

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

EYE OF TERROR

WARHAMMER 40,000 WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN

The Games Development team take a look back at the bloody conclusion to the largest wargaming event in history.

Andy Chambers: The biggest campaign in Games Workshop's history has drawn to a close. Over forty thousand players have sent in more than quarter of a million game results over eight weeks to decide the fate of the Cadian Gate. We've had more results posted in a single day than in the entire Armageddon campaign – and we thought that was big!

AND THE RESULT IS...

Victory for Chaos! Not a complete victory, the forces of Order have held the line in many places and Cadia itself still defies the Arch Warmaster Abaddon. But nonetheless over eight weeks the forces of Disorder have consistently out-fought and out-maneuvred their opponents across the warzones of the Eye of Terror.

It's been a nail-biter from start to finish, seeing the results come rolling in and watching the planets fall before the Chaos assault. It's had some hugely unexpected twists of fate and circumstance as the two opposing forces grappled with the complexities of the fiendish campaign mechanics and twists built into the game. But it has been a mighty game indeed, the like of which the world has, I suspect, never seen before.

THE CONCEPT

In concept the Eye of Terror campaign was created to be a monstrous strategy game with an unguessable number of players. By posting results from their tabletop games on the Eye of Terror website, players could make infinitesimal 'moves' on the Eye of Terror map,



WHAT IS THE CADIAN GATE?

The planet Cadia bestrides the one stable route out of the Eye of Terror, an infernal region of warp storms, daemon worlds and indescribable extra-dimensional horrors. The direst foes of the

Emperor, the servants of the Chaos gods, were kept in check by this and other Imperial bastion-worlds in the region. The objective of Abaddon's Thirteenth Crusade was to seize control of the Cadian Gate,

leaving him free to unleash the innumerable hordes of the Ruinous Powers against the heartland of the Imperium, the huge volume of space surrounding Terra known as the Segmentum Solar.



Campaign information	
Total number of sectors	12
Total number of systems	9
Total number of planets	46
Active warzones	67

choosing where to make a difference in the overall picture. For me, the big question was always whether the players themselves could organise their efforts in ways to make a difference to the overall map. In the Armageddon campaign the games played virtually cancelled each other out because there was no room for strategies. The campaign was fought at a tactical level and across the thousands of games played overall army balance (thank god) meant that there was seldom more than a 10% swing in either direction. Interestingly the Imperial fleet was the real star of that campaign, consistently out-performing the Orks.

So, the idea for Eye of Terror was to draw up a map and rules where tactical games allowed strategic moves. Because the individual moves would be tiny on such a vast scale (whole worlds at war, millions fighting) it would mean that the overall strategy would be generated by the players' decisions en masse. To facilitate this we created war rooms on the websites for the two sides' players to communicate and work on their strategies. We made up a set of event cards to distribute to individual players to allow them to make a difference in the fighting and create narrative ideas. We coordinated with the indefatigable GW Events and Retail Staff members so they could create a summer packed with battles all over the globe. We met with clubs and talked about what was coming up in White Dwarf, at gaming conventions and on the net. We finalised the mechanics of the campaign for the website and awaited the big day.

We still had no clue as to what would actually happen.

CAMPAIGN EVENTS

I felt it was important to introduce some pre-programmed events into the campaign which would give it a sense of unfolding drama and engage the players throughout its duration. These allowed us to sketch out a broad framework of themes for the course of the campaign in narrative terms. So, over eight weeks the campaign moved from a period of insurrections, raids and sabotage up to a devastating full-scale Chaos invasion, the commitment of Imperial reinforcements, intervention of the Eldar and on to a final, suitably apocalyptic showdown with warp storms cutting off access to all but the key strategic areas. In addition to the programmed

events there were wild cards too. Some of these were dictated by the turn of events within the campaign. For example we decided that the loss of Imperial control on certain worlds might ultimately lead to their destruction – the Imperials invoking Exterminatus in order to stop the Chaos taint spreading further.

Within this broader framework we then used the player event cards to flesh out individual acts of bravery or infamy, random chance and cruel fate.



PLANET KILLER

The fight is to the finish and the Despoiler has access to the most terrible weapons of the age. It was a fool's dream not to expect him to use them. Even he dare not destroy Cadia and its Pylons although anywhere else is at his mercy, and that is a quality Abaddon has long lacked. Play this card upon Macharia. That planet is destroyed.

