, including their young, they are active and agile, voracious hunters who work together to attack and kill just about any size of prey. Operating together in a pack the Knarloc has developed a cunning intelligence. Its brain to body-size ratio is far greater than that that of it's larger cousin. The Kroot seem to respect Knarlocs, revering them as powerful and successful hunters. Shapers have been known to allow their kindred to hunt, kill and eat Knarloc packs in order to aid the kindred's evolution. Mostly, Kroot only hunt and trap the young to tame and train.

When attacking, the Knarloc's primary weapons are its razor sharp beak and its fore-claws. The fore-claws will hook into its victim and then, using the Knarloc's leg strength to haul it in, it will administer the kill with its beak. Using this method, the Knarloc hunts Krootox and wild Kroot Hounds (their main competitors), as well as Pech's many other tree- and ground-dwelling herbivores.

On Taros, Knarloc Riders were used as shock troops, leading the Kroot's headlong charges. In the battle for the Phyyra Heights, the swift and agile beasts were highly effective assault troops, and many Imperial Guardsmen ended up as a Knarloc's meal. Knarloc Riders were also used as mounted scouts, operating as light cavalry, using their mounts to quickly get into an advantageous position, well hidden on the high-ground, and then sniping down with Kroot rifles from long range.

Amongst the Kroot it is seen to be a sign of social status to ride a Knarloc.

KNARLOC RIDER HERD

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Knarloc	40	4	3	5	4	3	3	2	8	6+

Thought for the day:
Let the alien bow down
before our sword.

Herd: A herd numbers from 3-6 Knarloc Riders

Equipment: The rider is armed with a Kroot rifle. The Knarloc is armed with a sharp beak and claws.

Fast Attack: A Knarloc Rider herd is a Fast Attack choice for a Kroot Mercenary force.

0-1 Knarloc Rider squad is a Fast Attack choice for a Tau army, but it may only be taken if the army also includes at least one Kroot Carnivore squad.

SPECIAL RULES

Cavalry: Knarloc Riders are cavalry, and the special rules for cavalry apply to the unit.

Eaters of the Dead: Both the Kroot Rider and Knarloc are voracious carnivores and will often let a defeated enemy escape whilst they feast on the flesh of the fallen. The Knarloc Rider must pass a Leadership test in order to pursue a foe defeated in close combat or make a sweeping advance. If the test is failed the Knarloc Rider squad must consolidate.

Hyperactive Nymune Organ: The Knarloc and its Rider are all affected by the hyperactive nymune organ adaptation. This means that the entire unit counts as Fleet of Foot. In the Shooting phase you may declare that the unit is going to run instead of shoot. Roll a D6. The result is the distance the unit may move in the Shooting phase. This move is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Signature Evolutionary Adaptations: The Knarloc is not affected by signature evolutionary adaptations.

Fieldcraft: The Knarloc and Rider benefits from the Kroot Fieldcraft special rule. They gain the +1 to their Cover Save in woods or jungles, and do not take Difficult Terrain tests when moving in woods or jungles.

VEHICLES OF THE IMPERIUM

Basilisk of the 12th Tallarn Regiment, fifth gun of the third company.

BASILISK

The Basilisk is the standard Imperial Guard artillery piece, a self-propelled field gun designed for medium to long-range artillery support for units in the front line. It is produced in vast numbers on forge worlds across the Imperium, and issued to most Imperial Guard regiments.

The Basilisk is the mainstay of Imperial Guard artillery companies, it is built upon the Chimera's versatile chassis. The basic Basilisk retains all the same basic features of the Chimera, but replaces the passenger compartment with a fighting platform, protected by an armoured gun shield. This fighting platform exposes the gun crew to enemy fire and hostile environments, making it far more vulnerable than a battle tank. Variants of the standard Basilisk, and other related artillery like the Medusa siege gun, have corrected this by adding an enclosed fighting compartment.

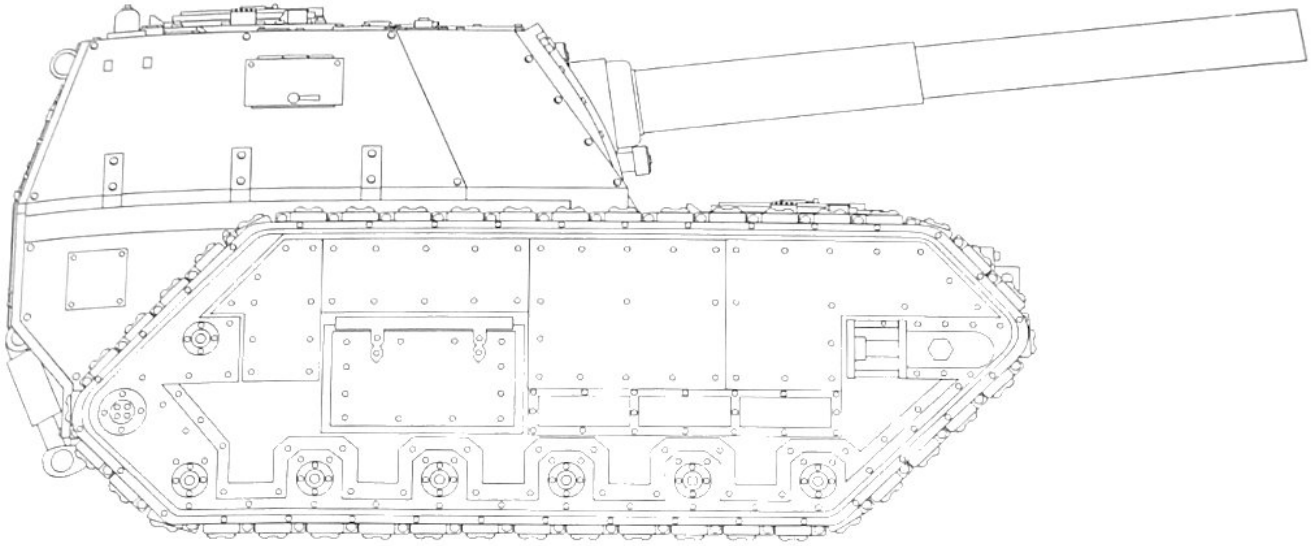
Armour plates protect the rear-fighting compartment, and inside the gunner and loader operate the Basilisk's Earthshaker cannon. The Earthshaker cannon is a 132mm calibre weapon, capable of firing a shell over 15 kms at a velocity of 814mps. Such is the power of the gun that it is easily capable of destroying enemy armoured vehicles, strong points and buildings. Fired using the standard 5 powder charges, an enclosed Basilisk cannot use the larger charges 6 and 7, due to the recoil restriction of the fighting compartment. This slightly limits the guns maximum range when compared to open-topped or platform-mounted Earthshakers.

A Basilisk can fire a variety of different shells. The majority of fire missions use high-explosive rounds, but other specialised rounds, such as smoke shells, incendiary shells and illumination shells are issued, in lesser numbers, as well.

As well as the gunner and loader, each Basilisk also has a driver and commander, who sit in the forward compartment. The commander mans the hull mounted heavy-bolter, used for self-defence against enemy infantry attacks.

On Taros, many of the Tallarn regiments operated Armageddon pattern Basilisks. The 12th Armoured regiment used them as assault guns, deployed in direct support of the forward tank companies, where they could use their long range to counter the Tau's lethal railgun fire, which gave the aliens a vital edge in the wide-open terrain. Although this had some success, with Basilisk scoring several confirmed kills, they still lacked the frontal armour protection of a battle tank, and the Tau soon learnt to identify and target the artillery guns first, using Seeker missiles carried on lighter vehicles, such as Devilfish and Piranhas. This resulted in severe losses, and a reduction in the effectiveness of the artillery companies in their traditional indirect fire role.

The 17th Tallarn regiment also attempted to deploy some of their Basilisks to support their infantry companies during the battle for the Phyyra Heights, but where thwarted by the steep, rugged terrain.



DVLA 6724930

ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vehicle Designation 0427-941-3011-BA04

Vehicle Name BASILISK ARTILLERY GUN

Forge World of Origin ARMAGEDDON

Known Patterns I-VI

Crew DRIVER, COMMANDER, GUNNER, LOADER

Powerplant VULCANOR 16 TWIN COUPLED MULTI-BURN

Weight 44 TONNES

Length 6.8 M

Width 4.8 M

Height 3.8 M

Ground Clearance 0.45 M

Max Speed - On Road 35 KPH

Max Speed - Off Road 21 KPH

Main Armament EARTHSHAKER CANNON

Secondary Armament HEAVY BOLTER

Traverse 3 °

Elevation -0° TO +59°

Main Ammunition 12 ROUNDS

Secondary Ammunition 300 ROUNDS

Armour

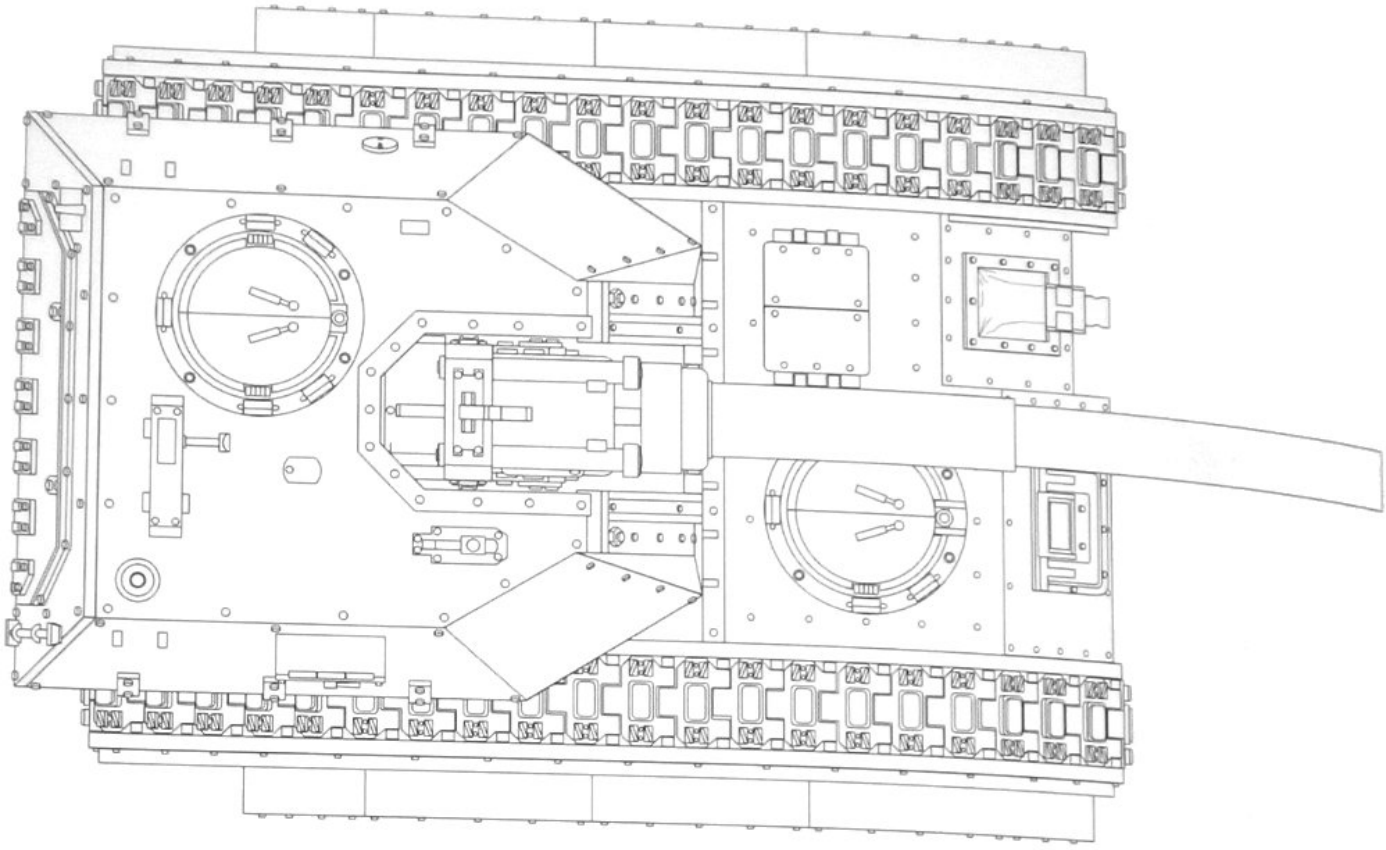
- **Turret** N/A
- **Superstructure** 100 MM
- **Hull** 150 MM
- **Gun Mantlet** N/A

Date 1325154.M38

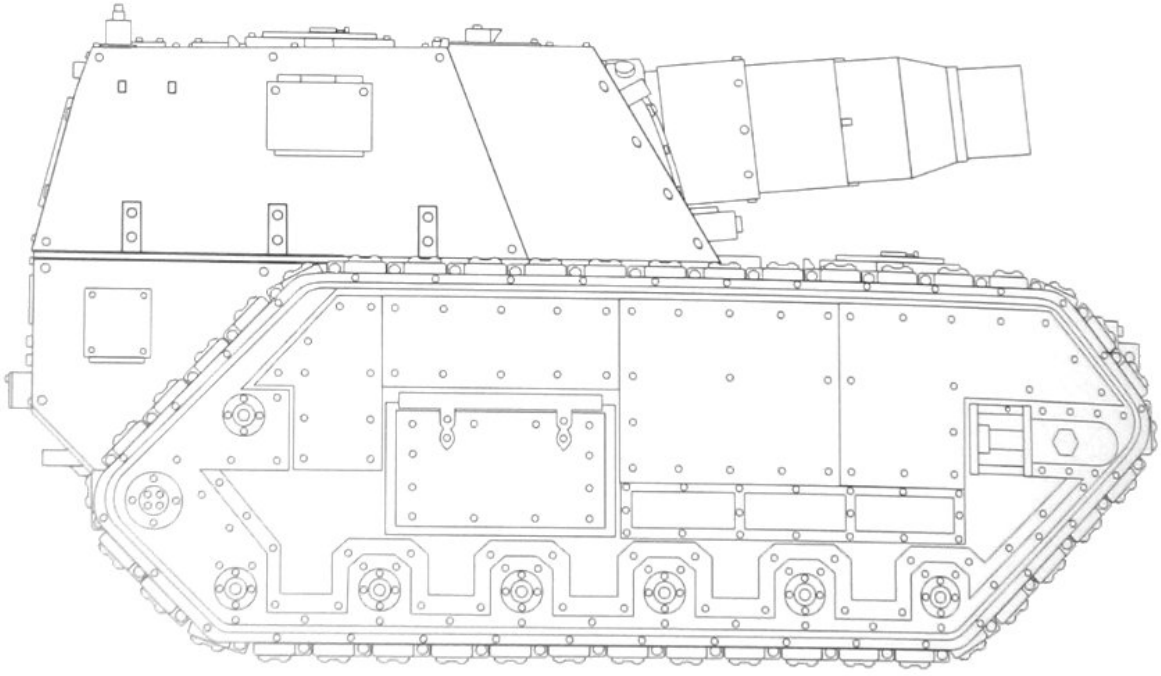
signature

Magos Fabricator

Basilisk – plan view

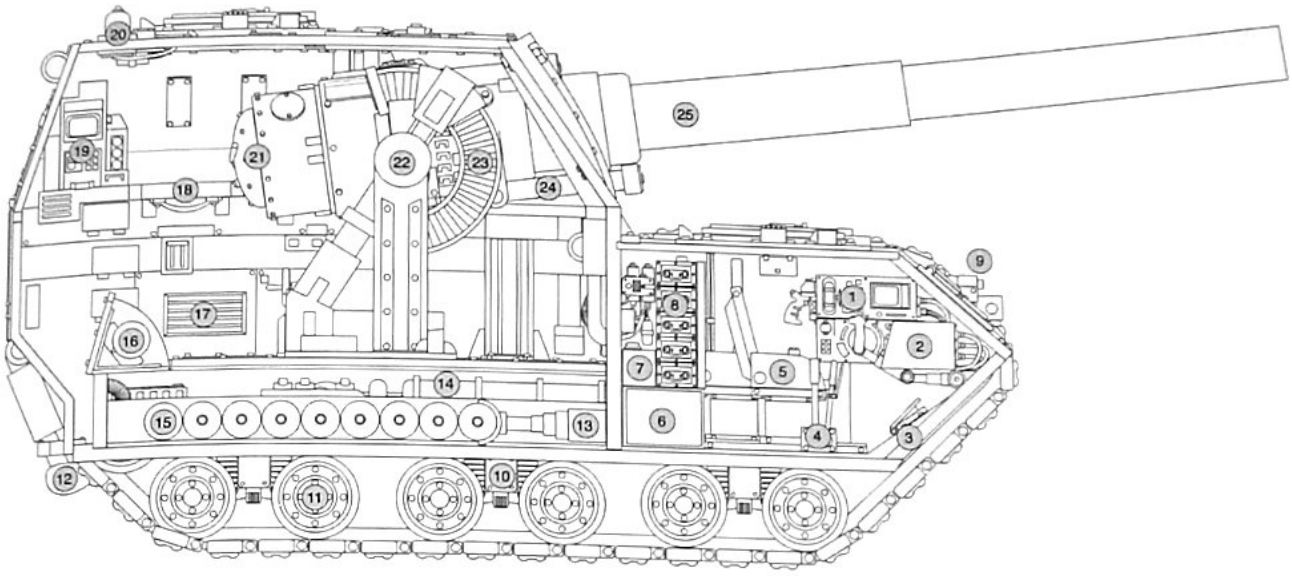


Medusa – Armageddon pattern



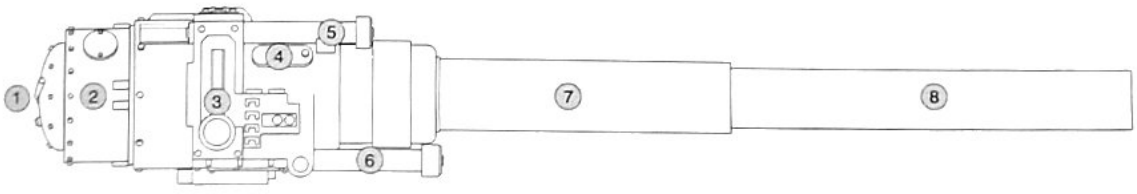
Basilisk – Armageddon pattern

Interior Detail



1. Driver's system control panel
2. Driver's console
3. Driver's foot pedals
4. Gear stick and brake lever
5. Driver's seat
6. Battery
7. Generator
8. Heavy bolter ammunition boxes
9. Hull-mounted heavy bolter
10. Suspension unit
11. Road wheel
12. Rear ramp hydraulics
13. Ammunition loading arm
14. Fuel tank
15. Under floor ammunition storage
16. Ammunition ready box
17. Exhaust vent
18. Gunner's seat
19. Targeting control panel
20. Main aerial lug
21. Breech
22. Elevation servo
23. Elevation gearing
24. Recoil piston
25. Earthshaker cannon

Earthshaker Cannon – Armageddon pattern



1. Breech handle and door
2. Breech
3. Elevation mount
4. Emergency vent – manual
5. Upper recoil piston
6. Lower recoil piston
7. Earthshaker, reinforced barrel shroud
8. Earthshaker barrel

ENCLOSED BASILISK

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Basilisk	120	12	10	10	3

Thought for the day:
Inspiration grows from the barrel of a gun.

Type: Tank

Crew: 4. Imperial Guard

Weapons: The Basilisk is armed with an Earthshaker cannon and a hull-mounted heavy bolter.

Options: The Basilisk may be given any of the following from the Imperial Guard Codex:camo-netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, mine sweeper, pintle-mounted storm bolter, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, rough terrain modification, searchlight, track guards, smoke launchers.

The Basilisk may be modified to fire indirectly as described in the special rules below at a cost of +25 pts.

Heavy Support: The Basilisk is a Heavy Support choice for an Imperial Guard army.

SPECIAL RULES

Indirect Fire: The Earthshaker can fire 'indirectly' at targets it can't see in the same way as a mortar or Whirlwind. Earthshakers that fire indirectly obey the normal Earthshaker cannon rules, except that they become Barrage (ie, Guess ranges) weapons with a range G36"-240". Note the minimum Guess range is 36".

ENCLOSED MEDUSA SIEGE GUN

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Medusa	155	12	10	10	3

Thought for the day:
Your purpose is greatness.

Type: Tank

Crew: 4. Imperial Guard

Weapons: The Medusa is armed with a Medusa siege gun and a hull-mounted heavy bolter.

Options: The Medusa may be given any of the following from the Imperial Guard Codex:camo-netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, mine sweeper, pintle-mounted storm bolter, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, rough terrain modification, searchlight, track guards, smoke launchers.

Heavy Support: The Medusa is a Heavy Support choice for an Imperial Guard army.

SPECIAL RULES

Medusa Siege Gun

Range: 36" **Strength:** 10 **AP:** 2 **Special:** Ordnance1/Blast

Siege Shells: A Medusa can fire siege shells instead of normal rounds, they use the normal blast template. Roll 2D6+10 when rolling for Armour penetration for the Medusa siege gun against bunkers, ading the dice scores together, instead of 2D6, and pick the highest.

BOMBARD
HEAVY SIEGE MORTAR

Bombards are amongst the largest artillery routinely fielded by Imperial Guard heavy artillery and siege artillery companies. Unlike most other artillery pieces, which use the Chimera chassis, the Bombard is built upon the larger, more robust chassis of the Leman Russ battle tank. This chassis is heavily modified to accommodate the weight of the siege mortar. Even with modifications a Bombard can only move slowly. The engine and track units given the weapon limited mobility, but it is not a true self-propelled artillery piece, and cannot fire on the move.

A Bombard is crewed by a single driver. The rest of the gunners follow in transport vehicles and work outside the Bombard. Most are occupied loading ammunition, whilst the gunner aims the weapon. Loading a Bombard is a time-consuming process, each shell being too heavy for a man to lift. The Bombard incorporates a small crane for moving shells into the breach.

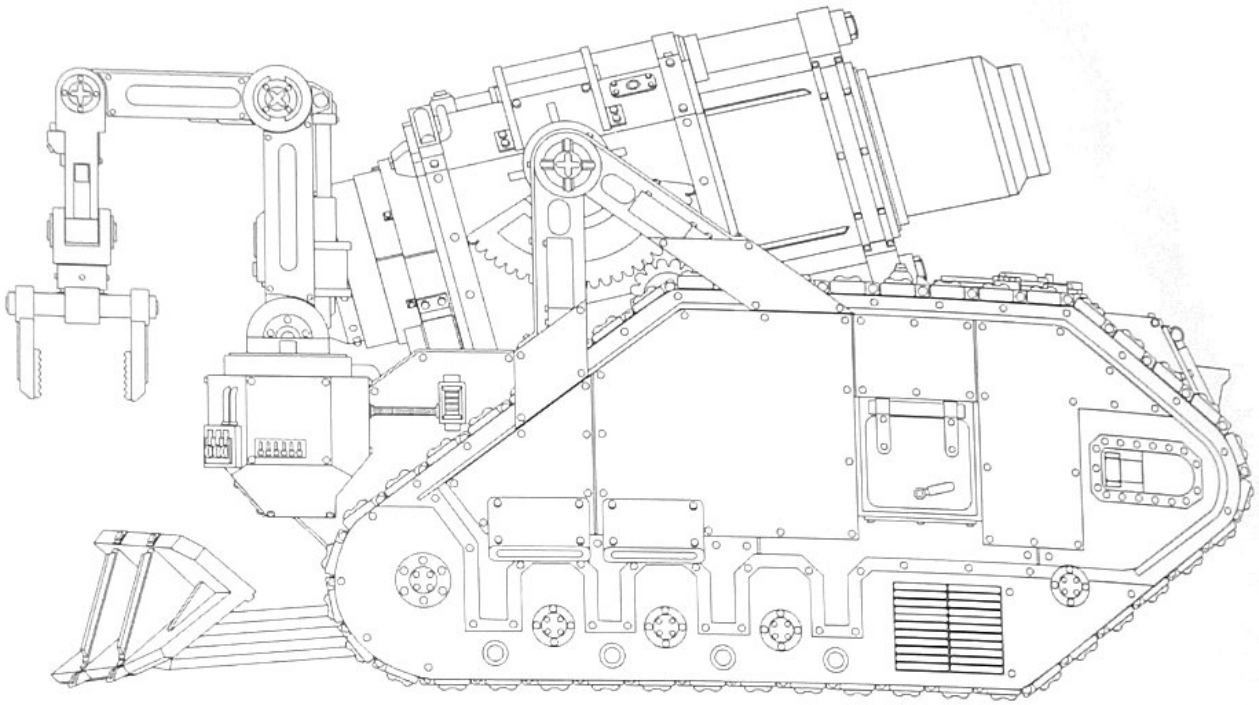
Lacking mobility and requiring time to reload the Bombard is not usually deployed on the frontline. Because of these restrictions Bombards are only deployed for sustained bombardments of static targets such as an enemy fortress or a rebel held city. Once deployed, a Bombard battery will remain in place and beginning relentlessly pounding its target. Launching huge rounds over long distances, the plunging fire of a battery of Bombards can quickly reduce walls, building and strong points to rubble.

Other features of the Bombard are its large recoil spade, this wedges into the ground and helps absorbed the guns recoil, stopping it from rolling backwards. As it is not expected to come face to face with enemy units the bombard is not equipped with any other weapons for self-defence, but may be fitted with a pintle-mounted weapon.

Many other vehicles must support each Bombard battery. A battery will also include other support vehicles, like a Chimera as a command vehicle and other Chimeras as a crew transports. There will also be Trojans towing trailers of ammunition, Sentinel powerlifters for loading supplies, Salamanders for forward observer teams and maybe even an Atlas recovery vehicle to help move a Bombard's massive weight should it become bogged down. An Imperial Guard siege artillery company is a small army in its own right.

On Taros, only the 17th Tallarn regiment was equipped with Bombards, counting a heavy artillery company of 6 vehicles in its order of battle. These heavy guns were originally being kept in reserve for the finale of the campaign, the expected siege of Tarokeen. They were deployed and used in support of the regiment's assaults on the Phyyra Heights, lobbing heavy fire into the hills. How effective this fire was against the Kroot defenders is not known. All six Bombards were eventually abandoned during the regiment's retreat.

Bombard – Gryphonne IV pattern



ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

DVLA/72493

Vehicle Designation 0427-941-0349-B061

Vehicle Name BOMBARD HEAVY SIEGE MORTAR

Forge World of Origin STYGIES VIII

Known Patterns II-XVII

Crew DRIVER

Powerplant HL270 V12 MULTI-FUEL

Weight 71 TONNES

Length 7.7 M

Width 4.8 M

Height 4.7 M

Ground Clearance 0.45 M

Max Speed - On Road 24 KPH

Max Speed - Off Road 12 KPH

Main Armament HEAVY SIEGE MORTAR

Secondary Armament NONE

Traverse 0 °

Elevation +10° TO +70°

Main Ammunition 0 ROUNDS, CARRIED SEPARATELY

Secondary Ammunition N/A

Armour

- Turret N/A
- Superstructure 100 MM
- Hull 150 MM
- Gun Mantlet N/A

Date 1325154.M38

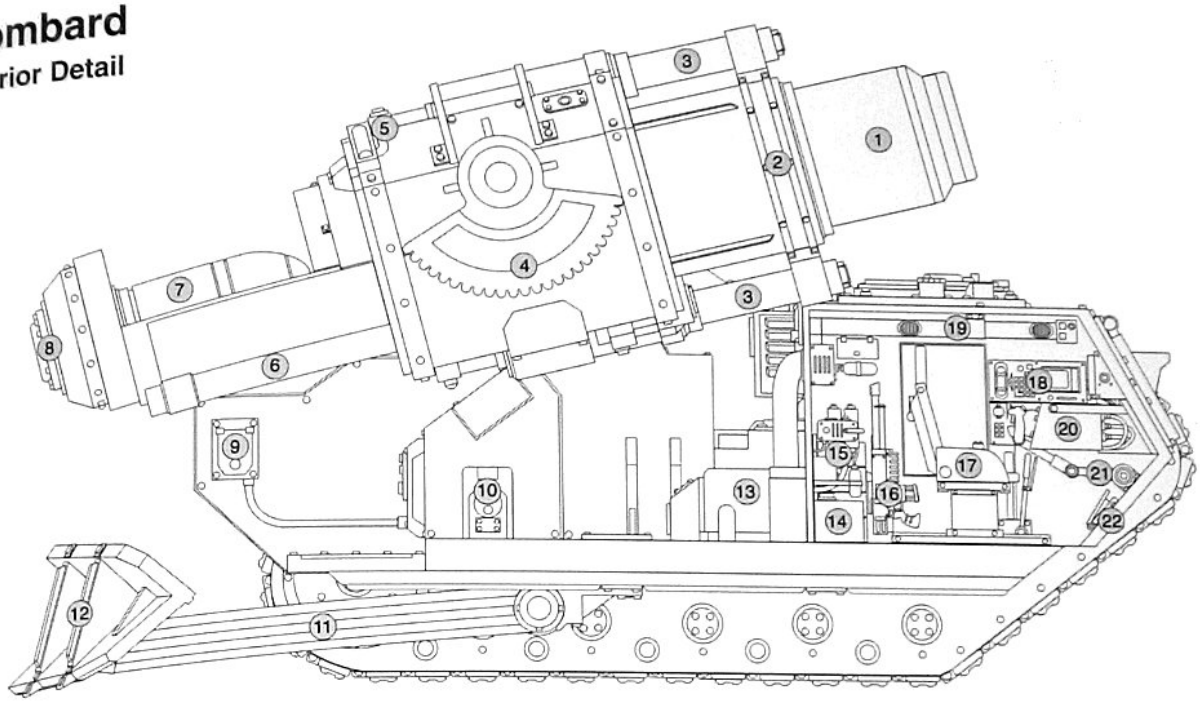
signature

Magos Fabricator

Dominus Ex Machina

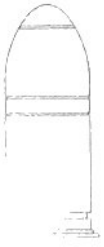
Bombard

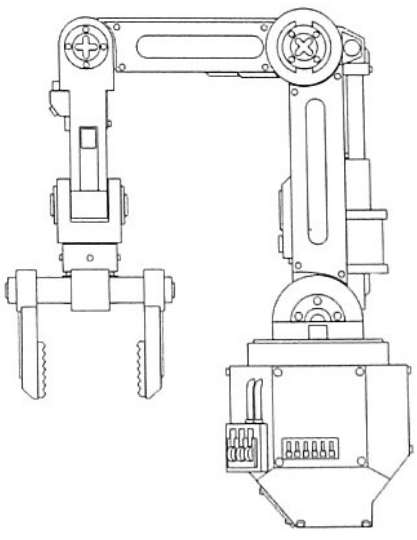
Interior Detail



1. Heavy siege mortar barrel
2. Barrel bracing
3. Recoil pistons
4. Elevation gearing
5. Recoil piston adjustment controls
6. Breech pistons
7. Heavy mortar siege shell
8. Breech locking wheel
9. External comms-link
10. Power unit control panel
11. Recoil spade arm
12. Recoil spade
13. Engine housing
14. Battery
15. Generator
16. Lasgun (stowed)
17. Driver's seat
18. Driver's system control panel
19. Air intake ducting
20. Driver's console
21. Steering column
22. Driver's foot pedals

Bombard siege shell and crane loading arm





BOMBARD

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Bombard	145	12	10	10	3

Thought for the day:
So it was, so it is, so it ever shall be.

Type: Tank, Open-topped

Crew: 5. Imperial Guard

Weapons: The Bombard is armed with a heavy siege mortar. It has no other weapons.

Options: The Bombard may be equipped with the following vehicle upgrades from the Imperial Guard Codex: camo-netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, pintle-mounted storm bolter, rough terrain modification, searchlight, track guards, smoke launchers.

A Bombard may be equipped with siege shells for an additional +10 pts.

Heavy Support: A Bombard is a Heavy Support choice for an Imperial Guard army.

SPECIAL RULES

Slow: Due to the weight of its weapon the Bombard can only move slowly. A Bombard is limited to a maximum move of 6" per turn. A Bombard cannot move and fire in the same turn, it must remain stationary to fire.

Bombard Heavy Siege Mortar

Range: G36"-240" **Strength:** 8 **AP:** 3 **Type:** Ordnance 1/ Massive Blast

Indirect Fire: The heavy siege mortar always fires indirectly at targets it can't see. Bombards are always Barrage weapons with a range of 36"-240". Note the minimum Guess range is 36".

Slow Rate of Fire: The Bombard takes a long time to reload its huge shells. It can only fire once every other turn, so after firing it must miss a turn whilst it reloads. It cannot move and reload at the same time.

Massive Blast: The Bombard uses its own massive blast template. You will need to make a 7" diameter template to represent the explosion of a bombard shell. In all ways this is treated as an ordnance template, deviating etc as per the normal rules – it just effects a larger area.

Siege Shell: A Bombard may be equipped with siege shells. When rolling to penetrate buildings or bunkers, roll 2D6 and add the results together.

Dedicated Ammunition Vehicle: Any Imperial Guard force that contains a Bombard may also include a Trojan and trailer for free. This is the Bombard's dedicated ammunition vehicle. The Trojan counts as part of the same Heavy Support choice as the Bombard itself. Any vehicle upgrades for the Trojan must be paid for as normal. The Trojan is still worth its normal Victory Points should it be destroyed.

GRIFFON
HEAVY MORTAR CARRIER

The Griffon is a close relative of the Basilisk and Medusa siege gun, replacing the main cannon with a large calibre mortar. The mortar is used for indirect fire, close support during infantry attacks and during sieges to throw shells high over enemy walls.

The Griffon is much maligned by many Imperial Guard artillery commanders, seeing it as lacking firepower and range, with its heavy mortar being a weapon too heavy to be man-portable, like its smaller cousins, but not large enough to warrant mounting on an armoured vehicle. Being vehicle mounted, the Griffon needs the fire control and observation back up usually found in large artillery companies. Because of these drawbacks, commanders have allowed the Griffon to become something of a relic. Losses are often not replaced and manufacturing rates on forge worlds have dropped off steady because of this. It seems the Griffon is slowly becoming extinct.

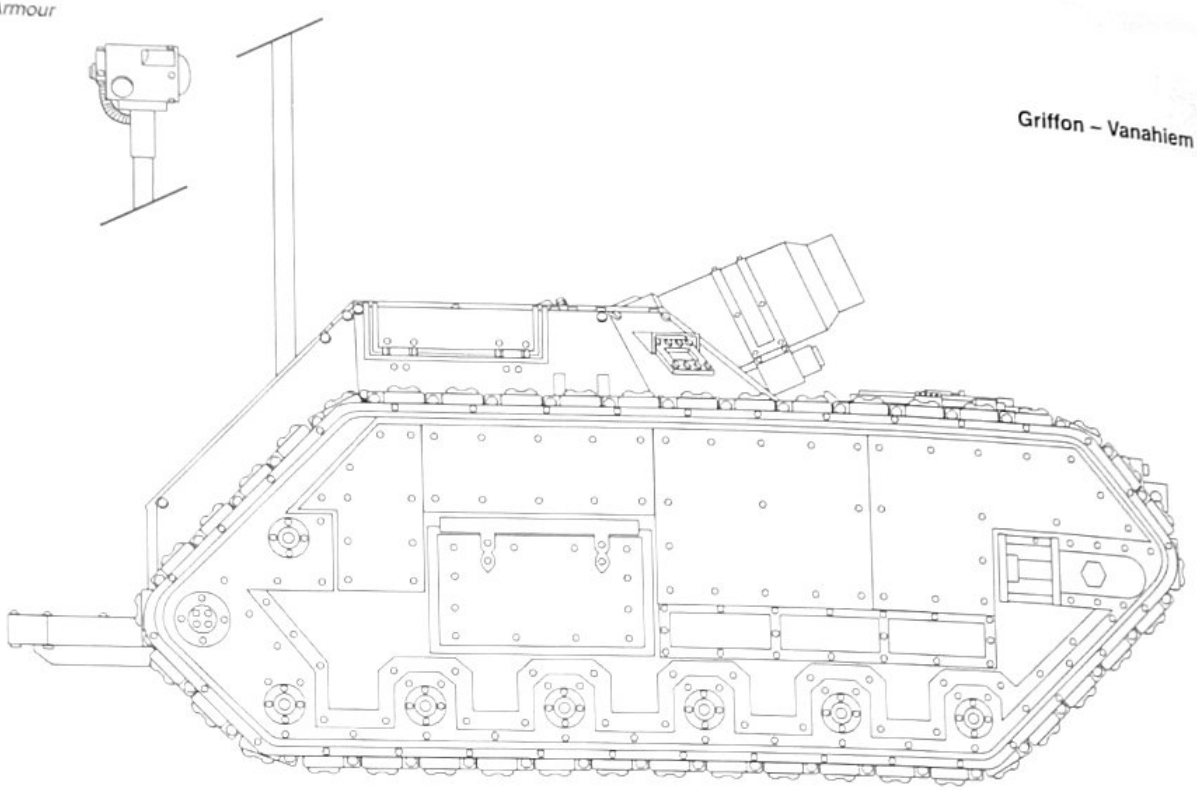
Despite its perceived drawbacks, the Griffon does have advantages over heavier artillery, and when deployed and used correctly is a valuable addition to the Imperial Guard's arsenal. It is the lightest of the Imperial Guard's artillery, and as such an ideal compromise between weight, firepower, mobility and ease of use. It can maintain a higher rate of fire, and delivers appropriate firepower for engaging enemy infantry and light vehicles, thereby freeing heavier weapons to engage harder targets. Well used, the Griffon is perfectly suited to both defensive fire and close support in offensive operations. It is a versatile tactical weapon when utilising different ammunition types.

The Griffon mortars fires a wide variety of shells from standard high explosive, smoke and illumination to siege shells. A siege shell's high trajectory means it can bury itself into the ground before exploding, if fused correctly. This reduces the blast radius, making this type of explosion less dangerous to infantry but devastating against buildings and bunkers, whose foundations can collapse, bringing the building down with it.

Like the Basilisk, the Griffon has a standard crew of four; a driver and a commander in the front compartment, and a gunner and loader operating the mortar on the rear-fighting platform.

Many of the Imperial Guard regiments on Taros still included Griffons on their inventory, providing heavier firepower to the front line infantry units. The Griffons of the 114th Cadian regiment provided important fire support during the regiment's drive to relieve Hydro-processing plant 23-30. The regiment's Basilisks were deemed too slow to keep up with the rapid advance, and so the Griffons became the regiment's only artillery support.

Imperial Guard siege regiments have used platform-mounted versions of the Griffon's heavy mortar, in static positions for continuous bombardments during sieges.



Griffon – Vanahiem pattern

ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vehicle Designation 0427-941-2544-GR18

Vehicle Name GRIFFON HEAVY MORTAR CARRIER

Forge World of Origin VANAHEIM

Known Patterns I-IIX

Crew DRIVER, COMMANDER, GUNNER, LOADER

Powerplant VULCANOR 16 TWIN COUPLED MULTI-BURN

Weight 38 TONNES

Length 6.9 M

Width 4.8 M

Height 3.85 M

Ground Clearance 0.45 M

Max Speed - On Road 70 KPH

Max Speed - Off Road 55 KPH

Main Armament HEAVY MORTAR

Secondary Armament HEAVY BOLTER

Traverse 3 °

Elevation +35° TO +80°

Main Ammunition 20 ROUNDS

Secondary Ammunition 300 ROUNDS

Armour

- **Turret** N/A
- **Superstructure** 100 MM
- **Hull** 150 MM
- **Gun Mantlet** N/A

Date 1325154.M38

signature

Magos Fabricator

GRIFFON

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Griffon	75	12	10	10	3

Thought for the day:
Dying for something is
greater than living for nothing.

Type: Tank, Open-topped

Crew: (4) Imperial Guard

Weapons: The Griffon is armed with a heavy mortar and a hull-mounted heavy bolter.

Options: The Griffon may be given any of the following from the Imperial Guard Codex: armoured crew compartment, camo-netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, mine sweeper, pintle-mounted storm bolter, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, rough terrain modification, searchlight, track guards, smoke launchers.

A Griffon may be equipped with any of the following types of shell; Smoke shells +5 pts, illumination shells +5 pts, siege shells+ 5 pts, infernus shells +10 pts.

Heavy Support: The Griffon is a Heavy Support choice for an Imperial Guard army.

SPECIAL RULES

Griffon Heavy Mortar

Range: G12"-48" **Strength:** 6 **AP:** 4 **Type:** Ordnance 1/ Blast

High Explosive Shell: These are the standard shells and use the stat line given above.

Instead of firing a high explosive shell a Griffon may be equipped with one of the following types of shell instead.

Siege Shells: Griffon Siege shells use the smaller blast template instead of the ordnance blast template, but count as ordnance in all other respects. Roll 2D6+6 when rolling armour penetration for siege shells against bunkers and buildings, and add the dice together rather than picking the highest.

Illum Shells: Illumination shells are fired at night to light up the battlefield and allow friendly troops to find targets. Once fired high into the sky they burn slowly, drifting down to earth on a parachute.

If the Griffon fires an illum shell then for the rest of the Shooting phase any unit on the table can re-roll their Night Fighting roll for targeting the enemy. They must accept the second roll even if it is worse.

Of course a lighter battlefield for one side is also a lighter battlefield for the other. Your opponent may also re-roll Night Fighting targeting dice in his next Shooting phase.

Smoke Shells: Smoke shells are fired to hide friendly forces from enemy fire and create a smoke screen.

Choose a friendly unit within range to protect with a smoke screen. The smoke provides an infantry unit with a 5+ Cover Save. Place some cotton wool in front of the unit to represent the smoke screen. The unit protected by a smoke screen cannot fire through it themselves. If the smoke is fired to hide a vehicle, then it counts as if it had used smoke launchers – any hits are glancing hits.

Infernus Shells: The interior of an infernos shell is filled with a combustible substance, such as oxy-phospur gel or thermite. This instantly burns, setting the target on fire.

An Infernus shell has the same effect as a high explosive shell, except any infantry unit that is hit must make an immediate Fall Back move to avoid the fire now burning.

DROP SENTINEL

The Sentinel is the Imperial Guard's standard issue light combat and scout vehicle. Widely used by most regiments for a variety of battlefield and rear echelon task, the Sentinel is one of the most common vehicles deployed by the Imperial Guard.

The Sentinel is a single-seater, all-terrain walker. Its cunningly articulate legs and feet mean it is capable of traversing even the most treacherous terrain, from jungles, to deserts, to swamps, to ice-fields, the Sentinel can go anywhere. Being a walker it lacks the top speed of tracked or wheeled vehicles but, at need, it can run – much like a man.

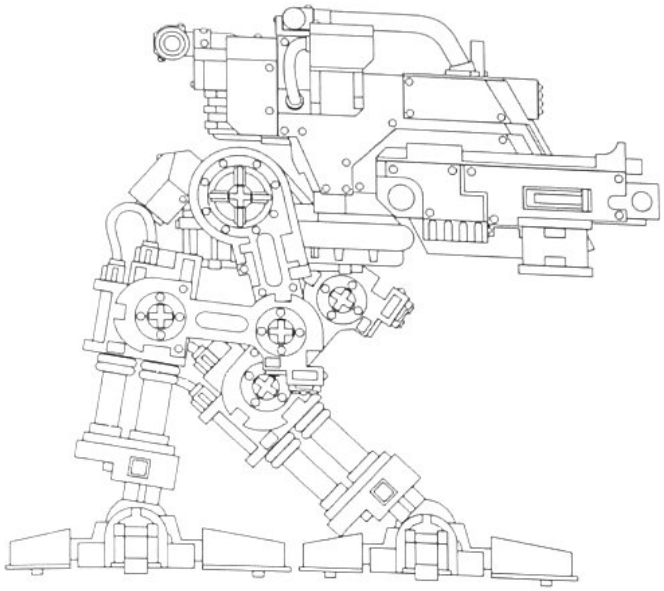
Amongst Guardsmen Sentinel pilots have gained a reputation as rogues and mavericks. Often called upon to operate independently of higher command, Sentinel pilots become individualistic, relying on their initiative, traits not generally encouraged in Imperial Guard soldiers.

Sentinels operate in squadrons of 1-3 vehicles, but are also fielded en-masse as entire companies. Their primary role is reconnaissance, ranging out in front of Imperial Guard columns to locate the enemy, but they are also used in many other roles. As a light combat vehicle, equipped with a single heavy weapon, they can provide valuable mobile heavy weapons support for infantry. Equipped with a hunter-killer missiles, they become an anti-tank weapon. Sentinels are also commonly used for security duties, patrolling around supply dumps, headquarters and airfields.

There are many different patterns of Sentinel, with each generally being armed differently. For example, the ubiquitous Mars pattern is armed with a multi-laser. The Catachan pattern carries a heavy flamer for jungle clearance. The Cadian pattern has an autocannon. The Armageddon pattern has a lascannon and a fully enclosed cockpit to protect the pilot from toxic environments.

The Elysians drop pattern Sentinel is a variant of the standard pattern, equipped with either a heavy bolter or multi-melta and with modifications made to the power plant and cab to allow the vehicle to fit inside a Valkyrie, once the legs are folded away. The Sentinel can be launched from the Valkyrie and landed via a grav-chute with the rest of the troops. For the Elysian Drop Troops, who lack many of the Imperial Guard's heavier weapons, the Drop Sentinels are vital, providing both mobile fire support and anti-tank firepower. Generally, the Elysians do not use Drop Sentinels as scouts, rather they are attached directly to infantry platoons as heavy weapons support. The 23rd regiment's Drop Sentinels were heavily engaged during the assault and subsequent defence of Hydro-plant 23-30. All of the regiment's thirty-six vehicles were destroyed during the three-day battle.

Drop sentinel with heavy bolter,
Accatran pattern



DVLA 6724930

ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vehicle Designation 0427-942-2203-CY019

Vehicle Name DROP SENTINEL

Forge World of Origin ACCATRAN

Known Patterns I-XII

Crew DRIVER

Powerplant CRDx 6 cyl 90PS

Weight 7 TONNES

Length N/A

Width 2.3 M

Height 4.8 M

Ground Clearance 2,22 M

Max Speed - On Road 25 KPH

Max Speed - Off Road 20 KPH

Main Armament HEAVY BOLTER

Secondary Armament N/A

Traverse 90°

Elevation -30° TO +30°

Main Ammunition 2,000 ROUNDS

Secondary Ammunition N/A

Armour

Turret N/A

Superstructure 45 MM

Hull 45 MM

Gun Mantlet N/A

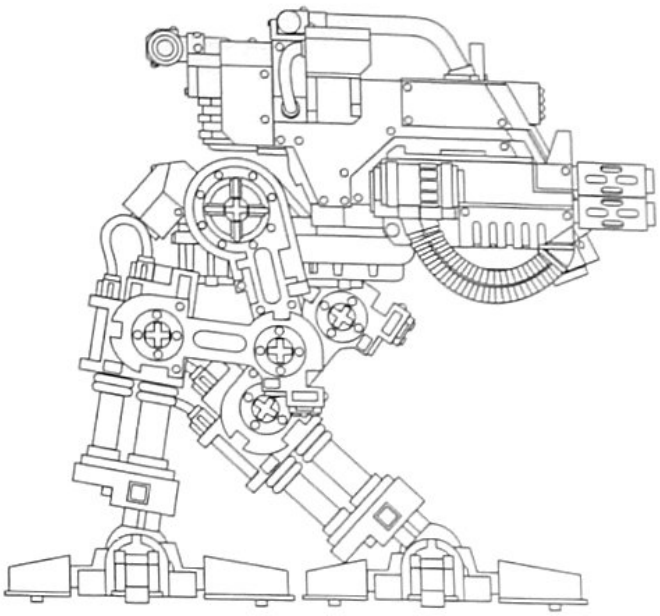
Date 1224031.M40

signature

Magos Fabricator

Pax Imperialis

Drop sentinel with multi-melta, Accatran pattern



DROP SENTINEL

	Points	WS	BS	S	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	I	A
Drop Sentinel	35	3	3	5	10	10	10	3	1

Thought for the day:
The same hammer that shatters the glass, forges the steel.

Type: Walker, Open-topped

Crew: (1) Imperial Guard

Squadron: Consists of between 1 and 3 Drop Sentinels

Weapons: Each Sentinel must be armed with one of the following weapons (a squadron may contain different weapons).

Heavy bolter +5 pts Multi-melta +20 pts

Options: Sentinels may take the following vehicle upgrades; armoured crew compartment, camo netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, searchlight, smoke launchers.

Transport: A Sentinel may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

Fast Attack: A Drop Sentinel squadron is a Fast Attack choice for an Elysian Drop Troop army.