THE EXECUTION

Within the first day it was clear that this was going to be bigger than I'd anticipated (I'd guessed at Armageddon +50%, boy was I wrong). The initial inroads of Chaos were disappointing to say the least. Over the first week their efforts were rebuffed and in some sectors the forces of Order went over to the offensive, tightening their grip on a few out-of-the-way systems. Over the following pages you can find accounts of the course of the campaign in all the individual warzones, but I recall vividly the wails of dismay in the Disorder war room that first week. Secretly I blamed myself in some measure as I'd used the planet of Nemesis Tessera as an example of being easy to influence in several presentations. The hordes of Chaos duly showed up there and got

smacked down in no uncertain terms. What I had dreaded – an easy victory for the more numerous players of the forces of Order – was in the offing.

By the second week there was a change in the wind. The Imperium continued to secure its control in some places but in the major sectors Chaos attacks were starting to take their toll. After the virtual stasis of the initial week the daily shifts were frightening to behold. Instead of concentrating their results in slugging matches with their Imperial opponents the Chaos players had begun to batter at worlds for a day and then move on, leaving their foes to pick up the pieces. Using just this tactic the forces of Disorder succeeded in capturing the prison planet of St Josmane's Hope. An

Imperial counter-attack developed but proved hopeless, the forces of Order had been caught flat-footed and couldn't muster the strength they needed to make progress.

On our internal Eye of Terror web group we contemplated the situation. From a background perspective we felt the Imperium would sacrifice the planet rather than lose it to the forces of Disorder, it would also mark the victory of the Chaos players so that come what may they had made a milestone mark (unplanned as it was) in the narrative of the Eye of Terror campaign. So it was one Friday night that I gave the order to destroy St Josmane's Hope, a fictional world in a giant fictional game with no actual pieces. It was a weird feeling.

WINNING AND LOSING

Each active warzone in the campaign was allotted an Imperial control percentage, which expressed their loyalty to the Emperor as an overall percentage. Game results registered in the warzone shifted that percentage up or down by increments determined by the resistance level of the planet, so number of results x resistance = control shift up or down.

IMPERIAL CONTROL TABLE

Percentage	State	Description
80-100	Faithful	Whilst the warzone may contain anti-Imperial factions they are kept under rigorous control and the loyalty of the inhabitants can normally be taken for granted.
60-79	Dependable	The warzone suffers frequent 'incidents' or contains regions to which Imperial control does not extend. In the main though the warzone is loyal albeit with a measure of self-interest.
40-59	In the balance	The warzone is still subject to Imperial law and control but the control is superficial and could break down under pressure. There are strong factions and substantial regions in the warzone that are actively opposed to the Imperium, but they are not yet able to exert control themselves.
20-39	Unreliable	Imperial control has broken down in this warzone, being confined only to some areas or die-hard supporters. The warzone still hasn't been utterly corrupted but it is on that path and Imperial forces should be very wary operating in such a zone.
0-19	Anarchy	All Imperial authority has collapsed and the warzone has fallen into lawlessness, heresy and iconoclasm. There may still be tiny outposts of loyalists but the warzone is on the brink of being in need of the ultimate sanction of Exterminatus.

What the forces of Disorder worked out early on, and used to their advantage, was that we also built in a cascade effect. When a warzone crossed a threshold, Unreliable to Anarchy for example, it would cause a knock-on effect on other warzones nearby. This represented the effects of supply lines, reinforcements and overall morale on the different worlds in a star system or across the systems in a sector or sub-sector of space. By concentrating their efforts on beating down Imperial control only in areas where it would have a knock-on effect Chaos was able to magnify its efforts over a wide area.

FACTIONS

It emerged that the players had got organised. The forces of Disorder had formed several factions advised by strategists from different think tanks, most notably the Triad and the Planet Killer group. Repeated efforts by the forces of Order to form a coherent strategy failed to get the same results. Until the last weeks of the campaign the forces of Order stayed one jump behind and unable to respond to the spreading tide of Disorder. To my delight the Tyranids and Orks each worked as discrete factions and hammered at their own chosen targets, Belis Corona and Scarus.