SPECIAL RULES

Deep Strike: Sentinels not carried in a Valkyrie may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Note: Drop Sentinels are not used in a scouting role and do not benefit from the Sentinel's Scout special rule.

SUPPORT SENTINEL

The Sentinel is a versatile vehicle, which, throughout the years has been put to many uses by Imperial Guard regiments – from scout vehicles and supply carrying power-lifters to lightweight drop variants. The Support Sentinels is one such modification, a heavily armed variant, operating as part of Sentinel companies, they lend heavy and indirect fire to the rest of the company. Because companies sometimes fight en-masse, or operate as mobile heavy weapons platforms in support of Infantry platoons, they need their own fire support that does not have the command and control restrictions of the heavy artillery. Support Sentinel squadrons provide immediate front line firepower.

The first, and most common pattern of Support Sentinel is armed with a multiple rocket pod. This is used for suppression fire and anti-infantry saturation fire. The rocket pods fires multiple small fragmentation rockets, highly effective against massed enemy infantry, such as Ork mobs and swarms of Tyranid Gaunts.

The second type of Support Sentinel is armed with a missile launcher and equipped with specialises targeting equipment allowing it to fire indirectly. This means the Sentinel can function as mobile light artillery. The targeter's distinctive tall periscope allows the Sentinel to 'see' over intervening terrain, meaning it can stay well hidden behind cover and still find targets.

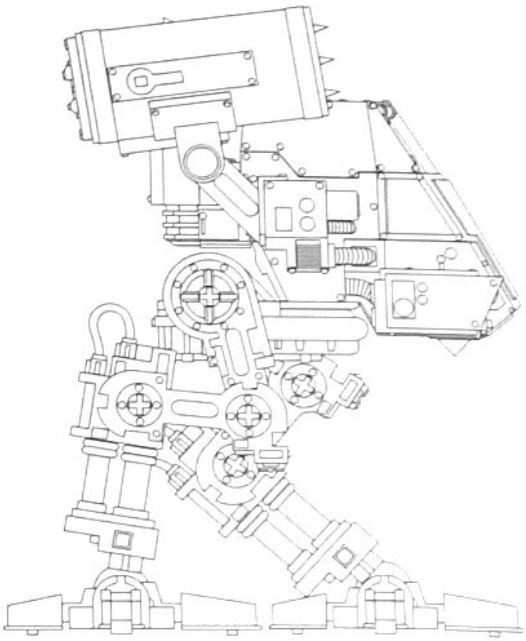
Support Sentinels are not common and each Sentinel company is lucky if it contains one or two squadrons of this variant. Sentinel company commanders value them highly for the valuable extra firepower they give to their squadrons.

As well as changes to the weapons, the Support Sentinel includes many other modifications as well. The pilot is protected from the missile's jet-wash by an armoured screen around his cockpit. This blast screen provides little in the way of extra protection from incoming enemy fire, but saves the pilot from being injured when his own weapon fires. The support variant also includes extra range-finder and target acquisition scanners. Mounted under the hull (the Sentinels normal weapon position), this scanner allows the Support Sentinel to find and engage targets at range.

Whilst operating in desert conditions some Sentinel pilots make their own modifications. These range from simple adjustments, like adding a tarpaulin roof to the cockpit to shade the driver from the sun, to having the regiment's Techpriests fit sand filters to avoid fine particles clogging the power-plant. Adaptations can also be made to the feet for walking on soft sand. All these might improve the Sentinels overall performance in a desert environment, but do little to effect its performance on the battlefield.

As well as the standard variant of the Support Sentinel, there is also a Drop pattern variant, used by the Elysian Drop Troops. This lightweight Support Sentinel fulfils the same role, but incorporates the Drop Sentinel's modifications, so it can be landed via grav-chute.

Support Sentinel with rocket pod, Triplex-Phall pattern



ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vehicle Designation 0427-942-2203-CX023

Vehicle Name SUPPORT SENTINEL

Forge World of Origin TRIPLEX-PHALL

Known Patterns I-XII

Crew DRIVER

Powerplant CRDv 6 cyl 90PS

Weight 4 TONNES

Length N/A

Width 2.3 M

Height 4.8 M

Ground Clearance 2,22 M

Max Speed - On Road 45 KPH

Max Speed - Off Road 40 KPH

Main Armament MULTIPLE ROCKET POD

Secondary Armament N/A

Traverse 90°

Elevation -0° TO +60°

Main Ammunition 7 MISSILES

Secondary Ammunition N/A

Armour

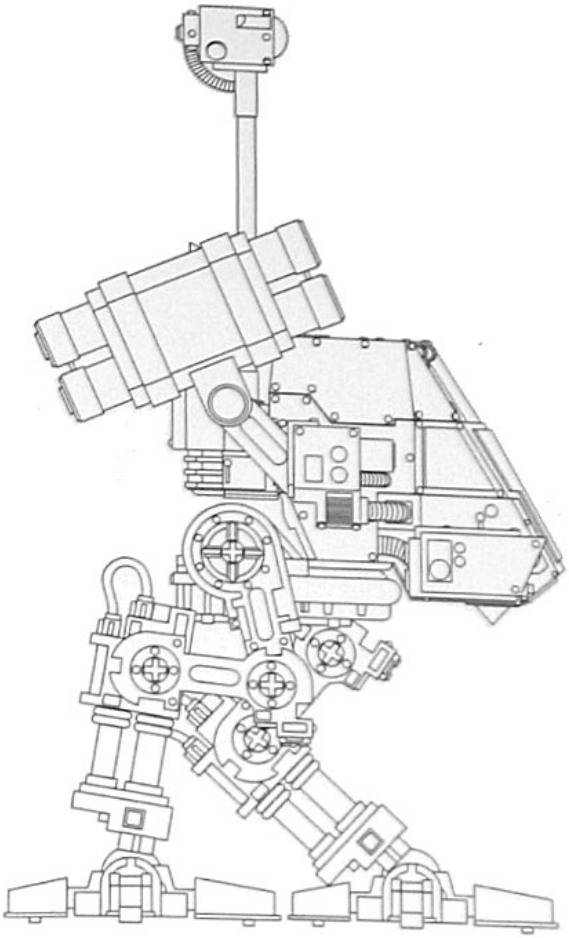
- **Turret** N/A
- **Superstructure** 45 MM
- **Hull** 45 MM
- **Gun Mantlet** N/A

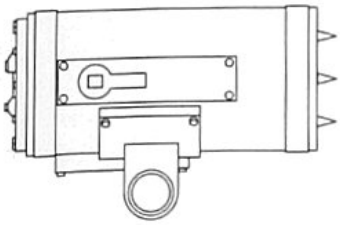
Date 1224031.M40

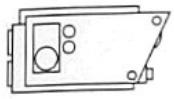
signature

Magos Fabricator

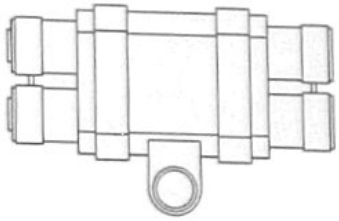
Dominus Ex-Machina



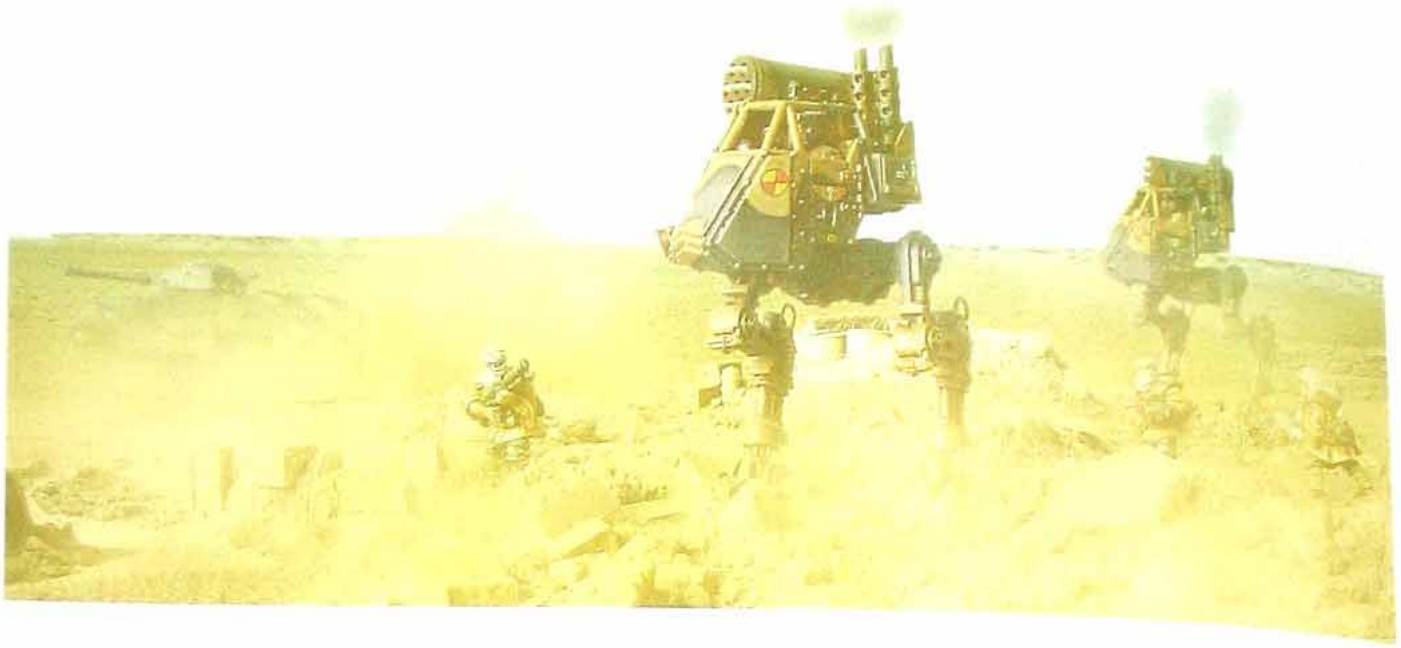




Voss pattern fragmentation warhead multiple rocket pod and multi-spectral targeter.



Voss pattern Mk 22 quad missile launcher tubes.



0-1 SUPPORT SENTINEL SQUADRON

	Points	WS	BS	S	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	I	A
Drop Sentinel	35	3	3	5	10	10	10	3	1

Thought for the day:
Will is not enough. Act!

Type: Walker, Open-topped.

Crew: (1) Imperial Guard.

Squadron: Consists of between 1 and 3 Sentinels.

Weapons: Each Support Sentinel must be armed with one of the following weapons (a squadron may contain different weapons).

Missile launcher +30 pts Multiple rocket pod +20 pts

Options: Sentinels may take the following vehicle upgrades: armoured crew compartment, camo netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, searchlight, smoke launchers.

Fast Attack: 0-1 Sentinel Support squadron is a Fast Attack choice for an Imperial Guard army. You must include at least 1 Sentinel squadron in your army to include a Sentinel Support squadron.

0-1 Support Sentinel squadron is a Fast Attack choice for an Elysian Drop Troop army.

SPECIAL RULES

Multiple Rocket Pod

Multiple rocket pods saturate a target area with rapid firing, small fragmentation missiles. They are highly effective anti-infantry weapon used against swarms of lightly armed troops.

Range: 24" **Str:** 4 **AP:** 6 **Type:** Heavy2, Blast

Missile Launcher

Frag **Range:** G6-48" **Str:** 4 **AP:**6 **Type:** Heavy1, Blast

Krak **Range:** 0-48" **Str:** 8 **AP:**3 **Type:** Heavy1

The frag missiles may uses indirect fire. It is treated as a Barrage (ie, Guess range) weapon with a minimum range of 6". As a Barrage weapon the frag missiles always causes Pinning tests.

The missile launcher can also be fired in a direct fire role as normal without the minimum range.

Note: Support Sentinels are not used in a scouting role and do not benefit from the Sentinel's Scout special rule.

AQUILA LANDER

The Aquila lander is a light personnel shuttle, used by the Imperial Navy to transport dignitaries, officials and other important personnel from ship-to-ship or from orbit to a planet's surface. The Aquila is a common aircraft, used both in space and inside planetary atmospheres. They are carried by many Imperial Navy warships, alongside their compliment of fighters and bombers, for routine transport and liaison duties. The Aquila is crewed by just a single pilot.

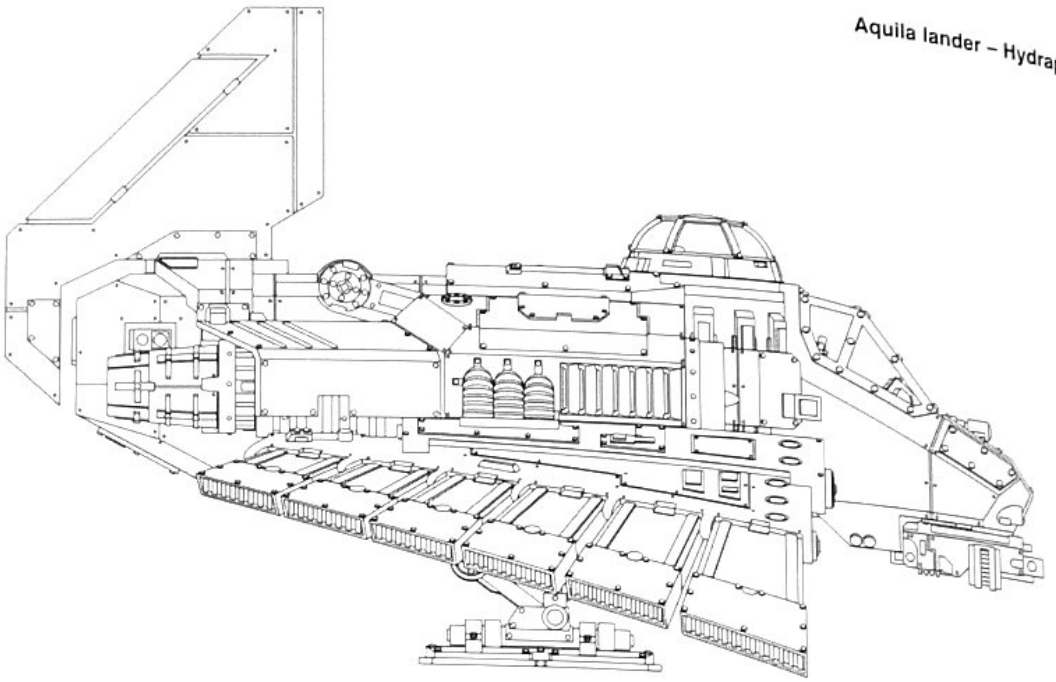
It is not a combat aircraft. Each lander is only armed with a chin-mounted heavy weapon for self-defence. Usually this is an autocannon or multi-laser, although some Aquilas' do mount other weapons. In comparison, with most aircraft, the Aquila is well armoured, this is for the protection of its important passengers.

The Aquila uses an unusual wing design. Its multiple independent engine vents form a distinctive 'wing-feather' appearance, from which the aircraft gets its name. In an atmosphere these vents give the aircraft good manoeuvrability, which is the aircraft's best defence if caught in air-to-air combat.

The transport compartment holds six men, enough for an official and a small retinue or bodyguard. The official is also provided with a command chair, including communication equipment. There is also an observation dome for the dignitary. On landing, the entire transport compartment lowers down to ground level to allow access.

On Taros, Aquila landers were commonly used by the High Command and 4621st Army command. Generals and their aides, Departmento Munitorum officials, supply officers etc, all needed to get across the wide deserts from headquarters to supply depot or for command briefings. The fastest way to do this was via a shuttle. Of course, this put the shuttle at risk of encountering roving Tau Barracudas. To avoid losing shuttles (and more importantly, their passengers), each had to be assigned an escort of Thunderbolt or Lightning fighter. This was another drain on the Navy's aircraft, which were already heavily engaged with the Tau Air Caste. As the demand for combat aircraft grew, the fighter escorts were withdrawn, and Aquila shuttles were either grounded or had to make dangerous trips, risking being shot down in an uneven dogfight. Several Aquila landers were shot down by Barracudas during the Imperial Guard's evacuation operation, include one transporting Provisioner-Prime Nymus Dree to orbit. The high-ranking Departmento Munitorum official was presumed killed after his shuttle crash-landed in the desert.

Aquila lander – Hydraphur pattern



ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANAFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

DVLA-345792

Vehicle Designation 0120-766-0724-PR 122

Type: LANDER

Vehicle Name: AQUILA

Forge World of Origin: CYPRA-MUNDI

Known Patterns: I-VI

Crew: PILOT

Powerplant: 2 X RX-40-08 ROCKET ENGINES

Weight: 42 TONNES

Length: 11.8 M

Wingspan: 21.45 M

Height: 8.1 M

Operational Ceiling: N/A

Max Speed: 1900 KPH APPROX

Range: 24,000 KM IN ATMOSPHERE

Main Armament: NOSE MOUNTED HEAVY BOLTER

Secondary Armament: N/A

Main Ammunition: 400 ROUNDS

Secondary Ammunition: N/A

Armour:

Superstructure: 65 MM

Hull: 65 MM

Pax Imperialis

CLASSIFIED

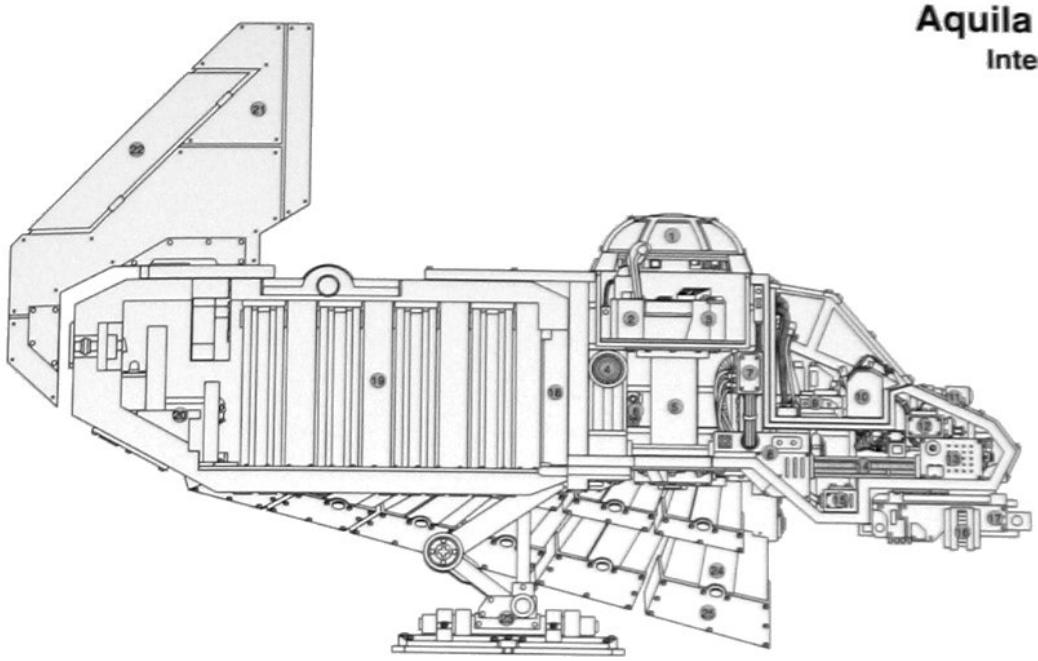
Date: 1224031.M41

Signature:

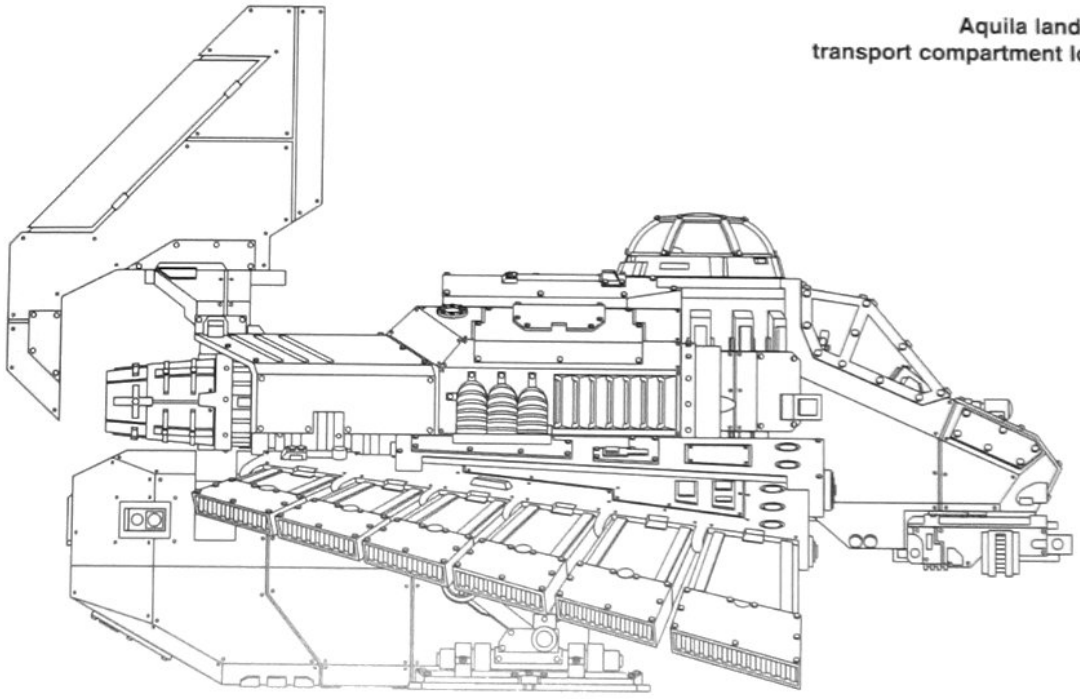
Magos Fabricator

Dominus Ex Machina

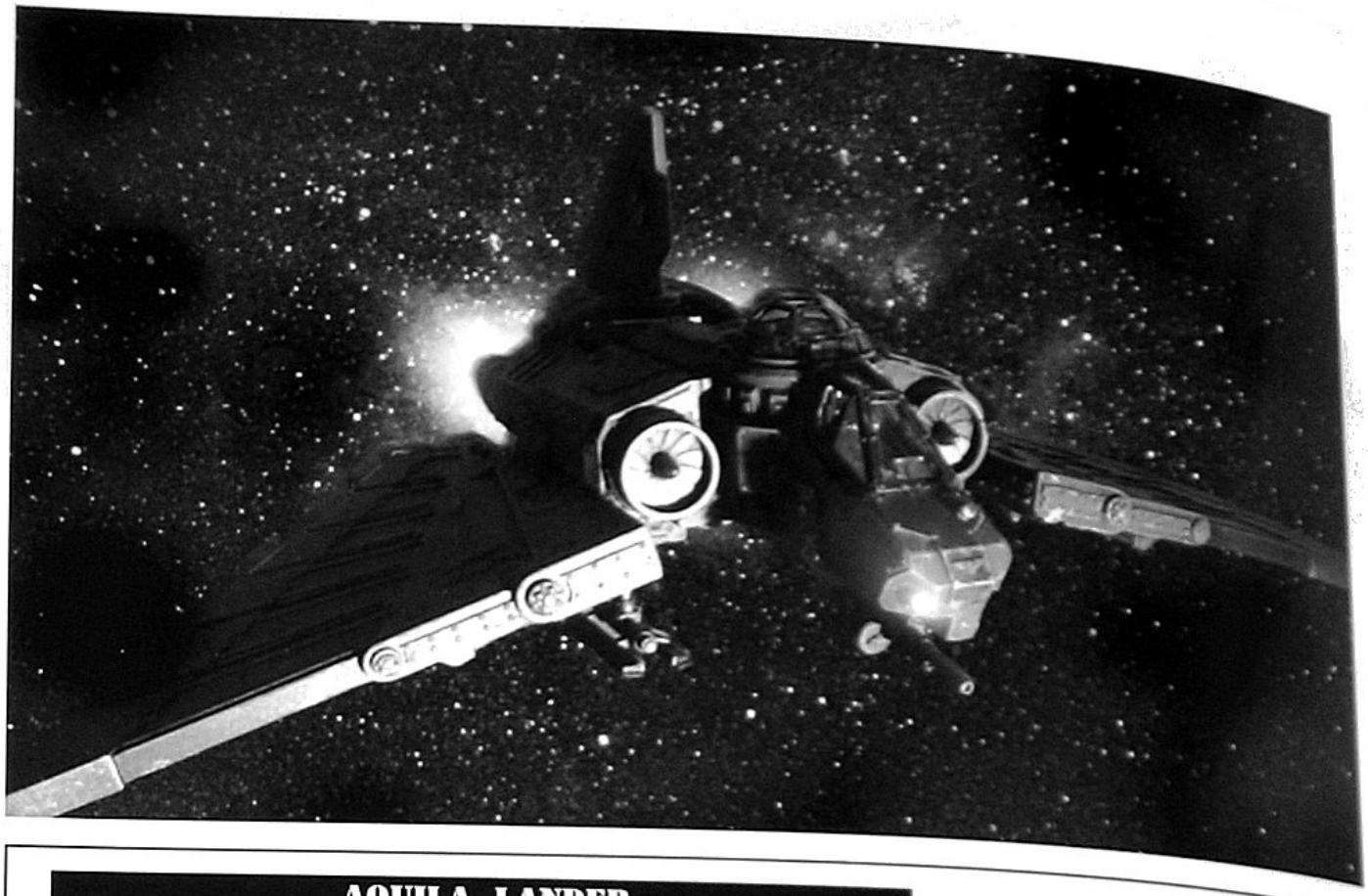
Aquila Lander
Interior Detail



1. Observation dome
2. Commander seat
3. Commander's control panel
4. Observation dome gearing
5. Elevator piston
6. Door control panel
7. Primary avionics compartment
8. Engine control systems
9. Pilot's seat
10. Pilot's systems control panel
11. Forward navigation light
12. Communications and tracking equipment
13. Primary flight control systems
14. Cable run
15. Emergency battery
16. Ammunition cannister
17. Heavy bolter
18. Passenger compartment blast door
19. Passenger compartment
20. Commander's travel seat
21. Tail fin
22. Tail rudder
23. Landing gear
24. Independent engine vent
25. Exhaust nozzle



Aquila lander with transport compartment lowered



AQUILA LANDER					
	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Aquila	110	11	11	10	3

Thought for the day:
You carry the Emperor's Will as a torch, with it destroy the shadows.

Type: Flyer, Orbital Lander

Crew: (1) Imperial Navy

Weapons: The Aquila lander has a single nose-mounted heavy bolter.

Options: The Aquila lander may upgrade its heavy bolter to a multi-laser for +10 pts, or an autocannon for +15 pts.

May take the following Imperial Navy Aircraft upgrades: Ejector seats, flare or chaff launcher, armoured cockpit, illum flares, distinctive paint scheme or decals.

Transport: May carry one character and up to 6 other men.

Transport Option: The Aquila lander is a Transport option for an Imperial character and his retinue or bodyguard (see rules below).

Access Points: 1. The Aquila has a single door as an access point for the passengers.

Fire Points: 0

SPECIAL RULES

VTOL Hover Mode: After arriving on the table the Aquila can choose to engage its VTOL hover mode and remain on the table. The Aquila uses its pinion thrusters to hover above the ground. It remains stationary but can turn in any direction to bring its weapons to bear. Whilst hovering it may fire its weapons.

For the purposes of being fired at, treat the Aquila as a moving skimmer whilst in hover mode. It can be targeted using the firer's normal BS. All hits are treated as glancing hits. If the Aquila is immobilised then it is destroyed. Whilst hovering it cannot be attacked in close combat (it is too high off the ground), unless the attacker can fly or has jump packs, in which case it can be assaulted as if it was a moving vehicle.

At the end of its own turn the Aquila may disengage VTOL hover mode, using its main thrusters, and fly off. It now reverts to being a flyer. It will return in the enemy turn on a 2+ as per the normal Flyer rules. It cannot return in the enemy turn immediately after it leaves the table, but must miss that turn as it flies away to gain height and speed for its attack run.

Imperial Character: This is a term to cover a variety of characters from different codexes and army lists. The Aquila is a transport option for any of the following: Inquisitor and retinue (Daemonhunter and Witch Hunters), Techpriest and Servitors (Imperial Guard), Cannoness and bodyguard (Witch Hunters), Preacher and followers (Witch Hunters), Administratum Prefect and bodyguard, Adeptus Arbites Marshall and Arbitrator bodyguard, Imperial Guard General and staff, a single Officio Assassinorum Operative (Daemonhunters and Witch Hunters). It may not be used as a Transport option by any Space Marine characters.

THUNDERHAWK TRANSPORTER

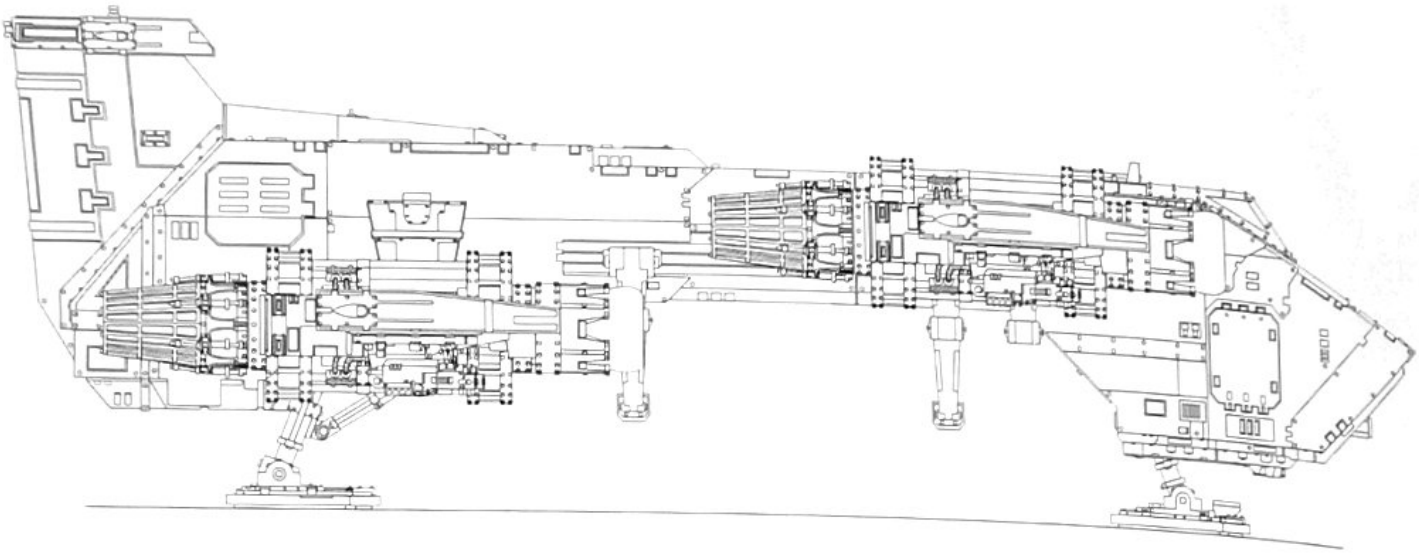
The Thunderhawk transporter is the logistical support variant of the standard gunship. Used to quickly move a Space Marine Chapter's vehicles from strike cruisers in orbit to a planet's surface, or from one ground operation to another. The transporter does not carry troops unless they are pre-loaded into the vehicles. It is armed with four heavy bolter turrets for self-defence, but can also carry wing mounted hellstrike missiles for attacking a landing zone. This is rarely required, as most of transporter's work is done after a landing zone has been secured. During planetary assaults, transporters fly non-stop missions ferrying vehicles and supplies to the Space Marines on the ground.

Twin-winged and powered by four RX-92-00 combination rocket/turbofan engines, the transporter is powerful enough to lift two fully loaded Rhinos or a single Land Raider, using large magnetic clamping arms to lock its cargo in place. It has four arms mounted upon runners on the fuselage, so they can be moved into position on a vehicle's side. The jointed arms then clamp the vehicle and lift it off the ground into the carry position. Upon landing, the arms will be lowered to place the under-slung vehicles on the ground, allowing the transporter to swoop in, drop off its cargo and quickly blast off. This minimizes the time a transporter is stationary on the ground, vulnerable to enemy attacks.

As well as carrying vehicles, a Thunderhawk transporter can also be equipped with an under-slung supply pod, for moving ammunition, fuel or other important supplies to a planet's surface. Transporters also carry other useful equipment such as winches and a drop pod recovery sling. They have a standard crew of two, a pilot and a co-pilot.

On Taros, Thunderhawk transporters formed an important part of the Raptors Chapter strike force, and were used to support all the Space Marines' operations, landing their vehicles and extracting them back to their waiting battle barge after each deployment. Their most significant contribution was landing the armoured vehicles which conducted the Iracunda Breakthrough, quickly getting the Space Marines into position to launch their armoured attack. At the conclusion of the campaign Thunderhawk transporters were amongst the last troops to leave Taros, lifting the surviving Raptors' vehicles to safety as the rearguard was evacuated.

Thunderhawk transporter



ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANAFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

DVLA 89/9623

Vehicle Designation 5463-028-7108-TH 011

Type ORBITAL TRANSPORTER

Vehicle Name THUNDERHAWK TRANSPORTER

World of Origin MARS

Known Patterns I-XI

Crew PILOT, CO-PILOT

Powerplant 4 X RX-92-00 COMBINATION ROCKET / AFTERBURNING TURBOFANS

Weight 105 TONNES

Length 28.8 M

Wingspan 26.65 M

Height 8.6 M

Operational Ceiling N/A

Max Speed 2000 KPH APPROX

Range 28,000 KM IN ATMOSPHERE

Main Armament 4 X TWIN-LINKED HEAVY BOLTERS

Secondary Armament N/A

Main Ammunition 2200 ROUNDS

Secondary Ammunition N/A

Armour

Superstructure 45 MM

Hull 45 MM

Pax Imperialis

Astartes

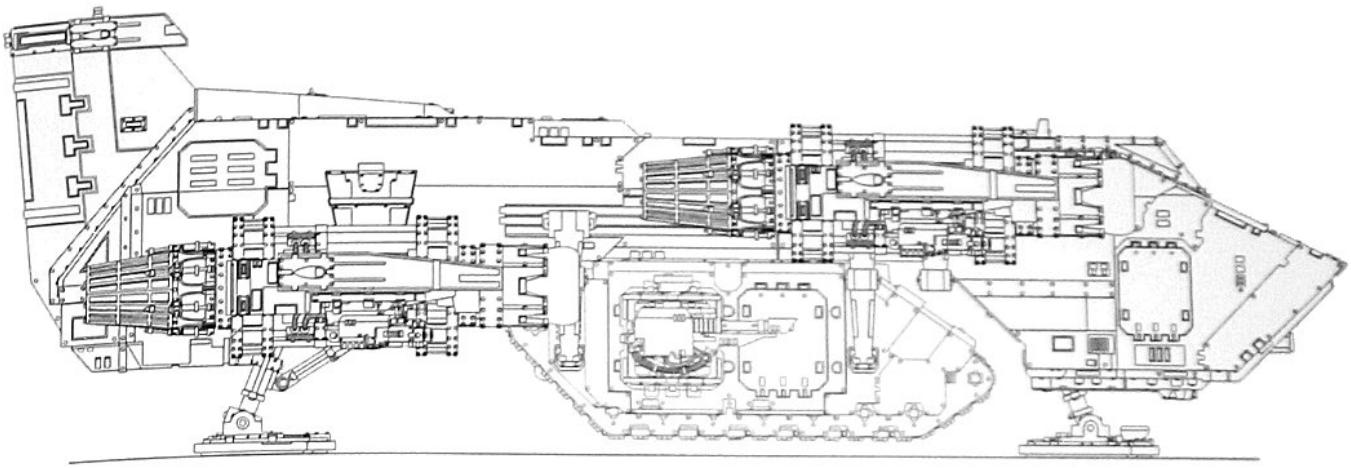
CLASSIFIED

Date 1224074.M40

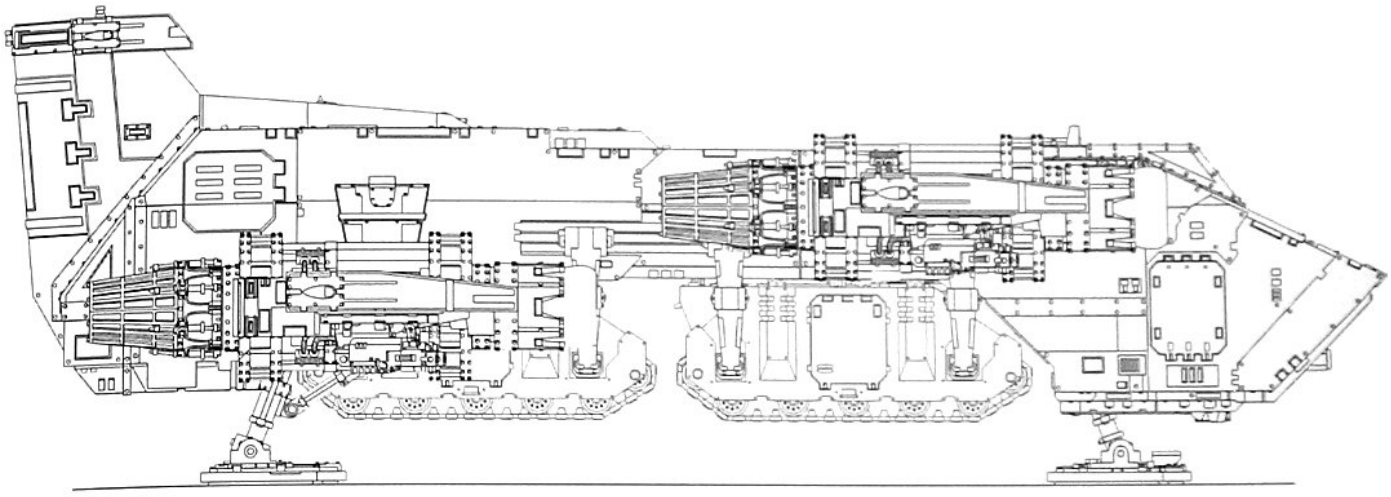
signature Dante Hayes

Magos Fabricator

Thunderhawk transporter with Land Raider



Thunderhawk transporter with Rhinos



THUNDERHAWK TRANSPORTER

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
T'hawk Transporter	455	12	12	10	4

Thought for the day:
Hope is sin.

Type: Super-heavy Flyer, Orbital Lander

Structure Points: 3

Crew: 2. Space Marines

Weapons: 4 x twin-linked heavy bolters. All Thunderhawk transporters have a decoy launcher.

Options: A Thunderhawk transporter may carry up to 6 hellstrike missiles for +10 pts per missile.

Transport: A Thunderhawk Transporter may carry 2 Rhinos or Rhino variants, or 1 Land Raider or Land Raider variant.

Rhino variants include: Predator, Razorback, Whirlwind, Vindicator, Damocles.

Land Raider variants include: Crusader, Prometheus, Helios.

Transport vehicles may contain any passengers they would normally be carrying. Vehicles and passengers must be paid for separately.

Super Heavy Detachment: As a Super-heavy Flyer the Thunderhawk transporter must be taken as a separate detachment. A detachment consists of 1-3 Thunderhawks or Thunderhawk Transporters.

SPECIAL RULES

Ceramite Shielding: In order to resist the heat of atmospheric entry a Thunderhawk transporter has thick ceramite shielding. This makes it resistant to melta (and melta-type) weapons. Melta weapons, including melta-bombs, never roll an extra dice for armour penetration due to being at half range.

Decoy Flares: If the Thunderhawk transporter takes a glancing hit from enemy fire, then it may fire its decoy flares to re-roll the result. The second result must stand, even if it is better than the first. Decoy flares may only be used once per game.

Unloading Vehicles: Vehicles can disembark from the transporter very quickly. The Thunderhawk transporter lands using the normal orbital lander rules. Simply leave the vehicle or vehicles in place when the transporter takes off again. A landed vehicle may begin moving, shooting etc as normal in their own turn.

Loading Vehicles: An empty transporter can pick up a vehicle by using the Orbital Lander rules to land on top of a vehicle. It must then spend a complete turn on the ground whilst the clamps are secured. When the Transporter takes off it takes the vehicle (and any passengers) with it.

Any damaged vehicle that is removed from the battlefield by a Thunderhawk transporters is worth half its normal Victory Points value to its opponents. Note destroyed vehicles are still worth their full value for Victory Points.

WARHOUND TITAN

Titans are huge walking war machines, protected within powerful void shields and mounting massive weapons of awesome destructive power, they are the Imperium's greatest fighting machines.

Titans are organised into Titan Legions. Controlled by the Adeptus Titanicus, the military division of the Adeptus Mechanicus, each legion has its base on a forge world. From its forge world home the legion will send out Titans to warzones across the galaxy to aid the Imperium's other fighting forces.

To the Adeptus Mechanicus, Titans are ancient and venerated symbols of the power of the Machine God. They bestride the battlefield like the Machine God incarnate. The Machine Spirit within is carefully tended with rituals and prayers. Each Titan will fight on countless battlefields over many hundred of years. The loss of a Titan is a grievous blow to a legion, and each loss will be mourned on its home forge world.

Each Titan is crewed by devout members of the Adeptus Mechanicus. A Titan commander is known by the rank of Princeps, and through the Titan's mind-impulse controls he can oversee all aspects of the war machine's operations.

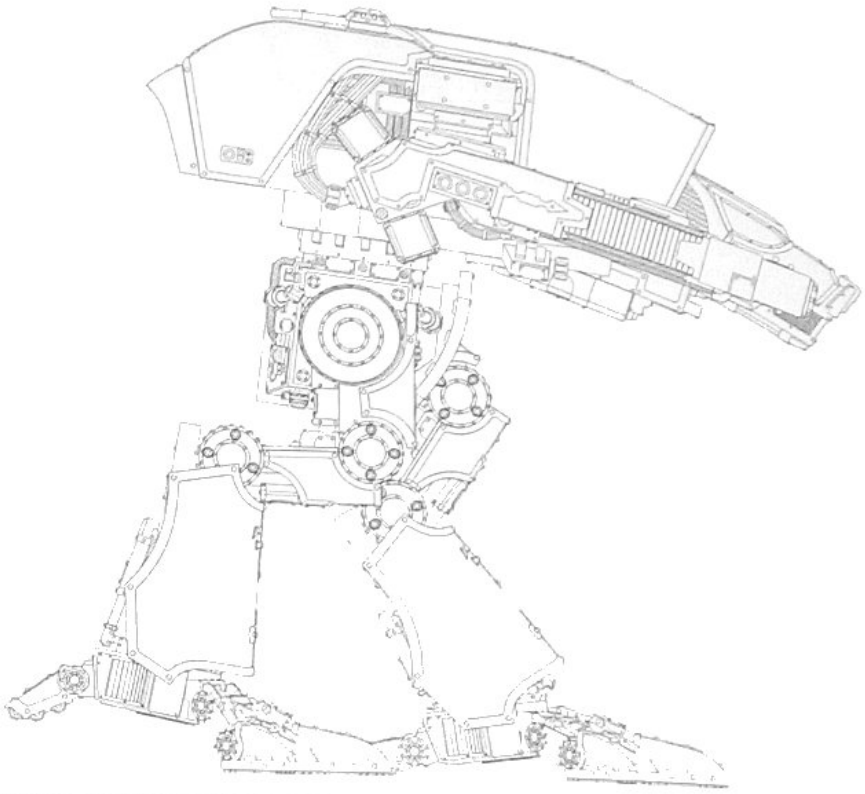
The Princep is aided by a crew of two Moderati, a Techpriest and several servitors. The first Moderati fulfils the functions of driver and navigator, the other is the gunnery commander and sensor operator. In their turn, the Moderati control the Titan's compliment of remote servitor-slaves. Part-human, part-machine, servitors are hardwired into the Titan's weapons, void shield generators and engineering systems.

The final member of the crew is a Techpriest. From his station in the engine room he controls the output of the Titan's plasma reactor. This is the heart of the Titan, supplying power to all the Titan's systems as required. All Titans require vast amounts of energy, and the Titan's dangerously volatile plasma reactor provides this. With its attendant risks of meltdown or a catastrophic run away reaction the Techpriest must constantly monitor the reactor's output, diverting power to systems as needed.

Warhounds are the smallest class of Titan, sometimes referred to as a 'Scout' Titan. They are the eyes and ears of the Titan legions, and when on campaign range far ahead of the main battlegroups. They are faster and more agile than a Reaver or Warlord Titan, but cannot match these mighty machines for armour or firepower. Warhounds almost invariable operate in pairs so that they can outmanoeuvre and outflank other larger Titans they might encounter. In a major engagement Warhounds operate on the flanks, and seek to engage enemy tanks and infantry rather than other Titans, where their Vulcan mega-bolters, inferno guns and turbo-lasers (all lighter Titan weapons), can still inflict immense damage.

On Taros, the Imperial forces were supported by a small battlegroup of just four Legio Ignatum Warhounds. To secure these war machines took strenuous diplomatic efforts, and even then the Titans were not available for the initial planetary assault. After their arrival, the Titans played a major role in the Iracunda Breakthrough, but the unexpected loss of Princep Jernay's Titan *Advensor Primaris* caused the Warhounds to be re-called. On the orders of High Magos Volta, the three survivors were amongst the first units to be evacuated from Taros.