A side effect of this was that the Tau were left to their own devices and expanded steadily through the whole campaign – I had believed that doing battle with the Tau would absorb more of the Ork and Tyranid players' attentions during a campaign mostly about the Imperium and Eldar against Chaos. Likewise, the Dark Eldar, Dark Angels and even individual Chaos legions worked together for common goals, often pursuing their own agenda in defiance of any overall plan. It was a joy to behold.

The Eye of Terror spawned a plethora of fan based forums and websites. A particularly fine one which emerged as a great source of information, analysis and views was ruralguards' site;

<http://hipcat.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk>

Congratulations to him and his contributors for enhancing the campaign immeasurably.

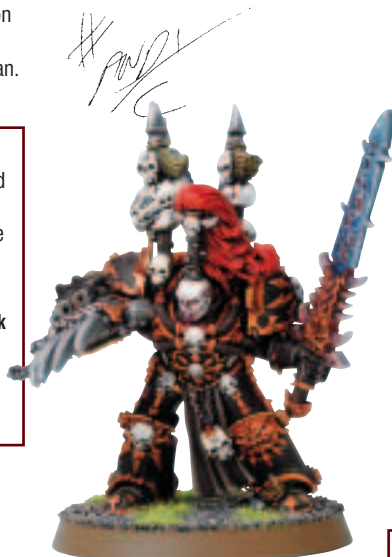
All too quickly the end was in sight. With two weeks to go the forces of Order finally gained some cohesion and started fighting back more effectively. Whereas many of the Imperium's victories had been used to maintain their superiority on a sector and system level, they were getting murdered on the planets. With a united command structure they managed to pull back from the brink and stop the continual erosion of their positions they had suffered for weeks.

At the last the combined efforts of the forces of Order kept Abaddon from his ultimate goal of controlling the Cadian system but, in the process, the Cadian Gate has been ravaged. Many bastions have fallen to the forces of Chaos and may never be recovered, the warp storms surrounding the Eye have expanded to engulf whole systems. The fighting on others could continue for decades to come. With the worlds captured

the forces of Disorder are now positioned to launch attacks into more Imperial worlds. The Cadian Gate may not be open to the forces of Chaos, but their minions are over the walls in unprecedented numbers.

The campaign has been massive in scale and a wonderful example of what can be achieved today. Less than a decade ago Jervis Johnson ran Ichar IV, our first mega campaign which used results from across the globe to determine its results – by post no less! The Eye of Terror set a new record for sheer 'bigness' and, as with its predecessors, will form a cornerstone of the rich background of the Warhammer 40,000 universe in the years to come. For all those who have taken part and made it possible I extend both heartfelt gratitude and congratulations on making something so truly gargantuan possible.

Ave Imperator!
Death to the False Emperor!
Here's to the battles yet to come.



ABADDON

Though Abaddon's final goal of smashing through the Cadian Gate was ultimately unsuccessful, the advances made by his forces have gained him much more than was initially imagined. His retinue of Chosen, led by Devram Korda, the Tyrant of Sarora, returned to his side in the closing days of the war, bringing with him two individuals who had journeyed to the centre of the Eye of Terror. Together with the sorcerer Ygethmor the Deceiver, they presented Abaddon with the Heart of Chaos, a power that Zaraphiston, sorcerer of the Despoiler, had long claimed could not exist. It is known that Ygethmor now stands at Abaddon's right hand, while the fate of Zaraphiston remains a mystery.



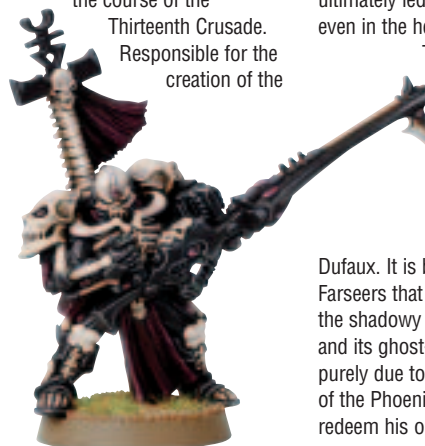
AHRIMAN

Ahriman himself ripped open the walls of the webway with information torn from the mind of Inquisitor Czevak. His plan to breach the fastness of the Black Library came dangerously close to fruition, but the combined forces of the mysterious Harlequins and the Ulthwé Strike Force held him from its gates. In a daring move, the Harlequinade of the Red Masque freed Inquisitor Czevak, though what they have since done with him is, at present, unknown: at present it is believed by Imperial Astropaths that he may be incarcerated by the Eldar within the webway.