Mars pattern
Warhound Titan



ADEPTUS MECHANICUS DEPARTMENTO MANUFACTURUM
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vehicle Designation 0550-4332-982-WH 04

Vehicle Name WARHOUND TITAN

Forge World of Origin MARS

Known Patterns III-XXI

Crew PREFECT, 2 X MODERATII, TECHPRIEST

Powerplant TYPE XIV PLASMA REACTOR

Weight 410 TONNES

Length 12.1 M

Width 11 M

Height 14 M AT REST

Ground Clearance 6.5 M

Max Speed - On Road 58 KPH 8.25 M STRIDE LENGTH

Max Speed - Off Road 42 KPH

Main Armament PLASMA BLASTGUN

Secondary Armament VULCAN MEGA-BOLTER

Traverse 100 °

Elevation -33° TO +36°

Main Ammunition UNLIMITED FROM REACTOR

Secondary Ammunition 14000 ROUNDS

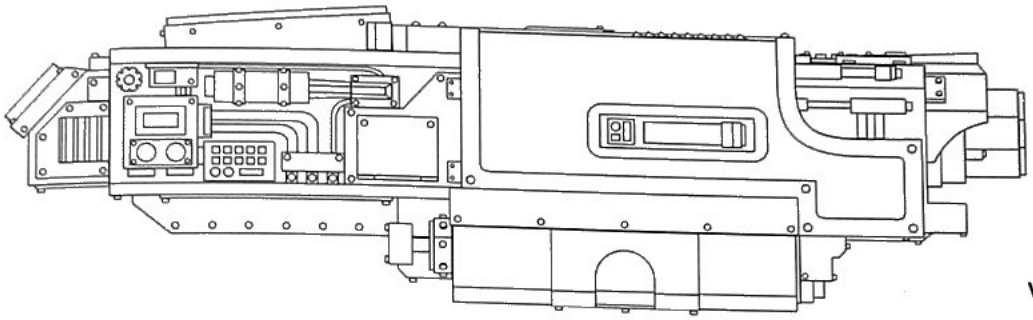
Armour

- **Turret** N/A
- **Superstructure** 95 MM
- **Hull** 95 MM
- **Gun Mantlet** N/A

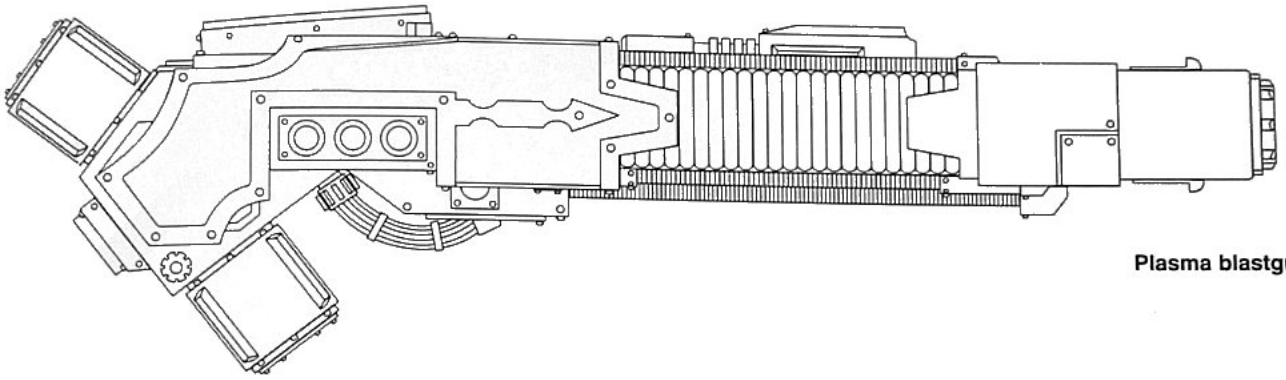
Date 1474099.M39 **signature**

Magos Fabricator

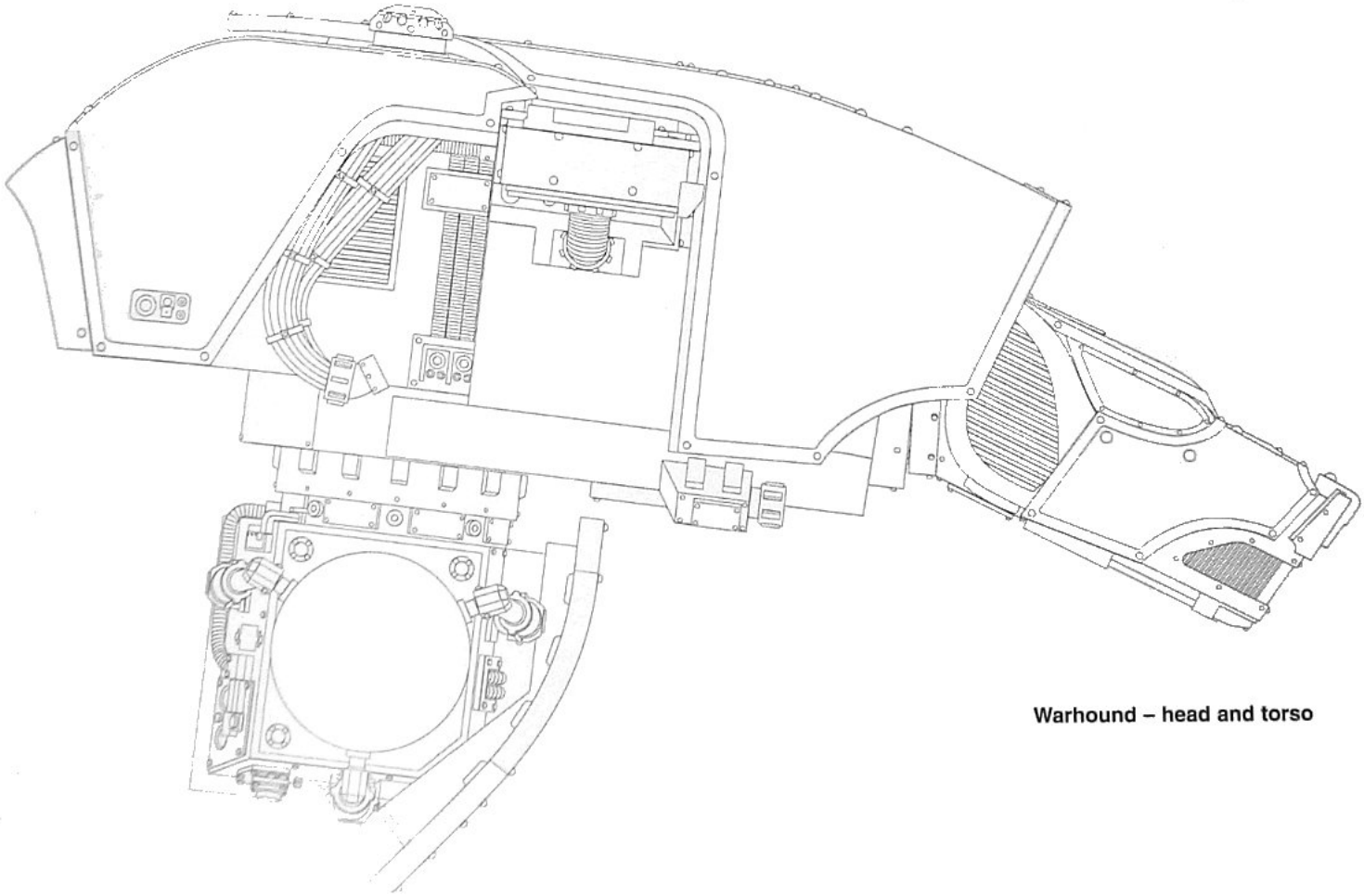
Domine Ex Machina



Vulcan pattern mega-bolter



Plasma blastgun



Warhound – head and torso

WARHOUND

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Warhound	450 + wpns	14	13	12	4

Type: Super-heavy Tank

Speed: Normal

Structure Points: 3

Void Shields: 2

Crew: 4. Adeptus Titanicus

Thought for the day:
As our bodies are protected by adamantium, so our souls are protected by loyalty.

Weapons: A Warhound must take two weapons from the following list for the points cost given: Plasma blastgun +180 pts; double-barrelled turbo-laser +210 pts; inferno gun +180 pts; Vulcan mega-bolter +180 pts.

Options: None

SPECIAL RULES

Minimum Range: A Warhound may not target units within 12".

Agile Vehicle: The Warhound is fast and manoeuvrable (for a Titan!), but its long strides do not have the straight line speed of a fastest vehicles. It can move up to 6" and fire all weapons, or up to 12" and fire one weapon. It may not move more than 12". It must move in a straight line, but can pivot up to 90° at the end of its move.

Targeting: As a Super-heavy vehicle the Warhound can target different units with its weapons.

Void Shields: Each void shield counts as having an Armour Value of 12. If the Titan has any void shields operating then roll to penetrate void shield rather than the vehicle. If a hit scores a glancing or penetrating hit then the void shield is overloaded and taken down – no additional damage is caused. Only when a Titan has no void shields left do you roll against its Armour Value and then roll for damage for glancing or penetrating hits as normal for a Super-heavy vehicle. Void shields have no effect in close combat.

At the start of its turn a Warhound can attempt to regenerate downed void shields. Roll a D6 for each downed void shield, it is regenerated on a roll of 6.

Titan Tank Shock: Enemy infantry must test at -1 to their Leadership if they are Tank Shocked by a Warhound. The enemy unit may still use the Death or Glory special rule.

Leg Armour: A Warhound has its thickest armour protecting its vulnerable legs. Troops on the ground which assault a Warhound can usually only attack its legs or feet, and therefore all close combat attacks against a Warhound are resolved against Armour Value 14, regardless of which direction the attacks come from. Troops which have jump packs or that can fly ignore this rule and use the Armour Value of whichever facing they are attacking.

Titan Stomp!: Unlike other vehicles attacked in close combat, a Titan can fight back, using its weight and size to kick and stomp enemies. It will make 1 attack against any model in base contact with it in the Assault phase. The Titan has a Weapon Skill of 1, an Initiative of 1, and a Strength of 6. Due to the Titan's massive size there is no Armour Save allowed against these attacks (except for Invulnerable Saves) and against vehicles roll 2D6+6 for armour penetration adding both dice together.

Opponents that fight a round of close combat against the Warhound and fail to destroy it (quite a likely occurrence!) automatically fall back unless they are a vehicle or another war machine. Titans never pursue or consolidate – they remain stationary.

Enginseer Repairs: Every Titan has a Techpreist as part of its crew, aided by servitors and servo-skulls to keep the Titan running smoothly. At the start of his turn the Enginseer may attempted to repair damage to the Warhound. If the Warhound has its engines damaged, weapon destroyed or field destroyed, one of these defects (chosen by the Techpreist) is fixed on a roll of 5+. Note, the Techpriest is always aided by a servitor dedicated to the task, so gains a +1 to the roll (on his own he would require a 6 to fix the damage).

TITAN WEAPONS

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Turbo-laser	12-72"	9	2	Heavy/1, Blast

Notes: The stat line is for a single barrelled turbo-laser. A double-barrelled turbo-laser would be Heavy/2, a triple-barrelled would be Heavy/3, with the extra blast templates treated as a Barrage.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Plasma Blastgun	12-54"	8	2	Ordnance/1, Blast, Titan-killer.

Note: If a target is under the centre hole of the ordnance template, roll 2D6 for armour penetration and add the results together rather than choosing the highest.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Inferno Gun	12-36"	6	4	Heavy1, Massive Blast

Note: When firing the inferno gun, designate a target unit and place the massive blast template so that it is at least partially over as many unit members as possible. The whole template must be in range and line of sight. Roll to hit once, using the Titan's BS. If you hit, then all models partially or wholly under the template are hit. If you miss, they are each hit on a roll of 4+. There are no Cover Saves against inferno gun hits.

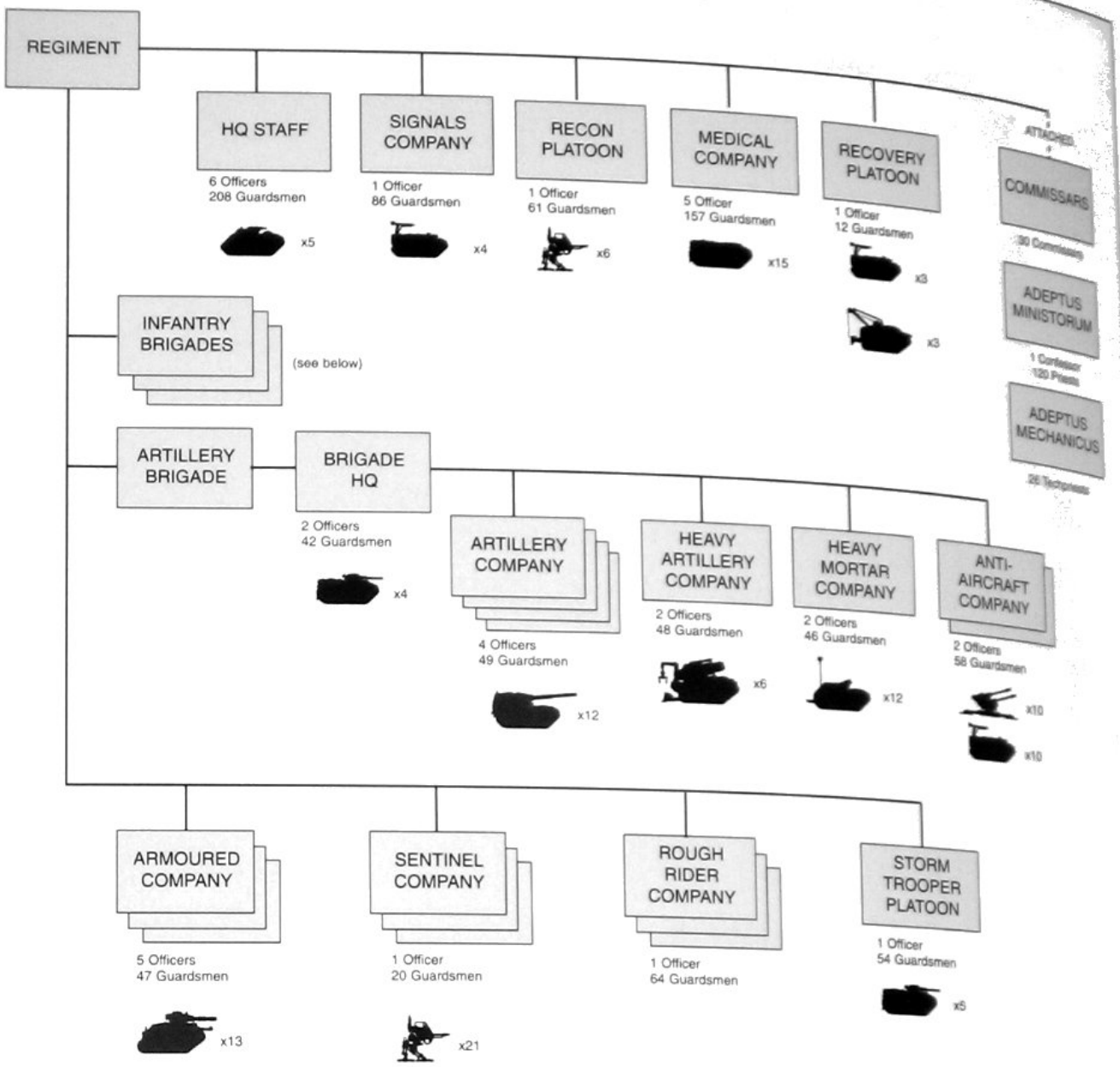
	Range	Str	AP	Type
Vulcan Mega-bolter	12-36"	6	4	Heavy/10, Rending

Note: Any rolls of 6 to hit cause an automatic wound with no Armour Save (except Invulnerable Saves and Cover Saves). Against vehicles, any Penetration roll of a 6 adds a further D6 to the result.

UNIT ORGANISATIONS

Remote sensor tower. This tower was first encountred by the 114th Cadian Regiment, unaware of its function several Chimeras were lost to Seeker missile strikes before the tower was destroyed.

17th TALLARN REGIMENT (Table of organisation)



REGIMENT TO & E

Personnel

1 General
4 Colonels
43 Captains
226 Lieutenants
1003 Sergeants
9230 Other ranks

30 Commissar
1 Confessor
120 Priests
26 Techpriests

10684 total

Weapons

10233 Lasguns
675 Long las
620 Laspistols
450 Close combat weapons
216 Missile launchers
162 Mortars
81 Lascannons
81 Heavy bolters
81 Autocannons
243 Plasma guns
216 Grenade launchers
216 Flamers
216 Melta guns

Vehicles

39 Leman Russes
150 Sentinels
49 Chimeras
48 Basilisks
6 Bombards
12 Griffons
20 Hydras
5 Salamanders
15 Samaritans
3 Atlas
38 Trojans

17th TALLARN REGIMENT
REGIMENTAL STAFF OPERATIONS

Regimental Commander.

General Barim-Abas is ultimately responsible for the regiment's success or failure, and the final arbitrator on all aspects of the regiment's running, whether engaged in battle or during garrison duties. In this he is advised by his regimental staff, a body of officers and men (drawn from his own regiment and various other Administratum departments) who organise, coordinate, prepare, compile and document all the regiment's activities.

Regimental Staff Sections

First Section. Operations.

The Operations section is the senior staff section of the regiment. The first section prepares field orders, situation maps, plans combat operations, compiles data on the situation in the regiment's area and estimates enemy strengths and movements. This section is commanded by the regiment's second-in-command, Chief of Operations, Staff Colonel Haddir.

Second Section. Intelligence.

The Intelligence section is responsible for collecting, evaluating, interpreting and then disseminating information about enemy forces. They collate information from reconnaissance units and field officers, interrogate prisoners of war and study captured documents. They also provide the Operations section and General Barim-Abas with daily intelligence updates, including reports on terrain and atmospheric conditions which might effect troop operations. It is commanded by Head of Intelligence, Staff Captain Ramtha. This section has an attached Imperial Navy liaison team for aerial reconnaissance work. It also includes a small interpreter team from the Ordo Dialogous who are experts in the Tau language. This team has been seconded to the regiment for the duration of the Taros Campaign.

Third Section. Communications and Signals.

This staff section maintains all the necessary communications between headquarters, its sub-units, other non Imperial Guard fighting arms and army High Command. It controls and regulates the regiment's vox-net. It also monitors enemy communications and gathers intelligence from signals intercepts, which it then hands over to second section. This section is under the command of Master of Signals, Staff Captain Farriq. This section has an attached Adeptus Mechanicus Transmechanic (a communications technology specialist) and his servitors.

Fourth Section. Transportation and Supply.

Fourth section coordinates transportation and supply and evaluates supply requirements. It prepares summaries for the operations section and regimental commander, and regulates traffic flow in the regiment's rear area. It also maintains security in the rear echelon, along supply lines and around supply dumps. It is assigned troops by the Operations section for these tasks. Large scale troop movements whilst not in combat (for example embarkation onto Imperial Navy transports) are also planned and controlled by the Transport and Supply section. This section is run by the Provisioner Principle, an attached Departmento Munitorum official who has direct contact with the Departmento Munitorum supply columns serving the regiment.

Fifth Section. Statistics and Administration.

The fifth section deals with personnel matters, tables of organisation and equipment (TO&E), strength reports and replacement troops. It also keeps all the units records and history. It is run by the Prefect Secundus Militant, an official attached from the Adeptus Adminstratum and staffed by Administratum Ordinates and Scribes.

None Combat Companies

These are regimental units with responsibilities outside of fighting the enemy. They tend to be far smaller that the fighting companies, but offer an important support role from the regiment's rear echelon.

Medical Company

The medical company, under command of the regiment's Surgeon Captain, provides aid and treatment for the wounded. The Medical company must supply medics to infantry companies, who are part of the command section and go into battle with the men. The Medical company is also equipped with an ambulance variant of the Chimera, called a 'Samaritan'. The Samaritan is crewed by the Medical company orderlies, who collect the wounded and transport them to either the medical company aid-station or a field-hospice in the rear. Each field-hospice is staffed by the merciful sisters of the Ordo Hospitaller.

Signals Company

Permanently attached to the third section of the headquarters, this is a small dedicated Communications company, equipped with powerful vox-caster and comms equipment.

Recon Platoon

Dedicated to the regimental HQ, used directly by the second section. All companies carry our reconnaissance and observation, but this platoon does not have the usual chain of command delays. The CO or 2-i-c can immediately order them to a location for scouting missions and get rapid results. It is a small mixed platoon formed by veteran infantry, Rough Riders and a supporting Sentinel squadron.

Recovery Platoon

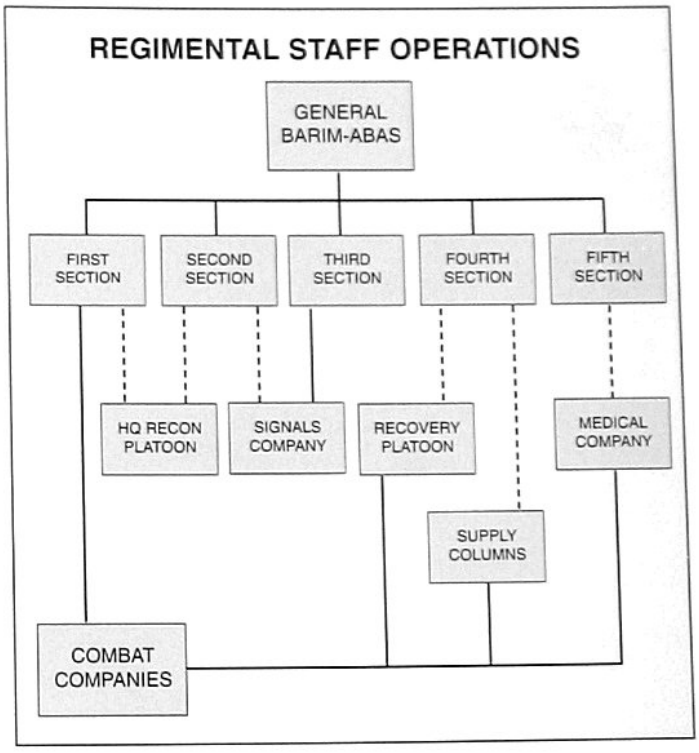
A small platoon to aid the regiment's vehicles in case they become damaged, bogged down or suffer breakdowns.

Department Munitorum Supply Column

The regiment's supplies are transported by the supply columns of the Departmento Muntiorum. This is not directly under the General's command, but the regimental HQ fourth section are in direct contact. The columns moves supplies from rear stockpiles to forward supply dumps or, if the situation allows, directly to the frontline.

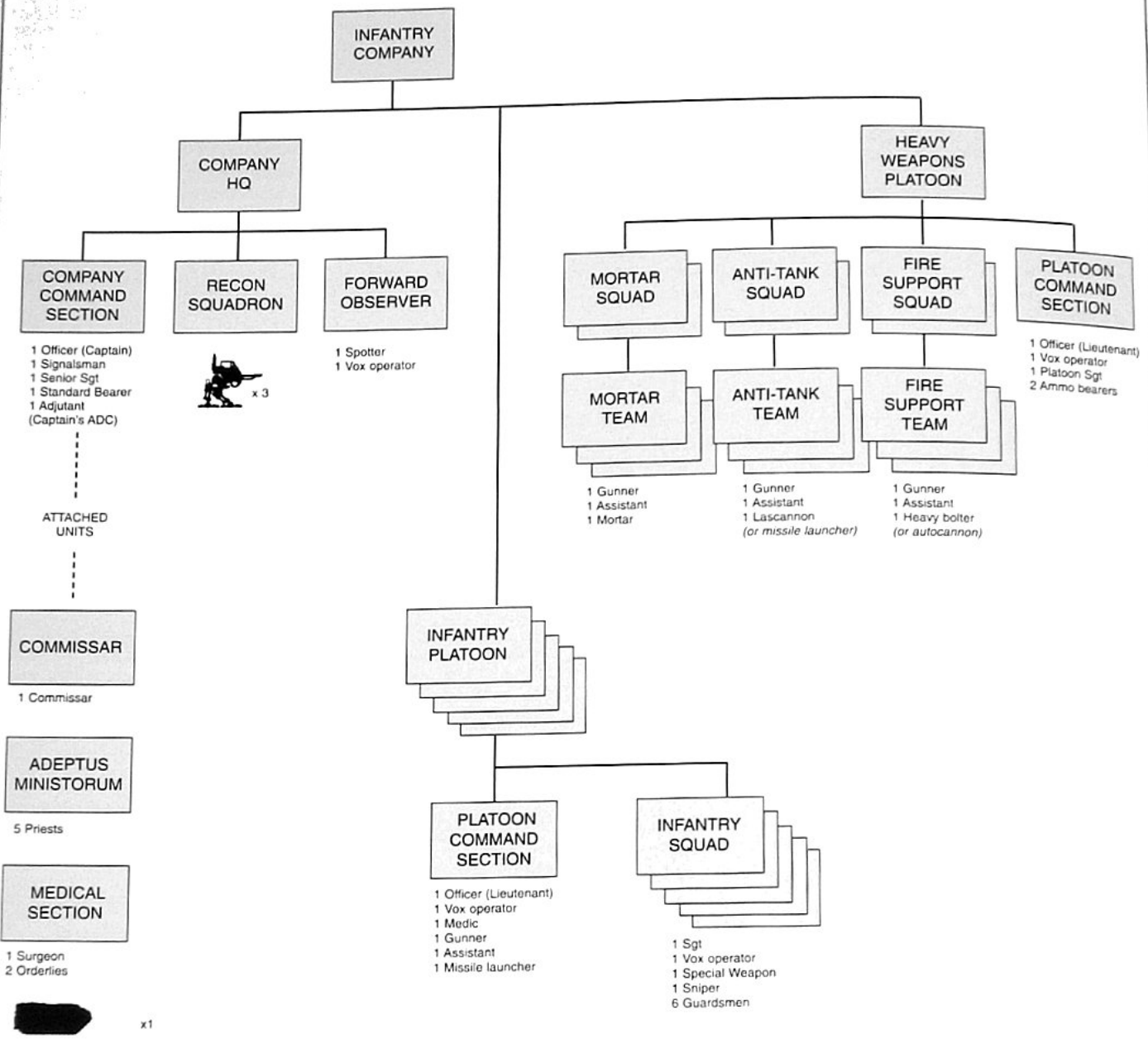
Infantry Brigades

For administration purposes the regiment is divided into three Infantry brigades. The brigades are not fighting units, they exist for ease of administration and non-combat tasks, such as resupplying, training and replacements.



17th TALLARN REGIMENT - LIGHT INFANTRY COMPANY

(Table of organisation. 9 Infantry companies per brigade)



COMPANY TO & E

Personnel

1 Captain
7 Lieutenants
29 Sergeants
292 other ranks

1 Commissar
5 Priests

335 total

Weapons

320 Lasguns
25 Long las
20 Laspistols
12 Close combat weapons
8 Missile launchers
6 Mortars
3 Lascannons
3 Heavy bolters
3 Autocannons
9 Plasma guns
8 Grenade launchers
8 Flamers
8 Melta guns

Vehicles

3 Sentinels
1 Samaritan

Other Equipment

33 Vox-casters
5 Medi-packs
1 Company Standard

EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARY No.5692 (TAROS CAMPAIGN) OF THE 17th TALLARN REGIMENT

569998.M41: 476/772 Aestus Dessert. **Weather:** Hot (39º), light winds

At 569 little enemy activity was reported. Forward reconnaissance elements of 4 infantry company and 1 company Sentinel squadrons continued the advance, reaching positions some 5km south of the regiment's daily objective at Phase line CH by 572.

At 570 communications were received from 4621st Army Command. General Barim-Abas was summoned to a command briefing at 4621st Army Headquarters. High Command dispatched a transport shuttle and fighter escort for the General and regimental staff. Representatives of all staff sections attending.

At 571 the General departed regimental HQ. During his absence, command of the regiment was transferred to Colonel Haddir, with orders to proceed with the advance schedule as far as Phase line CI.

At 571 12 company reported they had achieved Phase line CI, and a halt order was issued to the forward infantry companies in order that third, fourth and fifth echelon units may close-up in support. Forward company commanders report sightings of enemy air activity but had not come under attack. There was negligible ground resistance. Supporting echelons successfully completed their advance during darkness.

Ordnance Company Maintenance Report:

Serviceable tanks: 26

Short term repair: 2

Long term repair: 1

Daily Regimental Loss Report:

a. Complete Loss: None.

b. Badly Damaged: 1 Sentinel (recovered by Recovery platoon).

c. Casualties: 0 KIA. 1 Seriously wounded. 4 Lightly wounded but stayed with troops.

d. Enemy Losses: None.

572998.M41: 476/775 Aestus Dessert **Weather:** Hot (40º), no wind

At 572 Colonel Haddir issued the following Regimental Orders.

1) Order concerning the re-establishment of forward echelons. 4 Company is to be relieved of it current position by 17 Company. 4 is to be withdrawn for rest, refit and rear echelon security duties. Men are to be made available for security details at regimental supply dumps. 17 company is to enter the front line as their replacements. At 574 this move was completed successfully.

2) Order to Headquarters 4 Section concerning the reorganisation of supply priorities to meet the regiment's current demands. Notice was made that water and fuel supply levels have been significantly reduced and stockpiles should be rebuilt. Communications were passed to Departmento Munitorum officials to this end.

3) Order concerning reconnaissance and enemy activity reports to all companies of the regiment. Reference was made to the standing order *(see Regimental Order 134501-IX for details)*, that it is the responsibility of all units to conduct reconnaissance by observation, not just the forward echelon, and that all enemy activity must be reported to 2 Section, regimental Headquarters immediately. Reference was also made to the fact that, given the recent lack of enemy activity in the regiment's area, standard operating procedures for security and reconnaissance must still be maintained.

At 574 the regimental CO returned to the forward command post and resumed command. New orders have been received. The regiment's objective is to advance to, and occupy, the high ground at the Phyyra Heights. It is to advance with all speed and neutralise enemy resistance en-route. Orders effective immediately.

Forward companies continued advance, making 15 kms to Phase line CJ. No enemy activity was reported.

575998.M41: 476/778 Aestus Desert **Weather:** Hot (40º), no wind

In line with the regiment's new objective, the General issued orders for increased reconnaissance activity. Orders were given to company Captain's that frontline companies each detach a full platoon for reconnaissance in order to ascertain possible routes of advance, terrain and enemy strength between the regiment's current positions and the Phyyra Heights. Sentinel squadrons of 1 and 2 company were to be redeployed to support the forward scouts.

At 576 the reconnaissance platoon of 8 company reported contact with enemy ground forces. Initial skirmishes with enemy units by recon elements identified them as Pathfinder infantry supported by light skimmers, identified as Piranhas. A firefight developed. Recon elements managed to advance despite heavy enemy fire, forcing enemy units to withdraw. A request for an artillery fire mission by the platoon commander, Lt Harab, was refused. Ammunition supplies were to be conserved for larger enemy formations, and the target was not considered to be a sufficient threat.

8 company Preliminary Loss Report:

a. Complete loss: 1 Sentinel Scout walker.

b. Badly damaged: 1 Sentinel Scout walker (later recovered).

c. Casualties: 3 KIA, 3 Seriously wounded, 6 lightly wounded but stayed with troops.

d. Enemy losses: (Confirmed) 6 Infantry. No vehicles.

The delay caused by enemy activity meant that 8 company did not reach Phase line CK. Other forward companies reached Phase line CK with no enemy activity reported in their sectors of the regiment's front.

During today's advance 2 vehicles (1 Leman Russ, 1 Chimera) were reported with mechanical problems. The Recovery platoon removed both to the regiment's vehicle collection point.

The Surgeon Captain's report listed 14 men as being fit to resume duties. HQ 5 Section assigned these men to those companies listed with manpower shortages.

Ordnance Company Maintenance Report:

Serviceable tanks: 26

Short term repair: 2

Long term repair: 1

578998.M41: 476/781 Aestus Desert Weather: Hot (39º), no wind

At 578 squadron 4, 2 Sentinel company located a small hydro-evaporation facility in the forward area of 17 company sector. There were signs of enemy activity.

Orders were immediately issued to 17 company to prepare to attack the facility with any available resources. Request for preparatory artillery bombardment was refused, as standing orders are to capture all hydro-facilities intact for future use.

At 579 17 company moved into the attack, supported by the company's own heavy weapons platoon and Sentinels of 2 company. The attack was not opposed and the facility was captured without resistance. Closer examination revealed the facility had already been sabotaged, most likely by EMP charges placed amongst the evaporation equipment. Signs were that the enemy had then withdrawn.

A report of the findings was passed to 4621st Army command, with a request that Adeptus Mechanicus advisors investigate the site's potential for reconstruction. We were advised that this would be undertaken as soon as possible. Given the regiment's high water consumption rates due to the climate, this would be given a high priority.

Discussion took place on how best to combat enemy sabotage of such sites. No conclusions were reached.

At 580 reports arrived from 3 Rough Rider company that they were under attack from strong enemy forces. The company is assigned to supply convoy security and was escorting a Munitorum Column, code: 'Merida-6-44'. Fierce fighting was ongoing.

Units of 3 Sentinel company were redirected to the convoy's last reported location. During the fighting 4 Trojans and their supply trailers of fuel, water and rations were destroyed. Rough Rider squadrons dismounted to engage the enemy whilst coming under heavy automatic weapons fire.

Preliminary Loss Report 3 Rough Rider company.

a. Complete loss: 4 Trojans and supply trailers (plus supplies of fuel, water, rations being carried).

b. Badly damaged: 1 Trojan and supply trailer.

c. Casualties: 4 KIA. 6 Seriously wounded. 3 Lightly wounded but remained with troops. 9 Mukaali.

d. Enemy losses: (Confirmed) 7 Infantry.

This was the first significant enemy action in the regiment's area for seven days.

Two vehicles were released by the Adeptus Mechanicus advisors and were reassigned to their units.

581998.M41: 476/783 Aestus Desert **Weather:** Hot (39º), no wind

At 581 Departmento Munitorum officials advised Headquarters 4 Section of the arrival of replacement vehicles to make good combat losses to date. The replacement column's ETA was 583. The replacement Leman Russes and Chimeras were allocated to those companies with a shortfall, bringing the regiment back up to authorised strength.

Ordnance Company Maintenance Report:

Serviceable tanks: 38

Short term repair: 0

Long term repair: 1

Concern was raised about supply levels for water and fuel, and a request for additional supplies was forwarded to 4621st Army Headquarters.

At 582 General Barim-Abas dispatched a liaison officer to the 89th Tallarn regiment on our right flank to establish their positions in relationship to our own and avoid confusion over regimental boundaries. It was felt that a gap in the line was being exploited by enemy infiltrators to attack both regiments' rear echelons. We were advised that 89th regiment would cover this gap with Sentinel patrols.

Today the regiment achieved its objective of Phase line CL with no enemy resistance.

584998.M41: 476/786 Aestus Desert **Weather:** Hot (41º), no wind

Reports were received that lead reconnaissance elements had reached the lower slopes of the Phyyra Heights. No enemy resistance has been encountered.

At 585 reports were received of fatalities amongst forward recon platoons due the treacherous terrain. Loose rocks and scree having caused avalanches in which several men were killed and injured. This information was included in the daily intelligence brief, a note being made to warn the commanders of the following units of the potential hazard.

Preliminary Loss Report.

a. Complete loss: None

b. Badly damaged: 1 Sentinel scout walker

c. Casualties: 3 KIA. 3 Seriously wounded. 2 Lightly wounded but remained with troops.

d. Enemy losses: (Confirmed) None.

Today the regiment achieved its objective of Phase line CM with no enemy resistance.

587998.M41: 476/789 Aestus Desert **Weather:** Hot (40º), light wind

Reconnaissance of the Phyyra Heights continues. Reports of some evidence of enemy activity, but no sightings have been made.

At 589 the regiment achieved Phase line CN and a halt order was issued. This line was to form the jump-off point for an advance into the Phyyra Heights, and forward companies were advised to thoroughly re-supply before tomorrow's advance.

Second, third, fourth and fifth echelon units were to close-up and reorganise, given the terrain now facing the regiment it is expected that advances will not cover the same distances and therefore supporting artillery and mortar units were ordered to dig-in.

590998.M41: 476/793 Phyyra Heights **Weather:** Hot (40º), no wind

At 590 the General gave the order for all companies to begin their advance. Forward reconnaissance units had been pre-positioned along advance routes into the Phyyra Heights to act as guides. They had taken up their positions in darkness.

Enemy forces, identified as alien Kroot, attacked the forward companies in strength. Utilizing the slope and dense rocky terrain for cover the enemy applied mounting pressure on the left and right flanks.

Heavy fighting ensues. Lacking armoured support due to the steep terrain, 5 company are overrun with heavy losses on both sides. 11 company on the left are unable to consolidate their positions, and a request to withdraw was granted.

At 591 heavy fighting is continuing throughout the lower slopes. 6 company reported alien cavalry, identified as Knarloc, had overrun their command position. Captain Izra was believed KIA. Forward observer teams amongst the lead companies requested multiple firemissions. Artillery and mortar companies respond with very heavy concentrations of fire against the first ridgeline.

Other company commanders request permission to withdraw, given the proximity of friendly fire and the number of casualties being sustained. A general withdrawl order was issued, with all companies to disengage from the enemy and return to their start lines.

All companies in reserve were placed on stand-by to move in case of a threaten enemy breakthrough. Due to heavy artillery fire this did not occur.

At 592 artillery fire was suspended, the enemy having withdrawn. Harassing fire continued throughout the night.

Preliminary Loss Report.

a. Complete loss: 8 Sentinel scout walkers

b. Badly damaged: 11 Sentinel scout walkers

c. Casualties: 221 KIA. 364 Badly wounded. 214 Lightly wounded. 176 remained with troops.

d. Enemy losses: (Confirmed) 488 infantry and other units.

This was the regiment's heaviest day of combat since the beginning of the campaign on Taros. Heavy losses in Infantry companies were sustained.

Artillery supply status was given high priority for the next three days.

At 592 General Barim-Abas issued the following Regimental Order.

1) Order concerning increased levels of night-time patrolling, forward sentry post and guard units. It was of the utmost importance to prevent enemy infiltration into the regiment's area. To this end all patrolling and guard duties to be doubled, effective immediately.

593998.M41: 476/796 Phyyra Heights **Weather:** Hot (41º), light wind

At 593 the General issued orders for the regrouping and reorganisation of the regiment now faced with strong enemy resistance. Orders to capture the high ground still stand and preparations for a second assault were to begin immediately.

At 594 an officer briefing of all Artillery company commanders was convened to discuss fire missions, targets and supply status. Harassing fire missions were to continue around the clock as supplies allowed.

A request was made for additional aerial reconnaissance of potential targets This request was forward to 4621st Army command.

At 595 those companies engaged with the enemy submitted combat loss reports. Those platoons suffering from the worst manpower shortages were disbanded, with the surviving men being placed into other platoons.

Orders were issued to all Armoured company commanders for the deployed of tanks as additional artillery. Given the nature of the terrain it was felt that this would be the best deployment for the regiment's Armoured companies. Tanks were to be dug-in and used as static artillery for direct fire against the lower slopes.

Headquarters 1 section was requested to plan a second attack. Initial estimates were that this could be made in two days time. Preparations are in full progress.

During preparations aggressive patrolling of the lower slopes, to ascertain enemy positions, strengths and possible routes of attack was to continue.

596998.M41: 476/796 Phyyra Heights **Weather:** Hot (40º), light wind

Harasing artillery fire continued throughout the day.

At 597 a patrol of 5 company reported contact with enemy , identified as Kroot Stalker units. A firefight developed. Lieutenant Kharfah ordered a withdrawal without receiving orders from Headquarters 1 section. The Lieutenant was placed under arrest by Commissars.

Preliminary Loss Report.

a. Complete loss: None.

b. Badly damaged: None.

c. Casualties: 4 KIA. 2 Badly wounded. 5 Lightly wounded but remained with troops.

d. Enemy losses: (Confirmed) 8 infantry. (Unconfirmed) 14 Infantry.

At 598 Lt Kharfah was summarily executed for dereliction of duty by Commissars. 5 company Senior Sergeant was granted a field promotion to replace him.

At 598 a ceasefire order was isued to all Artillery and Mortar companies in order that resupply be completed before offensive action commenced at 599. New targets were appointed for fire concentrations, to last 20 minutes before new offensive operations commence.

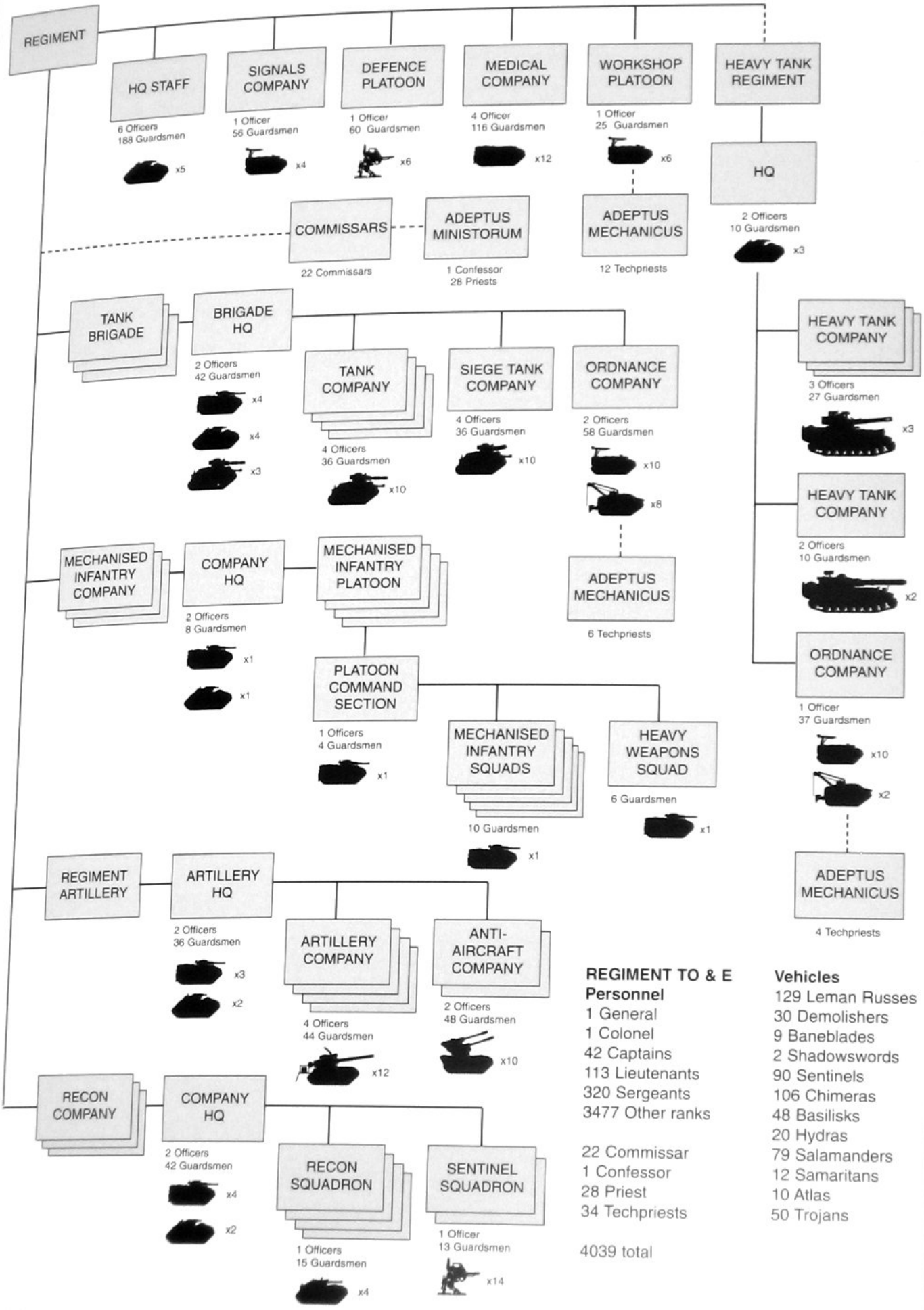
Ordnance Company Maintenance Report:

Serviceable tanks: 37

Short term repair: 1

Long term repair: 1

12th TALLARN ARMOURED REGIMENT (Table of organisation)



REGIMENT TO & E

Personnel

1 General
1 Colonel
42 Captains
113 Lieutenants
320 Sergeants
3477 Other ranks

22 Commissar
1 Confessor
28 Priest
34 Techpriests

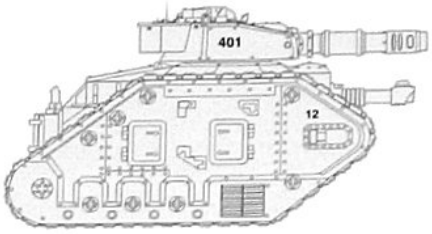
4039 total

Vehicles

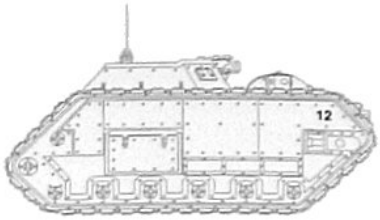
129 Leman Russes
30 Demolishers
9 Baneblades
2 Shadowswords
90 Sentinels
106 Chimeras
48 Basilisks
20 Hydras
79 Salamanders
12 Samaritans
10 Atlas
50 Trojans

4th TANK COMPANY, TALLARN 12th ARMOURED REGIMENT

COMPANY COMMAND TANK

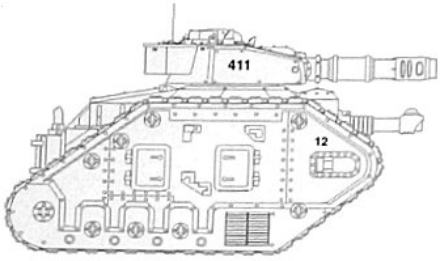


Captain Amudarya
Company Commander

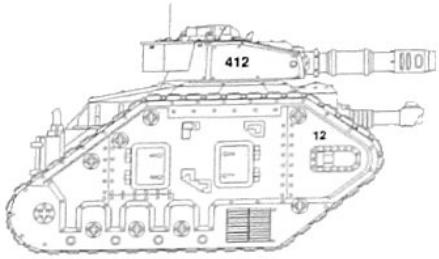


Attached from HQ for liaison duties.

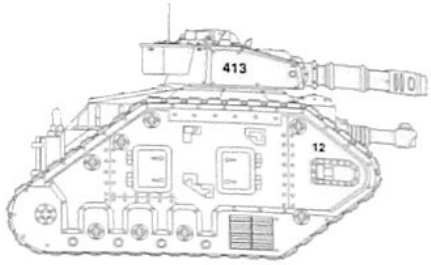
FIRST SQUADRON



Lieutenant Tayma
Squadron Commander

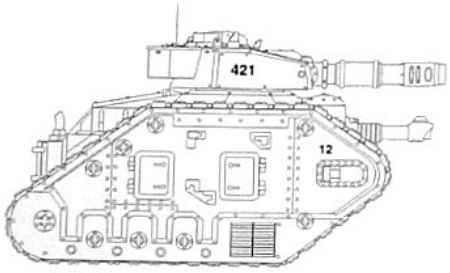


Sergeant Harrat
Squadron 2-i-c

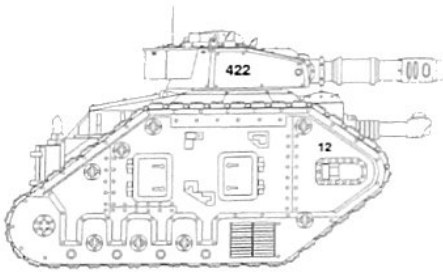


Sergeant Usfal

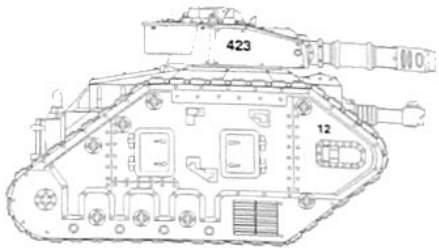
SECOND SQUADRON



Lieutenant Abu-Ras
Squadron Commander

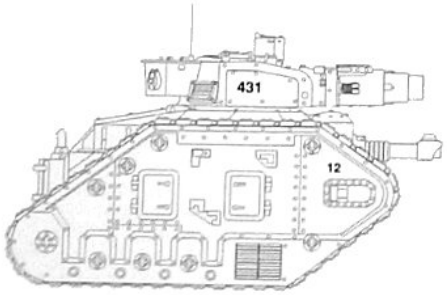


Sergeant Aziz
Squadron 2-i-c

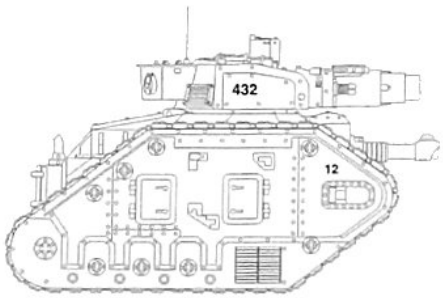


Sergeant Nito

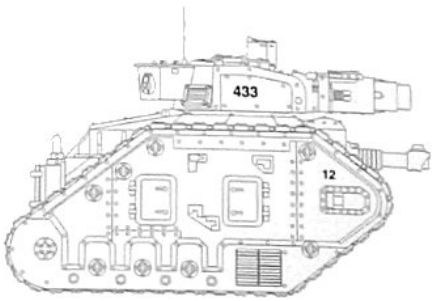
THIRD SQUADRON



Lieutenant Shaykh
Squadron Commander



Sergeant Kaf
Squadron 2-i-c



Sergeant Shirag

EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARY No.2970 (TAROS CAMPAIGN) OF THE 12th TALLARN ARMOURED REGIMENT

522998.M41:566/701 Aestus Dessert. **Weather:** Hot(44º), light wind

The cold dark of night gave way to the rapidly rising heat of Taros' dawn, the distant horizon being silhouetted by the brightening sky. Squadrons of Leman Russes and Chimeras rolled over the desert, deploying into battle formations from their night-time laagers. Once in position, the squadrons of 3rd and 5th tank companies halted, awaiting the order to begin the day's advance.

The early morning sun bathed the desert in a harsh glare. The air vibrated with the noise of the idling tank engines and clouds of blue smoke coughed from exhausts. From the distant rear came the crash of artillery. Heavy shells roared overhead as the regiment's Artillery companies laid down a preparatory barrage. In the distance explosions rent the morning air and sent fountains of sand and rock erupting into the sky, raising a dirty brown cloud of dust and smoke that slowly covered the regiment's formations on the light breeze.

On receiving the signal from Headquarters, engines were gunned and a hundred armoured vehicles lurched forwards into the attack simultaneously.

At 522 the spearhead Armoured regiments were making good headway against weak enemy resistance. So far today there had been a single air attack conducted by two Barracuda aircraft, resulting in the destruction of a Chimera and damage to another.

Captain Ma'rib's tanks moved forwards throughout the day, by last light trundling slowly into a low-lying area of shallow rocky valleys. Terrain reports had noted this area as possible hiding places for enemy infantry, and it had been part of the morning artillery fire plan for this reason. Now it was scorched by impact craters. The area was covered in shifting sand and ragged rocks. Behind the Leman Russes followed the Chimera armoured carriers.

Whilst advancing cautiously a missile impacted on the front of a leading tank but, by the blessing of the Emperor, failing to penetrate the armour. It shattered the vehicle's vision blocks and injure the driver. Soon after another missile impacted close by, showering all in a cloud of dust. The tanks halted. It was believed that concealed enemy infantry were directing the fire of Seeker missiles.

To clear the area the vanguard's supporting Armoured Fist platoon dismounted and formed a skirmish line, sweeping forwards on foot. There was no visible sign of the Tau, who must have withdrawn. After this lengthy delay the advance was halted for the night. Tanks withdrew to form secure laagers, whilst the infantry and crews organised night-time sentry posts and patrols to prevent enemy infiltration.

At last light Salamander-borne forward reconnaissance elements reported enemy movement on the regiment's right flank. They identified a force consisting of approximately a dozen enemy vehicles moving swiftly in a easterly direction across the regiment's front. Forward observers directed artillery fire at the target. A barrage struck the area, but later investigation by a Sentinel patrol revealed no damage had been caused.

Today the regiment had gained 14 kms.

Daily Regimental Loss Report:

a. Casualties: 2 KIA. 2 Seriously wounded. 2 Lightly wounded but stayed with troops.

b. Complete loss: 1 Chimera.

c. Badly damaged: 1 Chimera. 1 Leman Russ.

Enemy Losses: None.

525998.M41:566/701 Aestus Dessert. **Weather:** Hot(44º), light wind

After yesterday's difficulties, the Tank companies were still faced with forcing passage through the area difficult terrain. Those tanks equipped with dozerblades were ordered to lead the way, supported by dismounted infantry.

Soon after beginning the advance the spearhead was again under attack from concealed enemy. Bursts of pulse rounds sent the infantry scurrying for cover behind rocks or the tanks. The Leman Russes responded with cannon and heavy bolter fire, which forced the enemy to withdraw and allowed the slow advance to continue.

At 525 the lead elements came under strong air attack by Barracudas, resulting in the loss of a Leman Russ tank and a Trojan resupply vehicle. Captain Ma'rib requested air support, and the Imperial Navy responded, a fighter patrol of three Thunderbolts being seen over the area shortly afterwards.

This did not deter the enemy aircraft, which continued to attack in force, driving off the fighter patrol and exposing the forward elements to more air attacks. Hydra anti-aircraft weapons were brought forward to assist, but one was soon destroyed by a missile strike, forcing them to again withdraw.

At 526 progress had halted again, with enemy infantry resistance stiffening. The enemy launched a swift counter-attack, engaging at long-range with Hammerheads and Broadside battlesuits. Leman Russes returned fire, and a furious exchange of fire lasted for twenty minutes. At least one enemy vehicle was seen to explode. Three Leman Russes were hit and damaged.

At 257 the enemy had again withdrawn and the advance could continue. By last light, the vanguard had cleared the difficult ground. Infantry were detailed to patrol the area to prevent enemy infiltration. No contact was reported.

Today the lead elements of the regiment had only gained 10 km's. The night passed quietly. Resupply and recovery operations commenced and passed without incident.

Ordnance Company Maintenance Report:

Serviceable tanks: 122

Short term repair: 10

Long term repair: 12

Daily Regimental Loss Report:

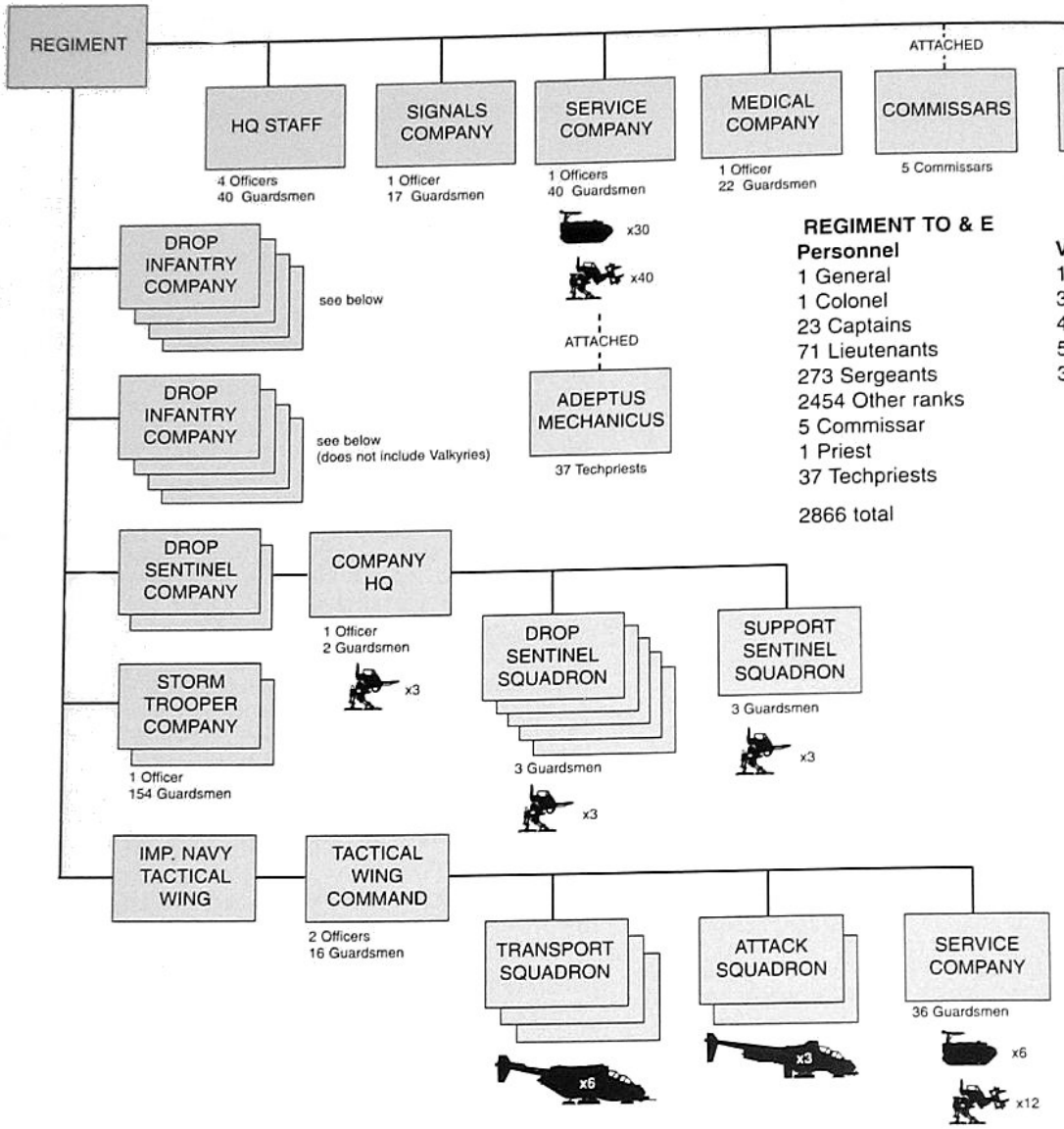
a. Casualties: 8 KIA. 8 Seriously wounded. 6 Lightly wounded but stayed with troops.

b. Complete loss: 1 Hydra, 1 Leman Russ, 1 Trojan, 1 Sentinel

c. Badly damaged: 3 Leman Russes. 2 Chimeras.

d. Enemy losses: 1 Hammerhead (confirmed)

23rd ELYSIAN DROP TROOP REGIMENT (Table of organisation)



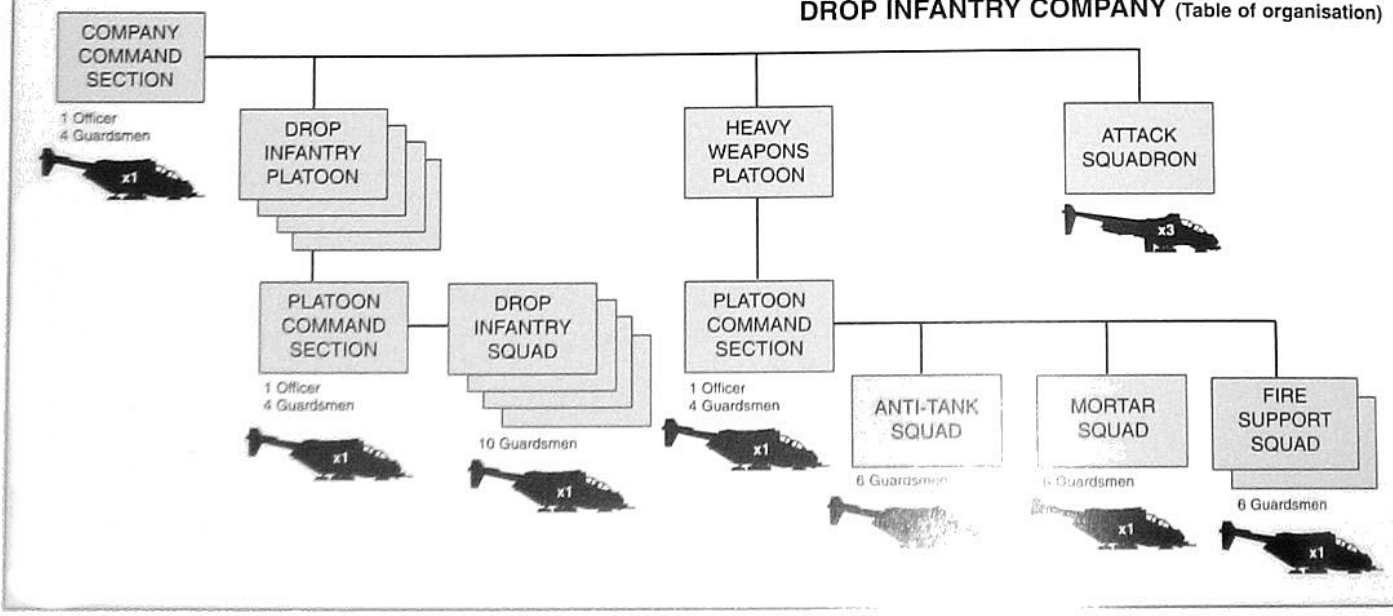
REGIMENT TO & E

Personnel
1 General
1 Colonel
23 Captains
71 Lieutenants
273 Sergeants
2454 Other ranks
5 Commissar
1 Priest
37 Techpriests

2866 total

Vehicles
182 Valkyries
30 Vulture gunships
42 Sentinels
54 Powerlifters
36 Trojans

DROP INFANTRY COMPANY (Table of organisation)



EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARY No.1-762 (TAROS CAMPAIGN) OF THE 23rd ELYSIAN DROP TROOP REGIMENT

6444998.M41: 383/849 'Isra I' Airbase **Weather:** Hot (40°), no winds

At 644 all staff officers were summoned to morning briefing to discuss progress and priorities for Operation Comet planning. General Syckava informed all that the regiment's proposed time for operation launch had been confirmed by 4621st Army Headquarters as 650.

All staff sections were set daily tasks.

At 645 the headquarters was visited by Lord Marshall De Stael and his entourage. Along with his staff and security personnel the Lord Marshal also delivered 3 Tau prisoners of war, capture by advancing Tallarn regiments and turned over to 4621st HQ for interrogation. Interrogation of these POWs was conducted through an Adeptus Dialogus interpreter, but the aliens revealed nothing about the defences of hydro-plant 23-30. In order to maintain strict security for the coming operation, the POWs were executed. This was carried at 646 out by the regiment's Commissars.

At 645 intelligence section received reports from 2424th Imperial Navy Bomber wing HQ, of aerial reconnaissance of the target area. Tactical maps were given an immediate priority and a study of the latest intelligence information was to be ongoing until mission launch.

Maintenance Report: Adeptus Mechanicus advisors informed HQ that all repairs would be complete by mission launch.

Serviceable aircraft: 207

Short term repair: 5

Long termRepair: 0

647998.M41: *383/849 'Isra I' Airbase* **Weather:** *Hot (41°), no winds*

At 647 all Staff sections were set daily tasks.

At 647 Colonel Balach, regimental 2-i-c, conducted the operations briefing for all the regiment's company and platoon commanders. This briefing gave a detailed overview of the Operation Comet plan, its objectives and the final timetable. At conclusion of briefing all officers were issued maps and available intelligence reports.

At 648 Colonel Balach conducted the pilots briefing for all the regiment's air crew. This briefing gave a detailed overview of the transportation plan, including loading schedule, take-off scehdule, air defence plan, route planning and waymarkers.

At 649 Colonel Balach, as commander of the first lift, conducted a tactical briefing for all those officers of the first lift companies. Special attention was given to officers of 709th Storm Trooper company whose men would lead the first wave. Detailed planning was made for the insertion of troops and the placement of homing beacons on the landing zones for the following elements of the first lift.

Meanwhile General Syckava and Staff Captain Cjal, commander of transport and supply staff section, oversaw the preliminary loading of equipment and supplies designated to the first lift. This operation was completed successfully. Men of the first lift were issued additional combat equipment, grav-chutes, rations and water supplies in preparation for tomorrow's operation.

At 649 General Syckava issued the following communique to all regimental personnel.

"Men of Elysian, we stand on the brink of the decisive battle of this campaign. Victory on the battlefield tomorrow will see the alien invader thrown back and vital new supplies secured for a renewed offensive. Every man must do his duty with courage, loyalty, strength and faith in our Emperor. We cannot fail, we shall not fail! Bring the enemy death – from the skies!"

Maintenance Report:

Serviceable aircraft: 212

Short term repair: 0

Long term repair: 0

650998.M41: 383/849 'Isra I' Airbase **Weather:** *Hot(42°), light winds*

At 650 troops of the first lift were ordered to embark their transports. On completion of this operation General Scykava issued the mission launch codeword, and the first lift took off, established formations and began their 1,500 km journey to the drop zone.

At 651 the lead elements of the air train reported target in site. Insertion of 709th Storm Trooper company units begans, with the enemy offering strong resistance.

Aided by the good work of the lead Storm Trooper squads, the Drop Troopers of the first lift dropped and landed in good order. Despite enemy fire, officers and sergeants quickly rendezvoused with their men and began to move out towards their objectives, sprinting from cover to cover, dodging through the dense industrial workings of the hydro-plant and storming their objectives. Grenades cleared enemy resistance, which was stronger than expected. The supporting Vulture gunships remained at a safe distance, only engaging stubborn resistance nests, and following orders to avoid the use of their heaviest ordnance to reduce collateral damage.

Heavy fighting continued all day. One by one first lift's objectives were reported captured. Never the less, the strong defence took its toll on the Drop Troopers of the first lift.

At the main generator building, obstinate resistance by alien 'Kroot' forces delayed its capture. This was now close quarters combat, at which the aliens excelled, and only after severe casualties was the objective finally captured, with the loss of Captain Kyrin, 2nd company, who was reported severely wounded. He was evacuated to a temporary regimental aid post, established near the central control complex. Lieutenant Ralbek was award a field promotion to Captain and given command of 2nd company for his outstanding bravely during the fighting.

At pumping station 1 Captain Malik, officer commanding 3rd company, was reported killed in action whilst leading the attack. The objective was successfully captured by a second assault, led by Commissar Graal.

At 652 Colonel Balach reported the establishment of the advanced regimental command post at the administration block. Troops of the Headquarters and elements of 3rd company were engaged in fighting to clear the immediate area of enemy.

At 652 Colonel Balach reported that all first lift objectives had been taken and secured and organised enemy resistance was now broken. The first lift was now engaged in securing the drop zone, digging-in and positioning heavy weapons to create a defensive perimeter.

Units at the following objectives – pumping station 2,generator house and main gate reported enemy sniper fire. Patrols were organised to seek and destroy any enemy survivors threatening the new perimeter area. These operations would be ongoing throughout the hours of darkness.

At 652 General Syckava briefed 4621st Army Headquarters on the regiment's situation and discussed the subject of the second lift, re-supply missions and the progress of the ground relief operation. The regiment was informed that the relief operation was on schedule and would arrive at the designated time.

At 651 the first aircraft returned to the airbase to refuel, rearm and begin to embark the second lift. The order for command of the regiment to be transfered to the forward command post established at Hydro 23-30 was issued.

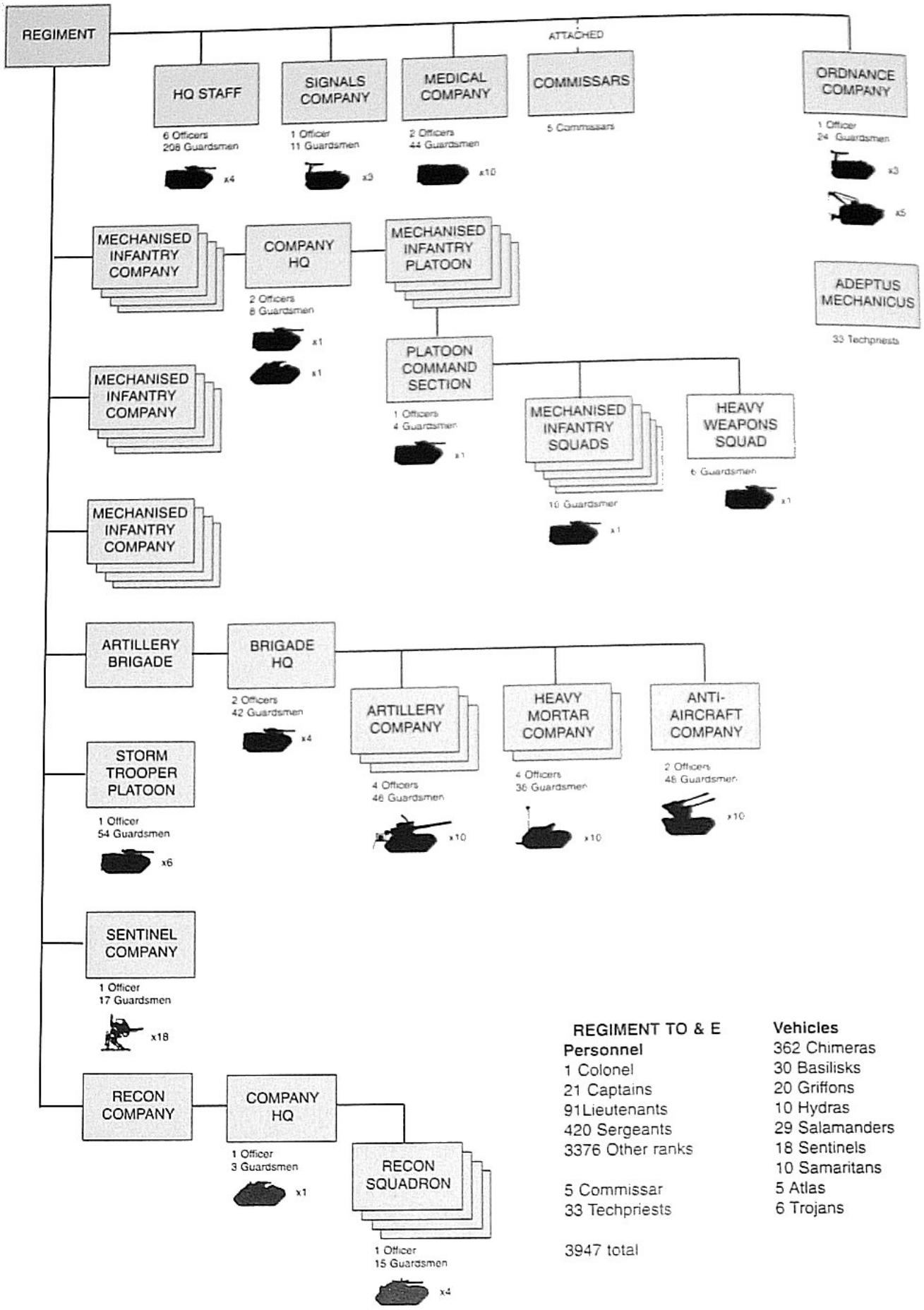
Daily Regimental Loss Report: Unavailable. At this time, losses are still being assessed. Figures below are initial approximations only.

a. Casualties: 218 KIA. 370 Seriously wounded. Lightly wounded - unknown.

b. Complete loss: 14 Valkyrie. 4 Vultures. 10 Sentinels.

Estimated Enemy losses: 850 killed. 100 prisoners.

114th CADIAN REGIMENT – MECHANISED (Table of organisation)



REGIMENT TO & E

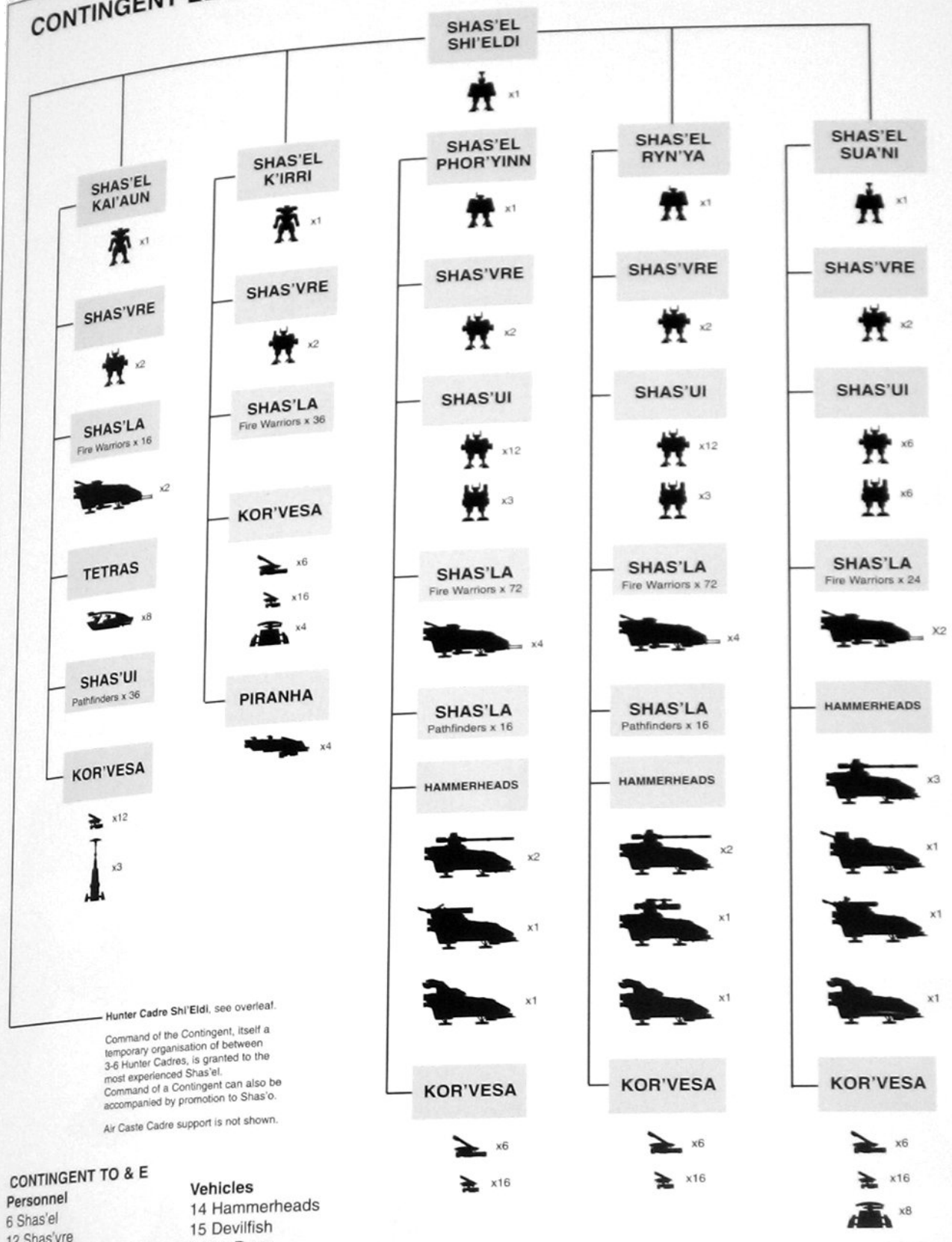
Personnel
1 Colonel
21 Captains
91Lieutenants
420 Sergeants
3376 Other ranks

5 Commissar
33 Techpriests

3947 total

Vehicles
362 Chimeras
30 Basilisks
20 Griffons
10 Hydras
29 Salamanders
18 Sentinels
10 Samaritans
5 Atlas
6 Trojans

CONTINGENT EL'SHI'ELDI (Projected table of organisation. 6 Hunter Cadres)



Hunter Cadre Shi'Eldi, see overleaf.

Command of the Contingent, itself a temporary organisation of between 3-6 Hunter Cadres, is granted to the most experienced Shas'el. Command of a Contingent can also be accompanied by promotion to Shas'o.

Air Caste Cadre support is not shown.

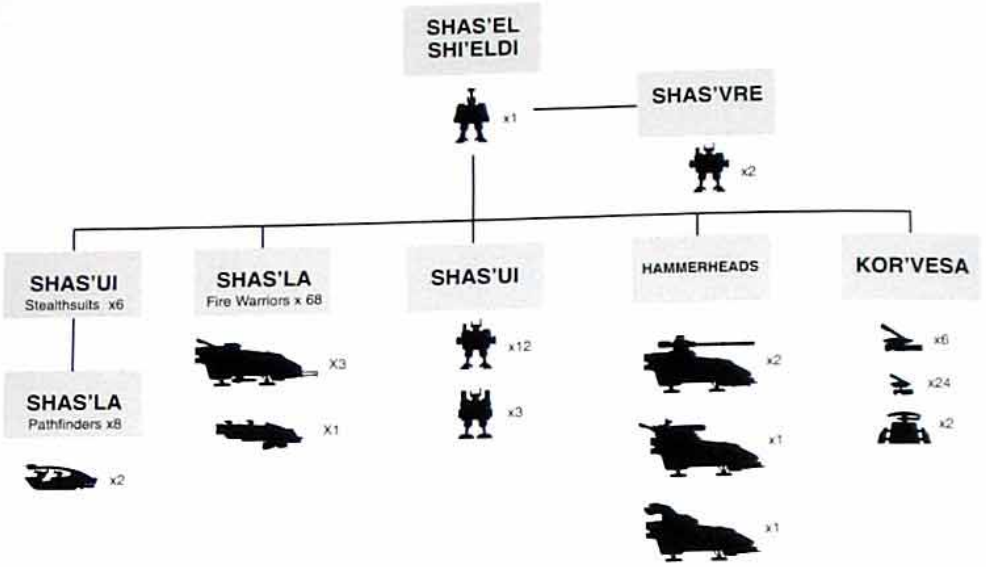
CONTINGENT TO & E

Personnel
6 Shas'el
12 Shas'vre
124 Shas'ui
428 Shas'la
179 Kor'vesa

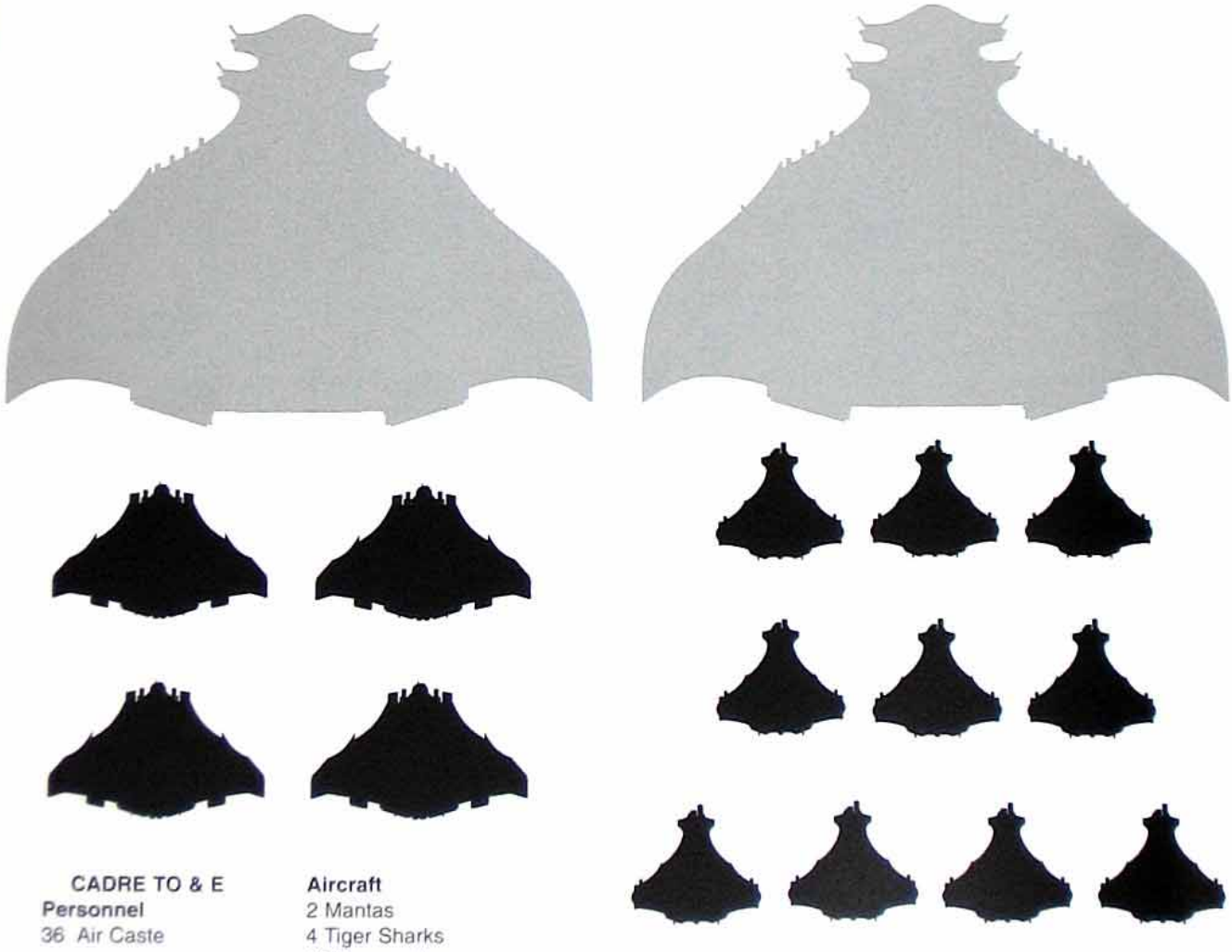
749 total

Vehicles
14 Hammerheads
15 Devilfish
4 Sky Rays
5 Piranha
10 Tetra
60 Crisis battlesuits
15 Broadside battlesuits

HUNTER CADRE SHI'ELDI (Projected table of organisation)



AIR CADRE (Projected table of organisation)

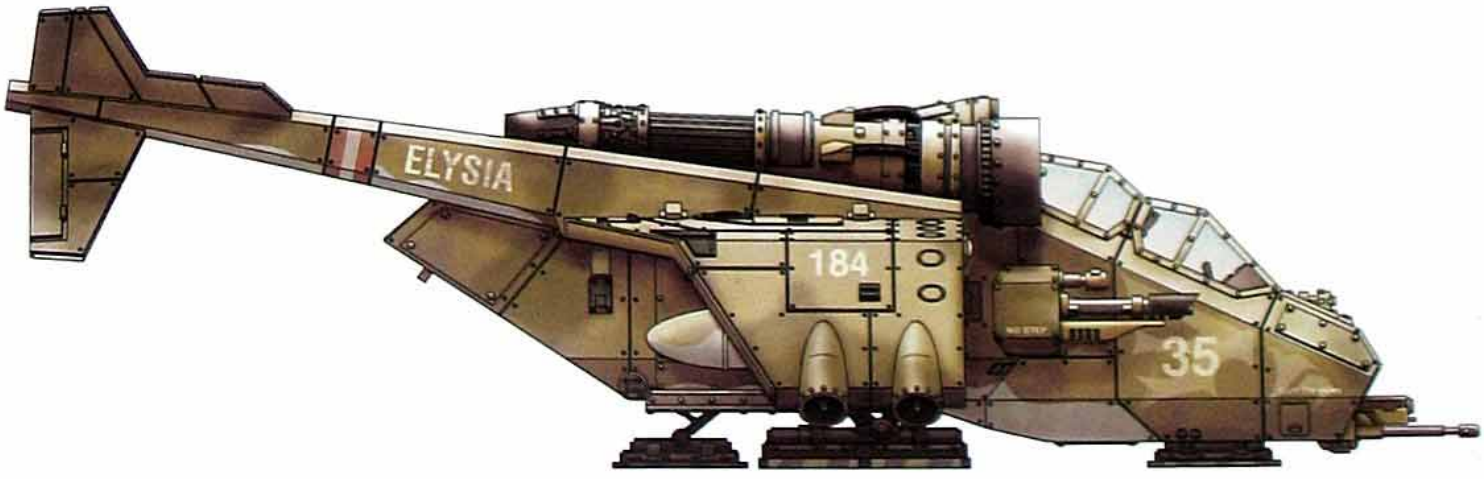


CADRE TO & E

Personnel
36 Air Caste

Aircraft
2 Mantas
4 Tiger Sharks
10 Barracudas

ARMY LISTS



Valkyrie of 184th Tactical wing, an Imperial Navy unit permanently attached to the 23rd Elysian Drop Troop regiment. This aircraft is the fifth of third transport squadron, transporting Storm Troopers during Operation Comet.

Imperial Armour

23rd ELYSIAN REGIMENT

DROP TROOP ARMY LIST

"From the skies!"

Regimental motto

THE IMPERIAL GUARD

The Imperial Guard is the largest fighting force in the galaxy, and the largest military organisation in the long history of Mankind. It is huge, billions upon billions of men at arms and millions of tanks and artillery guns stand ready to fight for the Emperor. It is the Imperial Guard that must bear the brunt of the Imperium's wars. Wherever there is conflict, there is the Imperial Guard.

The manpower for such a vast fighting force is drawn from across the Imperium. They come from primitive feral worlds and hive worlds, from death worlds and savage penal colonies. All must provide recruits for the Imperial Guard. Each planet owes tithes to the Imperium and part of these tithes are taken as manpower.

Many units are formed as infantry regiments, with tens of thousands of men. But there are other more specialised regiments, such as those recruited from the world of Elysia. These are the famous Drop Troops, highly mobile airborne forces, equipped with sophisticated aircraft, weaponry and grav-chutes for long range strikes deep into enemy lines.

WHY COLLECT ELYSIAN DROP TROOPS?

What is the appeal of an Elysian Drop Troop army? Well, I think it can be summed up in two words, air power. If you enjoy the adrenalin rush of fast jets then this is the army for you. You get aircraft, lots of aircraft, and you get high-tech, elite soldiers plunging from the skies directly into battle – pretty cool!

This army's true advantages lie in its speed, unpredictability and unrivalled ability to attack anywhere on the tabletop, anytime. Using deep strikes and Valkyries the Elysians can capture objectives rapidly by dint of overwhelming force and their close range firepower, often relying on demo-charges and special weapons for tank-busting. Failing this, look to the skies. Vultures, Valkyries and Imperial Navy aircraft pack fearsome amounts of firepower, and swooping over the table they can target just about anything. Tactical flexibility is the Elysians true advantage over most other forces, and commanders that learn to use that flexibility well will find there are few situations the Elysians cannot counter quickly and effectively.

Elysians are, by their nature, better suited to some scenarios that others, like raids and breakthroughs (try stopping them in a Blitz mission). In pitched battles they will fare worst, although defending in a Hold at all Costs or in a Rearguard mission would make for characterful games. Certain enemies also pose a serious problem for a mobile light infantry force. Try dropping Infantry squads directly into the heart of Tyranid swarm and I don't think many Elysians will be coming back! But conversely a pair of heavy armed Vultures could inflict terrible casualties on a Tyranid swarm's largest creatures before the troops go in to mop up the Gaunts.

As an Elysian commander you will need to think hard about where and when to attack. Just because a Valkyrie arrives from reserve does not necessarily mean they should immediately drop the troops in. Maybe a few strafing runs should be used first. Valkyries provide a measure of control over an Elysian force that grav-chute do not. Grav-chuting in is more hit and miss, and for an entire force fraught with danger.

This is a very specialised force, and I would suggest not a forgiving one for inexperienced commanders. Being Drop Troops, the Elysians lack many of the heavy weapons needed to defeat the enemies heaviest equipment and vehicles. Only being armed with lasguns and having a basic BS of 3 means they aren't a force that can afford to sit back and firefight with the enemy either. Elysian commanders should not expect to engage the enemy in a conventional stand-up fight and win. Instead, they should seek to take objectives by rapid hard-hitting attacks and then hold them with grim determination and selective targeting of enemy treats. Casualties will often be high, but that is the price Drop Troop regiment's pay for their mobility.

ELYSIAN DROP TROOP LIST

On the following pages you will find an army list that enables you to field an Elysian Drop Troop army for the Taros Campaign. This list includes all the models currently available from Forge World. The army list allows you to fight battles using the scenarios in the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook but also provides enough information to field Elysians in scenarios of your own devising or as part of an ongoing campaign.

The heart of this list is the men of a Drop Infantry company, with Valkyries and Vultures in support and other attached elements like Storm Trooper squads and Sentinels. Other support comes from more specialised equipment and the Imperial Navy flying in close support.

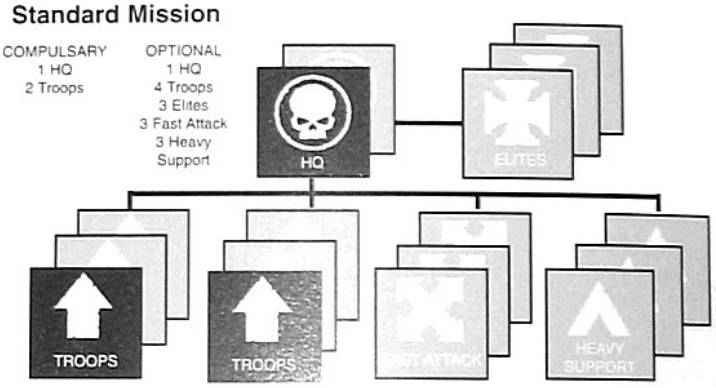
This army list is provided for players who wish to use their Imperial Armour models en masse in games. If you only wish to use one or two models, or a single Elysian squad in a Valkyrie, then I'd recommend sticking with the Imperial Guard Codex army list. The rules for each vehicle detail which choice each Imperial Armour vehicle is for a 'standard' Imperial Guard army.

USING FORCE ORGANISATION CHARTS

The army lists are used in conjunction with the Force Organisation chart from a scenario. Each chart is spit into five categories that correspond to the sections in the army list, and each category has one or more boxes. Each light tone box indicates that you may make one choice from that section of the army list, while a dark tone box means you must make a choice from that section.

Note that unless a model or vehicle forms part of a squad or squadron it counts as single choice from those available to the army.

Standard Mission



USING THE ARMY LISTS

To make a choice, look at the relevant section of the army list and decide which units you want to have in your army and which upgrades you want to give it (if any). Remember that you cannot field models equipped with weapons and wargear not shown on the model. This includes vehicle upgrades. Once this is done, subtract the points value of the unit from your total points and then go back and make another choice. Continue doing this until you have spent all your points.

Some units are restricted in number, such as 0-1 or 0-2. This is the maxium number of that type of unit an army may include, regardless of points costs. These restrictions have been included in the list to keep it playable and hopefully to encourage players to use more balanced forces.

ARMY LIST ENTRIES

Unit Name: The type of unit, which may also show a limitation on the maximum number of choices you can make for that unit (0-1, for example)

Profile: These are the characteristics of the unit type, including its points cost.

Type: The vehicle type, such as tank or skimmer, which often has other rules relating to it. For details of these rules see the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook.

Crew: Who crews the vehicle. This is usually reflected in the vehicle's BS.

Weapons: The unit's standard weapons

Options: This lists different weapons and equipment options for the unit and the additional points cost that must be paid to take them. Details of upgrades can be found in the Armoury and Wargear section.

Special Rules: Any special rules that apply to the unit.

DOCTRINES

The Elysian Drop Troops have the following doctrines from the Imperial Guard Codex.

Drop Troops
Iron Discipline
Veterans
Storm Trooper squads
Special Weapon squads

ELYSIAN DROP TROOP ARMOURY

A character may carry up to two weapons but only one of these may be a two-handed weapon. Within these limits, a character may add to or replace any weapons he already has with weapons from the armoury . Each model may take up to 50 points worth of wargear. A captain may take up to 100 pts worth of wargear, but no item more than once. All wargear must be represented on the model.

SINGLE-HANDED WEAPONS

Bolt pistol . . . . . .1 pt
Close combat weapon . . . . . .1 pt
Plasma pistol . . . . . .10 pts
Powerfist* . . . . . .20 pts
Power weapon* . . . . . .5 pts

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS

Lasgun + auxilary grenade launcher .3 pts
Bolter . . . . . .2 pts
Shotgun . . . . . .1 pt

WARGEAR

Bionics . . . . . .5 pts
Frag grenades . . . . . .1 pt
Krak grenades . . . . . .2 pts
Holy relic . . . . . 30 pts
(Commissars only, one per army)
Honorifica Imperialis . . . . . 25 pts
(one per army)
Macharian Cross* . . . . . .20 pts
Master-crafted weapon . . . . . .15 pts
Medallion Crimson . . . . . .15 pts
Melta bombs . . . . . .5 pts
Refractor field* . . . . . .15 pts
Scanner . . . . . .2 pts
Trademark item* . . . . . .10 pts

** Officers & Commissars only.*

AIRCRAFT UPGRADES

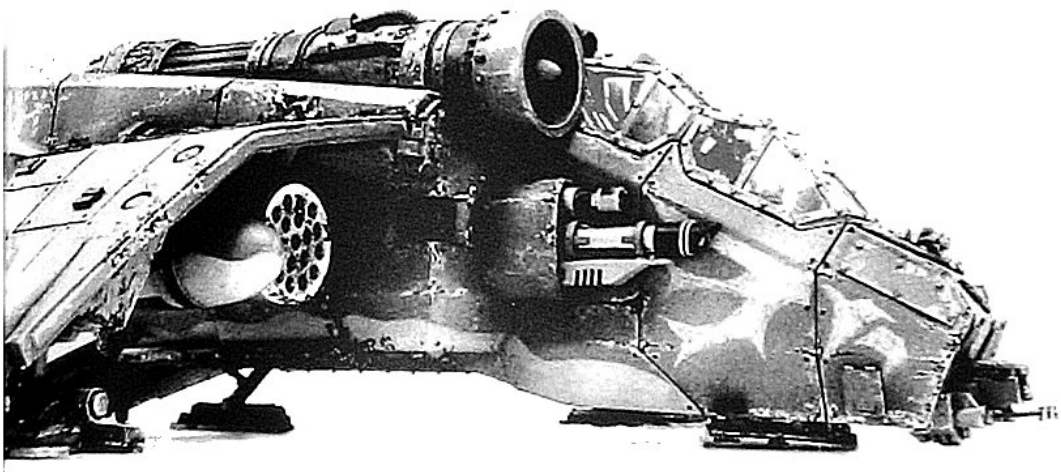
Aircraft may be fitted with the following equipment (see the entry for the aircraft in Imperial Armour volume 1 for details). No duplicates may be chosen for the same aircraft.

Ejector seats
for Marauder / Destroyer . . . . . 20 pts
for all other aircraft . . . . . .10 pts
Flare or chaff launcher . . . . . 5 pts
Armoured cockpit . . . . . .20 pts
Infra-red targeting . . . . . .10 pts
Illum flares . . . . . 3 pts
Distinctive paint scheme
or decals . . . . . .10 pts

VEHICLE UPGRADES

Some Elysian vehicles may be fitted with the following equipment (see the entry for the vehicle in the army list for details). Any upgrades taken must be shown on the model. No duplicates may be chosen for the same vehicle.

Armoured crew compartment 15 pts
Camo netting . . . . . .1 pt
Extra armour . . . . . .5 pts
Hunter-killer missile . . . . . .10 pts
Improved comms . . . . . .20 pts
Searchlight . . . . . .1 pt
Smoke launchers . . . . . .3 pts



ELYSIAN DROP TROOP WARGEAR

This section describes how the specialised Imperial Guard equipment works. These rules supersede those in the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook. Items not listed here function as described in the Warhammer 40,000 rulebook. All wargear chosen must be represented on the model/vehicle.

Bionics
Bionics allow an Imperial Guard character that has suffered a crippling injury to return to service but they do not improve his abilities in any way.

However, there is a chance that an attack will damage a bionic part rather than doing any real harm. To represent this, if a model with bionics is killed, instead of removing it place it on its side. Roll a D6 at the start of the next turn: on a roll of 6 the model is stood back up with 1 wound but on any other roll it is removed as a casualty.

Demolition Charge
A model armed with a demolition charge may use it in the Shooting phase instead of making its normal shooting attack.

Demo charges have a range of 6". The attack is treated in the same way as an ordnance attack, except that the model throwing the charge can move on the turn that he throws it. Place the large template blast marker as you would normally and then roll to see if the charge scatters (due to its short range the charge is almost as dangerous to the user as it is to the target!).

Demo charges are one shot weapons.

Range: 6" **Str:** 8 **AP:** 2 **Type:** Ordance,Blast **Notes:**Single shot

Auxilary Krak Grenade Launcher
An auxiliary krak grenade launcher is a single shot grenade launcher mounted under the barrel of a lasgun. Loaded with a krak grenade and used as a squad close support weapon against hard targets and light vehicles. A model may fire either its lasgun or grenade launcher, not both.

Range: 12" **Str:** 6 **AP:** 4 **Type:** Assault1 **Notes:** Single shot

Vox-Caster
Communications between Imperial Guard units on the battlefield are dealt with by troopers trained to use special vox-caster or comm-link. The size and appearance of a comm-link depends on its place of origin but in game terms they all have the same effects.

If a Command HQ or Command section has a vox-caster, then one squad per turn that also has a vox-caster may use the Leadership value of the officer, no matter where they are located on the battlefield (ie, they don't have to be within 12" of the officer as would normally be the case). You may choose to use the vox-caster at any time (eg, when an eligible squad is about to take a Leadership test or if the Command unit is in reserve).

Hellguns & Hellpistols
Hellguns use a very advanced form of lasgun that utilises a high energy laser beam. In game terms, they are treated as a las weapon of the same type, except that their AP value is 5 rather than '–'.

Holy Relic
A model bearing a holy relic may reveal it once per battle. This may be done at any time, as long as the model with the relic does not move on the turn it is shown.

On the turn the relic is revealed, all Imperial Guardsmen that are within 2D6" get a +1 attack bonus for the rest of that turn. The relic may be revealed in an opposing player's turn if you wish.

Honorifica Imperialis
This award is one of the highest honours that can be won by all ranks of the Imperial Guard. Whatever the original status of the bearer he will use the same profile as a Heroic Captain. He will not become an independent character or an officer as a result but will continue in his role, albeit with better characteristics.

Macharian Cross
The Macharian Cross is awarded only to Imperial Guard officers in recognition of innovative and successful tactical thinking. The bearer can be expected to use initiative in battle. After deployment is complete (including deploying infiltrators and moving scouts), but before determining who has the first turn, any single Infantry squad within 6" of the officer may redeploy up to 12", but must abide by all the mission's deployment zones and rules.

Master-Crafted Weapons
A master-crafted weapon follows the normal rules for the converted weapon except that it allows one failed to hit roll per turn to be re-rolled. Such a modified weapon is taken as an upgrade for a weapon already carried by a model and must be represented by a suitably ornate weapon on the model itself. A grenade cannot be master-crafted.

The upgrade cost of 15 points is added to the normal cost of the weapon but only the upgrade cost is taken against the 50 points limit on wargear taken by a model (so a master-crafted power weapon costs 25 points but counts as only 15 points against a character's 50 points Wargear limit).

Medallion Crimson
The Medallion Crimson is awarded to men who have suffered horrorific wounds and have not lost their faith in the Emperor or their will to fight on. It takes a lot to stop a man who has earned this decoration. The first time the bearer is wounded by an attack that causes instant death, he just takes a single wound instead.

Medi-Pack
Medi-packs allow a unit with a medic to ignore the first failed Saving throw it rolls in every turn. The medi-pack may not be used on a model that suffers Instant Death or has been hit by a close combat weapon that allows no Armour Save. A medi-pack may not be used if the medic is in base contact with an enemy model.

Power fist
A large armoured gauntlet containing a powerfield generator, which can slice through enemy armour. Wreathed in a crackling energy field a power fist doubles the user's strength (up to a maximum of 10) and a model armed with a power fist ignores Armour Saves. Attacks with a powerfist are always delivered at Initiative 1.

Power Weapons
These weapons generate a crackling energy field that can cut through an opponent's armour like a hot knife through butter. The type of power weapon most commonly used by the Imperial Guard is the power sword. A model armed with a power weapon ignores Armour Saves.

Refractor Field
This piece of equipment produces an energy field that gives the model a 5+ Invulnerable Save. This may be used instead of the model's normal Armour Save.

Surveyor
A surveyor (also known as an auspex or scanner) is used to detect hidden enemy troops. If enemy infiltrators set up within 4D6" of a model with a scanner then the model is allowed to take a 'free' shot at them (or sound the alarm in a Raid scenario). If the model is part of a unit, the whole unit may shoot. These shots are taken before the battle begins and may cause the infiltrators to fall back.

Trademark Item
This is something the character carries into battle to show his disregard for the enemy. It could be a swagger stick or a nonchalantly smoked cigar, or something more grandiose like a billowing, scarlet cape or a chestful of shiny medals.