Though his ultimate goal was thwarted, Ahriman's star has since risen in its ascendancy with his Daemonic Primarch, so perhaps some other, unguessable objective was achieved that remains to come to light.

MAUGAN RA

The immortal Phoenix Lord Maugan Ra took a vital role in deciding the fate of the Eldar over the course of the Thirteenth Crusade. Responsible for the creation of the



Ulthwé Strike Forces, Maugan Ra and the elite Black Guardians fought across every sector by cunning use of the webway. He ultimately led the Eldar to victory even in the heart of the Eye of

Terror and, after repelling Dark Eldar raids on Xersia, fought alongside Creed against Abaddon's incursion into the Basilica

Dufaux. It is believed by many Farseers that the reappearance of the shadowy Craftworld of Altansar and its ghost-like inhabitants was purely due to the iron determination of the Phoenix Lord to locate and redeem his once-lost brethren.



URSARKAR CREED

No man, no Space Marine, fought harder to save Cadia. Although each Castellum levelled cut him deep, the faith of Ursarkar Creed was unshakeable. His victories could not easily be counted but the numbers of the Arch-enemy did not lessen whereas each defeat drained his strength. Creed was forced first to give ground to preserve his forces and then to abandon his favoured mobile defensive tactics in favour of defending fortified lines. His friend, Jarran Kell, was wounded defending him from yet another Chaos Champion eager to make a name and Creed was fatigued to the point of collapse when finally the momentum of the Chaos forces ran out.

Cadia stood, but only just. The greatest fortress-world of the Imperium had been reduced to a blasted husk. It may have been a time of despair, but Creed sent out a message that was eventually relayed to every Cadian regiment wherever it was.

"Soldiers, I speak to you to tell you to keep faith with the God-Emperor. We have a sacred duty greater than any of us. We are Cadians, we bar the gate to hell; if it is breached, we will seal it.

Wherever you are, recruit, recruit and train. Seek out pious men and bring them under your colours. While the Shock Troops march toward Cadia hope remains. Know that we will never cease the fight while our world lies desecrated and burned. March on my soldiers, march on, till we are together again, tomorrow, on Cadia."



LOGAN GRIMNAR

A council of representatives from those chapters opposing Abaddon's Thirteenth Black Crusade elected the irascible Great Wolf of the Space Wolves Chapter as their nominal head. His leadership in the campaign proved a decisive factor in many engagements, and he even ordered a Great Company under his command to stand beside a company of Dark Angels at Kasr Sonnen, the two forces putting aside their deep, mutual resentment to rout a force many times their own size. The incident proved that the two forces united presented a force many times more

powerful than the sum of its parts, yet few believe the two chapters will be able to put aside their differences for good.



CYPHER

The mysterious leader of the Fallen, Cypher has been hunted by the Dark Angels and their successor chapters for ten thousand years. Though it is not known whether Cypher was encountered directly during the war, unconfirmed reports suggest that the chapter's Interrogator-Chaplains captured as many as eight Fallen during the battles around the Caliban system, more than have been captured in such a short period in many thousands of years. Further reports link Cypher to the mysterious Voice of the Emperor, who, it is rumoured, was captured by the Dark Angels during the fighting, but whose cell was found empty upon the prison ships' return to the Tower of Angels.



TYPHUS

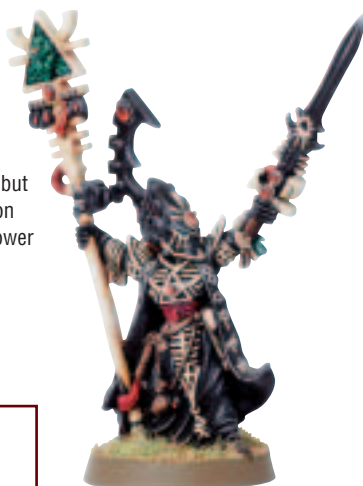
Striding through the blackened ruins of the ravaged worlds of the Imperium, crushing the bones of the slain beneath his Terminator armour and spreading the vilest afflictions of Nurgle, Typhus was the embodiment of terror, a cursed thing too terrible to name. His ship, the Terminus Est, and its supporting plague fleet were one of the largest Chaos battle groups remaining active throughout the war and allowed Typhus to terrorise warzone after warzone.