A unit led by a character who carries a trademark item will be reassured by his presence and may re-roll any failed Morale or Pinning checks that it suffers. However, if the character is slain the unit must pass a Morale test to avoid falling back.

ELYSIAN VEHICLE UPGRADES

Armoured Crew Compartment
These may only be added to open-topped vehicles. The vehicle no longer counts as being open-topped.

Camo Netting
Vehicles often carry rolls of camouflage netting that can be unrolled to help hide the vehicle. In scenarios using the hidden set-up rules (see the Warhammer 40,000 rules) vehicles carrying camo netting

can be set up hidden anywhere in their deployment zone, not just in or behind appropriate terrain features.

Extra Armour
Vehicle crews sometimes add extra armour plating to their vehicle to provide a little extra protection. Vehicles equipped with this count 'Crew Stunned' results on the damage tables as 'Crew Shaken' results instead.

Hunter-Killer Missile
These missiles are treated as krak missiles with an unlimited range but may be used only once per battle. Roll to hit and wound or to penetrate armour as normal.

Improved Comms
These upgrades take the form of long 'whip' aerials or other large aerial set-ups. A vehicle with improved comms can communicate with other Imperial Guard formations, such as nearby reserves or artillery support. To represent this, the improved comms allow the Imperial Guard player to re-roll one Reserves roll per turn, and to re-roll the dice when checking to see if an enemy unit or obstacle is hit by a preliminary bombardment. Regardless of how many improved comms are present, an Imperial Guard player can only use one re-roll per turn.

Searchlight
Searchlights can be used in missions where the rules for night fighting are used (see page 134 of the Warhammer 40,000 rules). They allow one enemy unit spotted by the vehicle to be fired at by any other Imperial Guards within range that have a line of fire. However, a vehicle that uses a searchlight can be fired at by any enemy units in their next turn; they can see the searchlight shining in the dark.

Smoke Launchers
These carry charges that can be fired to hide the vehicle behind a cloud of smoke. Once per game, after completing movement (no matter how far), a vehicle with smoke launchers can trigger them. Place cotton wool around the vehicle to show it is concealed by smoke. The vehicle may not fire and use its smoke launchers in the same turn. Any penetrating hits scored by the enemy in their next Shooting phase count as glancing hits. After the enemy's turn, the smoke disperses with no further effect.

IMPERIAL NAVY AIRCRAFT UPGRADES

Ejector Seats
Should the aircraft be hit, the ejector seat fires the pilot (and crew if present), out of the aircraft and grav-chutes them safely to ground. If the aircraft is destroyed then roll a D6 for each crewman. On a 1-3, the crewman is killed; on a 4+ the crewman manages to successfully eject. Roll a Scatter dice and 4D6 for the direction and distance away from the aircraft that each crewman lands. Roll separately for each crewman. An aircraft crewman counts a single Imperial Guardsman with a laspistol. They are considered to be below half strength for the purposes of morale checks, claiming table quarters, etc. They are worth no Victory Points on their own but if any crew survive the aircraft only counts as damaged for the purposes of the Victory Points total.

Flare or Chaff Launcher
Flares and chaff are launched to fool enemy fire aimed at the aircraft. If it takes a Vehicle Immobilised damage result on the damage tables then re-roll the result. The second result must stand even if it is another Immobilised result. The flare or chaff launcher only works once. Once it has been used it cannot be used again.

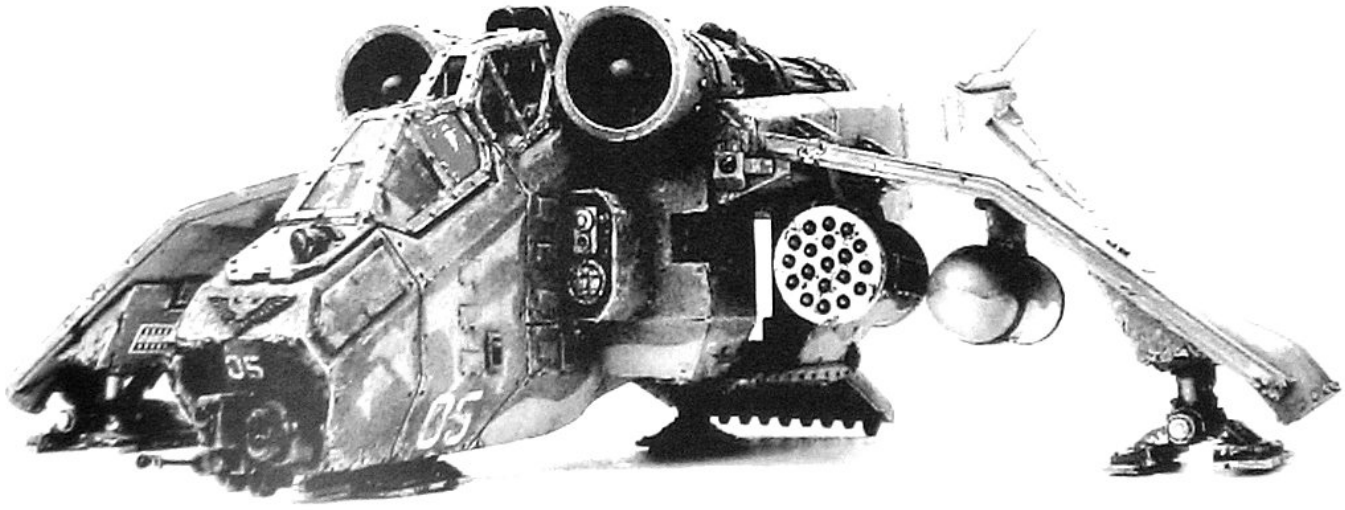
Armoured Cockpit
Reinforced armour around the cockpit helps to keep the pilot and crew safe from incoming fire. If the aircraft takes a Crew Shaken, Crew Stunned or Pilot Shaken result on the damage table, then on a dice roll of 4+ the effect is ignored.

Infrared Targeting
The aircraft has been modified to fight at night. When used in a Night Fighting mission, the aircraft can re-roll the dice for the distance it can engage enemies at. You must abide by the second result even if it is worse than the first.

Illum Flare
The aircraft carries a bright flare, which is dropped to illuminate the battlefield at night. The Illum flare can be used in missions where the rules for night fighting are used. They allow one enemy unit spotted by the aircraft to be fired at in the next turn by any other ground forces that are in range and have a line of sight.

Distinctive Paint Scheme or Decals
The crew have painted the aircraft in such a way as to make it stand out. Commonly, the nose of the plane is painted as the face of a monster, or the wings are given bright lightning flashes or similar decoration. This allows troops on the ground to recognise it, giving them the morale boost of knowing the Imperial Navy is at hand.

In the player's own turn, after the aircraft has attacked in the opponent's turn, the first unit to fail a Morale test may re-roll the test. The unit must abide by the second result. To take a distinctive paint scheme upgrade it must be shown on the model.



HEADQUARTERS

0-1 COMPANY COMMAND SQUAD

Company Command Squad ..... **60 pts + upgrades**

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Heroic Captain	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	9	5+
Captain	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	8	5+
Veteran	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+
Guardsman	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+

Number/Squad: The Company Command squad consists of one Captain and four Guardsmen, all with grav-chutes.

Weapons: Lasguns.

Options: One model may be armed with the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts. This may be further upgraded to a master vox-caster for another +20 pts.

The entire Command squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +5 pts. The entire Command squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +10 pts.

Characters: One Guardsman can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Captain can be upgarded to a Heroic Captain for +15 pts. The Heroic Captain, Captain and Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

One Guardsman, not equipped with a special weapon or a vox-caster may be upgraded to a Medic at +5 pts. The Medic has a medi-pack.

Transport: The Command squad may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Iron Disciple: Elysian Drop Troopers are led by superb officers, veterans of many battles, trained to lead from the front by example. Any unit using the Leadership characteristic of an Captain or Heroic Captain ignores the -1 modifier for a Morale or Pinning test for being under half strength and may regroup even if below half strength.

Deep Strike: Elysian Drop Troop Infantry without a transport vehicle may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Leadership: Any Imperial Guard unit within 12" of the officer may use his Leadership when taking Morale and Leadership tests as long as he isn't in close combat, falling back or pinned.

Each Drop Infantry company is led by a Captain and his Company Command squad. They direct the company in battle and its supporting heavy weapons. He coordinates the actions of his subordinates with the rest of the regiment.

The Company Command squad allows access to the Heavy Weapons squads. For each Company Command squad you may take 0-2 Fire Support squads, 0-1 Anti-Tank squads, 0-1 Mortar squads, 0-2 Special Weapon squads.

0-2 FIRE SUPPORT SQUADS

Fire Support Squad ..... **85 pts**

Number/Squad: Six Guardsmen forming three Heavy Weapon Teams.

Weapons: Lasguns. Each Heavy Weapon Team is equipped with a heavy bolter.

0-1 ANTI-TANK SQUAD

Anti-Tank Squad ..... **100 pts**

Number/Squad: Six Guardsmen forming three heavy weapon teams.

Weapons: Lasguns. Each Heavy Weapon Team is equipped with a missile launcher.

0-1 MORTAR SQUAD

Mortar Squad ..... **85 pts**

Number/Squad: Six Guardsmen forming three Heavy Weapon Teams.

Weapons: Lasguns. Each team is equipped with a mortar.

0-2 SPECIAL WEAPON SQUADS

Special Weapons Squad ..... **40 pts** + weapons

Number/Squad: Six Guardsmen

Weapons: Lasguns. Up to three guardsmen may replace their lasguns with one of the following: flamer at + 9 pts; melta gun at +15 pts; sniper rifle at +10 pts; maximum of one demolition charge at +10 pts.

Elysian infantry are supported in battle by a number of man-portable heavy weapons. Each company includes a platoon of heavy weapons, which are then divided up to support the Infantry platoons in combat. As an air-mobile unit they do not employ the largest heavy weapons, such as lascannons, as these are too cumbersome. Instead they rely on heavy bolters, missile launchers and mortars, which can be dropped from Valkyries in drop cannisters and collected by the crew before moving into the attack.

During assaults small squads equipped with special weapons and demo charges are often formed to attack hard targets at very close range.

0-5 COMMISSARS

Commissar ..... **40 pts**

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Commissar	4	4	3	3	2	4	2	10	5+

Number: One Commissar with a grav-chute.

Weapons: Las pistol and close combat weapon.

Options: Commissars have access to the Elysian armoury and may select 'Officer only' items

Transport: If the officer they are attached to has a transport Valkyrie then the Commissar will also travel in it.

SPECIAL RULES

Advisors: Each Commissar must be allocated to a squad, starting with the Company Command squad. A second Commissar must be allocated to the Platoon Command Section. If all the Command squads have a Commissar the next Commissars are assigned to Infantry squads, Hardened Veteran squads or Storm Trooper squads. Unattached Commissars may not be used.

Summary Execution: Commissars are tasked with ensuring unwavering dedication to the Imperial Creed and do not tolerate backsliders. If a unit with a Commissar fails a Morale check for any reason, the Commissar will summarily execute the officer or Sergeant leading the squad. This happens automatically – remove the executed model as a casualty. The unit in question is then assumed to have passed the Morale check and continues to fight under the leadership of the Commissar.

The presence of a Commissar in a unit adds +1 to the Leadership characteristic of the Officer or Sergeant commanding the unit for tests affecting the unit.

Even the stoic Elysians are 'advised' in battle by a cadre of Commissars. They are ruthless, fearless individuals whose dedication to the Imperial Creed keeps the troops fighting to the last man, or face summary execution for dereliction of duty!

TRANSPORT OPTION

Valkyrie Airborne Assault Carrier ..... **140 + wpns + upgrades**

	Pts	Front	Side	Rear	BS
Valkyrie	140+wpns	11	11	10	3

Type: Flyer, Orbital Lander

Crew: 4. Imperial Navy

Weapons: The Valkyrie is armed with a hull-mounted multi-laser and two door-mounted heavy bolters.

Options: The multi-laser maybe upgraded to a lascannon for +10 pts.

The Valkyrie has two external fuel tanks. The Valkyrie may exchange both the fuel tanks for one of the following: two hellstrike missiles for +20 pts; two multiple rocket pods for +50 pts.

A Valkyrie may take any of the following Imperial Navy Aircraft upgrades: Ejector seats, flare or chaff launcher, armoured cockpit, infra-red targeting, illum flares, distinctive paint scheme or decals.

Transport: A Valkyrie can transport up to 12 models. A Valkyrie is always selected as a transport upgrade for another unit and may only transport the unit it was bought for. Independent Characters that join a unit with a Valkyrie may also travel in it. A Valkyrie can also carry a single Sentinel, Cyclops or sentry gun.

Acces Points: Passengers exit via the two side doors and the exit ramp at the back of the fuselage.

Fire Points: None.

SPECIAL RULES

VTOL Hover Mode: The Valkyrie can choose to engage its VTOL hover mode to remain on the table. For full details of the rules for flyers and VTOL hover mode see the Flyer rules in Appendix II.

Heavy Lift: If a Valkyrie is carrying either a Sentinel, Cyclops or sentry gun then it must be equipped with external fuel tanks. Whilst equipped with fuel tanks a Valkyrie may not carry hellstrike missiles or multiple rocket pods.

The Valkyrie airborne assault carrier is the standard transport vehicle of the Elysian Drop Troops. Used for high altitude drops or low level insertions, and armed for fire support during missions, the Valkyrie is also versatile enough to be used in many roles. Be it dropping in heavier equipment such as Drop Sentinels, Cyclops, Sentry guns or drop cannisters full of extra supplies.

ELITES

HARDENED VETERANS

These are the best troops in the regiment, battle-scarred veterans of many campaigns. They are often deployed for the most dangerous mission or used for advanced reconnaissance and insertion behind enemy lines. Grizzled survivors, they are given a certain amount of free reign to operate as they need to.

Hardened Veterans Squad ..... **cost of squad**

	Pts/Model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Veteran	8	3	4	3	3	1	3	1	8	5+
Vet. Sergeant	13	3	4	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+

Unit: The squad consists of one Veteran Sergeant and between four and nine Veteran Guardsmen, with grav-chutes.

Weapons: Lasgun or shotgun.

Options: Up to three model may be armed with one of the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts; up to one demolition charge +10 pts; sniper rifle at +10 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +1 pts per model. The entire squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +2 pts per model.

Characters: The Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury. He may choose 'Officer only' equipment.

Transport: A Hardened Veterans squad may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Iron Disciple: Elysian Drop Troopers are led by superb officers, veterans of many battles trained to lead from the front by example. Any unit using the Leadership characteristic of an Officer ignores the -1 modifier for a Morale or Pinning test for being under half strength and may regroup even if below half strength.

Deep Strike: Elysian Drop Troop Infantry without a transport vehicle may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Infiltrate: Hardened Veterans that do not have a Valkyrie and do not Deep Strike may Infiltrate if the mission being used permits (they are already on the ground ahead of the main attack).

STORM TROOPERS

The regiment includes two complete Storm Trooper companies permanantly attached. They perform covert operations and form the spearhead of many assaults, providing an elite core to the regiment.

Storm Troopers Squad ..... **110 pts + cost of vehicle**

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Storm Trooper	3	4	3	3	1	3	1	8	4+
Vet Sergeant	3	4	3	3	1	3	2	8	4+

Unit: The squad consists of one Sergeant and nine Storm Troopers, with grav-chutes.

Weapons: Hellguns with targeters. The Sergeant has a Hellpistol and close combat weapon. All Storm Troopers have frag and krak grenades.

Options: Up to two models may be armed with one of the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire squad may be given melta bombs for an additional +40 pts.

The Sergeant may upgrade his close combat weapon to a power weapon for +5 pts.

Characters: The Sergeant may be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for +6 pts. A Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the Armoury.

Transport: The Storm Troopers squad may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Deep Strike: Storm Troopers without a Valkyrie may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

TROOPS

DROP INFANTRY PLATOON

A company is formed by four infantry platoons and a Heavy Weapons Platoon. Each platoon is made up of a platoon Command squad and four Infantry squads. These are the fighting heart of the regiment, the men that bear the brunt of all combat operations.

Platoon Command Squad ..... **45 pts + upgrades**

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Lieutenant	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+
Vet Sergeant	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+
Guardsman	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+

Number/Squad: The Platoon Command squad consists of one Lieutenant and four Guardsmen with grav-chutes.

Weapons: Lasguns.

Options: One model may be armed with the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire Command squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +5 pts. The entire Command squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +10 pts.

Characters: One Guardsman can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Lieutenant and Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the Armoury.

One Guardsman, not equipped with a special weapon or a vox-caster may be upgraded to a Medic at +5 pts. The Medic has a medi-pack.

Transport: The Command squad may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Iron Disciple: Elysian Drop Troopers are led by superb officers, veterans of many battles, trained to lead from the front by example. Any unit using the Leadership characteristic of an Officer ignores the -1 modifier for a Morale or Pinning test for being under half strength and may regroup even if below half strength.

Deep Strike: Elysian Drop Troop Infantry without a transport vehicle may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Leadership: Any Imperial Guard unit within 12" of the Officer may use his Leadership when taking Morale and Leadership tests as long as he isn't in close combat, falling back or pinned.

2 – 4 Infantry Squads ..... **65 pts + upgrades**

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Guardsman	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+
Vet. Sergeant	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+

Unit: The squad consists of one Sergeant and nine Guardsmen, with grav-chutes.

Weapons: Lasguns.

Options: One model may be armed with the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One model not carrying a special weapon, may be armed with a single demolition charge for +10 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +10 pts. The entire squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +20 pts.

Characters: The Sergeant can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

Transport: An Infantry squad may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Iron Disciple: Elysian Drop Troopers are led by superb officers, veterans of many battles, trained to lead by example from the front. Any unit using the Leadership characteristic of an Officer ignores the -1 modifier for a Morale or Pinning test for being under half strength and may regroup even if below half strength.

Deep Strike: Elysian Drop Troop Infantry without a transport vehicle may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

FAST ATTACK

DROP SENTINEL SQUADRON

Sentinel Squadron ..... **cost of vehicles**

	Pts	WS	BS	S	Front	Side	Rear	I	A
Sentinel	35	3	3	5	10	10	10	3	1

Type: Walker, Open topped. **Crew.** 1. Guardsman

Squadron: The squadron consists of between one and three Sentinels.

Weapons: Each Sentinel must be armed with one of the following weapons (a squadron may contain different weapons).

Heavy bolter +5 pts Multi-melta +20 pts

Options: Sentinels may take the following vehicle upgrades; armoured crew compartment, camo netting, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, improved comms, searchlight, smoke launchers.

Transport: A Sentinel may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Deep Strike: Sentinels without a Valkyrie may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Elysian Drop Troops make wide use of Drop Sentinels, which are small enough to fit inside a Valkyrie and can be dropped on grav-chute to provide mobile heavy weapons support. Unlike other Imperial Guard regiments they are not deployed as scout units, but for direct fire support. They are the only armoured vehicles fielded by the Elysians.

0-1 SUPPORT SENTINEL SQUADRON

Support Sentinel Squadron ..... **cost of vehicles**

	Pts	WS	BS	S	Front	Side	Rear	I	A
Support Sentinel	35	3	3	5	10	10	10	3	1

Type: Walker, Open topped. **Crew:** 1. Guardsman

Squadron: The squadron consists of between one and three Support Sentinels.

Weapons: Each Sentinel must be armed with one of the following weapons (a squadron may contain different weapons).

Missile launcher +30 pts Multiple rocket pod +20 pts

Options: Support Sentinels may take the following vehicle upgrades: armoured crew compartment, camo netting, extra armour, improved comms, searchlight, smoke launchers.

Transport: A Sentinel may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Deep Strike: Sentinels without a Valkyrie may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

Each Sentinel Company also includes a squadron of Support Sentinels, equipped with missile launchers or rocket pods for saturation fire.

CYCLOPS

Cyclops ..... **25 pts + cost of vehicle**

	Pts	Front	Side	Rear	BS
Cyclops	25	10	10	10	3

Type: Tank (may not tank shock) **Crew:** 1. Imperial Guardsman

Weapons: 1 Demolition charge. The operator carries a laspistol.

Transport: Up to 2 Cyclops' may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

For complete Special Rules see Imperial Armour Volume 1: Imperial Guard and Imperial Navy.

Deep Strike: A Cyclops and its operator, without a Valkyrie, may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

As they are small enough to fit inside a Valkyrie, Cyclops' are sometimes deployed by Elysian Drop Troops to destroy enemy obstacles, razorwire and minefields, clearing the way for the following infantry.

HEAVY SUPPORT

VULTURE GUNSHIP

Vulture gunships provide the Elysians with their heaviest firepower flying in direct support of the Valkyries. Armed with a wide array of heavy weapons, missiles and bombs, they are a powerful attack gunship.

Vulture Gunship ..... **100 + wpns + upgrades**

	Pts	Front	Side	Rear	BS
Vulture	100 + wpns	11	11	10	3

Type: Flyer

Crew: 2. Imperial Navy

Weapons: Nose-mounted heavy bolter.

Options: The Vulture has four wing hardpoints for mounting weapons. Each weapon is bought as a pair and a Vulture may mount two pairs of weapons. A Vulture must choose a pair of weapons from the Hardpoint 1 list (inner wing) and a pair of weapons from the Hardpoint 2 list (outer wing).

Hardpoint 1: 2 xExternal fuel tanks for free; twin-linked lascannons at +45 pts; twin-linked missile launchers at +45 pts; twin-linked autocannons at + 30 pts; twin linked multi-lasers at +30 pts; 2 x multiple rocket pods at +50 pts.

Hardpoint 2: 2 x External fuel tanks for free; 2 x bomb racks of 3 heavy bombs per rack at +60 pts; 2 x bomb racks of 3 x heavy smart bombs per rack at +90 pts; 2 x missile racks of 3 hunter-killer missiles per rack at +60 pts; 2 x multiple rocket pods at +50 pts; 2 x hellstrike missiles at +20 pts.

A Vulture may take any of the following Imperial Navy Aircraft Upgrades: Ejector seat, flare or chaff launcher; armoured cockpit; infra-red targeting; illum flares; distinctive paint scheme or decals.

SPECIAL RULES

VTOL Hover Mode: The Valkyrie can choose to engage its VTOL hover mode to remain on the table. For full details of the rules for flyers and VTOL hover mode see the Flyer rules in Appendix II.

Multiple Rocket Pods: Multiple rocket pods saturate a target area with rapid firing, small fragmentation missiles. They are an effective anti-infantry wepaon used against swarms of lightly armed troops.

Range: 24" **Str:** 4 **AP:** 6 **Type:** Heavy2, Blast

SENTRY GUN BATTERY

Sentry guns are small enough to be airmobile and provide useful extra firepower to the regiment. These guns are often dropped in to help form a defensive perimeter once an objective has been captured.

Tarantula ..... **15 pts per gun**

	Front	Side	Rear	BS
Tarantula	10	10	10	2

Unit: Consists of 1 to 3 Tarantula sentry guns.

Weapons: Twin-linked heavy bolters.

Options: A Tarantula may exchange its twin-linked heavy bolters for twin-linked lascannons for +10 pts.

Transport: The Tarantula may be mounted in a Valkyrie airborne assault carrier. See the Valkyrie entry for points cost and more details.

SPECIAL RULES

Deep Strike: Sentry guns without a Valkyrie may Deep Strike, if the mission permits, using their grav-chutes to land on the battlefield.

IMPERIAL NAVY AIR SUPPORT

The Imperial Navy often fly in close support of the Elysian Drop Troops, providing fighter protection to the Valkyries and seeking out enemies with strafing cannons, bombs and hellstrike missiles.

All the normal rules for aircrfaft apply to air support.

Air Support ..... **cost of vehicles**

Unit: Consists of 1 aircraft. This can be either: a Thunderbolt fighter or Lightning fighter. For points costs and options see the individual vehicle entry.

TALLARN IMPERIAL GUARD

The Tallarn Infantry regiments of the Taros Campaign should be represented using the standard Imperial Guard Codex and using the following doctrines.

DOCTRINES

Light Infantry
Sharp Shooters
Priests
Techpriests
Rough Riders

The exceptions to the codex are listed below.

The Tallarn Armoured regiments should be represented using the Imperial Guard Armoured battlegroup army list from Imperial Armour Volume 1 – Imperial Guard and Imperial Navy.

TROOPS

The following army list entry may be taken in Tallarn armies, occupying one Troops choice on the Force Organisation chart.

TALLARN INFANTRY PLATOON

PLATOON COMMAND SQUAD . . . . . 40 pts + upgrades

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Lieutenant	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	8	5+
Veteran	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+
Guardsmen	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+

Squad: The squad consists of one Lieutenant and four Guardsmen.

Weapons: Lasguns or las pistol and close combat weapons.

Options: Two Guardsmen may form a weapons team armed with a missile launcher at +15 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire Command squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +5 pts. The entire Command Squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +10 pts.

Characters: One Guardsman can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Lieutenant and Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

One Guardsman, not forming part of a Heavy Weapons Team or equipped with a vox-caster may be upgraded to a Medic at +5 pts. The Medic has a medi-pack.

SPECIAL RULES

Light Infantry: The unit rolls an additional dice when determining how far they can move in difficult terrain. The squad may infiltrate if the scenario permits.

Sharp Shooters: Any squad member with a BS of 3 may make a single re-roll of a shooting to hit roll of 1. This ability has no effect when firing plasma guns or sniper rifles.

Leadership: Any Imperial Guard unit within 12" of the officer may use his leadership when taking morale and leadership tests, as long as he isn't in close combat, falling back or pinned.

2-5 INFANTRY SQUADS . . . . . 60 pts + upgrades

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Veteran	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+
Guardsmen	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+

Squad: The squad consists of one Sergeant and nine Guardsmen.

Weapons: Lasguns. The Sergeant may exchange his lasgun for a las pistol and close combat weapon at no extra points costs.

Options: One model may be armed with the following: flamer at +6 pts; melta gun at +10 pts; plasma gun at +10 pts; grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One model may be armed with a sniper rifle for +5 pts.

One model may be given a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire squad may be given frag grenades for an additional +10 pts. The entire squad may be given krak grenades for an additional +20 pts.

Characters: The Sergeant can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

SPECIAL RULES

Light Infantry: The unit rolls an additional dice when determining how far they can move in difficult terrain. The squad may infiltrate if the scenario permits.

Sharp Shooters: Any squad member with a BS of 3 may make a single re-roll of a shooting to hit roll of 1. This ability has no effect when firing plasma guns or sniper rifles.

Leadership: Any Imperial Guard unit within 12" of the officer may use his Leadership when taking Morale and Leadership tests, as long as he isn't in close combat, falling back or pinned.

FAST ATTACK

The following army list entry may be taken in Tallarn armies, occupying one Fast Attack choice on the Force Organisation chart.

TALLARN ROUGH RIDER SQUADRON

	Pt	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Rough Rider	8	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+
Veteran	+6	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+

Squad: The squadron consists of one Sergeant and between four and nine Rough Riders.

Weapons: Las pistol and close combat weapons.

Options: The squadron can replace their las pistols or close combat weapons with hunting lances at +3 pts per model.

Up to two Rough Riders, without hunting lances, may be armed with one of the following: melta gun +10 pts, plasma gun +10 pts, grenade launcher at +8 pts.

One Guardsman not equipped with a special weapon may be equipped with a vox-caster at +5 pts.

The entire squadron may be given krak grenades for an additional +2 pts per model. The entire squadron may be given melta bombs for an additional +4 pts per model.

Any Rough Rider squadron may upgrade their horses to Mukaali for an additional +5 pts per model.

Characters: The Sergeant can be upgraded to a Veteran Sergeant for an additional +6 pts. The Veteran Sergeant may choose additional equipment from the armoury.

SPECIAL RULES

Cavalry: Rough Riders are cavalry (see Warhammer 40,000 rulebook for more details).

Hunting Lance: A model using a hunting lance cannot use an additional close combat weapon but gains +2 to its Strength and Initiative when charging. There is no Armour Save against hunting lance attacks. Hunting lances are automatically used in the first close combat they fight, and cannot be used again.

Fleet of Hoof: In the Shooting phase you may state that the sqaudron will move rather than shoot. Roll a D6 – this is the distance the unit moves instead of firing any weapons.

Mukaali: Due to creature's size and bulk, a Rough Rider on a Mukaali gains +1 T.

TAU AUXILIARY FORCES

TAU HUMAN AUXILIARIES

Following the First Taros Intervention and the Avenging Sons' withdrawal from Tarokeen, the Tau moved to take complete control of the planet. They already had strong military forces on Taros, and reinforcements were on the way. Having borne the brunt of the fighting and won the battle the Tau commanders were in a strong position to dictate terms – they had saved the Planetary Governor after all!

Water Caste diplomats laid an ultimatum on the table before Planetary Governor Aulis – disband and disarm the PDF immediately, or their Hunter Cadres would do it by force! From now on the fighting on Taros would to be the Tau's operation alone, not a joint one. Governor Aulis was outraged at being stripped of his military power, but there was also a sudden dawning realisation that the Tau where here to stay! The aliens forces were in place and growing stronger. Aulis had opened the door to the Tau, and he did not have the forces to close it.

A heated argument followed in which the Tau diplomats agreed to a small compromise. The PDF would be disbanded, but any troops who volunteered to fight for the Tau Empire would be allowed to keep their small arms (but not heavy weapons) and come under command of the Tau military hierarchy. They would mostly be stationed for garrison duty at strategically important locations.

The former PDF squads would be allowed to fight alongside the other Tau forces, and those that proved their loyalty in battle would be well treated by their new commanders and, in time, even given access to more advanced Tau weaponry.

Under this agreement the Planetray Governor felt he still had some forces in the field (although no power to command them), and the Tau could swell their ranks with human auxilaries. It was a tactic they had already used with some success in other parts of the Empire. Any troops that laid down their arms willingly but did not volunteer to fight would be allowed to go free, or used to create new work gangs for the mines. Any troops that resisted the new edict would be shown no mercy.

Many of the PDF volunteered to serve the Tau, lured by the promise of fair treatment, which was more than they could expect from the Imperium's invading forces. Already heavily outgunned no PDF units resisted the Tau take over. The Tau refer to their new troops as Gue'vesa – which translates as 'Human helpers'.

TROOPS

The following army list entry may be taken in Tau armies, occupying one Troops choice on the Force Organisation chart.

GUE'VESA TEAM

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Gue'vesa'la	6	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	7	5+
Gue'vesa'ui	+10	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	5+

Squad: The squad consists of 6-12 auxiliaries.

Weapons: Lasguns.

Options: The team may carry frag grenades at an additional cost of +1 point per model.

Character: One auxiliary may be upgraded to a Gue'vesa'ui at an additional cost of +10 points. The leader may buy a Tau pulse rifle at an additional cost of +3 points.

SPECIAL RULES

Death to Traitors!: Although the humans who have joined the Tau Empire bear no ill-will towards their former compatriots, the same cannot be said of Imperial troops fighting the auxiliaries. Imperial troops will always hit a Gue'vesa on a roll of 3+ in close combat, regardless of relative Weapon Skill.

MINING WORK GANGS

The huge strip-mines of Taros are dug by thousands of work gangs. These men work the great mining machinery and labour with cutting tools and explosives to extract the ore. It is hard, dangerous, dirty work and the work gangs become close-knit teams. They are fiercely competitive, often violently so, with the other gangs. Mass brawling and worse are not uncommon. This competitive spirit is encouraged by the mineowners, who reward the most productive gangs with luxuries and punish those that fail to meet quotas.

Work gangs have their own names, like 'Jax Boys', 'the Tungusta Diggers', 'Fornax Burrowers' or 'Logan's Ground Pounders'.

Taros' mines also have a sizeable Ogryn workforce, these great brutes are ideally suited to heavy manual work, like hauling ore carts or crushing rocks.

As well as being loyal to each other, the gangs are also fiercely loyal to their mine, and when it is threatened they will fight hard to defend it, despite being poorly armed and trained.

TROOPS

The following army list entry may be taken in Tau armies on Taros, occupying one Troops choice on the Force Organisation chart.

MINING WORK GANG

	Pts/model	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Gang Leader	12	3	4	3	3	1	3	2	8	-
Miner	+5	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	6	-
Ogryn	+25	4	3	5	4	3	3	2	8	-

Squad: The gang consists of 1 Gang Leader, 5-18 Miners and 0-1 Ogryn.

Weapons: Various pistols (count as las pistols), various close combat weapons (picks, crowbars, hammers etc). The Ogryn carries a club or hammer.

Options: Up to one Miner may carry a las-cutter (a mining tool which counts as a melta gun) for +10 pts. Up to one Miner may carry a demolition charge for +10 pts.

Character: The Gang Leader may exchange his las pistol and close combat weapon for a lasgun, autogun or shotgun for free.

MODELLING THE TAU AUXILIARIES

There are lots of miniatures you could use to represent your Gue'vesa teams, in particular any of the Imperial Guard range, as well as Necromunda miniatures. However, in order to present the humans as part of a Tau force, as well as for ease of conversion when it comes to equipping them with Tau weaponry, the best option is to use a combination of the Imperial Guard and Tau Fire Warrior plastic sets.

Combining these two sets allows you to use whatever mixture of parts you feel is appropriate to your force. Legs, arms, weapons and heads from the Imperial Guard set, can be combined with the torso, shoulder pad, back pack and other details from the Fire Warrior set. You can vary how much you use from either set to achieve the look you like, either a more scruffy and Imperial appearance, or a Tau regimented look.

For mining work gangs use Orlock, Van Saar or Ash Waste Nomad miniatures from the Necromunda range. An Ogryn can be represented by a Warhammer Ogre.

TAU IN EPIC ARMAGEDDON

TAROS CAMPAIGN ARMY LIST

THE TAU ON TAROS

The Tau Fire Warrior Command on Taros, under Shas'o R'myr, consisted of approximately 80 to 100 Hunter Cadres. These Hunter Cadres were organised into larger Battles for specific roles. Whilst flexible and fluid, so Battles can be formed and dissolved quickly, their main role throughout the campaign were either spoiling counter-attacks against the Imperial Guard frontline, or infiltration and sabotage operations against the Imperial Guard's rear echelons. Other Battles were formed for garrisoning duties, using human auxiliary forces, and Kroot Kindreds were used to occupy the Phyyra Heights.

TAU SPECIAL RULES

COODINATED FIRE

The Tau are masters of ranged warfare and have several very experienced fighters and specially equipped troops that are able to lead other Tau on an attack, expertly directing their fire against the foe; thus Tau are especially adept at outflanking enemy formations and attacking them from several sides with their deadly coordinated fire.

Some units are noted as being able to call in coordinated fire. Those units can order up to two other formations that have not taken an action this turn to follow them when they take an advance, double or sustained fire action, as long as all of the formations have at least one unit within 15cm of the formation of the unit calling for coordinated fire.

Make a single initiative roll for all formations, counting a -1 modifier if any have Blast markers. If the test is failed then the original formation (with the unit calling for coordinated fire) receives a Blast marker and must take a hold action, but the other formations are unaffected (and may take an action later in the turn).

If the test is passed then all formations concerned are allowed to take either an advance, double or sustained fire action, but must all fire at the same target formation. There is no obligation for all formations to take the same action, they don't have to stay within a given distance of each other, and the formations will complete their actions one after the other.

MARKERLIGHTS AND GUIDED MISSILES

Markerlights are devices carried by many types of Tau infantry and vehicles. They allow their user to mark out enemy targets electronically, so that they can easily be targeted and engaged by other friendly units. Seeker missiles are self-guided projectiles that can be fired on targets marked by a Markerlight. Their drone brains allow them to independently find their way to their designated target, avoiding any obstacles in the way. Seeker missiles are readily available in any Tau army, being mounted on tanks, aircraft and support craft. They have a long range so can be fired over considerable distances once a target is marked.

Guided missiles must be guided by a Markerlight to be fired. If they are guided by Markerlights, hits may only be allocated to units from the target formation that are within range and line of fire of a unit with Markerlights. As long as this requirement is met, the firing unit does not need a line of fire to the target unit itself, but must still be in range.

The Tau unit 'illuminating' the target may not be broken, suppressed or have marched this turn. It doesn't have to belong to the firing formation itself, can be used to 'illuminate' any number of target units, and the action it performs does not alter the Markerlight value in any way (no +1 for sustained fire or -1 for double, for example), unless specifically stated (e,. the +1 to hit with Pathfinders' multiple Markerlights). This aside, the normal shooting rules apply.

TAU TECHNOLOGY

TAU JETPACKS

Tau Battlesuits and Drones make use of powerful and sophisticated jump packs. These allow them to pounce on the enemy and strafe them before retreating again out of range of the survivors' retribution. This makes Jetpack-equipped troops hard to counter and very difficult to engage. Tau units often use their Jetpacks for aerial deployment from Mantas or Orcas.

Tau Jetpacks follow all the rules for Jump Packs. Additionally, units with Tau Jetpacks are allowed to fall back from a charging enemy instead of making a counter charge move. The units may move 10cm in any direction immediately after the enemy formation has declared an engage or air assault action against their formation (note that falling back happens before a charge is made, not after charge moves as with counter charges).

In addition to this, units with Tau Jetpacks can disembark from an aircraft (using the normal rules), but without the aircraft having to land. They can then fire at the same formation together with the aircraft; any Blast markers on the aircraft do not affect the disembarked formation.

TAU DRONES

Tau make extensive use of floating, disc-shaped machines called drones. In battle, drones are programmed to shield their controllers by getting in the way of incoming fire or close combat opponents.

Formations containing drones plus at least one non-drone unit halve the number of additional Blast markers they receive because of destroyed drone units (fractions rounded down), and count drones destroyed in an assault only as half models (again rounding fractions down) when working out who has inflicted more casualties; additionally, drones in such formations may be allocated any type of hit (AP and AT). Formations consisting entirely of drones follow the normal rules.

TAU DEFLECTOR SHIELDS

The Tau support craft make use of a highly advanced shield technology, similar to Imperial void shield technology. However, the Tau deflector shields work slightly differently in that they do not stop the incoming projectile, but is shaped and positioned in such a way as to deflect the incoming fire (hence the designation). A further noteworthy trait is that the shield's response will be proportionally more powerful with the energy of the attack.

Tau deflector shields work like an Invulnerable Save in all respects, with the single exception that they will save on a different score than the normal 6+. This score is dependent on the impact energy of the hit: The deflector will save on a 4+ against TK hits, a 5+ against MW hits, and a 6+ against any other type of attack, e,. AT hits or hits sustained in an assault, etc.

SUPPORT CRAFT

Lacking large ground-based war engines like Titans, the Tau make use of smaller spacecraft for ground support. Unlike the much faster aircraft, they hover menacingly over the battlefield and act as a high-flying weapons platform. Support craft can remain high up in the air, this means they can always draw a line of fire to any target and vice versa, like aircraft.

They also ignore terrain when moving and will never count as being in cover. It goes without saying that troops can't use them as cover, as they are too far away from the ground. They can only deploy troops as part of a planetfall. In an assault, they work just like skimmers.

TAU UNITS

TAU FIRE CASTE GROUND FORCES

TAU ETHEREAL CASTE MEMBER

Ethereals are not members of the Fire Caste, but represent their own ruling Caste of Ethereals (Aun). The loyalty all Tau display towards them is total, their views and commandments are never questioned, save in council by a fellow Aun.

Ethereals have a profound psychological influence on fighting troops around them, motivating them to acts of bravery or unflinching defence. However, this does not happen out of fear but out of deep respect. Aun V're was the only known Ethereal on Taros, advising the Tau's Taros Coalition. In the field he was always accompanied by shield drones that were programmed to protect him by physically getting in the way of incoming shots or blows if necessary, and he carried the ceremonial weapon of the Ethereal Caste, the honour blade. This is a ritual weapon, used to denote rank rather than for combat. It is the Ethereals' role to lead and guide, not to fight.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Character	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Honour blade	(base contact)	Assault weapon	Extra attacks (+1)

Notes: Character, Invulnerable Save, Inspiring, Leader, Formation joined by the Ethereal becomes Fearless. If the Ethereal is killed, his formation breaks and all other Tau formations with a unit with a line of fire to the Ethereal receive a Blast marker.

TAU SHAS'O COMMANDER

Shas'o is the highest rank that a Fire Caste member can attain. Only those Shas'el who have proven themselves worthy by repeated success in the field are considered for promotion. Shas'o R'myr was the Fire Caste's commander on Taros. He did not lead a Cadre in the field, but was the supreme commander for an entire Fire Warrior Command, coordinating the entire campaign. R'myr himself is a battlescarred warrior, a supremely dangerous opponent in his personal Crisis battlesuit. He had similar weapons and equipment to his Shas'el, but his rank and importance meant that he had access to more non-standard equipment, like several different hard-wired support systems, shield generators or upgraded weapons systems.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Character	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Plasma rifle	30cm	AP4+	-

Notes: Character, Invulnerable Save, Tau Supreme Commander (same as normal Supreme Commander, but with coordinated fire instead of Commander).

TAU SHAS'EL COMMANDER

Shas'el, the second highest rank of the Shas, are Tau military commanders of the Fire Caste. They are experienced in battle and commanding troops, and usually lead by example. All Fire Caste warriors of rank Shas'vre or higher are equipped with a Crisis battlesuit and they actually employ it to support their army in battle. They are seasoned fighters and expert suit pilots, making them a fearsome prospect at short ranges as they lead their troops into attacks. Tau make almost no use of close combat weapons, instead, the most common officer weapon is the plasma rifle. They are also supported by accompanying Shield Drones, which protect them from enemy attacks.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Character	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Plasma rifle	30cm	AP4+	-

Notes: Character, Invulnerable Save, Coordinated Fire, Leader.

TAU FIRE WARRIOR TEAM

The indisputable mainstay of any Tau army, Tau Fire Warriors or Shas'la are solid and dependable core troops. They are well armoured and equipped with the deadly pulse rifles and pulse carbines, which provide them with a definitive edge over almost any other type of infantry in ranged combat. They are certainly not the fastest, bravest or most endurable troopers by nature, but their technology and extensive training goes a long way to counter any biological disadvantage they might have compared to humans or Orks. The result is highly proficient infantry.

Shas'la are equally capable of stout defence with their accurate, long-ranged pulse rifles as of fighting up close with their pulse carbines with built-in photon grenade launchers. Together with their tightly-knit nature and 'mutual support' attitude, this certainly makes them a force to be reckoned with.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Pulse carbines	15cm	AP5+	Disrupt
Pulse rifles	30cm	AP5+	-
Markerlight	30cm	n/a	-

TAU PATHFINDER TEAM

Compared to the Fire Warriors, Tau Pathfinders have a more specialised role on the battlefield. The Markerlight, their main weapon, is not a weapon as such, but instead used to electronically mark enemy units and thus increase the accuracy of their fellow Tau against those. This concept of working for the Tau'va at the expense of personal glory is very prominent in Tau society (and also warfare) and makes Pathfinders very popular with other Tau units. In short, Pathfinders are out there to guide their comrades' aim, not to win the battle themselves. However, the Pathfinders' role has vital battlefield importance, using Markerlights to designate targets, and then call down self-guided Seeker missiles from tanks, aircraft, spacecraft or fixed installations to take out enemy threats with pin-point strikes.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Pulse Carbines	15cm	AP5+	Disrupt
Pulse Rifles	30cm	AP5+	-
Markerlights	30cm	n/a	+1 to hit for missiles

Notes: Scouts, Sniper, Coordinated Fire

TAU XV8 CRISIS BATTLESUIT

Of all weapons systems employed by the Tau, the Crisis Battlesuit is easily the most distinctive and recognisable. It confers the troopers within exceptional protection, as well as mounting a vast array of deadly weapons. The Crisis' greatest strengths lie in mobility and short-ranged firepower – it is their role to get to the right place and take out the right targets. They are equipped with a selection of weapons that allow them to effectively engage anything the enemy might have; they are there to tackle any units that the normal Shas'la teams can't deal with. Only seasoned veterans are granted the honour to don a Crisis battlesuit, and these fight together as teams of three. Becoming a Crisis battlesuit pilot is the first step in becoming a Tau officer.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	25cm	3+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Missile pods	45cm	AP4+/AT4+	-
Plasma rifles	30cm	AP4+	-
Fusion blasters	15cm	MW 4+ and small arms	Macro-weapon

Notes: Tau Jetpacks. The twin-linked fusion blasters confer the macro-weapon ability to the unit's firefight value.

TAU XV15 STEALTH BATTLESUIT TEAM

Of all the various battlesuit variants of the Tau, the XV15 Stealth is the smallest – a Tau in an XV15 is hardly larger than a Fire Warrior in standard armour. However, this perfectly suits their role as infiltrators and saboteurs. In addition to the Tau Jetpack, which is common to most battlesuits, the Stealthsuit has the unique capability of camouflaging its wearer. This is achieved by a number of disruptors which are arrayed all over the suit and distort the wearer's form, blending him into the background like a chameleon. Stealth teams either work in support of larger formations or range ahead of the main army, the 'lone wolves' of the Tau. They are encouraged to fight independently and have great autonomy with their mission parameters, as befits their style of fighting. They ambush enemy units and disrupt their supply lines, like vengeful ghosts striking at will.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	25cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannons	15cm	AP3+ and small arms	Disrupt First Strike
Markerlight	30cm	n/a	-

Notes: Tau Jetpacks, Scouts, Reinforced Armour, the Burst cannons confer the first strike ability to the unit's firefight value.

TAU XV88 BROADSIDE BATTLESUIT

The XV88 is a variant of the Crisis, designed for long-range heavy fire support. To this end, the standard Jetpack has been removed and replaced with thicker armour and heavier weapons. The main weapons system of the Broadside are its twin-linked railguns, linear particle accelerators capable of punching through virtually any amount of armour. Only a few vehicles are able to withstand a direct hit without suffering critical damage.

Broadsides are larger and slower than Crisis, so they take up the role of stationary fire support, especially against enemy armoured targets. They are often employed in association with Fire Warriors to form defence lines or solid fire bases for a Tau advance.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	15cm	4+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Rail guns	75cm	AT2+	-
Plasma rifles	30cm	AP4+	-

Notes: Reinforced Armour, Walker

TAU GUN DRONE SQUADRON

Tau Gun Drones (Kor'vesa) are small, disc-shaped, semi-sentient machines employed alongside Tau units in battle. They are equipped with a smaller and much modified version of Tau Jetpacks, which allows them to hover over the ground and fly over most obstacles. As weapons they carry twin-linked pulse carbines, a formidable weapon for short-ranged firing. Drones are most often controlled by a Tau warrior, acting as his robotic bodyguard. To be able to function independently, they need to combine their processors into a network, so only larger groups of drones are able to fight on their own without close supervision.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	30cm	5+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Pulse Carbines	15cm	AP5+	Disrupt

Notes: Tau Jetpacks, Drones

TAU HEAVY GUN DRONE SQUADRON

Heavy Gun Drones are a further development of the basic Gun Drone. They are visibly larger with heavier construction than standard Drones and carry heavier weapons in the shape of burst cannons. On some Drones, one burst cannon has been replaced with a Markerlight so the drones can range ahead of the main army and pick out targets for destruction. They do not follow the usual drone program of protection of Tau life, but are employed in dedicated Drone squadrons to actively take part in the fighting. They are a relatively new addition to the forces of the Tau and most versions are still undergoing field trials at the moment.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	25cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannons	15cm	AP3+	Disrupt
Markerlights	30cm	n/a	-

Notes: Tau Jetpacks, Drones

TAU HAMMERHEAD GUNSHIP

The Hammerhead is the main battle tank of the Tau Fire Caste, like the Leman Russ for the Imperial Guard and the Predator for the Space Marines, and it is a close match for both. The Hammerhead is a grav-tank, which allows it to pass over difficult terrain with impunity. Despite this, it is heavily armoured and carries a lethal amount of firepower.

Its main weapon system is either a railgun or an ion cannon, with the self-guiding smart missiles as back-up. The Hammerhead-mounted Railgun differs from the one mounted on Broadside battlesuits in that it can not only fire a solid slug, but also a sophisticated sub-munition, which proves deadly against massed infantry. The ion cannon is a very versatile weapon and can, thanks to its rate of fire and the tank's sophisticated targeters, even engage enemy aircraft with some success.

On Taros, the Imperium also encountered a wide variety of Hammerhead weapons, with missile pods, burst cannon and plasma cannons all adding the Hammerhead's deadly arsenal.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	30cm	4+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Railgun	75cm	AP4+/AT3+	-
OR one of the following			
Ion cannon	60cm	AP4+/AT4+/AA6+	-
Burst cannons	30cm	AP4+/AA5+	-
Missile Pods	45cm	AP5+/AT4+	-
Plasma Cannons	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	-
Fusion cannons	30cm	MW4+	-
AND			
Smart missiles	30cm	AP4+	Ignore cover
Seeker missiles	75cm	AT5+	guided missile

Notes: Skimmer, may have one main weapon, not all!

TAU DEVILFISH TROOP CARRIER

The Devilfish is the trusty troop transport for Fire Warriors and Pathfinders, able to carry a full squad of them into battle. It is relatively well armoured for a transport vehicle, but only has a single burst cannon for self defence. In addition, it mounts Guns Drones in special carriages on the sides, which can be detached in battle to provide support for disembarking teams. It is based on the same chassis as the Hammerhead, but the hull of the tank has been reconfigured to passenger space. It is used to carry Tau infantry to the front, or to evacuate them when the enemy is in a position to overwhelm the Tau line.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	30cm	4+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannon	15cm	AP4+	-
Seeker missiles	75cm	AT5+	guided missile

Notes: Skimmer, Transport (may carry two units of the following units: Fire Warriors, Pathfinders).

TAU SKY RAY MISSILE DEFENCE GUNSHIP

The Sky Ray gunship is the Tau version of ground-based air defence. It uses the hull of the Hammerhead as a basis, but doesn't mount a main gun in the turret, but Seeker missiles and Markerlights to acquire enemy aircraft. Its targeting systems are very advanced and allow it to launch its missiles with enormous accuracy against low-flying aircraft from great distances.

The Seeker missiles can be used against armoured ground targets with good effect as the targeting systems allow for quick re-calibration. It is therefore a reliable tank hunter/air defence and has become indispensable for the Tau military against opponents with strong aerial forces, like the Imperium of Man.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	30cm	4+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Smart missiles	30cm	AP4+	Ignore cover
Seeker missiles	75cm	AT5+/AA5+	Guided missile
Markerlights	30cm	n/a	-

Notes: Skimmer.

TAU DRONE SENTRY TURRET

Drone sentry turrets are a notable example of Tau stationary defence. They are roughly as large as a warrior in a battlesuit and consist of armoured body, weapon, and ammo/energy supply. It has no crew but is drone controlled and fully automated. Its weapon is normally kept inside the main hull, only in case of firing is the top armour raised and the weapon elevated and brought to bear. Drone sentry turrets are usually deploy by Orcas and then remain stationary until picked up again. They are mostly employed to protect important installations, reinforce defence lines or form expendable pockets of resistance that are used as a lure.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	0cm	4+	-	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+	Disrupt
OR, one of the following:			
Plasma rifles	30cm	AP4+	-
Missile pods	45cm	AP5+/AT5+	-

Notes: Up to four turrets may be carried in an Orca and may disembark within 15cm as if they had jump packs. From then on, they are immobile and cannot change their position.

TAU PIRANHA

Again, first encountered on Taros, the Piranha is a military adaptation of a two-seated, open-topped skimmer into a light combat vehcile. It has had armour added, as well as armament of a burst cannon and detachable Gun Drones, identical to those mounted on a Devilfish. On Taros, it was mostly employed for reconnaissance duties or as a platform for launching Seeker missiles.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	30cm	5+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannon	30cm	AP4+	-
Seeker missile	75cm	AT5+	guided missile

Notes: Skimmer, Scouts

TAU TETRA SCOUT SPEEDER

The Tetra is also a two-seated light skimmer, similar to the Piranha, but crewed by Pathfinders for long-range reconnaissance and insertion behind enemy lines. Its armament, in the form of pulse rifles, is considerable weaker, but it is equipped with Markerlights instead. Thus it can fulfil the same role as Pathfinders on foot. Still, it is a rather rare occurrence with most Tau armies, as it's still a relatively new piece of equipment.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	35cm	5+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Plasma Rifles	30cm	AP5+	-
Markerlight	30cm	n/a	-

Notes: Skimmer, Scouts, Coordinated Fire

TAU REMOTE SENSOR TOWER

A new Tau weapon, so far only encountered on Taros, the Remote sensor tower is positioned to scan the surrounding area for enemy activity, and automatically mark a target with its Markerlight before calling in a Seeker missile from a Tau unit close by. The first the enemy know about being under attack is a missile strike. The Tau use Remote sensor towers instead of static minefields, allowing them to cover large areas without committing large amounts of Fire Warriors.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	0cm	5+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Markerlight	30cm	n/a	-

Notes: Scouts. Remote sensor towers are immobile and cannot change their position.

ALIEN AUXILIARY FORCES

KROOT MASTER SHAPER

Master Shapers are the leaders of Kroot kindreds, they oversee the genetic development of their kindred as well as making all the important decisions together with the other senior Shapers of the tribe. Their main duty is to lead their tribe to new prey species that can be assimilated into the Kroot genome so that the kindred evolves, gaining new abilities and traits (hence the designation of 'Shaper'). Kroot often hire themselves out as mercenaries, and it is the Master Shaper's business to negotiate the terms of the contract with the employers. They also lead their tribe in battle, using their superior physiology, numerous volutionary adaptations as well as the exotic and deadly weaponry gifted by their employers in exchange for their service.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	6+	4+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Kroot rifle	15cm and base contact	small arms assault weapons	- -

Notes: Leader, Infiltrators

KROOT CARNIVORE SQUAD

Kroot are a savage race, but make excellent infiltration and close combat troops. Their arboreal origins make them experts in fieldcraft as well as tracking and ambushing enemies in dense terrain. Though Kroot are fierce and skilled fighters in close combat and short-ranged firefights, they lack armour and must rely on the protection of their surroundings. They fight using their Kroot rifles, originally primitive weapons but now adapted and upgraded by the Tau. The rifle's main use is in close combat, where the numerous blades attached to it make it an effective weapon. Kroot are voracious carnivores and devour their victims after a battle, as this confers them their enemies' strength and courage according to their beliefs. In fact, they are able to assimilate part of their prey's genetic make-up and learn new abilities in this way or even provoke artificial evolutionary leaps. Unsurprisingly, this behaviour is a cause of friction between them and the Tau, who dislike such acts of savagery.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	-	4+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Kroot rifle	15cm and base contact	small arms assault weapons	- -

Notes: Infiltrators.

KROOT HOUND PACK

Kroot Hounds are a different evolutionary branch to the Kroot, a form that has evolved into a four-legged hunting beast. Kroot Hounds are exceptionally ferocious and need handlers to take care of them, lest they turn on other Kroot or Tau. This makes them somewhat troublesome to take along into battle and is the reason why they are detested by the Tau. Exclusively used for battle and hunting, the Hounds have sharp fangs and claws for tearing apart enemies in close combat and mercilessly pursuing any survivors.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	20cm	-	4+	-

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Fangs	base contact	assault weapons	-

Notes: Infiltrators, Scouts, count as having a speed of 15cm for set-up only.

KROOTOX HERD

Krootox are another Kroot form that has evolved from the main branch. They are stuck at a lower level of evolutionary development, being essentially lumbering herbivores. However, they have a strong bond to their Kroot masters and will fight alongside them savagely.

In battle the Kroot lash large Kroot guns to the Krootox's back for fire support during an attack. Krootox are large and strong beasts, and can rip apart most enemies in close combat, while able to absorb heavy blows themselves.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	4+	4+	4+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Claws	base contact	assault weapons	extra attack (+1)
Kroot Guns	45cm	AP5+/AT6+	-

KROOT GREAT KNARLOC

The Kroot Great Knarloc is a massive beast native to the Kroot homeworld of Pech. It is physiologically obvious that it shares some ancestors with the other Kroot forms, but it is very unlike any of the current ones. It is omnivorous, but can prove a skilled hunter when in the need of fresh meat.

A Great Knarlocs huge mass and strength means it is often used as beast of burden by the Kroot, but can also be unleashed as fighting beast in battle. Like the Krootox it is not predisposed to violence, but it can be goaded into aggression by its Kroot handlers, though they must be careful to direct its anger towards the enemy and not themselves.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Light Vehicle	20cm	4+	4+	-

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Beak and claws	base contact	assault weapons	Macro-weapon, extra attack (+1)

Notes: Walker, counts as having a speed of 15cm for set-up only

KROOT KNARLOC RIDERS

Also a native of the jungles of Pech, Knarlocs are the smaller cousins of the Great Knarlocs, and just as dangerous. Once captured, tamed and domesticated by the Kroot, Knarlocs are used as steeds in battle. Kroot warriors armed with crude spears or their Kroot rifles hurl themselves into the fray atop the shrieking monster.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	20cm	5+	4+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Kroot rifle	15cm and base contact	small arms assault weapons	- -

Notes: Mounted, Scouts.

GUE'VESA'UI HUMAN AUXILIARIES COMMANDER

On Taros, the Tau were prudent enough to give their auxilia formations their own leaders and commanders, and the human Gue'vesa formations are no exception. They are frequently led by the most veteran and combat-experienced individuals and attain the rank of Gue'vesa'ui, who are formed into Command squads. These command their company and keep it fighting under fire, leading from the front. They are often gifted superior pulse weaponry and other high-tech equipment by their Tau masters, both to increase their firepower and as an indication of rank.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	6+	6+	4+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Pulse rifle	30cm	AP 5+	-

Notes: Leader

GUE'VESA HUMAN AUXILIARIES TEAM

After the Tau defeated the First Taros Intervention they moved to take total control of the planet. There first step was to disband and disarm the Planetary Defence Forces, leaving them the sole military force on the planet. Rather than waste this manpower, any ex-PDF soldier was welcome to swear allegiance to the Empire and fight in defence of their planet. Many joined up, and the Tau treated their 'human helpers' well, equipping them and using them mostly for garrison and guard duties. To the Imperium,such men are simply traitors and are given no clemency, in many cases this just made them fight harder, knowing they could expect no mercy if they surrendered.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Infantry	15cm	-	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Lasguns	(15cm)	small arms	-

TAU AIR CASTE FORCES

TAU BARRACUDA SUPERIORITY FIGHTER

The Barracuda is the Tau's standard fighter plane employed by the Kor (Air) Caste for aerial combat missions. It carries a wide array of weapons and is therefore able to attack enemy aircraft as well as ground targets, however its main role is combat air patrol to secure air superiority. It is an agile and manoeuvrable craft, and the Tau Air Caste pilots are physiologically better adapted to air and space combat than most other races, as they spend practically their entire life in space or at least airborne. It is only recently that the Barracuda pilots have been adapting to other roles as well, like close ground support with their Ion cannons and missile pods.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
Aircraft	Fighter	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Ion cannon	30cm	AP4+/AT4+/AA6+	Fixed forward arc
Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+/AA5+	-
Missile pods	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	
Seeker missiles	75cm	AT5+	guided missiles

TAU TIGER SHARK

The Tiger Shark is not a dedicated bomber, but fulfils the dual role of bomber and drone transport craft. In addition to its usual weapons, its bays can hold a great number of Gun Drones that can be dispersed during flight. This allows the Tau to drop small formations of (relatively expendable) troops in the back of the enemy where they can sow confusion, simulate offensives and generally cause havoc.

But even without its drone cargo, the Tigershark is a solid bomber aircraft that can effectively counter ground formations with its twin-linked ion cannons, burst cannons and missile pods. Sometimes they are the only support for Pathfinders working deep behind enemy lines, increasing their firepower with Seekers missiles that can be carried to a marked target at a moment's notice.

On Taros a new variant of the Tiger Shark was identified, re-armed with heavy railguns and used to engage the Imperium's largest war machines. This new weapon sacrifices its drone transport capability to become a dedicated ground attack aircraft.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
War Engine, Aircraft	Bomber	5+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Ion cannons	45cm	AP3+/AT3+/AA5+	Fixed forward arc
Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+/AA5+	-
Missile pods	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	

Damage Capacity 2. Critical Hit Effect: The Tiger Shark is badly damaged. The pilot loses control and it crashes to the ground. The Tiger Shark and all models on board are destroyed.

Notes: Transport (may carry up to three units of Gun Drones); cannot land.

OR

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
War Engine, Aircraft	Bomber	5+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Railguns	90cm	MW3+	Titan-Killer (D3) Fixed forward arc
Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+/AA5+	-
Missile pods	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	

Damage Capacity 2. Critical Hit Effect: The Tiger Shark is badly damaged. The pilot loses control and it crashes to the ground. The Tiger Shark and all models on board are destroyed.

Notes: Cannot land.

TAU ORCA DROPSHIP

The Orca is a dropship, normally used to carry Tau troops from orbiting spacecraft to the planet's surface. On Taros, Tau planetary landings took the form of a massive concerted drop of multiple Hunter Cadres well before the Imperium's forces arrived. Orcas were used for the insertion of small, infiltrating teams into enemy-held territory. To fulfil its shuttle role, the Orca has a large troop carrying capacity. However, it is only lightly armed and armoured and is not a combat vehicle. In battle it runs risk of being shot down. On Taros, the Orca did most of its work in the unoccupied deserts, inserting cargos of Pathfinders and Stealthsuits in relative safety.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
War Engine, Aircraft	Bomber	5+	6+	6+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+	-
Missile pod	45cm	AP5+/AT5+	-
Seeker missiles	75cm	AT5+	guided missiles

Damage Capacity 2. Critical Hit Effect: The Orca is badly damaged. The pilot loses control and it crashes to the ground. The Orca and all models on board are destroyed.

Notes: Planetfall, Transport (may carry eight of the following units: Fire Warriors, Pathfinders, Stealth suits, Gun drones, Heavy Gun Drones*, Crisis battlesuits*, Broadside battlesuits*; * these count as two units for transport capacity purposes).

TAU MANTA

The Tau make use of small spacecraft as heavy support units to their battle lines. Fighting so close to the surface, the greatest part of their energy must be expended to keep them airborne, so they are not capable of fast manoeuvres once they are committed to ground combat. The ubiquitous Manta is the most commonly used of these, and can be employed as transport craft to land troops as well as dedicated support craft. Its firepower is withering and easily a match for the largest Imperial war machines on Taros. As main armament it mounts a pair of heavy railguns, as well as heavy Ion cannon batteries, scores of Seeker missiles and drone-controlled close defence burst cannons.

In addition to its impressive armament, one or two Mantas can transport a full fighting Cadre, with supporting vehicles and battlesuits, into battle and deploy them under heavy covering fire. As a space faring vessel, the Manta is heavily constructed, with reinforced armour and deflector shields (akin to those installed on the major Tau spacecraft) to absorb incoming fire.

Type	Speed	Armour	Close Combat	Firefight
War Engine, Aircraft	Bomber	4+	5+	3+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
Railguns	90cm	MW3+	Titan-Killer (D3) Fixed forward arc
2x Ion cannons	60cm	AP3+/AT3+/AA6+	Fixed forward arc
8x Burst cannons	15cm	AP4+/AA5+	-
Missile pods	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	
Seeker Missiles	75cm	AT5+	guided missiles

Damage Capacity 9. Tau deflector shields. Critical Hit Effect: The Manta's fire control systems are damaged. No weapons maybe fired to a range greater than 45cm. Further critical hits will cause an additional point of damage.

Notes: Support Craft, Planetfall, Reinforced Armour, Fearless, Transport (may carry up to 14 units of the following units: Fire Warriors, Pathfinders, Stealthsuits, Gun Drones, Crisis battlesuits*, Broadside battlesuits*). Additionally, up to four of the following vehicles may be carrier as well: Devilfish (may also carry troops), Hammerhead, Sky Ray.

DESIGN NOTES

Tau Drones: The effect of drones is built into the shooting values and armour values of Tau units, rather than being listed separately. For example, the effect of Gun Drones is built into the firepower for the pulse weapons used by Tau infantry, and the presence of Shield Drones accounts for the higher than average armour values of Tau infantry and Tau battlesuits.

Basing Tau Units: Crisis and Broadside battlesuits, Heavy Drones and Krootox should be mounted 2-4 to a base (in terms of unit characteristics I've assumed that Crisis and Broadsides are mounted two to a base, while Stealth have four to a base). Feel free to add a drone to infantry and battlesuit stands if you wish (and even to vehicle 'stands' if you mount your vehicles on a base).

TAU TAROS ARMY LIST

Tau armies have a strategy rating of 3. All Tau formations have an initiative rating of 2+.

TAU CADRES

Any amount of points may be spent on Tau Cadres. These are independent formations.

Formation Type	Units	Cost
Fire Warrior Cadre	6 Tau Fire Warrior teams. May additionally have either 3 Devilfish troop carriers or 1 Orca dropship for +75 pts	150 pts
Battlesuit Cadre	4 XV8 Tau Crisis battlesuits. May additionally have 1 Orca dropship for +75 pts	250 pts

TAU AIR CASTE

These are independent formations.

Formation	Units	Cost
Barracuda	2 Barracudas	125 pts
Tiger Shark	2 Tiger Sharks	300 pts
Manta	1 Manta	850 pts

TAU CADRE UPGRADES

Up to three upgrades can be taken per Tau Cadre. Upgrades are not separate formations but are added to the original Cadre and are counted as part of it in all respects. Each upgrade can only be taken once per Cadre.

Upgrade Type	Units	Cost
Commander	Each Tau Cadre may have one of the following Commanders: Upgrade 0-1 Fire Warrior team to an Ethereal Upgrade 0-1 Crisis battlesuit to Shas'o Commander Upgrade one Crisis battlesuit to a Shas'el Commander	 +75 pts +100 pts +50 pts
Fire Warriors	+4 Tau Fire Warrior teams. May have two Devilfish Transports for +50 pts	100 pts
Gun Drones	+4 Tau Gun Drone squadrons	75 pts
Broadside battlesuits	+2 Tau XV88 Broadside battlesuit teams	150 pts
Crisis battlesuits	+2 Tau XV8 Crisis battlesuits teams	125 pts
Stealthsuits	+3 Tau XV15 Stealthsuit teams	125 pts
Hammerheads	+3 Tau Hammerhead gunships	200 pts
Piranha	+3 Tau Piranhas	75 pts
Sky Ray	+1 Tau Skyray missle defence gunship	75 pts
Orca	+1 Orca dropship	75 pts

TAU CONTINGENTS

Up to 2 Contingents may be taken for each Cadre included in the army. These are independent formations.

Formation Type	Units	Cost
Pathfinder Contingent	6 Tau Pathfinder teams. May additionally have either 3 Devilfish troop carriers or 1 Orca dropship for free and/or 4 Gun Drone squadrons for +75 pts	250 pts
Stealthsuit Contingent	4 Tau XV15 Stealthsuit teams. May additionally have 1 Orca dropship for +75 pts	175 pts
Broadside Battlesuit Contingent	2 Tau XV88 Broadside battlesuit teams. May additionally have 4 Gun Drone squadrons for +75 pts	150 pts
Hammerhead Contingent	3 Tau Hammerhead gunships. May additionally have 2 further Hammerheads for +125 pts. May additionally have one Sky Ray for +75 pts	200 pts
Gun Drone Contigent	4 Tau Gun Drone squadrons. May additionally have 4 further Gun Drone squadrons for +75 pts. Any pair of Gun Drone squadrons may be upgraded to a pair of Heavy Gun Drone squadrons for +25 pts for the pair	75 pts
Drone Sentry Turrets Contingent	3 Drone sentry turrets. May additionally have 3 further Drone sentry turrets for + 75 pts	75 pts
Tetra Contingent	4 Tetra Scout speeders. May additionally have 2 further Tetra Scout speeders for + 50 pts	100 pts
Remote Sensor Tower Contigent	2 Remote sensor towers	50 pts

ALIEN AUXILIARY FORMATIONS

Up to 1 Alien Auxiliary Formation may be taken for each Cadre included in the army. These are independent formations.

Formation Type	Units	Cost
Kroot Kindred	1 Kroot Master Shaper and 9 Kroot Carnivore squads. May additionally have up to one of each of the following: 4 Kroot Carnivore squads for +75 pts 4 Kroot Hound packs for +75 pts 4 Krootox herds for +100 pts 3 Great Knarlocs for +75 pts 4 Knarloc Rider squads for +100 pts	200 pts
Gue'vesa Auxiliary Company	1 Gue'vesa'ui Human Auxiliary Commander and 12 Gue'vesa Human Auxiliary teams. May have a further 6 Gue'vesa teams for + 75 pts	175 pts

SCENARIOS

Piranha light skimmer armed with a fusion gun and camouflaged for operations in darkness. This vehicle was encountered by the Avenging Sons during the defence of the Governor's Palace. It was confirmed destroyed during the fighting.

PLAYING THESE HISTORICAL RE-FIGHTS

The following scenarios are historical re-fights of battles from the Taros campaign. By no means are these the only battles fought on Taros, and there are many other scenarios that we just did not have space for.

Once you have the forces and terrain you can replay this scenarios, perhaps swapping sides or you can use the scenario as the basis of another game. Many of the scenarios can be used as examples of typical battles from the deserts of Taros, Tau counter-attacks, Imperial Guard attempts to advance through the Phyyra Heights, or Elysian Drop Trooper attacking objectives at Hydro-plant 23-30. Tinker with the forces, move the terrain around, and re-use the scenario.

These scenarios can also be used as a good the basis for collecting an army. Start by getting the forces together to play one game, and then build on that. By the time you have collected the forces to play all the scenarios you'll have a full Tau, Space Marine or Imperial Guard force.

The Battle: Briefly describes the historical background to the battle and the actual outcome.

The Wargame: Covers the details needed for replaying the battle as a game including useful information about recommended table size, turn length and the terrain you'll need.

Special Rules: Any non-standard rules which apply, or special situations which apply only to this game. Special rules should not transfer between scenarios.

Objectives: What to consider when deciding who won. Sometimes there is a set victory condition, so the winner will be obvious. Players should decide between them who had the best of the battle.

Sketch Map: Shows the basic terrain set up. Players should feel free to use their own terrain collections to create a table that best approximates that shown.

Notes: A few thoughts on expanding or replaying the scenario.

Force Lists: Each scenario includes a force list detailing the troops involved in the battle. Whilst these are very specific, right down to wargear and vehicle upgrades, we realise that most players will not be able to complete the forces exactly. This is fine, as other similar models can be used instead. Players should feel free to alter the list to fit their collections, but should only exchange like for like. Do not replace a Fire Warrior squad with a Hammerhead, but if you change the weapon fits on a battlesuits, or use a Fire Warrior squad that has pulse rifles instead of pulse carbines, or a Hammerhead has an ion cannon instead of a railgun this doesn't matter. As long as the only motivation for changing the forces is so you can play the game being WYSIWYG with the miniatures you have available, and changes are made in consultation with your opponent, then it is fine.

Being historical forces they do not conform to the Codex requirements (HQ, Elites, Troops, Heavy Support etc), as these exist in Codex to create balanced forces for points-based games. None of these scenarios are even points-based games. Sometimes one force is heavily out numbered, but a commander must try to do the best he can with the resources available to him – wars are rarely a fair fight! Some scenarios have been design with an untair fight specifically in mind. When faced with overwhelming odds your job is to try and match the historical outcome. Victory does not always go to the side that inflicts the most damage.

In a perfect world, players would already have (or be collecting) the exact forces, and paint them up in the correct colour schemes. It is an imperfect world, and players should feel free to use different Space Marine Chapters to stand in for the Avenging Son and Raptors. If the Ultramarines or Dark Angels are called upon to replace the historical Chapters, then so be it! The same goes for the Imperial Guard. Tallarn and Elysian regiments that bear the brunt of the fighting, but those with Cadians, Catachans or Mordians forces should feel that it is fine for their armies to 'stand-in' for the historical ones. The exception to this is the Tau and Kroot. You really need Tau and Kroot forces to play these games.

Reinforcements: These are following forces which automatically arrive on the turn stated. So reinforcements on turn 3, would mean forces which arrive on turn 3 regardless of the table top situation. They usually move on from their table edge, although scenario will note where reinforcements arrive from.

Reserves: Arrive on a random turn, using the Reserves mission special rule. A unit in reserve must move on in the turn it passes its Reserve roll. They usually move on from their own table edge, although scenario will note where reserves arrive from.

SCENARIO 1

THE DENAB INCIDENT

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Battle Fleet Gothic

The Battle

The skirmish in the Denab system sparked the Taros War. At the time, the attacking Patrol Group *Ravanor* did not have any idea what the discovery of a rogue transport squadron docked at a Tau waystation would eventually lead to. The surprise attack, led by Captain Darillian onboard the Dauntless light cruiser *Lord Ravanor*, was a complete success. His attack destroyed the waystation and an unwitting Tau supply convoy in the process.

The Wargame

This Battlefleet Gothic game should be played on a 6' x 4' table. Set up the board as shown on the map. The waystation is placed in the center of the table, with the three rogue transports docked with it. The only other celestial phenomena is the asteroid field, which occupies most of the Imperial table edge.

Patrol Group *Ravanor* should be set up within 12" of their table edge, ready to begin their attack. The Imperial player takes first turn.

The Tau reinforcements enter from the opposite table edge on turn 2. The game lasts until either side has no forces left, due to damage or disengagement.

Objectives

The Imperial player must destroy the Tau waystation and rogue transports. He should also attempt to board at least one transport. The Tau player must escape with as many rogue transports as he can from any table edge.

IMPERIAL FLEET

Patrol Group Ravanor

Lord Ravanor – Dauntless class light cruiser

(Captain Darillian – 1 re-roll)

Scadryn Squadron

VCS-6 – Sword class frigate. VCS-6 is a converted scout vessel. She is equipped with extra sensors and probes in the prow for long-range detection, giving her +1 Leadership. Her weapons battery is reduced to firepower 3.

VCS-7 – Sword class frigate

VCS-8 – Firestorm class frigate

VCS-9 – Firestorm class frigate

TAU FLEET

1 x Tau Waystation

Type/Hits	Speed	Turns	Shields	Armour	Turrets
Defence/5	0cm	0	1	5+	2
Armament		**Range**	**Firepower**		**Fire Arc**
Railgun battery		45	4		All round

Has tracking systems

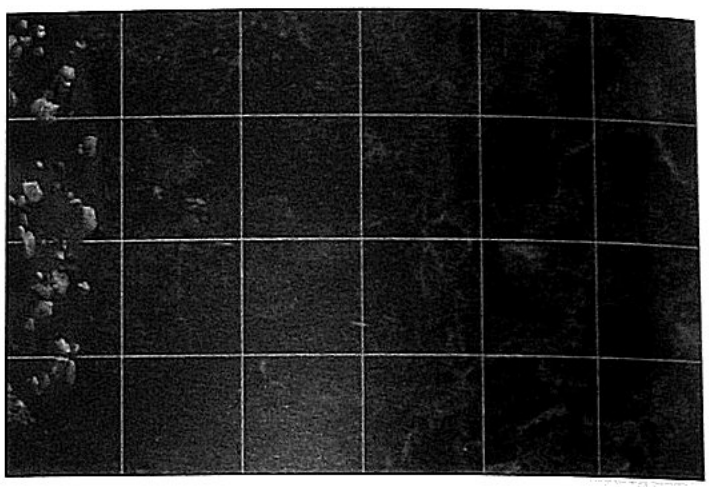
Rogue Transport Squadron 3 x Transports

Type/Hits	Speed	Turns	Shields	Armour	Turrets
Escort/1	15cm	45	1	5+	1
Armament		**Range**	**Firepower**		**Fire Arc**
Weapon battery		15	2		front/left/right

TAU REINFORCEMENTS

2 x Castellan class Heavy Escorts

4 x Tau Transports



SCENARIO 2
Warhammer 40,000

THE FIRST TAROS INTERVENTION
ATTACK ON THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE

The Battle

The Avenging Sons' attempt to kill the Planetary Governor resulted in a two-day battle for the Governor's Palace. After their initial drop pod assault the Space Marine strike force found Planetary Governor Aulis was not present, and came under sustained attack from strong Tau forces, which they had not expected to encounter on Taros. Outnumbered and forced onto the defensive the Space Marines never found their target and where eventually forced to evacuate after heavy fighting and casualties.

The defeat of the Avenging Sons escalated the crisis on Taros, resulting in the Imperium's invasion.

The Wargame

This game should be played on a large (6' x 6' or 6' x 8'), table. The terrain represents the Planetary Governor's Palace. In the centre of the table is a large courtyard, surrounded by various buildings, towers and a few statues.

The defender deploys first, placing his Planetary Defence Forces and Administrators. The Space Marine player takes the first turn using only his Deathwind drop pod. The rest of the Space Marine forces arrive using the normal Reserves rules.

The Tau forces arrive using the normal Reserves rules and move on from a random point. Enterance points are numbered 1-4. Roll a dice to see which points each Tau unit moves on from.

The game lasts 8 turns or until all the Administrators are dead.

Special Rules

The Planetary Governor is the target of this raid. He is represented by 5 single miniatures placed anywhere on the table. These are actually various administrators caught up the battle, none are actually the Governor himself. They are independant characters with the following stat line.

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Administrator	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	8	5+

Equipment: Laspistol, bionics

Objectives

The Space Marines must find and kill the Planetary Governor, to be sure they must kill all the Administrator miniatures (none of which are actually Governor Aulis, but they don't know this). They must also inflict as much damage as possible on the Tau forces. The Tau should attempt to wipe-out the Space Marines.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM
Avenging Sons 'Taros Intervention Force'

Arriving on Turn 1.
Deathwind drop pod armed with missile launchers

Reserves

Command Squad
Captain Armaros with artificer armour, bolt pistol, powerfist, Terminator honours, teleport homer.
Apothecary Actium with bolt pistol, narthecium, reductor, auspex.
Sergeant with bolt pistol and close combat weapon
1 Space Marine with plasma gun
1 Space Marine with melta gun
In a drop pod

Assault Demi-Squad
Sergeant with bolt pistol and close combat weapon
4 Space Marines with bolt pistols and close combat weapons
All have frag and krak grenades and melta bombs. Note: they do not have jump packs. *In a drop pod.*

Assault Demi-Squad
5 Space Marines with bolt pistols and close combat weapons
All have frag and krak grenades and melta bombs. Note: they do not have jump packs. *In a drop pod.*

Tactical Demi-Squad
Sergeant with boltgun
1 Space Marine with missile launcher
3 Space Marines with boltguns
All have frag and krak grenades. *In a drop pod.*

Tactical Demi-Squad
1 Space Marine with melta gun
4 Space Marines with boltguns
All have frag and krak grenades. *In a drop pod.*

Tactical Demi-Squad
Sergeant with boltgun
1 Space Marine with heavy bolter
3 Space Marines with boltguns
All have frag and krak grenades. *In a drop pod.*

Tactical Demi-Squad
1 Space Marine with flamer
4 Space Marines with boltguns
All have frag and krak grenades. *In a drop pod.*

Terminator Squad
Terminator Sergeant with storm bolter, chainfist and purity seals
1 Terminator with assault cannon
3 Terminators with storm bolters and powerfists
The squad teleports onto the battlefield.

Mk IV Dreadnought – Brother Hakael
with powerfist, storm bolter and twin-linked heavy bolters. Smoke launcher. *In a drop pod.*

PLANETARY DEFENCE FORCES

The Palace security platoon deployed anywhere on the table. They are Imperial Guardsmen.

Command Squad	Lt+4 men	Heavy Bolter
Squad	10 men	Melta gun
Squad	10 men	Flamer
Squad	10 men	Grenade launcher
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun

All squads have frag grenades.

5 Administrators (see special rules).

TAU FORCES

All Tau forces are reserves, moving on from a random entry point.

Fire Warrior Teams

Team	12 Fire Warriors	pulse rifles
Team	12 Fire Warriors	pulse rifles
Team	12 Fire Warriors	pulse rifles

Each team is led by a Shas'ui with a Markerlight.
All teams have photon and EMP grenades

Gun Drones
8 Gun Drones twin-linked pulse carbines

Gun Drones
8 Gun Drones twin-linked pulse carbines

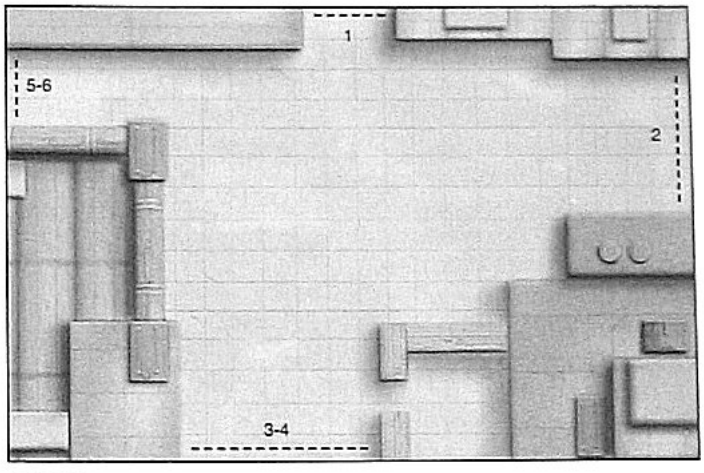
Hammerhead Gunship
with missile pods, two burst cannons, flechette discharger, 4 Seeker missiles

Hammerhead Gunship
with railgun, smart missile system, decoy launchers, target lock, 4 Seeker missiles

Broadside Battlesuit Team
Broadside with twin-linked railguns, smart missile system, multi-tracker

Broadside with twin-linked railguns, twin-linked plasma rifles, shield generator

Barracuda with 4 Seeker missiles.



NOTES

This scenario is an amalgamation of events surrounding the First Taros Intervention. This is a single scenario in which those two days are rolled into one battle. As a battle in an urban location we recommend that you use the Cityfight rules for this scenario.

SCENARIO 3

ASSAULT ON MISSILE SILO 'DECIMA'

470998.M41

Warhammer 40,000

The Battle

Missile silo Decima was the single greatest threat to the invasion fleet, and it fell to the Raptors Chapter to destroy the silos before the main invasion could begin. The attack involved the whole of third company deploying from Thunderhawk gunships and targeting the two silos with demolition charges. For the assault, the company was organised into four strike forces – codenamed A, B, C and D each with their own objectives for the attack. The first to landed was Strike Force A, an Assault squad who would attack the anti-aircraft defences to clear the way for the following Thunderhawk gunships.

The following strike forces would attack the ground defences and the silos themselves. Meanwhile, in the underground command centre, the missiles were being readied to fire at the orbiting battle barge. It was vital that this was not allowed to occur, so the Raptors had to move swiftly.

The Wargame

This game should be played on a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is basically open desert, with a few rocky outcrops for cover. In the centre of one long table edge place the missile silo. The rest of the terrain should be deployed as shown on the map, with the perimeter fence, razor wire, Hydra and gun emplacements and two underground bunker entrances. The entire area has already been shelled, so scatter 4 or 5 large craters about.

The Space Marine player takes the first turn, deploying Strike Force A via deep strike. The defender's security platoon enter the board on turn one using both of the bunker entrances. Roll for the arrival of the Space Marine Thunderhawk gunship and its passengers on the normal Reserves table.

The game ends when either the silo is destroyed or the missile launched.

Special Rules

Demolition Charges

The Space Marines can only destroy the silos by using the demolition charges issued to the Tactical squads. The silo can be assaulted like a stationary vehicle and has an Armour Value 14 all round.

	Range	Str	AP	Notes
Demolition Charge	0"	9	2	Can only be used against silos

Objectives

The Space Marines must destroy the missile silo before the missile launches. From the end of the defender's turn 4 onwards roll to see if the missile is prepped and ready to launched. On a 6, the missile is launched and the game ends.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Raptors Strike Force A

Assault Squad

Veteran Sergeant Igis with purity seals

9 Space Marines with bolt pistols, close combat weapons, frag grenades, melta bombs and jump packs

They deploy onto the table using the Deep Strike special rules.

Reserves – Raptors Strike Force C

Thunderhawk Gunship

with turbo-laser and carrying the following squads. Once the Thunderhawk has deployed the infantry it has orders are to return to orbit. It cannot return to the table for subsequent attack runs.

Tactical Squad

Sergeant with boltgun

1 Space Marine with missile launcher

1 Space Marine with plasma gun

2 Space Marines with boltguns, demolition charges

5 Space Marines with boltguns

All have frag and krak grenades

Tactical Squad

Sergeant with boltgun

1 Space Marine with missile launcher

1 Space Marine with melta gun

2 Space Marines with boltguns, demolition charges

5 Space Marines with boltguns

All have frag and krak grenades

Devastator Demi-Squad

Sergeant with boltgun

1 Space Marine with heavy bolter

1 Space Marine with multi-melta

2 Space Marines with boltguns

All have frag grenades

Devastator Demi-Squad

1 Space Marine with heavy bolter

1 Space Marine with lascannon

3 Space Marines with boltguns

All have frag grenades

PLANETARY DEFENCE FORCES

The silo security platoon deployed anywhere on the table. They are Imperial Guardsmen.

Security Platoon

Command Section	Lt+4 men	Missile launcher, medi-pack
Squad	10 men	Melta gun
Squad	10 men	Grenade launcher
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun
Squad	10 men	Flamer

All have frag grenades

Gun Emplacement with battle cannon

Gun Emplacement with twin-linked heavy bolters

Hydra Flak Emplacement

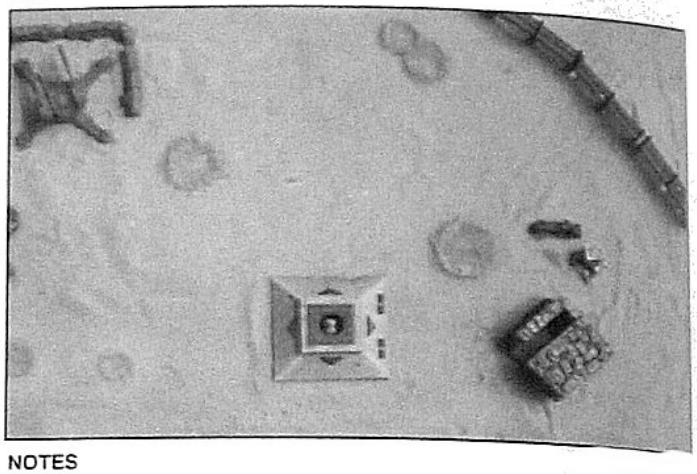
	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Front	BS
Flak emplacement	11	11	11	3

Type: Immobile

Crew: (3) Imperial Guard

Weapons: 2 x twin-linked, long-barrelled autocannons on an AA mount.

Options: None



NOTES

This scenario covers the major part of the mission, but could be expanded to included a second table with the second silo and a second Thunderhawk carrying 2 more Tactical squads and Captain Orelius and his Command squad. In this case increase the size of the defending force with more gun emplacements, a second security platoon and minefields. In the expanded game, the Space Marines must destroy both silos to win.

SCENARIO 4
Warhammer 40,000

ENCOUNTER AT TUNGUSTA STATION

518998.M41

The Battle

At first light, the Tallarn 17th Regiment began a general advance across its entire front. At the command of their officers the men rose from their quickly dug foxholes and trenches, whilst tanks reversed from their scrape holes, gunned their engines and began to grind slowly forwards. Behind them the artillery opened fire, hitting pre-selected targets all along the front. The regiments three armoured companies formed the cutting edge of the advance, with squadrons of Leman Russes and Vanquishers rumbling across the desert sands. Lacking Chimeras the advance would be at walking pace.

At midday, as the combined force of 1st Armoured company tank's and Tallarn Infantry moved along across the open desert they encounter elements of Hunter Cadre Shi'Eldi. These were the rapid response forces, which had sped to intercept the tank. A force of Hammerheads and Fire Warriors were tracking the Imperial forces movement through Pathfinder observer teams, and had arrived in the vicinity of Tungusta Station only minutes before.

This battle became typical of Tau actions all along the Imperium's front during their offensive towards Tarokeen. Rapid, hard-hitting counter-attacks stalling the advance and draining the Imperial Guard of men and fighting machines before using their mobility to withdraw into the desert and disperse, making it difficult for Imperial artillery to react in time or find concentrated targets. The Imperium's slow advance along a wide front would continue, but the Tau never stand and hold the ground. Tungusta Station is not the only Tau counter-attack in the first days of the advance, but it was the hardest fought.

The Wargame

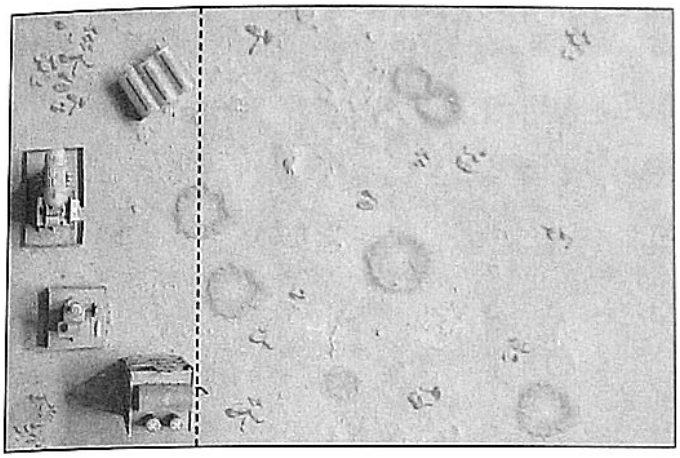
This game should be played along the length of a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is basically open desert, with a few rocky outcrops for cover. In the centre of the table, 2' from the northern table edge is Tungusta Station, a collection of buildings, mining equipment and debris occupying approximately an 18" square area. There should be shell craters scattered about the table.

Tau forces can deploy up to 24" from their table edge, except for the Pathfinder team which can deploy in cover anywhere on the table. The Imperial forces move onto the table on turn 1, measuring from the southern table edge.

All Tau and Imperial reinforcements enter from their table edge on the turn stated, including aircraft. The Imperial Guard player takes the first turn. The game lasts 8 turns.

Objectives

The side in possession of Tungusta Station at the end of the game is the winner.



Notes

You can use this scenario as the basis of other Tau counter-attacks, by modifying the terrain slightly (remembering it is always open desert though), and making slight changes to the force lists. You could even replay it allowing players to pick their armies from the Codex army lists!

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

A Squadron, 1st Armoured Company, 17th Tallarn Regiment

Squadron HQ Leman Russ with hull-mounted heavy bolter, smoke launchers, track guards, searchlight, pintle heavy stubber.

Leman Russ with hull-mounted heavy bolter, smoke launchers, track guards, hunter-killer missile.

Leman Russ with hull-mounted lascannon, smoke launchers, dozerblade.

1st Platoon, 2nd Infantry Company , 17th Tallarn Regiment

Command Section	Lt*+4 men	Missile launcher, medi-pack
Squad**	10 men	Melta gun, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Grenade lncher, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Grenade lncher, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Melta gun, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, sniper rifle

All squads carry frag grenades and krak grenades. Each squad has 1 Guardsman equipped with a vox-caster.

*Lieutenant Kavir is armed with a laspistol and power sword.

**Led by Veteran Sergeant with lasgun and melta bombs.

Reinforcements – arriving on Turn 3

Elements of B Squadron, 1st Armoured Company

Leman Russ with hull-mounted heavy bolter, smoke launchers, track guards, hunter-killer missile.

Reinforcements – arriving on Turn 4

3rd Storm Trooper Squad, 2356th Company

Squad	10 men	Melta gun, grenade launcher

in a Chimera with multi-laser, searchlight, smoke launcher, pintle-mounted heavy stubber.

Reinforcements – arriving Turn 7

Thunderbolt fighter with 4 bombs, ejector seat, armoured cockpit.

TAU FORCES

Hunter Cadre El'Shi'Eldi

Hammerhead Gunship with railgun, smart missiles system, multi-tracker, blacksun filter, fletchette discharger.

Sky Ray with disruption pod, decoy launchers.

Pathfinder Team

Team	4 Shas'la	pulse carbines, Markerlights.

Reinforcements – arriving on Turn 2

Commander Shas'el Shi'Eldi in XV84 Crisis battlesuit, fusion blaster, missile pod, multi-tracker, target lock, Markerlight.

Bodyguard

Shas'vre Crisis battlesuit, twin-linked missile pods, shield generator, hard-wired target lock.

Shas'vre Crisis battlesuit, twin-linked burst cannons, target lock, hard-wired multi-tracker.

Team is bonded.

Fire Warriors

Team	12 Shas'la	pulse rifles

in a Devilfish with flechette discharger, 2 seeker missiles.

Team	12 Shas'la	pulse rifles

in a Devilfish with decoy launchers, 2 seeker missiles.

All have photon and EMP grenades. Each team is led by a Shas'ui with a Markerlight.

Reinforcments – arriving on Turn 6

Hammerhead Gunship with twin-linked plasma cannons, a smart missile system, multi-tracker, blacksun filter, target lock.

Barracuda with decoy launchers.

THE BATTLE OF GIADAMAK

SCENARIO 5

Epic

The Battle

The 3rd Tallarn Armoured regiment launched its attack to overrun the Tau defenders of Giadamak mine. First by encircling the mine with the tank companies, then by assaulting the complex with armoured infantry formations, attacking behind a rolling barrage of artillery fire.

The first company into the attack was repulsed with heavy losses, caught in the Tau's killing zone. After an artillery bombardment the regiment launched a second assault, with 3rd company taking the lead. After intense fighting this succeeded in getting a foothold inside the mine. Surrounded and in danger of being overrun the Tau evacuated their survivors via Orca dropship. After a hard day of fighting the Tau had inflicted heavy losses on the Tallarn infantry, but left many of their own dead behind.

The Wargame

This game should be played across a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is open desert, with a few scattered rocky outcrops for cover. In the centre of the Tau table edge there is a large mining complex, complete with buildings, equipment, quarry cliffs, rocks, spoil heaps etc. This counts as an area of ruin/rubble.

Tau forces may be placed anywhere in their half of the table, including in the mine. Tau forces deploy first.

Imperial forces enter from their table edge when they have the initiative.

The game lasts 8 turns.

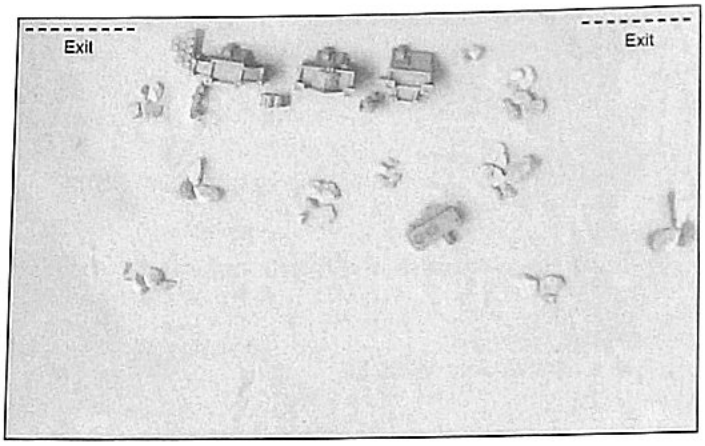
Objectives

The Imperial forces must capture the mining complex by clearing it of Tau forces. The Tau must inflict as much damage as they can, then escape off the board. If both tank companies have moved off the table edge then this must be via Orca dropship (there is no other escape). If the tanks have not completed the encirclement then it can also be on the ground, by moving off their table edge. The victor should be judged by comparing how many Tau escaped verses how many Imperial forces were lost.

Special Rules

Encircling Attack

Both the Tallarn tank companies have orders to encircle the mining complex, to cut it off from reinforcements. Their orders are not to become involved in the fight to clear the mine. To represent this, the Tank companies must exit the Tau table edge at the exit points marked on the map. If they fail to do this by the end of turn 4, then the Tau automatically win the game, because they can easily escape to fight another day.



FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

2nd Armoured Company, 3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment

CHQ	1 Vanquisher
1st Squadron	3 Leman Russes
2nd Squadron	3 Leman Russes
3rd Squadron	3 Leman Russes

4th Armoured Company, 3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment

CHQ	1 Leman Russ
1st Squadron	3 Leman Russes
2nd Squadron	3 Leman Russes
3rd Squadron	3 Leman Russ Conquerors

2nd Infantry Company, 3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment

CHQ	Command Unit	1 Chimera
1st Platoon	8 Infantry units	4 Chimeras
2nd Platoon	8 Infantry units	4 Chimeras
3rd Platoon	8 Infantry units	on foot
4th Platoon	8 Infantry units	on foot
5th Platoon	4 Fire Support units	2 Chimeras

Artillery Battery

3 Basilisks

Reinforcements – arriving on turn 5

3rd Infantry Company, 3rd Tallarn Armoured Regiment

CHQ	Command Unit	Salamander
1st Platoon	8 Infantry units	4 Chimeras
2nd Platoon	8 Infantry units	4 Chimeras
3rd Platoon	8 Infantry units	on foot
4th Platoon	8 Infantry units	on foot
5th Platoon	4 Fire Support units	2 Chimeras
Flak	1 Hydra	

TAU FORCES

Hunter Cadre

Crisis Battlesuit	1 Commander, 3 Battlesuit units
Pathfinders	6 Pathfinders units, 3 Devilfish
Fire Warriors Cadre	6 Fire Warrior units 2 Gun Drone units
Fire Warriors Cadre	6 Fire Warrior units 2 Gun Drone units
Fire Warriors Cadre	6 Fire Warrior units 2 Gun Drone units
Fire Warriors Cadre	6 Fire Warrior units 2 Gun Drone units
Gun Drone Contingent	2 Gun Drone units, 2 Heavy gun drone unit
Broadside Contingent	2 Broadside Battlesuit units
Human Auxiliary Contingent	1 Commander 12 Human auxiliary units

Reinforcements

Air Caste Formations – arriving on turn 4

2 Barracudas

2 Barracudas

4 Orca Dropships

SCENARIO 6

Warhammer 40,000

NIGHT RAIDERS

563998.M41

The Battle

In attempted to swing the air war in their favour the Tau launched a daring raid to destroy Imperial Navy aircraft whilst still on the ground. Small Stealth teams had already infiltrated the Imperial Guard rear areas. Operating only at night, their mission was to find and report the location of Imperial supply routes and facilities. They were under strict orders not to engage the enemy, just to locate potential targets for other strike forces.