It was on Ulthor, in the Agripinaa system, that Typhus unleashed his greatest sorceries, exhibiting the favour in which he is held by Nurgle. The once

verdant agri-world was twisted and corrupted. The taint of the Herald devolved whatever life it found rendering it down into a formless sea of putrescence that wailed in unending torment. Seeing his handiwork Typhus took the nascent daemonworld for his own, a stronghold beyond the Gate from which he could bring terror to the Imperium at his leisure.

AZRAEL

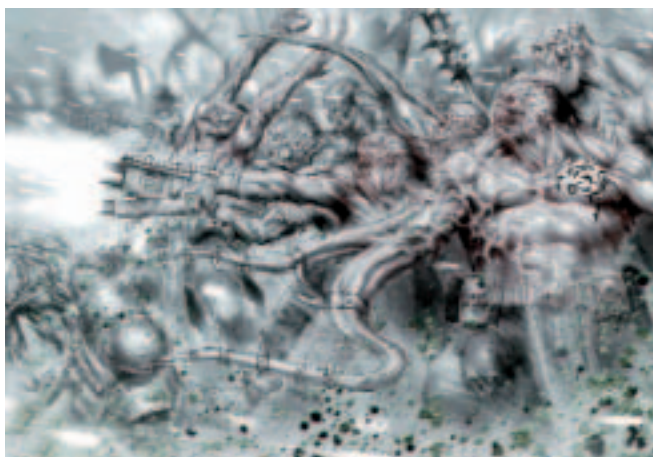
Azrael, the Supreme Grand Master of the Dark Angels was a notable absentee at the council of Chapter Masters that elected Grimnar their head. Azrael led the Dark Angels, and the so-called Unforgiven Chapters, according to his own, inscrutable strategy. The only time he is known to have stood beside other Imperial forces was when he led a company of Dark Angels upon Xersia, where he joined with Lord Castellan Creed and his Cadian 8th to repel a force of Black Legionnaires from the world's High Basilica. Though the Despoiler succeeded in his sacrilegious mission to desecrate the high altar as part of some dedication to the Ruinous Powers that would guarantee the success of the Thirteenth Black Crusade, Azrael was instrumental in repelling the invaders, for a time at least.

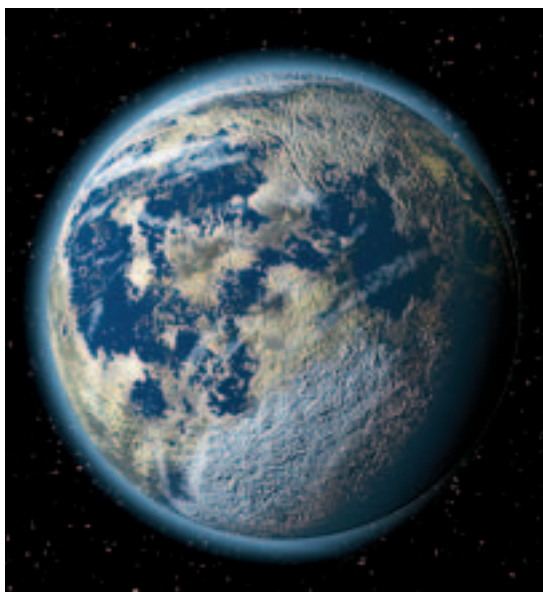


ELDRAD ULTHRAN

The Farseer Eldrad Ulthran, most gifted prophet of the Eldar race,

found that the twisting forests of possibilities through which he walked at will were denied to him, blinding his exceptional scrying abilities. His one certainty was that darkness stood ready to engulf him and possibly even his homeworld. At the formation of the Ulthwé Strike Forces Eldrad divided many parts of his consciousness into shimmering waystones and, after many weeks of guiding his troops through the webway, he was exhausted and spent when he was last seen by the Eldar of Ulthwé. He appointed a controversial member of the Seer Council as his successor before departing with his Warlock bodyguard on a desperate last quest; to rescue the soul of one of the legendary Talismans of Vaul before it turned the surface of Cadia into a boiling, incandescent sea.