When a patrolling Stealth team reported the location of a forward airbase, Shas'el K'irri responded quickly. A forward airbase was a high-priority target. He gathered an elite strike force. His plan was simple and very dangerous. In a daring night-time raid a single Orca loaded with troops would fly low over the desert and pass directly over the air strip. The Fire Warrior teams and their support would jump out and, under the covering fire of drones and Crisis battlesuits, attack the aircraft with EMP grenades. The Shas'el would lead the attack. Meanwhile, the Orca would circle round and return to land directly on the airfield. Once the aircraft where destroyed and the Orca was landed, the teams would fall back to the Orca and make a rapid escape, covered by a flight of Barracudas scrambled to intercept any Imperial pursuit. Surprise would be on their side, but once the airbase realised it was under attack they would respond quickly and in force. He warned all his Shas'la that the chances of survival were low. They would be deep in enemy territory and, should anything go wrong, cut-off. He felt the gains would be worth it in the long run. It was a risk worth taking for the Greater Good!

The Wargame

The game should be played on a 6' x 4' table. Position the terrain, including the grounded aircraft, as shown on the map. Deploy the Imperial forces as follows.

The Security Platoon Command section and Sentinel powerlifter starts the game in or next to the command post.

The 1st security squad start the game in the sandbag bunker by the gate along with the turret emplacement.

The Trojan starts the game parked next to the fuel tank.

The Tau player takes the first turn, with the Orca automatically arriving over the table. All Tau forces deploy from the Orca.

Roll for Imperial reserves using the normal Reserves table. Roll an additional D6 to determine which point each squads enter the table, as shown on the map.

There is no turn limit to this scenario. The game last until all the aircraft are destroyed, until the Tau forces have escaped the table in their Orca, or the Tau or Imperial player has no forces left fighting.

It is dark. The Night Fight rules apply throughout this scenario.

Objectives

The Tau forces must destroy all the aircraft and escape in their Orca. The Imperial forces must prevent this.

Notes

Use this scenario as the basis for other Tau surprise raids. The Imperial Guard force should be limited to security forces, and equipment like Trojans, Sentinel powerlifts etc, not their front line equipment like tanks and artillery. The Tau will only use light mobile forces, like Pathfinders and Gun Drones.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Security Platoon

Command Section	Lt*+4 men	Medi-pack
1st Squad	10 men	Grenade launcher, sniper rifle

All squads carry frag grenades. Each squad has 1 Guardsman equipped with a vox-caster. *The Lieutenant is armed with a laspistol and close combat weapon.

Sentinel Powerlifter

Hydra Platform in a sandbagged position.

Turret Emplacement with multi-laser and searchlight.

Trojan with searchlight, rough terrain modification (dozerblade).

2 x Minefields. Positioned outside the perimeter fence.

Reserves

Roll separately for each squad.

Sentinel Squadron

3 Sentinels with multi-laser, searchlight, smoke launchers.
1 has a hunter-killer missile.

2nd Security Squad

Squad	10 men	Melta gun, sniper rifle

3rd Security Squad

Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, sniper rifle

4th Security Squad

Squad	10 men	Flamer, sniper rifle

All squads carry frag grenades. Each squad has 1 Guardsman equipped with a vox-caster.

TAU FORCES

Crisis Battlesuit Team

Commander Shas'el K'irri in XV81 Crisis battlesuit, fusion blaster, flamer, smart missile system, hard-wired target lock and blacksun filter.

Bodyguard

Shas'vre Crisis battlesuit, plasma rifle, missile pod, multi-tracker, Hardwired target lock and blacksun filter.

Shas'vre Crisis battlesuit, plasma rifle, flamer, shield generator, Hardwired target lock and blacksun filter.

The team is bonded.

Fire Warrior Teams

Team	8 Shas'la	half have pulse rifles, half have pulse carbines
Team	8 Shas'la	half have pulse rifles, half have pulse carbines
Team	8 Shas'la	half have pulse rifles, half have pulse carbines

All 3 teams are bonded. Each team is led by a Shas'ui. All have photon and EMP grenades.

Gun Drone Squadron

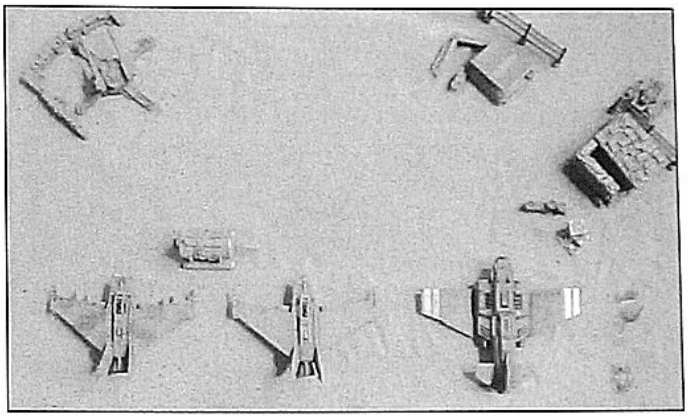
8 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines

Heavy Gun Drone Squadron

3 Heavy Gun Drones with twin-linked burst cannons

Orca Dropship

with blacksun filter, decoy launchers, disruption pod.



SCENARIO 7 AMBUSH OF SUPPLY COLUMN THETA-XJ-59

Warhammer 40,000 **568998.M41**

The Battle

Supply convoy Theta-XJ-59 was small supply column transporting fuel, water and ammunition to the 17th Tallarn Regiment. Stalked by Stealthsuits, it was ambushed as it followed a trail northwards. Despite the Rough Rider squadron protecting it, and the timely arrival of Sentinels to aid the defence, the convoy was overwhelmed and destroyed in detailed. The burnt out hulks of the Trojans and trailers were left as grim way-markers along the supply route for the next column which past this way. Many similar columns suffered the same fate.

This battle is typical of the surprise attacks the infiltrating Tau forces used to cut Imperial supply lines, a mission that the Stealthsuits teams proved highly adept at, especially in night-time raids. For the Tallarn security units it was nearly impossible to locate and target the Stealthsuits before they struck. Small, roving Stealth teams, aided by Pathfinders and drones dropped from Tigersharks, ambushed supply columns time and again, causing heavy loses in war materiels. Security for the supply columns was continually increased, at a cost in frontline troops, but unreliable supply lines and shrinking stockpiles eventually made it impossible for Imperial Guard commanders at the front to plan and execute offensive operations.

The Wargame

The game should be played along the length of a 6' x 4' board. Deploy the Imperial forces first. Position the supply column along the track, not further than half way across the table. The Rough Rider security squads should be placed in the Imperial player's half of the table, but within 12" of a vehicle.

Deploy the Tau forces anywhere on their side of the table, but not within 12" of Imperial forces. The Tau take the first turn.

The game lasts 6 turns.

Objectives

The Tau forces must destroy the Trojans and trailers, the Imperial player must prevent this, by either defeating the Tau ambushers or escaping with the Trojans and trailers off the Tau's board edge.

Special Rules

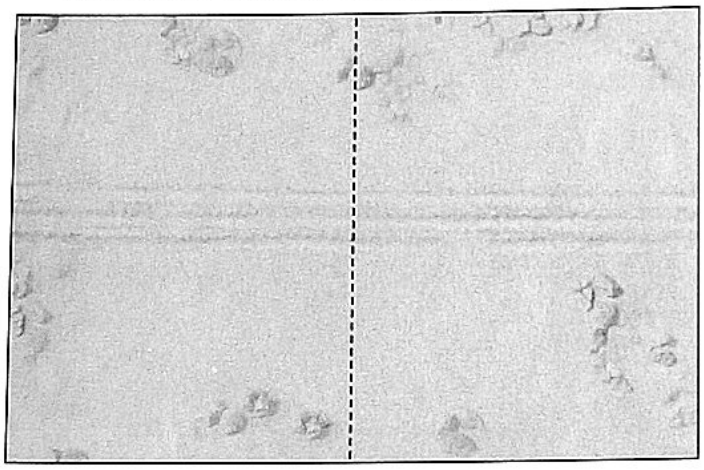
Trailers

Trailers cannot move unless they are being towed by another vehicle. Trailer may be targeted as a separate vehicle. They have an Armour Value of 10 all round. Having no crew, they ignore Crew Shaken and Crew Stunned damage results. An immobilised trailer can no longer move, but its towing vehicle can automatically unhitch and continue to move normally, leaving the trailer to become a piece of cover. An Armament Destroyed damage results also immobilises a trailer.

The first time a fuel tanker comes under fire roll to see what it contains.

1-3 Water. A 'Vehicle Explodes' or 'Vehicle Annihilated' result counts as a 'Vehicle Destroyed' result.

4-6 Fuel. Due to its flammable contents, a tanker containing fuel treats all 'Vehicle Destroyed' results and as a 'Vehicle Explodes' result. It treats a 'Vehicle Explodes' results as a 'Vehicle Annihilated' result.



FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Supply Column Theta-XJ-59

1 Trojan towing a flat-bed trailer with rough terrain modification (dozer blade)

2 Trojans towing fuel tankers

Rough Rider Squad 1

Squad	5 Rough Riders on horses	laspistol, hunting lance

One Rough Rider carries a grenade launcher.

Rough Rider Squad 2

Squad	5 Rough Riders on Mukaali	laspistol, hunting lance

The squad includes a Sergeant with close combat weapon and laspistol.

Reinforcements – Arrive on Turn 3. Entering from the Imperial player's table edge.

Sentinel Patrol

Sentinel with multi-laser, smoke launcher, searchlight.

Sentinel with multi-laser, hunter-killer missile.

TAU FORCES

Pathfinder Team

Team	4 Shas'la	Pulse carbines, markerlights

The team includes a Shas'ui. All carry photon and EMP grenades. The team is bonded

Stealthsuit Teams

Team	3 Shas'ui	Burst cannon

The team is bonded

Reinforcements – Arrive on Turn 3. Entering from the Tau player's table edge

Pathfinder Tetra Squadron

2 x Tetra speeders.

Gun Drone team

Team	6 Drones	twin-linked pulse carbines

Notes

You can re-fight this battle increasing the size of the game by using a larger board and more Trojans, trailers and more security forces, such as Armoured Fist squads or right up to a Leman Russ leading the column. Tau forces should also increase, but be restricted to Pathfinders, Stealth teams, Gun Drones, Heavy Gun Drones or strafing aircraft. If the table is longer the game should also be longer, as the extra time will be needed to travel the extra distance. As an ambush, the Tau should always get to set up second and take the first turn – good luck!

SCENARIO 8
Battle Fleet Gothic

DESTRUCTION OF TROOP CONVOY ALPHA-FOUR

541998.M41

The Battle

The Tau fleet announced their presence in the Taros system when they attacked and destroyed troop convoy Alpha-four. It was a sudden and viscous attack that caught the convoy with little protection, and annihilated the 8th Brimlock Dragoons, who were trapped in the holds of the transport vessels. The attack presaged a series of convoy raids in an attempted to cut the Imperial force's lines of supply.

During the action the Tau fleet destroyed all the Imperial ships in a devastating attack. The Dictator class cruiser *Black Duke* tried to reach the embattled convoy, but only arrived in time to pick up survivors.

The Wargame

This game of Battlefleet Gothic should be played on a 6 x 4 table. Set up the board as shown on the map. The battle takes place in the outer reaches. A single gas/dust cloud is the only celestial phenomena.

Convoy Alpha-four and its escort should be set up with 6" of one short table edge. The opposite edge is the 'Imperial table edge', from which they must escape.

The entire Tau fleet enter from either of the long board edges. The Tau have surprise and therefore get the first turn.

Special Rules

The *Black Duke* is racing to aid the convoy. From turn 2 onwards, at the start of each turn, roll a dice, on a 6 the *Black Duke* arrives from the Imperium's table edge. Should the *Black Duke* arrive, it is automatically on 'All Ahead Full' orders on the turn it arrives.

Objectives

The Tau player must destroy the Imperial transports before they escape whilst minimising their own losses. The Imperial convoy must exit via the Imperium's table edge with as many ships as possible.

IMPERIAL FLEET

Cerebus – Dauntless class light cruiser
(Captain Nomura – 1 re-roll)

Errant Squadron 1
- **ETS-1** - Sword class frigate
- **ETS-2** - Sword class frigate

Errant Squadron 2
- **ETS-3** - Sword class frigate
- **ETS-4** - Sword class frigate

Transports
- **Imperius Javalin** – Armed transport
- **Imperius Anvil** – Armed transport
- **Imperius Gauntlet** – Armed transport
- **Prince Maud** – Transport

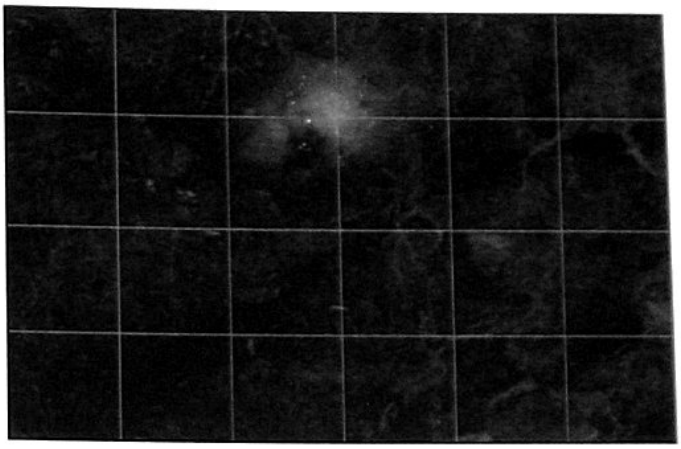
Reinforcements

Black Duke – Dictator class cruiser

TAU FLEET

Io'Tar – Protector class warship

5 x Castellan class heavy escorts



SCENARIO 9
Battle Fleet Gothic

HUNT FOR THE A'RHO

583998.M41

The Battle

After a long hunt the *A'hro* led the Imperial pursuers deep into the Inner flare zone before eventually turning to fight. In amongst the solar flares and radiation bursts she stood her best chance in an uneven match. The A'hro was out-gunned, but she put up a tremendous fight before being destroyed, taking the *Hammer of Thrace* and three escort ships with her.

The A'hro's mission was never intended to be anything more than a diversion, and in keeping two Imperial capital ships busy she served her purpose well. Whilst the hunt for a A'Rho continued, the other Protector led attack groups could target the supply convoys, the real objective of the Tau fleets incursion into the Taros system.

The Wargame

This game should be played across a 6 x 4 table. Set up the board as shown on the map. The battle takes place in the flare region. The table maybe affected by a single solar flare and single radiation burst, roll for each at the start of each turn. Scatter four or five gas clouds around the table as celestial phenomena.

The Tau fleet deploys within 30cm of one of the long table edges. This table edge is now Sunward. The Imperial fleet deploys within 30cm of the opposite table edge. Set-up should be done in secret (on the map or behind a screen).

Roll a D6, the side that rolls highest may choose whether to take the first or second turn.

Special Rules

Use the Fighting Sunward special rules. The Tau's table edge is the sunward direction.

Objectives

The Imperial player must destroy the *A'hro* whilst minimising his own losses.

IMPERIAL FLEET

Righteous Power - Overlord class battlecruiser
(Fleet Admiral Kotto - 2 re-rolls)

Hammer of Thrace - Lunar class cruiser

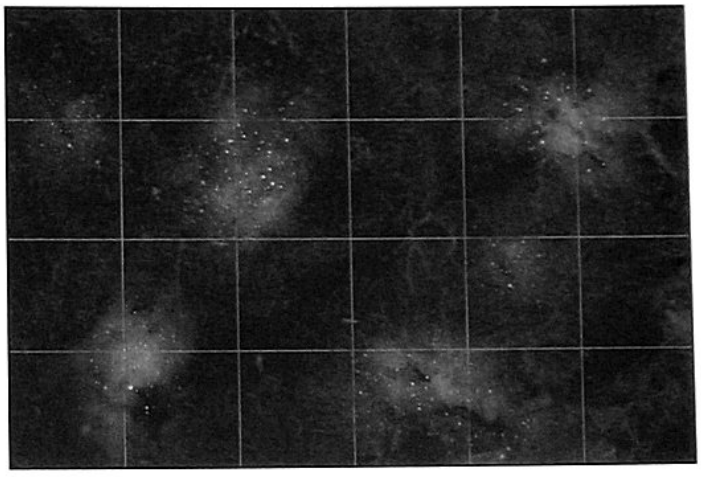
Novem Squadron
- **NVM-12** - Firestorm class frigate
- **NVM-22** - Firestorm class frigate
- **NVM-32** - Firestorm class frigate
- **NVM-42** - Firestorm class frigate

TAU FLEET

A'Rho – Custodian class carrier
(Tau Kor'O - 1 re-roll)

3 x Warden class carrier escorts

5 x Castellan class heavy escorts



SCENARIO 10

Warhammer 40,000

STORMING THE PHYYRA HEIGHTS

590998.M41

The Battle

On the right flank of the X Corps advance the 17th Tallarn regiment was faced by the formidable Phyyra Heights, a barren wilderness of steep, craggy highlands with very few trails or accessible routes for armoured vehicles. The Tau had already occupied this rough terrain with their allies, the Kroot.

Kroot warbands were now hiding in the high caves and crags. When the Imperial Guard arrived and attempted to climb the slopes the Kroot attacked, racing down hill in a shrieking horde to fall upon the Guardsmen below. The unexpected counter-attack caught the lead squads as they struggled up hill. Many Guardsmen died as the Kroot's wild beasts savaged them. Only heavy artillery fire prevented a disaster, allowing the Guardsmen to withdraw to the safety of the plains below.

The 17th regiment made four more attempts to climb the slopes, and succeeded at the fifth attempt. Having achieved a foothold, they were then faced with a rocky wilderness crawling with Kroot Carnivore squads and echoing to the cries of Kroot Hounds and Knarlocs. Fighting in the Phyyra Heights would continue between the 17th regiment and the Kroot until the order to withdraw was given.

The Wargames

This is a pitched battle, with the Kroot attacking downhill through the rocks. The only terrain on the table are areas of rocky ground, these should be scattered liberally across the entire board. Rocky areas count as difficult ground. There is no other terrain.

Deploy the Imperial scout force first. The Recon squad and Sentinel squadron may be placed anywhere in the Imperial player's half of the table.

The Kroot deploy second. Position the entire Kroot force within 6" of their table edge. This is the Kroot warband emerging from hiding behind the ridgeline, ready to charge.

The Imperial player takes the first turn, moving the rest of his forces on from his board edge. Reinforcements enter on from their board edge on the turn noted in the force lists.

The game lasts 6 turns, after this heavy artillery fires start to fall and both sides must withdraw.

Special Rules - Rock Slide Trap.

The Kroot have been preparing to defend the high ground for some time and have booby trapped the slopes with rock slide traps. This is a pre-prepared avalanche of boulders which tumble down the slope to crush those trying to climb up.

During the game the Kroot player can attempt to trigger one rock slide trap. At the start of the enemy turn the Kroot player nominates an enemy squad in rocky ground, this squad triggers the trap on a roll of 4+.

If the trap is triggered, the unfortunate squad takes 2D6 Str 3 hits from the rock avalanche, normal Armour Saves are allowed. If the trap is not triggered, then the Kroot player may try again on another squad next turn. Once the rock slide trap has been triggered it cannot be used again.

Objectives

This is a pitched battle. The side that has inflicted the most damage wins.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Scout Force

Hardened Veterans Recon Squad

Squad*	6 veterans	Melta gun, Sniper Rifle

The squad carry frag grenades and krak grenades. 1 Guardsman is equipped with a vox-caster.

*Led by a Veteran Sergeant with a laspistol, close combat weapon and the Medallion Crimson.

Sentinel Squadron

2 x Sentinels with multi-laser, smoke launcher

Reinforcements – Arriving on turn 2

5th Company Command Section

Command Section	Cpt* +4 men	Melta gun

* The Captain has a laspistol, power weapon and refractor field.

1 Guardsman carries the Company Standard.

Mortar Squad	6 men	3 mortars
Fire Support Squad	6 men	3 heavy bolters

Priest with shotgun, close combat weapon, holy relic

3rd Platoon, 5th Infantry Company, 17th Tallarn Regiment

Command Section	Lt*+4 men	Missile launcher, medipack
Squad	10 men	Melta gun, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Grenade launcher, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Flamer, sniper rifle
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, sniper rifle

All squads carry frag grenades and krak grenades. Each squad has 1 Guardsman equipped with a vox-caster.

*The Lieutenant is armed with a laspistol and close combat weapon.

– Arriving on turn 3

OP Team

2 men with lasguns and vox-caster

Artillery Strike

Basilisk (spotted by the OP team)

– Arriving on turn 5

1 Basilisk with armoured crew compartment, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, track guards, smoke launcher.

KROOT FORCES

Master Shaper

Kroot rifle, frag and krak grenades, hyper-active nymune organ.

Accompanied by 2 Kroot Hounds.

3x Kroot Carnivore Squads

Squad	14 Kroot*	Kroot rifles
	6 Kroot Hounds	
	1 Krootox	Kroot gun

* each squad includes a Shaper with frag and krak grenades.

Knarloc Riders Herd

Squad	6 Knarloc Riders	Kroot rifles

Goaded Great Knarloc Herd

2x Squads	1 Goaded Great Knarloc	
	8 Goads	Kroot rifles, goad stick

The 2 Great Knarlocs and their Goads operate independently of each other.

1 Knarloc herd includes a Shaper with frag and krak grenades.

1 x mounted Great Knarloc

with a Kroot bolt thrower and explosive bolts.

SCENARIO 11
Warhammer 40,000

THE BATTLE FOR HYDRO-PLANT 23-30
FIRST LIFT – PUMPING STATION 1

650998.M41

The Battle

Operation Comet's assault captured hydro-plant 23-30 after a day of hard fighting. The defending garrison of human auxiliaries and Kroot mercenaries resisted bravery despite the attackers' overwhelming firepower.

At Pumping Station 1 (an objective of 3rd company), the first wave, led by Storm Troopers of 709th company were repulsed with the death of Captain Malik and serious casualties. It was Commissar Graal who rallied the surviving men, organising supporting mortar fire and led a second attack which drove out the Kroot. Once captured, a fresh platoon moved forwards to secure the objective against counter-attack.

The fighting around Pumping Station 1 was so heavy and intense that the pumping station was mostly destroyed in the battle, rending it useless.

The Wargames

Play this game on a 6' x 4' table. A large build in the centre of the Tau table edge is the pumping station. Opposite it should be lots of pipelines, walkways, large storage tanks and other industrial scenery, including lots of detritus like barrels, girders and stacks of crates.

Deploy the defender's garrison first within 12" of their table edge. The Drone sentry turrets can be positioned anywhere on the table. Tau reinforcements move onto the board from the Tau table edge on the turn given in the force lists.

The Imperium's forces take the first turn and enter from their table edge. Reinforcements arrive on the turn given. The Elysian squads all drop onto the table using the Deep Strike special rules.

The game lasts 7 turns.

Special Rules

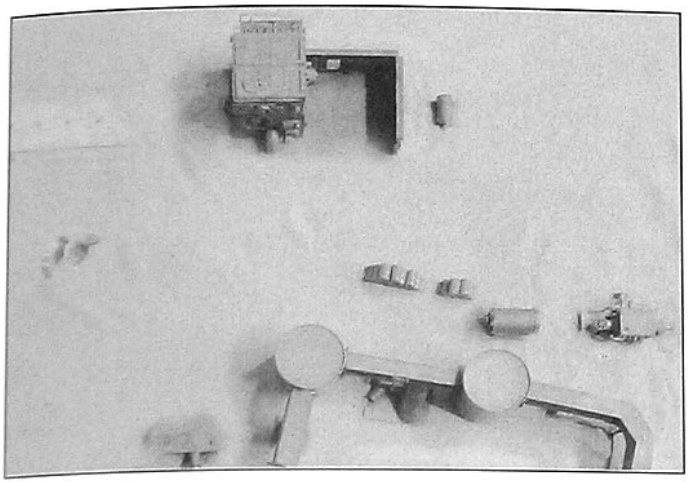
'Standing orders are to avoid excessive collateral damage'

The Imperial Commanders need to use the hydro-processor after it is captured, and cannot therefore afford to destroy it in the process. Collateral damage to the facility must be kept to a minimum.

Keep a track of how many times the Imperial forces fire weapons with a Strength of 5 or more and miss. If this happens more than 20 times in the game then the pumping station and surrounding workings have taken excessive collateral damage – more than can be quickly repaired, and the Imperial side looses the battle even if they capture the pumping station.

Objectives

The side in possession of the pumping station at the end of the game wins.



Notes

This battle is typical of those fought by the first wave of Elysian Drop Troops, met by the human auxiliary garrison forces, Kroot and workers militias. You could replay this mission several times, adjusting the terrain and forces slightly for other objectives. Other special rules might include tanks full of dangerous chemicals which could rupture or explode. If you have Necromunda terrain, then here is the place to use it!

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Turn 1

5th Squad, 709h Storm Trooper Company

Squad	10 men	Melta gun, grenade launcher

in Valkyrie with a multi-laser, 2 x fuel tanks, armoured cockpit, chaff launchers

6th Squad, 709h Storm Trooper Company

Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, grenade launcher

in Valkyrie with a multi-laser, 2 x fuel tanks, armoured cockpit, chaff launchers

All Storm Trooper squads have frag and krak grenades and melta bombs.

Vulture Gunship with twin-linked missile launchers, fuel tanks, ejector seats.

Reinforcements – Arriving on Turn 2

3rd Company Command Section

Command Section	Capt*+4 men	Grenade Incher, medipack, master vox

* Captain Malik carries a laspistol and powerfist.

Anti-Tank Squad	6 men	3 Missile Launchers

Commissar Graal with lasgun, refractor field

1st Platoon, 3rd Infantry Company, 23rd Elysian Drop Troops Regiment

Command Section	Lt*+4 men	Flamer, medi-pack
Squad**	10 men	Melta gun, demo charge
Squad**	10 men	Grenade Incher, demo charge
Squad	10 men	Flamer, demo charge
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, demo charge

All squads have frag and krak grenades and a vox-caster.

* Lt Rawne carrying a laspistol, melta bombs and a surveyor.

** Veteran Sergeant carrying a lasgun with auxiliary krak grenade launcher.

– Arriving on Turn 5

Off-table Artillery Strike

Mortar battery strike 3 x Mortars

The barrage can be spotted for by either an Elysian Officer, Veteran Sergeant or Commissar Graal.

TAU FORCES

Initial Garrison

Human Auxilaries Teams

Team	10 men	lasguns
Team	10 men	lasguns
Team	10 men	lasguns

* All have frag grenades. Each team leader has a pulse rifle.

3 x Drone Sentry Turrets

1 has twin-linked burst cannons. 1 has twin-linked missile pods. 1 has twin-linked plasma rifles. All have a shield generator and a disruption pod.

Workers Militia

Team	10 men	various pistols (count as laspistols) various close combat weapons

These are just workers who have armed themselves to help defend their plant. They have standard Guardsmen's stats, but have no armour.

Reinforcements – Arriving on Turn 3

Kroot Carnivore Squad

Squad	10 Kroot*	Kroot rifles
	1 Krootox	Kroot gun

* includes a Shaper with a Kroot rifle.

Kroot Carnivore Squad

Squad	10 Kroot*	Kroot rifles

– Arriving in Turn 4

Gun drones

7 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines

Gun drones

7 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines

– Arriving on Turn 5

Tiger Shark

The Tiger Shark has already dropped its Gun Drones by the time it reaches the table, so is no longer armed with them.

SCENARIO 12

Warhammer 40,000

THE BATTLE FOR HYDRO-PLANT 23-30 SECOND LIFT – SOUTHERN PERIMETER

659998.M41

The Battle

The second day of the battle for the hydro-processing plant saw the Elysians of the first wave on the defensive, holding out against the Tau's swift attack. They were hard pressed, hanging on for the arrival of the second lift to reinforce them and secure the plant.

Uncharacteristically, the Tau pressed their attack hard. After an initial aerial bombardment the aliens closed in, under the cover of their Manta, and eventually rousted the defenders from their cover in bitter fighting.

The Wargame

Play this game on a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is the hydro-processing plant, so there should be lots of industrial scenery, pipe works, storage tanks etc. After a day of fighting there is also destroyed vehicles scattered about, even a crashed Valkyrie for cover. The Tau's board edge is the perimeter fence of the plant.

Deploy the Imperial defenders first, anywhere in their half of the table. They may have a few (2 or 3) hastily constructed sandbagged positions for additional cover.

The Tau forces take the first turn and enter from their table edge in the order listed. Reinforcements arrive on the turn given in the force lists. The Elysian squads of the second lift all drop onto the table using the Deep Strike special rules. The game lasts 7 turns.

Special Rules

Off-table Manta Fire. The Tau attack is supported by a Manta flying overhead strafing the entire area with fire. The Elysian's have no response to this lethal rain. At the start of each Tau turn roll for off-table Manta support.

1-2 No fire this turn

3 1 Burst cannon turret

4 2 Burst cannon turrets

5 1 Ion cannon

6 1 Railgun

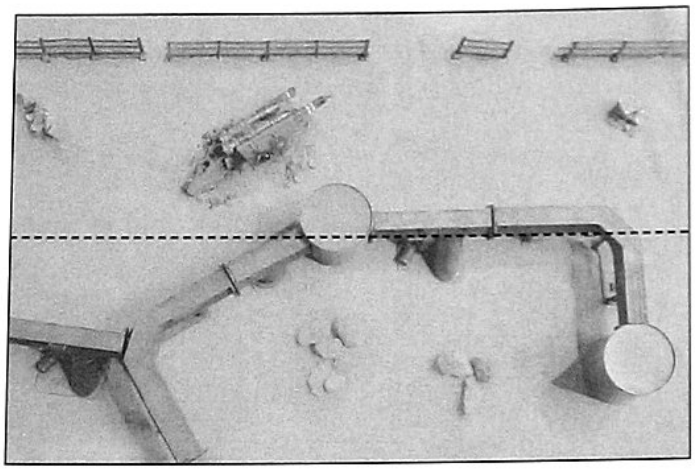
The shots maybe targeted at any enemy unit on the table.

Mid-air Casualties

The Elysians of the second lift came under heavy fire as they fell towards the hydro-plant. To simulate the effects of massed Tau AA fire as they deep strike onto the board, each Elysian Infantry squad and Sentinel is attacked by a D6-1 pulse rifle rounds. Roll to hit and wound as for a normal Fire Warrior squad.

Objectives

This is a pitched battle. The side that inflicts the most damage wins.



FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Initial Defenders (Casualties have reduced the size of these squads)

12th Squad, 709th Storm Trooper Company

Squad	6 men	Melta gun

Squad has frag and krak grenades.

3rd Platoon, 4th Infantry Company, 23rd Elysian Drop Troops

Command Squad	Lt*+3 men	Plasma gun, medi-pack
Squad**	7 men	Melta gun, demo charge
Squad	8 men	Grenade launcher

All squads have frag and krak grenades and a vox-caster.
* Lt Yentz carries a lasgun with auxiliary krak grenade launcher
** Veteran Sergeant carrying a lasgun with auxiliary krak grenade launcher.

Fire Support Squad	6 men	3 heavy bolters

Veteran Squad

Squad	7 men	sniper rifle, flamer

Special Weapons Squad

Squad	2 men	sniper rifle

Tarantula Sentry gun with twin-linked lascannons

Reinforcements – Arriving on Turn 2

Vulture Gunship with twin-linked lascannons, 2 fuel tanks, ejector seats, chaff launcher, armoured cockpit.

– Arriving on Turn 3

2nd Platoon, 8th Infantry Company, 23rd Elysian Drop Troop

Command Squad	Lt*+4 men	Flamer, medi-pack
Squad**	10 men	Melta gun, demo charge
Squad**	10 men	Grenade Lncher, demo charge
Squad	10 men	Flamer, demo charge
Squad	10 men	Plasma gun, demo charge

All squads have frag and krak grenades and a vox-caster.
* Lt Garrus has a laspistol and bionics.
** Veteran Sergeant carrying a lasgun with auxiliary krak grenade launcher.

Drop Sentinel Squadron
Sentinel with heavy bolter, smoke launcher, hunter-killer missile.
Sentinel with heavy bolter, smoke launcher.
Sentinel with multi-melta, smoke launcher.

TAU FORCES

Moving on in Turn 1

Pathfinder Team

Team	8 Shas'la	pulse carbines

in a Devilfish with disruption pod, decoy launchers, 4 Seeker missiles.
Led by a Shas'ui. All have photon grenades. The team is bonded.

Crisis Battlesuit Team
Crisis battlesuit with twin-linked burst cannons, target lock
Crisis battlesuit with fusion gun, flamer, multi-tracker
Crisis battlesuit with twin-linked missile pods, shield generator

Heavy Gun Drone Squadron

5 Heavy Gun Drones, one has a Markerlight

Hammerhead with railgun and smart missile system

Hammerhead with twin-linked fusion cannons and burst cannons

Reinforcements – Arriving on Turn 2

Fire Warrior Teams

Team	10 Shas'la	Pulse rifles
Team	10 Shas'la	Pulse rifles
Team	10 Shas'la	Pulse rifles
Team	10 Shas'la	Pulse rifles

All have photon and EMP grenades. Each team is led by a Shas'ui with a Markerlight.

Broadside Battlesuit Team

Broadside battlesuit, twin-linked plasma rifles, target lock.

Broadside battlesuit, smart missile system, drone controller with 2 Shield Drones.

– Arriving on Turn 3

Gun Drone Squadron
8 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines

SCENARIO 13

Warhammer 40,000

IRACUNDA BREAKTHROUGH

653998.M41

The Battle

The Raptors' spearheaded the breakthrough onto the Iracunda Isthmus, utilising their powerful armoured units in support of the Legio Ignatum Warhounds, to smash aside the Tau's blocking Hunter Cadres. Throughout the day, the two forces clashed in a long-ranged engagement in the open deserts. With the Imperium's firepower inflicting heavy casualties on the Tau, the armoured formation swept forwards, and achieved their objective, despite the loss of the Warhound Titan *Advensor Primaris* to the Tau's latest weapon – a railgun armed Tiger Shark designed to kill Titans!

In the Space Marines' wake followed the Chimera-borne infantry of the 114th Cadian Regiment. Once Tau resistence had collapsed they recieved the order to begin their drive north to relieve the Elysian forces fighting around Hydro-plant 23-30.

The Wargame

Play this game on a large table (or the floor/ 6' x 12' table/ the larger the better). The only terrain on the table are a few areas of rocky ground. The rest is open, bare desert.

Deploy the Imperial forces first, up to 12" from their table edge. Next deploy the Tau forces, up to 12" from their table edge.The Imperial player takes the first turn. On the turn they arrive, all Reserves move on from their own table edge.

The game lasts until either all the Imperial forces have exited the board, or either side has no forces left fighting.

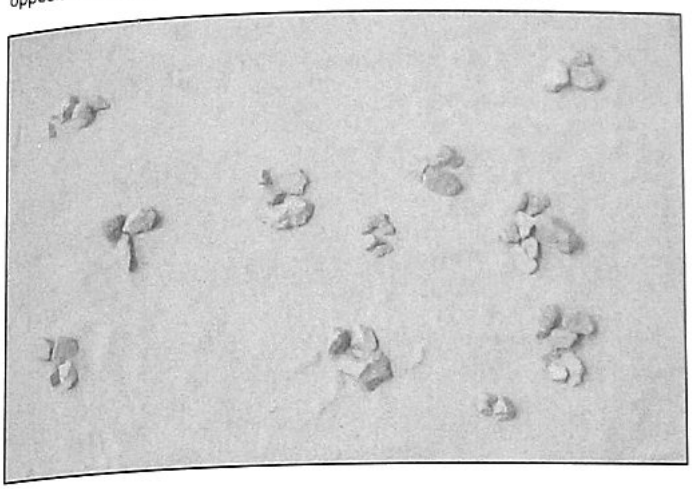
Objectives

The Imperial forces must advance as far as they can, exiting via the Tau board edge if possible. They should aim to get half their forces off the Tau table edge. The Tau must prevent this.

Notes

As a powerful Space Marine armoured attack, supported by Titans, this is a big wargame, and will require a lot of toy soldiers and a big table. It is the sort of game you can play with multiple commanders on each side, with each providing some of the forces.

Expanding this (already large), game can be done by adding the Imperial Guard forces and a second Warhound. This would be a Chimera-borne Armoured Fist platoon of the 114th Cadian regiment, maybe accompanied by two Salamander Scouts, arrive from Reserve, with orders to advance off the opposite table edge.



FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Legio Ignatum Warhound – *Advensor Primaris*
Mars pattern Titan with plasma blastgun and Vulcan mega-bolter

Tactical Squad 1
- Sergeant with boltgun
- 1 Space Marine with missile launcher
- 1 Space Marine with melta gun
- 7 Space Marines with bolters

in a Land Raider with extra armour, pintle-mounted storm bolter, searchlight, smoke launchers

Reserves

Space Marine Command Squad
- Captain Orelius with bolt pistol, lightning claw, terminator honours, iron halo, purity seals, frag and krak grenades.
- Apothecary with narthecium, reductor
- Company standard bearer with company standard
- 1 Space Marine with multi-melta
- 1 Space Marine with plasma gun
- 5 Space Marines with boltguns

in a Land Raider Prometheus with hunter-killer missile, smoke launchers

Devastator Squad
- Sergeant with bolter
- 2 Space Marines with lascannons
- 2 Space Marines with heavy bolters
- 5 Space Marines with bolters

in a Rhino with extra armour, smoke launchers

Predator Destructor with lascannon sponsons, extra armour, Power of the Machine Spirit, pintle-mounted storm bolter, smoke launcher

Predator Destructor with heavy bolter sponsons, extra armour, Power of the Machine Spirit, pintle-mounted storm bolter, smoke launcher

Techmarine with bolter, power axe, signum, auspex, servo-arm, 2 technical servitors

Whirlwind with vengeance missiles, Power of the Machine Spirit,

Tactical Squad 2
- Sergeant with bolter
- 1 Space Marine with missile launcher
- 1 Space Marine with flamer
- 7 Space Marines with boltguns

in a Rhino with smoke launchers

Tactical Squad 3
- Sergeant with bolter
- 1 Space Marine with missile launcher
- 3 Space Marines with boltguns

in a Razorback with twin-linked lascannons, extra armour, hunter-killer missile, smoke launchers

TAU FORCES

Hammerhead with railgun, smart missile system, target lock

Hammerhead with missile pods, smart missile system, 4 Seeker missiles

Pathfinders
Team 4 Shas'la pulse carbines, Markerlights
All have photon and EMP grenades. The team is led by a Shas'ui.

Reserves

Hammerhead with railgun, burst cannons, multi-tracker

Fire Warriors
Team 12 Shas'la pulse rifles
in a Devilfish with flechette discharger, 2 Seeker missiles.

Team 12 Shas'la pulse rifles
in a Devilfish with decoy launchers, 2 Seeker missiles.

All have photon and EMP grenades. Each team is led by a Shas'ui with a Markerlight.

Piranha Squadron
2 Piranha's with burst cannons, 2 Seeker missiles

Broadside Battlesuit Team
- Shas'vre Broadside battlesuit, smart missile system, shield generator
- Shas'ui Broadside battlesuit, plasma rifles, target lock
- Shas'ui Broadside battlesuit, smart missile system, multi-tracker

The team is bonded.

Tigershark with twin heavy railguns and 6 Seeker missiles.

OPERATION DEATHBLOW

687998.M41

SCENARIO 14

Warhammer 40,000 Kill Team

The Battle

Operation Deathblow was the Imperium's attempt to end the Taros Campaign by killing both the Tau supreme commanders in one stroke. Having established the location of the Tau's headquarters (in abandoned mining workings close to Tarokeen), Colonel Scheja led a suicidal diversionary attack. With three squads of Storm Troopers he attacked the headquarters guards, allowing the Eversor assassin time to break-in to the underground headquarters and hunt down the Ethereal. This part of the mission was succesful, but unknown to the attackers Shas'o R'myr was leading the defence, and survived the attack.

The loss of their Ethereal shocked and saddened the Tau, but it would be the Emperor's forces who would eventually suffer the Tau's wrath.

The Wargame

This game is split into two parts. The first part is Blue team's diversionary attack. The second part is the Eversor's attempt to kill Aun'Vre. The first part of the game will establish how long the Eversor has to complete the second part of the game.

Play part 1 on a 6' x 4' table. In the centre is a collection of abandoned buildings and equipment. Deploy the defenders first in a 24" square area in the centre of the table.

The Imperium forces take the first turn and enter from any table edge.

The attack takes place at night, the Night Fight special rules are used throughout.

Part one lasts until all Imperial forces or all Tau force have been destroyed. Keep track of how many turns have passed, as you will need this information in part two.

Part two last as long as part one. If the Eversor has not killed the Ethereal by the end of that turn then he looses.

Special Rules

Because this is a surprise attack the Shas'o and his Shas'vre bodyguards have not had time to don their battlesuits. They have the following characteristics.

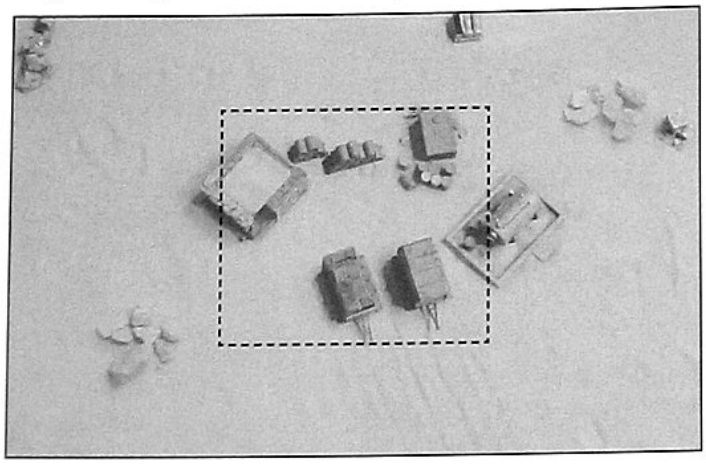
	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Shas'vre	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	4+
Shas'o	4	5	3	3	3	3	4	10	4+

	Range	Str	AP	Type	Notes
Pulse pistol	12"	5	5	Pistol	-

At the end of turn 6 the Valkyries must depart.

Objective

The Imperial forces must kill Shas'o R'myr and the Ethereal Aun'Vre to win the game. If they kill one it is a draw, if they kill neither it is a loss.



PART ONE

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Blue Team

Colonel Scheja – Heroic Senior Officer

Carapace armour, boltgun, plasma pistol, frag and krak grenades, Medallion Crimson. The Colonel is an independent character.

1st Volunteer Squad, 2378th Storm Trooper Company

Squad 10 men Melta gun, grenade launcher

In a Valkyrie with a multi-laser, 2 fuel tanks, ejector seats, chaff launcher, infra-red targeting.

2nd Volunteer Squad, 2378th Storm Trooper Company

Squad* 10 men Plasma gun, Grenade launcher

* Led by a Veteran Sergeant carrying a bolt pistol and close combat weapon.

In a Valkyrie with a multi-laser, 2 fuel tanks, ejector seats, illum flares, infra-red targeting.

3rd Volunteer Squad, 2378th Storm Trooper Company

Squad* 10 men Flamer, Grenade launcher

* Led by a Veteran Sergeant carrying a bolt pistol and close combat weapon.

In a Valkyrie with a lascannon, 2 fuel tanks, ejector seats, chaff launcher, infra-red targeting.

All Storm Trooper squads have frag and krak grenades.

TAU FORCES

Shas'o R'myr

1 Shas'o with pulse pistol, photon grenades.
Hard-wired drone controller and target lock. Accompanied by a Shield Drone.
Note: The Shas'o is not equipped with his Crisis battlesuit, he wears Fire Warrior armour giving him a 4+ save. For characteristics see special rules.

Bodyguard Team

2 Shas'vre with pulse carbines, photon grenades
Hard-wired target lock. Team is bonded.
Note: The Shas'vre are not equipped with a Crisis battlesuit, they wear Fire Warrior armour giving them a 4+ save. For characteristics see special rules.

Fire Warrior Security Teams

Team 10 Shas'la with pulse rifles, photon grenades
Team 10 Shas'la with pulse rifles, photon grenades
Team 10 Shas'la with pulse rifles, photon grenades

Each team is led by a Shas'ui. Teams are bonded.

Gun Drone Squadron

4 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines.

Gun Drone Squadron

4 Gun Drones with twin-linked pulse carbines.

3 Drone Sentry Turrets

With a twin-linked plasma rifles, a missile pod and twin-linked burst cannons. Each has a disruption pod and shield generator.

PART TWO

The Battle

Red team (the Eversor assassin) has entered the command centre under cover from Blue team's diversionary attack. The Eversor must now hunt through the rooms and corridors, avoiding or destroying the guards and headquarters staff, to find the Tau Ethereal and kill him.

The Wargame

For this game, use the Kill-Team special rules. This is an Assassinate mission (but use the Ethereals normal stat line instead of the generic stat line in the 40K rulebook).

The table should be an area of corridors and rooms. If you have any, you could use Space Hulk boards or draw the command complex on large piece of paper. Alternatively, it can be built from cardboard or polystrene. The centre of the command complex should be the control room, in which is the Ethereal.

Part two lasts for the same number of turns as part one lasted.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

Red Team

Eversor Assassin with power sword, executioner pistol, neuro gauntlet, melta bombs, frag grenades.

Kill-Team specialist kit: Backstabber, Distraction

TAU FORCES

Ethereal Aun'Vre with two close combat weapons.

Brute Squads

6 units of Tau Fire Warriors with pulse rifles.

Brute squad specialist kit: All Points Bulletin.

SCENARIO 15
Warhammer 40,000

FIGHTING RETREAT

The Battle

The Tallarn regiments are in full retreat, withdrawing back across the desert to their landing zones. Stragglers and survivors are making their way south as best they can, but order and discipline are starting to breakdown as the Tau close-in to ruthlessly mop-up the survivors.

Officers and Commissars are attempting to keep units together and fight rearguard actions as best they can, while Tau Stealthsuits and Pathfinders set ambushes along the route of retreat. As the 4621st Army begins to disintergrate as an effective fighting unit, its final actions are desperate fighting retreats with ad-hoc units, fending off the pursuing Tau so as many men as possible can escape.

The Wargame

This game should be played along the length of a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is open desert, with scattered rocky areas. Destroyed and abandoned equipment, like Chimeras, Leman Russes and Trojans should be scattered about, along with the other discarded detritus of battle.

The Imperial Guard forces deploy first. They may be placed anywhere in the northern half of the table.

The Tau's initial forces (the Stealthsuit team) are deployed within 12" of the southern table edge. All the Tau reserves move on from the northern table edge.

There is no turn limit to this game, play until all the Imperial Guard forces have escaped or are destroyed.

Special Rules

Low on Fuel: The Imperial Guard vehicles are very low on fuel. Each time a vehicle completes its movement roll a dice; on a 1 it completes the move but is then out of fuel. It cannot move for the rest of the game.

Straggler Squads: Imperial Guard Straggler squads are the remnants and survivors of the regiment, but they are no longer organised as company/platoon/squads. Before deploying the squad roll 2D6 for the number of Guardsmen in each squad. Each Guardsman has a lasgun only and no other equipment. If there are 5 or more squad members, then also roll for special equipment.

1. Squad includes a flamer
2. Squad includes a melta gun
3. Squad includes a plasma gun
4. Squad includes a sniper Rifle
5. Squad includes a Veteran Sergeant with plasma pistol and sword
6. Squad includes a missile launcher

Objectives

The Imperial Guard forces must escape off the southern board edge with as many forces as possible. The Tau must pursue them and kill as many men/ destroy as many vehicles as possible. The more men that escape, the better the Imperial side have done.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM
STRAGGLERS OF 17th TALLARN REGIMENT

Commissar
With power sword, laspistol, refractor field, Medallion Crimson.
In this scenario the Commissar is an independent character.

Priest
With shotgun, purity seals, rosaries.
In this scenario the Priest is an independent character.

Straggler Squad 1 – roll randomly.
in a Chimera with autocannon, pintle-mounted heavy stubber, smoke launcher, rough terrain modification.

Straggler Squad 2 – roll randomly.

Straggler Squad 3 – roll randomly.

Straggler Squad 4 – roll randomly.

Rough Rider Squadron
5 Guardsmen with hunting lances, laspistols, on Mukaali.

Trojan towing an **Earthshaker Platform**

TAU FORCES

Initial Deployment

Stealthsuit Team
4 Shas'ui with burst cannons.
Team includes a Shas'vre team leader with a markerlight.

Reserves – Arriving from the northern board edge.

Pathfinder Team
8 Pathfinders with pulse carbines.
Team includes a Shas'ui team leader. All have photon grenades.
in a Devilfish with decoy launchers, disruption pod.

Gun Drone squadron
8 Gun Drones

Piranha Squadron
2 Piranhas with burst cannons. Each has 2 Seeker missiles.

Fire Warrior Team
12 Shas'la with pulse carbines.
Team includes a Shas'ui team leader. All have photon grenades.
in a Devilfish with multi-tracker.

SCENARIO 16

EVACUATION

Epic

The Battle

With the Imperial Guard forces in full retreat, and the landing zones swarming with survivors of the defeated army, all trying to board landing craft and escape, it fell to the Space Marines of the Raptors Chapter to organise and defend the perimeter of the landing zones. Their actions were buying time for the last ships to get away.

Captains Orelius and Kaedes deployed their complete companies into the defensive positions and stood ready to repel the expected Tau attack.

They did not have long to wait. The Tau launched two attacks against the landing grounds by Manta-borne Hunter Cadres. Shas'o R'myr led the first attack personally, seeking revenge for the death of Aun'Vre. After fierce fighting, the Space Marines repelled both attacks, stopping the Tau and allowed the last transporters to escape into orbit, before they evacuated Taros for good.

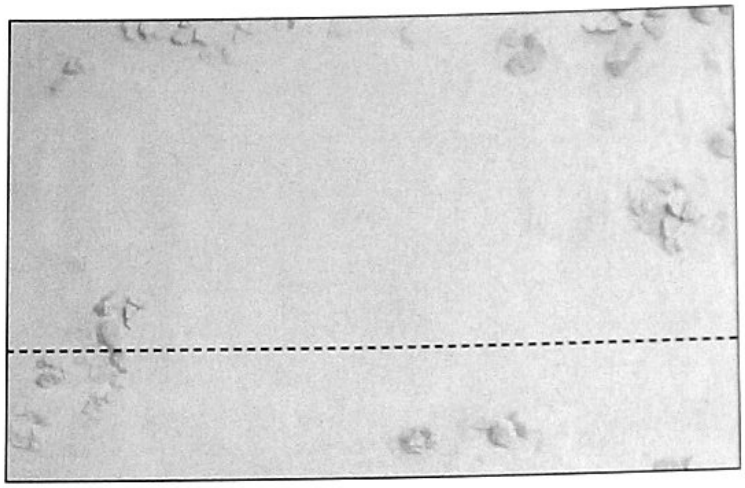
The Wargame

This game should be played across the width of a 6' x 4' table. The terrain is open desert, with the usual scattered rocky areas. The Space Marines deploy first, place them in their deployment zone, up to 12" on from their board edge. They may start the game dug-in behind sandbagged positions, vehicles in tank scrapes etc.

The Tau forces enter from the opposite board edge when they have the initiative.

Objectives

The Tau forces must break through the Space Marine cordon to overrun the landing grounds. They have 5 turns to do this. If the Space Marines are still fighting at the end of turn 5, they win.



Notes

This is the first of two battles which took place on the same day. To play the second battle, simply replace Raptors 3rd company with 6th company, by removing the Devastators and Assault detachments, and the Land Raiders, and replacing them with Tactical detachments and 2 detachments of 4 Land Speeder Tornadoes. Tau forces should remain roughly the same, except the commander in the second game should be reduced to a Shas'el.

Alternatively you can combine the forces into one large battle on a larger table.

FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

RAPTORS SPACE MARINES – 3rd Company

Tactical Detachment – 6 Tactical units with 3 Rhinos
with Commander (Captain) upgrade and Dreadnought

Tactical Detachment – 6 Tactical units with 3 Rhinos
with Commander (Chaplain) upgrade and Dreadnought

Devastators Detachment – 4 Devastator units with 4 Razorbacks

Assault Detachment – 4 Assault units

Predator Detachment
2 Destructors, 1 Annihilator

Whirlwind Detachment
3 Whirlwinds and 1 Hyperios

Land Raider Detachment
3 Land Raiders

1 Thunderhawk Gunship
with missile upgrade

1 Thunderhawk Gunship
with missile upgrade

Battle Barge in orbit

TAU FORCES

1 Manta

carrying the following units:

Battlesuit Cadre
4 Crisis battlesuit units
1 unit with Shas'o Commander upgrade

Broadside Battlesuit Contingent
2 Broadside battlesuit units

Gun Drone Contingent
4 Gun Drone squadrons

Gun Drone Contingent
4 Gun Drone squadrons

Fire Warrior Cadre
6 Fire Warrior units in 3 Devilfish and 1 Sky Ray

1 Manta

carrying

Fire Warrior Cadre
6 Fire Warrior units
2 Crisis Battlesuit teams upgrade

Stealthsuit Contingent
4 Stealthsuit units

Hammerheads
3 Hammerhead Gunships and 1 Sky Ray

APPENDICES

XV89'Crisis battlesuit with twin-linked fusion blasters.
This command suit belongs to an unidentified Tau Shas'el. It was destroyed by Space Marine forces during the defence of the landing zones.

APPENDIX I
SUPER-HEAVY VEHICLES

RULES FOR USING SUPER-HEAVY VEHICLES IN GAMES OF WARHAMMER 40,000

The battlefields of the 41st millennium are home to some truly awesome war machines. These huge vehicles tower over the battlefield and carry enough weapons to wipe out a typical 40K army in a round or two of shooting! I've yet to meet a 40K player who didn't secretly want to include such a vehicle in their own army, and the following rules allow you to do just that.

Be warned! Super-heavy Tanks will dominate any game they are used in, and because of this it should be saved up for special occasions, rather than being wheeled out willy-nilly for every battle that is played.

USING SUPER-HEAVY TANKS

Super-heavy Tanks fight in their own 'army', fighting alongside another army as a separate detachment, as described in the 40K rules. In addition, you may only include one Super-heavy Tank detachment in your army for each 'normal' detachment that you field. This limits the use of Super-heavy Tanks to large games of over 2000 points, as is appropriate for such rare and potentially devastating machines. Of course, players that wish to may ignore this restriction and use Super-heavy Tanks in smaller games, but only if they get their opponent's consent first. Super-heavy Tanks may only be used in tournament games if the tournament instructions specifically say they may be used.

Super-heavy Tank detachments and Super-heavy Flyer detachments consist up to three machines of (more or less) the same type. Baneblades and Shadowswords are considered similar enough to be mixed into the same detachment, as are Marauders and Marauder Destroyers.

STRUCTURE POINTS

Super-heavy Tanks are so large that they can absorb damage that would destroy another vehicle. To represent this, they must be given 2 or more Structure Points, which equate roughly to wounds for other models. Basically, the more Structure Points a vehicle has, the bigger it is.

ORDNANCE

Super-heavy vehicles may fire ordnance and still fire other weapons. They may fire ordnance even if they move.

TARGETING

Super-heavy vehicles can engage more than one target unit if desired. Instead of picking a target for the Super-heavy vehicle, pick a target for each weapon on the Super-heavy Tank. You must declare all of the Super-heavy vehicle's targets before resolving any fire (you can't see how one of its weapons did before deciding what the others are firing at).

SUPER-HEAVY TANK SHOCK

Enemy infantry must test at -1 to their Leadership if they are Tank Shocked by a Super-heavy Tank.

LUMBERING VEHICLES

Lumbering vehicles grind along at a slow and steady pace. They can move up to 6" a turn. They must always move straight ahead, but can pivot by up to 90° at the end of the move. Lumbering vehicles can fire all of their weapons even if they move.

WAR ENGINES AND DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Super-heavy Tanks treat difficult terrain differently to normal vehicles. For a start, they can ignore low walls, hedges, bushes and rubble – there's no need to test for these at all. Going through other difficult terrain they test as normal. However, if they roll a 1, they are not automatically immobilised, instead they lose D3" of movement, just as if they had suffered an Engines Damaged result on the damage tables (see later).

CLOSE COMBAT ATTACKS

Super-heavy Tanks can Tank Shock an enemy in the Movement phase. If the enemy pass the Morale check, then the Super-heavy Tank moves into contact with the enemy unit and must fight a close combat against it in the Assault phase. This is the only way that Super-heavy Tanks can enter close combat (though they can be assaulted by enemy units in the enemy's turn as normal). Being in close combat does not stop the Super-heavy Tank shooting, and it may fire at the unit it is assaulting if desired.

Super-heavy Tanks are allowed to 'barge into' enemy infantry units rather than stopping when they contact the first enemy model. Keep moving the Super-heavy Tank until it completes its move, moving enemy models out of the way as required. Any models moved out of the way should be placed back on the table so that they are touching the Super-heavy Tank as close as possible to their starting location before they were 'barged'. Super-heavy Tanks can't barge other Super-heavy Tanks out of the way.

In the Assault phase, a Super-heavy Tank that Tank Shocked the enemy receives a number of bonus close combat attacks. These attacks represent the chance of the victim either getting stomped upon or crushed under the tank tracks, wheels or what ever, and are only ever received in the Super-heavy Tank's turn; if the Super-heavy Tank is assaulted by the enemy in the enemy turn then it does not receive any bonus attacks.

The number of bonus attacks is equal to the number of enemy models or vehicles that are in base contact with the Super-heavy Tank (ie, each enemy touching the war machine is attacked once). All bonus attacks count as having a WS of 1 and a strength of 6. Roll to hit and damage normally. All Super-heavy Tank close combat attacks ignore Armour Saves, and roll 2D6 for Armour Penetration.

Opponents that fight a round of close combat against a Super-heavy Tank and fail to destroy it (quite a likely occurrence!) automatically fall back unless they are a vehicle or another war machine. Super-heavy Tanks may never pursue or consolidate – they remain stationary.

NEW WEAPON RULES

Co-axial Weapons: A 'co-axial' weapon is one that is fixed beside another weapon of a different type, a bit like a twin-linked weapon but where two different types of weapon are used. For example, a tank might have a turret mounted autocannon with a co-axial heavy bolter mounted beside it. Any type of weapons may be fitted into a 'co-axial' mount. Both weapons must fire at the same target unit, even if fitted to a war machine.

SUPER-HEAVY TANK DAMAGE TABLES

Roll on the following tables for glancing and penetrating hits on a Super-heavy Tank. Ordnance also rolls on these tables, not the Ordnance Damage tables.

GLANCING HIT

(S+D6 ROLL EQUALS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Gun Crew Shaken – One weapon may not shoot next turn (chosen by opponent).

2 Gun Crew Shaken – One weapon may not shoot next turn (chosen by opponent).

3 Driver Stunned – May not move next turn.

4 Engines Damaged – Knock D3" off the vehicle's move (vehicles reduced to a move of 0 are immobilised; skimmers are destroyed).

5 Field or Weapon Destroyed – One weapon or field chosen by opponent is destroyed.

6 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on this table. If reduced to '0' Structure Points then roll on the Catastrophic Damage table opposite.

PENETRATING HIT

(S+D6 ROLL BEATS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Driver Stunned – May not move next turn (Skimmers drift D6" straight ahead).

2 Engines Damaged – Knock D3" off the vehicle's move (vehicles reduced to a move of 0 are immobilised, skimmers destroyed).

3 Field or Weapon Destroyed - One weapon or field chosen by opponent is destroyed.

4 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on the Glancing Hit table. If reduced to 0 Structure Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table opposite.

5 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on the Glancing Hit table. If reduced to 0 Structure Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table opposite.

6 Chain Reaction – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on this table. If reduced to 0 Structure Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table opposite.

CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE

(S+D6 ROLL BEATS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Damage Control – The player controlling the vehicle must take a Ld test for it (use the 'standard' Ld for the army, ie, 7 for Imperial Guard). If the Ld test is passed, then the damage control systems on the Super-heavy Tank have contained the damage, and 1 Structure Point is 'repaired'. If the test is failed, your opponent must roll again on this table (which may give you another Damage Control test, if you're lucky!).

2-3 Destroyed – The vehicle is wrecked. Mark the destroyed vehicle with cotton wool or remove it entirely.

4-5 Explosion – Models within D6" suffer one wound on a D6 roll of 4+ (Saving throws allowed). Vehicles are unaffected. Otherwise, as above.

6 Huge Explosion – The vehicle is vaporised in a huge explosion. Roll a D3 per original Structure Point to determine how far the explosion extends in inches. Models in range suffer a wound on a roll of 4+ (Armour Saving throws allowed). Vehicles suffer a glancing hit on a roll of 4+.

GLANCING HIT

(S+D6 ROLL EQUALS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Gun Crew Shaken – One weapon may not shoot (chosen by opponent).

2 Gun Crew Shaken – One weapon may not shoot (chosen by opponent).

3 Pilot Shaken – Roll a D6 immediately. On a 1-3, the aircraft turns 45° left; on a 4-6, the aircraft turns 45° right. The flyer may not turn again for the remainder of this turn, and must remain facing in this direction when it shoots and moves off the table.

4 Engines Damaged – From now on there is a -1 modifier to the dice roll made to see if this flyer returns to the table after each attack run. The modifier is cumulative, so a flyer which suffered two Engine Damaged results would suffer a -2 modifier, etc.

5 Field or Weapon Destroyed – One weapon or field chosen by opponent is destroyed.

6 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on the Penetrating Hits table. If reduced to '0' Structure Points then roll on the Catastrophic Damage table instead.

PENETRATING HIT

(S+D6 ROLL BEATS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Pilot Shaken – Roll a D6 immediately. On a 1-3 the aircraft turns 45° left; on a 4-6 the aircraft turns 45° right. The flyer may not turn again for the remainder of this turn, and must remain facing in this direction when it shoots and moves off the table.

2 Engines Damaged – From now on there is a -1 modifier to the dice roll made to see if this flyer returns to the table after each attack run. The modifier is cumulative, so a flyer which suffered two Engine Damaged results would suffer a -2 modifier, etc.

3 Field or Weapon Destroyed - One weapon or field chosen by opponent is destroyed.

4 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on this table. If reduced to 0 Damage Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table instead.

5 Major Damage – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on this table. If reduced to 0 Structure Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table instead.

6 Chain Reaction – Lose -1 Structure Point and roll again on this table. If reduced to 0 Structure Points, roll on the Catastrophic Damage table instead.

SUPER-HEAVY FLYER DAMAGE TABLES

Roll on the following tables for hits on a Super-heavy Flyer. As a flyer, all hits are Glancing. Ordnance also rolls on these tables, not the Ordnance Damage tables.

CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE

(S+D6 ROLL BEATS ARMOUR VALUE)

1 Damage Control – The player controlling the vehicle must take a Ld test for it (use the 'standard' Ld for the army, ie, 7 for Imperial Guard). If the Ld test is passed then the damage control systems on the Super-heavy Flyer have contained the damage, and 1 Structure Point is 'repaired'. If the test is failed your opponent must roll again on this table (which may give you another Damage Control test, if you're lucky!).

2-5 Crash – The flyer crashes into the table 2D6" away in a random direction and then explodes. Models within D6" suffer one wound on a D6 roll of 4+ (Saving throws allowed). Vehicles are unaffected.

6 Huge Explosion – The flyer is vaporised in a huge explosion. This does not affect units on the ground, but other flyers within D6" suffer a glancing hit. Remove the flyer from play.

APPENDIX II
FLYERS

RULES FOR USING AIRCRAFT IN GAMES OF WARHAMMER 40,000

Imperial Armour introduces a new type of vehicle to the Warhammer 40,000 rules, called a Flyer. These vehicles are similar to skimmers in that they are capable of flight. The main difference between a skimmer and a flyer is that flyers tend to make an 'attack run', flying on at one table edge and then hurtling in a straight line very fast over the table before zooming off another table edge, all in the course of less than a turn, while a skimmer can 'loiter' and stays in play.

FLYERS

Flying vehicles require rather a lot of special rules to cover their movement. They start the game off the table, and then basically carry out an 'attack run' by flying over the table in a straight line. The following rules explain how this works in a game of 40K.

ON-STATION!

Flyers always start the game 'on-station', ie, in reserve, even in scenarios that do not normally allow reserves to be used. Roll a dice for them each turn, starting with the second turn, as you would normally for a reserve unit. When the flyer appears, place it on any table edge, facing in the direction you wish it to fly. It will not actually move until the opponent's turn, but placing it like this equates to the opposing army hearing and seeing the flyer appearing on the horizon! Because it's not really got to the table yet, the flyer may not shoot or be shot at until it makes its attack run.

ATTACK RUN

A flyer makes its attack run after your opposing player's Movement phase, but before their Shooting phase – in effect you 'interrupt' their turn to let the flyer make its move, (if several flyers all arrive at the same time, make their moves in any order you like and then move onto the Shooting phase). Move the flyer in a straight line any distance you like across the table. The flyer will get to make its attack at the end of the opponent's Shooting phase, after he has had a chance to fire at it.

After making the move, play returns to your opponent's Shooting phase. Enemy units shoot normally, or can target the flyer if preferred. The flyer can be shot at by any weapons apart from ordnance and barrage weapons, which may only target flyers if they are in an AA mount.

Measure the range to the flyer's base, or to any position the flyer occupied during its move before it reached its final position (ie, the shots can be assumed to have taken place as the aircraft moved). Then add 12" to the range measured to the base to find the range to the flier. Roll to hit the flyer, but because it is moving so fast it will only be hit on a roll of 6, no matter what the BS of the model making the attack is. Then roll for damage normally, counting the flyer as a fast-moving skimmer (ie, all hits are glancing). Stunned and Shaken results stop the flyer from attacking but have no other effect. Immobolised results destroy the flyer. Note that the LOS can never be blocked between a flyer and a target, either when it attacks or when it is shot at.

Assuming the flyer isn't shot down or suffers a stunned or shaken result, then it can make its attacks after your opponent has finished his Shooting phase. The flyer may pivot up to 45° either before or after making the attack (but not both). A flyer may shoot all of its weapons, even though it has moved.

Measure the range from the flyer's base to the target, but do not add 12" to the range this time (the flyer's attack doesn't have to work against gravity!). Then make the attack using the normal shooting rules. After the flyer has made its attack, it flies in a straight line off the table.

SECOND STRIKE

The flyer can make further attack runs. Roll a D6 at the start of the next friendly player's turn, and position the flyer on the table edge in the same manner as when it first appeared on a D6 roll of 2+. On a roll of 1, the flyer doesn't return this turn, but you may roll again for it in your next player turn.

NEW WEAPONS

These weapons may only be fitted to flyers.

Bombs: Bombs have the same effect as mortars (G48", S4, AP6, Heavy 1 blast, may pin). If a flyer releases several bombs at the same time, count each as a separate mortar in a 'battery'. Each bomb carried may be used once per battle. Bombs costs 5 pts each.

Heavy Bombs: These work in the same manner as a normal bomb, but it has the effect of a Griffon mortar (G12-48", S6, AP4, Ordnance 1 blast). Heavy bombs cost 20 pts each.

Rockets: Rockets have the same cost and effect as hunter-killer missiles (unlimited range, S8, AP3, Heavy 1). Each rocket carried may be used once per battle. Rockets cost 10 pts each.

Smart Bombs: A bomb or heavy bomb can be upgraded to a smart bomb for +50% cost. A smart bomb works in the same way as a normal bomb, except you may re-roll the Scatter dice if you don't like the first result (you must accept the second roll though!). To turn a bomb or heavy bomb into a smart bomb add +50% to its standard point costs.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT MOUNT

An anti-aircraft mount, as its name implies, is a mount that allows a weapon to be fired at flyers more easily than would normally be the case. Any weapon may be fitted in an anti-aircraft mount. An anti-aircraft mount allows the weapon to shoot at flyers using its normal BS, rather than only hitting on a 6. It also allows ordnance and barrage weapons to fire at fliers. For ordnance or barrage AA weapons, roll the Scatter dice – on a 'Hit' result the flyer is hit, otherwise the shot misses. Do not roll for scatter.

Weapons fitted in anti-aircraft mounts may not fire at all if the vehicle moved, and preclude the use of any other weapons on the vehicle in the turn that they fired, unless they are fitted to a war machine.

SUPER-HEAVY FLYERS

The Thunderhawk is a Super-heavy Flyer, and all of the rules that apply to Super-heavy Tanks apply to it also. Note that because the Thunderhawk is a flyer it can't Tank Shock enemy units or assault them! Because Thunderhawks are Super-heavy units they must be taken in their own 'detachment', as described in the Super-heavy vehicle rules. A Thunderhawk detachment can consist of between 1-3 Thunderhawk aircraft. Any types of Thunderhawk variant may be included in the same detachment.

ORBITAL LANDER

If a flyer is an orbital lander then it will fly down from orbit (or the sky) to land on the battlefield. When the flyer arrives from reserve it makes an attack run just like any other flyer. However, rather than firing its weapons it is allowed to land on the table (or hover low). If it chooses to land troops, it may not shoot.

The passengers may disembark in the opponent's turn; place them within 2" of the access points. The flyer may now completes its attack run, taking off again and leaving the table in same manner as if it were completing an attack runner (ie, it flies off the table in a straight line).

If new passengers wish to embark the flyer must land (or hover low) through its sides next turn. New passengers must move to the flyer and embark using the normal rules. Whilst landed, a flyer cannot move, but may shoot weapons like a normal vehicle. A flyer may not fire rockets or drop bombs whilst landed! If the flyer is fired upon whilst landed then the enemy roll to hit as normal, they do not need to roll 6s to hit.

A landed flier may take off again in any enemy turn, after the enemy has had their Shooting phase. It takes off and leaves the table in the same manner as completing an attack run.

Example
A Valkyrie transporting a Storm Trooper squad arrives from reserve. It is placed on the edge of the board until the enemy's turn. After the enemy's movement phase the Valkyrie moves to the point it wishes to drop the Storm Troopers off. In the enemy shooting phase they can target the Valkyrie, requiring 6s to hit, adding 12" to the range and only scoring glancing hits. After this, the Valkyrie drops off its troops, who are placed within 2" of the access points. It then flies straight off the board. It may return next turn on a 2+ roll as per the Flyer rules.

VTOL HOVER MODE

Some flyers (such as the Valkyrie and Vulture) are able to hover in place, remaining over the battlefield rather than flying off after an attack run.

When the flyer halts it may declare it is entering VTOL hover mode. Resolve the enemy shooting phase as normal, but the hovering flyer is hit using the firer's normal BS. The hovering flyer may then fire as a normal flyer, or disembark passengers. Rather than leave the table as per the normal Flyer rules, it remains on the table. The flyer uses its vectored engines to hover above the ground. It remains stationary but can turn in any direction to bring its weapons to bear. Whilst hovering, a flyer may fire all its weapons.

For the purposes of being fired at, treat the hovering flyer as a moving skimmer whilst in Hover mode. It can be targeted using the firer's normal BS, but still add 12" to the range. All hits are treated as glancing hits. If the hovering flyer is immobilised then it is destroyed. Whilst hovering, it cannot be attacked in close combat (it is too high off the ground), unless the attacker can fly or has jump packs, in which case it can be assaulted as if it is a moving vehicle.

At the end of its own turn the hovering flyer may disengage VTOL Hover Mode, using its main thrusters and fly off. It now reverts to being a flyer. It cannot return in the enemy turn immediately after it leaves the table, but must miss that turn as it flies away to gain height and speed for its attack run. It will return in the enemy turn on a 2+ as per the normal flyer rules.

Example
A Valkyrie transporting a Storm Trooper squad arrives from reserve. It is placed on the edge of the board until the enemy's turn. After the enemy Movement phase, the Valkyrie moves to the point it wishes to drop its troops off and declares it is activating VTOL hover mode. In the enemy Shooting phase they can target the Valkyrie, using there normal BS, adding 12" to the range and only scoring glancing hits. After the shooting, but before the Assault phase, the Valkyrie deploys its troops, who are placed within 2" of the access points. The Valkyrie then remains on the board, and can fire in its own Shooting phase before de-activating VTOL mode and leaving the board at the end of its turn. The Storm Troopers can move normally in their turn.

APPENDIX III
DEATH FROM THE SKIES
Advanced rules for aircraft and aircraft weaponry

Aircraft add a whole new dimension to the battlefields of the 41st millennium, high speed bombing and strafing runs are great fun, and I really like Jervis' aircraft rules for 40K. With a growing range of models available from Forge World aircraft can now be part of any 40K battlefield.

Aircraft with their speed, mobility and firepower dominate battlefields, and unless treated carefully they will do the same on the tabletop. This means whilst strafing, rocketing and bombing your opponent into oblivion might be great fun for you, it's not great fun for the poor victim – given wargames are supposed to be fun for both players, airpower becomes problematic if abused.

How to avoid air superiority ruining a good game – that is the question? Given players want to include aircraft in their games, then here are some thoughts to help balance up your games which might otherwise be ruined by airpower.

Firstly, is air defence. Weapons that are designed to shoot down aircraft are worth their weight in gold to a 40K commander suffering under air attacks. In fact I'd say they are a must have, even if the vehicle does nothing but hide behind cover and scan the skies, it is still doing a good job. Forge World are working on AA weapons for all 40K races, most how have some form of effective defence against enemy air attacks. Those that don't will get them eventually. I have included a special Tyranid AA weapon at the end of this article, as they seem to suffer most from a lack of defence.

Secondly, aircraft are powerful. They carry a lot of firepower, can easily find good targets, are fast and difficult to hit. Their only disadvantage is poor armour compared to tanks. Lacking AA defence the best defence is massed fire, even small weapons are a threat to aircraft, and concentrated fire is the best hope of scoring a hit. When under air attack concentrate firepower on the aircraft, go after it with everything you can, because if you don't it will be back next turn to reap more destruction.

The third option is a new one. The fighter-intercept rules which are included below. The best way to stop aircraft is by using aircraft. 40K is not the place for the game of dogfighting fighters, but I do feel that an aircraft should be able to attack another aircraft, sacrificing its ground attacks to target the enemy aircraft. This is where smaller fighter aircraft should score over heavier bombers, which have the weapons to do vast amounts of damage, but should also be vulnerable in return.

TARGETING WITH AIRCRAFT

Currently aircraft fall under the same targeting rules as ground vehicles and Super-heavy ground vehicle, ie, an aircraft without structure points must target all its fire at one unit. A Super-heavy aircraft can target as many different units as it likes.

These new weapon rules amend this slightly. A single weapon type must be used against a single target, ie, all the hellstrike missiles launched by an aircraft in one turn must be fired at one target. All the bombs dropped in one turn must be at one target. In the case of Super-heavy Flyers these can be different targets for different weapon systems, so a Marauder Destroyer could target one unit with its bombs, another with its hellstrike missiles, another with its autocannons and a fourth with its tail turret. For standard-sized aircraft, all their firing must be against a single target as for standard-sized vehicles.

Bombs are barrage weapons. If more than one bomb is dropped treat the attack as a multiple barrage. Even if an aircraft has line of sight, because of their speed and height, bombs always deviate two D6", taking the highest result rolled. Smart bombs may re-roll these dice.

AIR-DROPPED WEAPONRY

BOMBS

Currently aircraft bombs are quite weak (equivalent to mortar or heavy mortar shells). For reasons of game balance this is OK, but aircraft bombs tend to be far larger than artillery or mortar rounds. 500 lbs of explosive creates a big bang, and bombers can drop far more than a single bomb. OK, so the wargame of carpeting bombing your opponent's army with two Marauder bombers is not going to be much fun, so the following rules are a compromise, to increase the power of bombs, but also make them far more inaccurate weapons, which are only guaranteed to hit the ground, if not much else!

General purpose, high-explosive bombs

These are smaller bombs of around 500 lbs, designed for general destructive bombing against infantry, vehicles and defences.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Bomb	G48	6	4	Ordnance1/ Blast

A flyer can only target one unit (squad, vehicle, monster, bunker etc) per turn with its bombs (this includes Super-heavy Flyers). A plane can drop as many bombs as it likes in a turn. After the first bomb each subsequent bomb dropped is treated as a multiple barrage. Bombs that scatter always roll 2D6 for the distance, taking the highest result.

Heavy general purpose, high-explosive bombs

These are larger bombs of around 1,000-1,500 lbs, designed for heavy destructive bombing against hard targets such as war machines, fortifications and buildings.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Heavy bomb	G12-48	10	3	Ordnance1/ Blast

A flyer can only target one unit (squad, vehicle, monster, bunker etc) per turn with its heavy bombs (this includes Super heavy Flyers). A plane can drop as many heavy bombs as it likes in a turn. After the first Heavy bomb, each subsequent bomb dropped is treated as a multiple barrage. Heavy bombs that scatter always roll 2D6 for the distance, taking the highest result.

RARE BOMBS

Incendiary bombs

These are bombs are filled with highly flammable material, such as promethium, which do most of their damage from setting targets alight, rather than by the size of the explosion.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Incendiary bomb	G48	5	4	Ordnance1/ Blast

A flyer can only target one unit (squad, vehicle, monster, bunker etc) per turn with its incendiary bombs (this includes Super - heavy Flyers). A plane can drop as many incendiary bombs as it likes in a turn. After the first bomb, each subsequent bomb

dropped is treated as a multiple barrage. All models partially or wholly under the template are hit. Ignore cover saves for models hit by incendiary bombs. Incendiary bombs that scatter always roll 2D6 for the distance, taking the highest result.

Smart bombs

Advanced bombs use guidance systems to hit their target. A smart bomb works in the same way as a bomb, except you may re-roll the scatter dice if you do not like the first result, the second roll must be accepted.

ROCKETS AND MISSILES

Hellstrike missiles

Hellstrike missiles are currently exactly the same as hunter-killer missiles. Judging by the model, hellstrikes are in fact far larger missiles, fired at higher velocity (given the aircraft is already travelling at high speed when it is launched). Hellstrike missiles are one-shot ordnance weapons. They keep the same stat line, but become an ordnance weapon with no Blast template. Roll to hit using BS as normal but roll 2D6 for Armour Penetration, then choose the highest roll on the Ordnance Damage table.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Hellstrike	48"	8	3	Ordnance1

All the Hellstrikes launched in one turn must be at the same target. If an aircraft launches 4 Hellstrikes they must all be at the same target, you cannot launch 4 Hellstrikes at 4 different targets. This applies to Super-heavy flyers as well as standard size flyers.

Hunter-Killer missiles

A hunter-killer missile contains a small logis-engine, which directs the missile in flight. Once locked-on it will seek and destroy its target.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Hunter-Killer	unlimited	8	3	Heavy1

All the hunter-killer missiles launched in one turn must be at the same target. If an aircraft launches 4 hunter-killers they must all be at the same target, you cannot launch 4 missiles at 4 different targets. This applies to Super-heavy Flyers as well as standard-size flyers.

Multiple rocket pods

These small missile launchers are used to saturate a target area with rapid firing fragmentation missiles. They are highly effective anti-infantry weapon commonly used against swarms of lightly armed troops. Due to their short range they are only general mounted on low-level or hovering attack aircraft such as Valkyrie and Vulture, lacking the range needed for higher flying aircraft.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Rocket pod	24"	4	6	Heavy2/ Blast

Treat each multiple rocket pod as a separate weapon, resolving shots in turn.

FIGHTER-INTERCEPT SPECIAL RULE

Currently aircraft cannot attack aircraft, they can only attack ground targets. Faced by an incoming Marauder bomber it seems a Nigthwing fighter is no defence! To rectify this problem try these rules:

When an aircraft arrives from reserve it is placed on the edge of the board. At the start of the opponent's turns, instead of beginning an attack run the aircraft can declare it is waiting for a fighter-intercept. It remains on the edge of the board and cannot be targeted. When an enemy aircraft enters the board, the fighter-intercept can immediately attack it.

The fighter-intercept attacks using forward firing weapons at 24" range (do not add 12" for height). Bombs and hellstrike missiles cannot be used against enemy aircraft. Roll to hit as per normal for attacking an aircraft (ie, needing 6s to hit, all hits are only glancing).

The aspect of the enemy aircraft attacked depends on the board edges each flyer entered on. If the flyers entered on the opposite board edges then attacks are against the front armour (the flyers are going head to head). If the flyers enter via the same board edge then attacks are against the rear (the interceptor is on the target's tail). Any other combination and attacks are resolved against the side armour.

Assuming it survives, the intercepted aircraft can now choose to either fire back at the fighter-interceptor or continue with its ground attack run. If it fires back then it cannot attack ground targets as well. Only weapons with a line of sight to the attacking aircraft can return fire, and bombs or hellstrike missiles cannot be used against aircraft.

Once all firing is resolved both planes leave the table and roll to see if they return next turn as normal.

Only the following aircraft can use the Fighter-Intercept special rule:

- Imperial Navy Thunderbolt and Lightning fighter
- Eldar Nightwing and Phoenix
- Tau Barracuda
- Ork Fighter-Bommer and Bommer
- Chaos Hell Talon
- Tyranid Harridan (and any Gargoyles carried by the Harridan).
- Dark Eldar Raven and Razorwing.

EPIC AIRCRAFT VARIANTS

These rules are for the Forge World range of Epic scale aircraft. They should be used in scenario and campaign style gaming, rather than in tournament style games. For this reason no points values are given. For tournament games a 'counts as' is given.

The reason for doing these variants is that Forge World offers a greater variety of models than the main Epic range, with many weapon combinations not covered in the basic game – but all designed to match their 40K equivalents. This produces some frightening results (Marauder Destroyer!) and the Vulture gunship has a very wide choice of weaponry (actually far larger than shown here). Should players wish, they can feel free to swap weapons to make any of the armament combinations available in 40K.

I have reduced the hellstrike's AT to 4+ on the aircraft rather than 2+ on the Vulture mainly because 2+ seems way over the top for aircraft armed with multiple hellstrikes, and the skimming Vulture or Valkyrie is a slower, more stable firing platform than a fast moving jet.

EPIC AIRCRAFT VARIANTS

LIGHTNING FIGHTER

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Fighter	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
long autocannon	45cm	AP5+/AT6+/AA6+	Fixed Forward Arc
twin lascannons	30cm	AT4+/AA4+	Fixed Forward Arc
2 x hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT4+	One shot

Counts as: Thunderbolt

LIGHTNING (Strike Variant)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Fighter	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
twin lascannons	30cm	AT4+/AA4+	Fixed Forward Arc
3 x hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT4+	One shot

Counts as: Thunderbolt

THUNDERBOLT (Missile armed)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Fighter	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
2 x twin autocannons	30cm	AP4+/AT5+/AA5+	Fixed Forward Arc
twin lascannons	30cm	AT4+/AA4+	Fixed Forward Arc
2 x hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT4+	One shot

Counts as: Thunderbolt

THUNDERBOLT (Bomb armed)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Fighter	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
2x twin autocannons	30cm	AP4+/AT5+/AA5+	Fixed Forward Arc
twin lascannons	30cm	AT4+/AA4+	Fixed Forward Arc
bombs	15cm	2BP	One shot

Counts as: Thunderbolt

MARAUDER BOMBER

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Bomber	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
2 x twin heavy bolters	15cm	AA5+	
twin lascannons	45cm	AT4+/AA4+	Fixed Forward Arc
bombs bay payload	15cm	4BP	One shot
underwing bombs	15cm	4BP	One shot

Counts as: Marauder bomber

Damage Capacity 2. Critical Hit Effect: The bomber's engines are seriously damage, the pilot loses control and the aircraft crashes.

MARAUDER DESTROYER

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Aircraft	Bomber	6+	n/a	n/a

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
3x twin autocannons	30cm	AP4+/AT5+/AA5+	Fixed Forward Arc
twin heavy bolters	15cm	AA5+	
twin assault cannons	15cm	AA4+	
bombs bay payload	15cm	2BP	One shot
4 x hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT4+	One shot

Counts as: Marauder bomber

Damage Capacity 2. Critical Hit Effect: The bomber's engines are seriously damage, the pilot loses control and the aircraft crashes.

VALKYRIE (Lascannon variant)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	35cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
3 x twin autocannons	45cm	AT5+	-
2 x heavy bolters	30cm	AP5+	-
hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT2+	One shot

Counts as: Valkyrie

VULTURE (variant 1, general purpose role)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	35cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
heavy bolter	30cm	AP5+	-
twin missile launchers	45cm	AP5+/AT5+	-
bomb racks	15cm	2 BP	One shot

Counts as: Vulture

VULTURE (variant 2, anti-personel role)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	35cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
heavy bolter	30cm	AP5+	-
twin autocannons	45cm	AP4+/AT5+	-
2 x rocket pods	30cm	1 BP	Disrupt, One shot

Counts as: Vulture

VULTURE (variant 3, anti-tank role)

Type	Speed	Armour	CC	Firefight
Armoured Vehicle	35cm	5+	6+	5+

Weapon	Range	Firepower	Notes
heavy bolter	30cm	AP5+	-
twin lascannons	45cm	AT4+	-
2 x hellstrike missiles	120cm	AT 2+	One shot

Counts as: Vulture

APPENDIX IV

TAU VEHICLE COLOUR SCHEMES & MARKINGS

The Tau's approach to battlefield camouflage and identification largely remains a mystery to the Imperium's forces. To the casual observer, Tau vehicle camouflage is utilising the same principles of concealment, confusion and recognition as the Imperium, but the Fire Caste have refined these principles to suit the Tau's method of waging war.

Tau patterns try to combine the concealment and confusion aspects into one colour scheme. On Taros, the vast majority of Hunter Cadres were using subtle diffused patterns with long blending distances. Given the distances that vehicles would be visible over open desert this makes perfect sense, providing the most effective camouflage at long range. Notably most Tau vehicles, and aircraft, use a two-tone scheme, in which the camouflage is added as another tone of the base colour, drawing on natural patterns, often symetrical. For example, a Devilfish in a blue night-time concealment and disruption pattern might be dark blue, with lighter blue stripes. It seems the Fire Caste have developed a system of camouflage that does not use contrasting colours.

Some Hunter Cadres (probably those assigned to different battlefield roles) used variations of the basic patterns. Commanders seem to be given leeway to use their own personalised colour schemes if they wish.

Tau Hunter Cadres also use a trim colour. This colour, used sparingly on all of a Hunter Cadre's vehicles, may be to aid recognition on the battlefield. Alternatively, there may be some traditional or ritualistic reason behind the choice of colour, but again this is unknown.

Recognition for Tau vehicles does not seem to be an important issue. This maybe due to their advanced communications and tracking technology, making visual recognition less of a factor, but this is speculation.

Vehicle markings and number are used, but are less intrusive that on Imperial Guard tanks. It seems the disciplined Fire Caste do not allow the addition of slogans, vehicle names or kill markings (all common on Imperial Guard vehicles). On Taros no Tau vehicles were seen with such 'unofficial' crew additions. There was also no Campaign badge.

The principles of Tau vehicle numbering and lettering are unknown at this time. Notably, regardless of the Sept from which a Hunter Cadre is drawn, all Fire Caste vehicles bear the badge of that Caste, which is also the symbol of the race's homeworld Sept.

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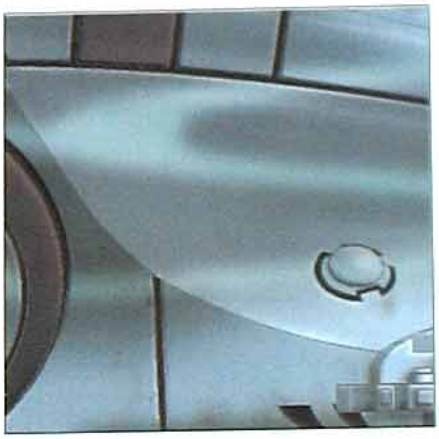

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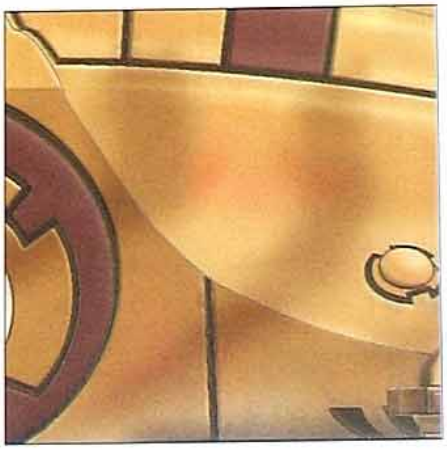

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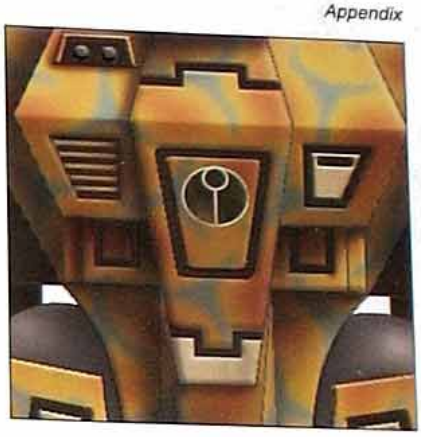

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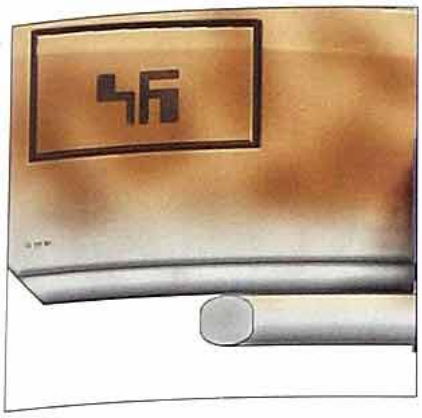

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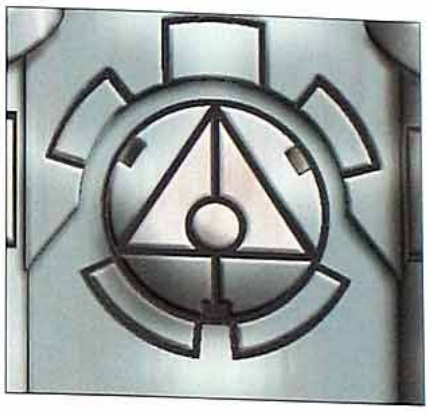

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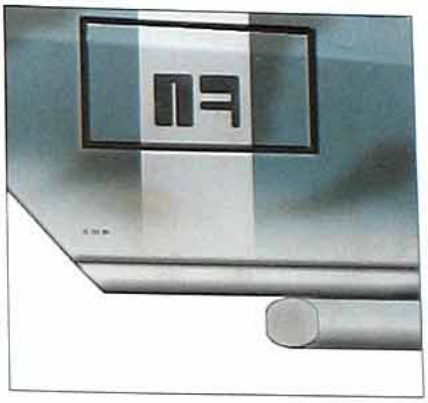


1. T'au symbol. The symbol of the Tau homeworld, and also the symbol of the Fire Caste, is the most common symbol carried by all Tau vehicles and Fire Warriors.

2. Night-fighting colour scheme using a continous feathered line as a confusion pattern, to disrupt the vehicles shape and make identification difficult.

3. Desert camouflage scheme. Commonly Tau camouflage seems to utilise two shades of the same colour, as here, sandy yellow with a darker shade to aid concealment.

4. Tau lettering. For identification purposes the Tau use their own alphabet to denominate between vehicles. What (if any) system lies behind the lettering is unknown.

5. Desert camouflage scheme. Again two shades of the same colour used to aid conceal. This scheme was the most common encountered Tau camouflage on Taros.

6. A two tone pattern favoured by some Hunter Cadres for sky-line concealment.

7. An uncommon bold camouflage scheme, utilising the same pattern as (5), but without feathering. Also, note the lighter coloured underbelly, not uncommon on grav-vehicles.

8. This unusual mottled pattern (still in two tone though) was used by one Hunter Cadre for all its vehicles.

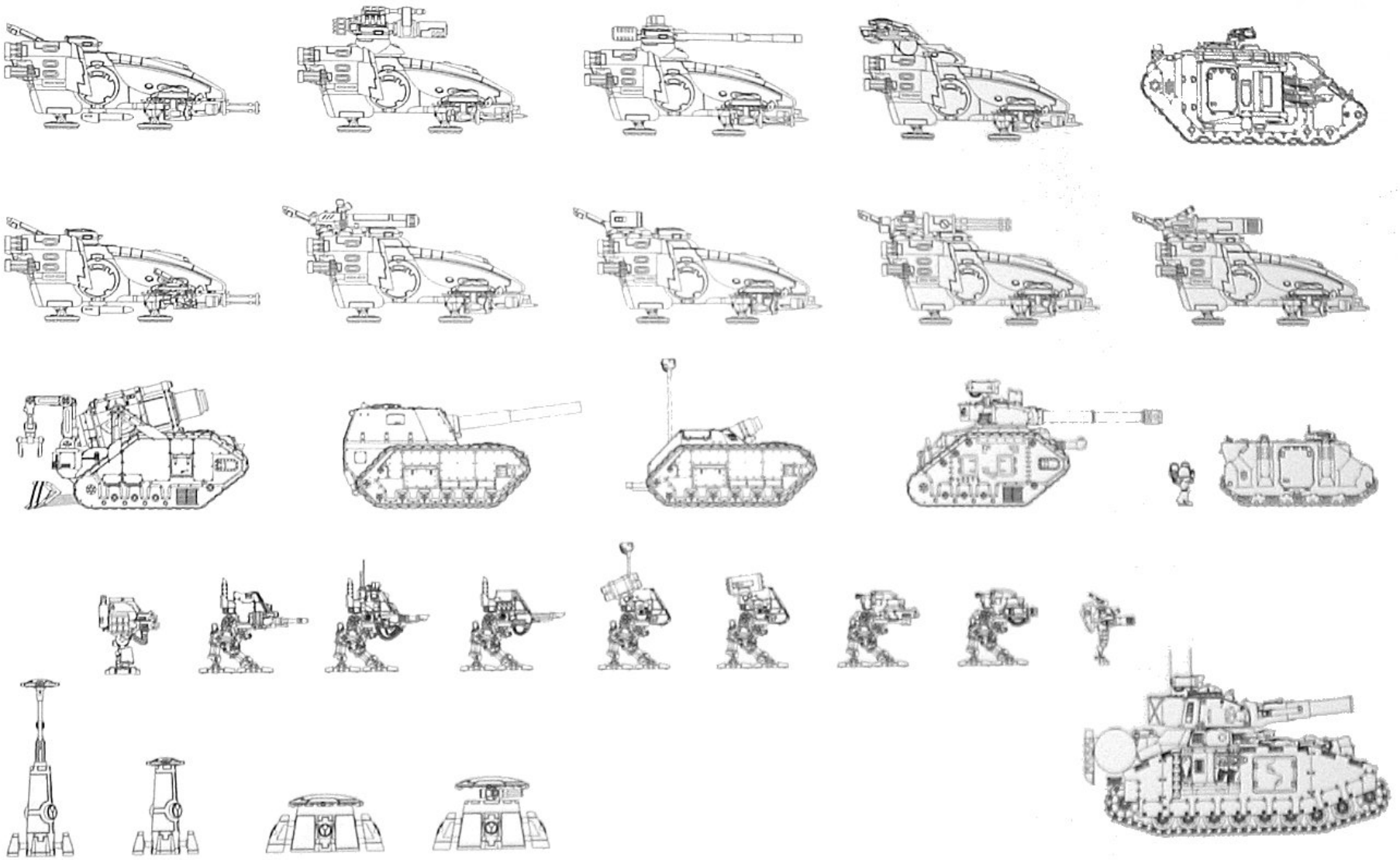
9. A distinctive pattern used on a commander's personal battlesuit. This scheme does not conform to any normal Tau camouflage, and as such must be either a personal preference or an experimental pattern.

10. Tau numbering. Like the alphabet Tau use numbers as well, again their significance is unknown.

11. Air Caste symbol, carried by all Tau aircraft. This one is taken from a Tiger Shark. Which way round the symbol is supposed to be (if it even matters to the Tau), is debatable.

12. Tau numbering, this time highlighted by an identification stripe. In this case, it is a white stripe, but other colours are sometimes used.

APPENDIX V – SIZE COMPARISON



Imperial and Tau vehicles of the Taros Campaign.