The Hive Teriix disaster was the catalyst for a wave of warp storms to roll through the entire Cadian sector. Terror and confusion reigned and, in the wake of the storms, the forces of Chaos struck. In the vanguard was Lucius the Eternal, Champion of Slaanesh and his Emperor's Children. These fiends perpetrated the most unspeakable atrocities upon the planet of Belisar. In the face of such horror the heroic action of Captain Lockheart and the 80th Thracian regiment at Weykand Gap restored Imperial morale.

The feeling was short-lived though. On Demios Primary, treachery rendered the orbital defences helpless to resist the Arch-enemy's onslaught. Black Legion assault groups, along with renegade Space Marines of the Extinction Angels, swept through the forges of the Adeptus Mechanicus scattering the Skitari Legions like chaff. The Legio Astorum mobilised in defence of its fortress and gradually repelled the invaders. The loss of the forge world's manufacturing capabilities was, however, a serious blow and, weeks after the invasion, Extinction Angel units remained hidden in the depths of the Mechanicus facilities despite the arrival of a Black Templar Crusade to hunt them down.

On Ormantep Black Legion forces were opposed by members of the 13th Company. Initially it was not clear who these mysterious warriors were, but their victory over the 9th Black Legion company was ample demonstration of their loyalties.

Kergath the Flame, Captain of the 9th, was prey to the Wulfen and the Chaos forces were temporarily driven off.

On Kasr Sonnen, Kasr Holn, Vigilatum, St Josmane's Hope and Kasr Partox, however, the Chaos Legions enjoyed victory after victory. Kasr Vassan was fiercely disputed, the streets running with blood. On St Josmane's Hope, the situation became so dire that Ursarkar Creed ordered that the planet's reactors be deliberately overloaded, sacrificing the world to prevent it becoming a stronghold of the Arch-enemy. On Kasr Holn, Space Marine reinforcements managed to stem the tide, but on Vigilatum and Kasr Partox the Imperial forces were overwhelmed by a tide of mutants, traitors and renegades. At the forefront, the Black Legion, Word Bearers and World Eaters repeatedly shattered each successive Imperial defence line and turned proud castellum into charnel pits. The invaluable expertise of the Iron Warriors in this type of warfare was rewarded when a new fortress began to take shape on the shattered remains of Kasr Partox.

The Chaos fleet, including one of the Blackstone Fortresses – ancient engines of destruction built aeons past by unknown xenos – gathered above Cadia but they were delayed by lightning-fast attacks on the Blackstone by squadrons of Eldar cruisers. Lord Admiral Quarren was quick to take advantage of the delay and his counter-strike flowed from Cadia, to Xersia and finally Demios

Binary. By dint of this cunning manoeuvre Quarren succeeded, first in dividing the main fleet and, then, in pursuing the defeated elements to final extinction. Only those squadrons that stayed close to the Blackstone Fortress remained a threat but the Chaos fleet was now concerned more with survival. Most significantly the Imperial flagship *Gathalamor* crippled the *Merciless Death*, driving it to the Warp from whence it took no further part in the war.

As an act of vengeance, Abaddon despatched the *Planet Killer* to Macharia. A desperate boarding action by Space Marine Honour Guard companies failed to prevent the *Planet Killer* firing, but damaged its shields. As a consequence, debris from the shattered world struck the *Planet Killer*, which was last seen tumbling away into wilderness space critically damaged.

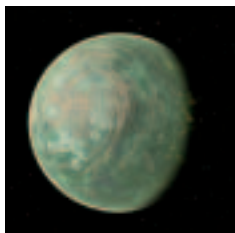
As if the task of repelling the legions of the Despoiler was not enough, Vigilatum and Kasr Partox were subjected to slave raids by the Dark Eldar, each inflicting more misery and drawing vital forces from the front line. The Dark Eldar next appeared in the Xersia system, where the Relictors Chapter anticipated their raid and were waiting for them. The Relictors outdid the savage Dark Eldar in ferocity, defeating them before they could claim any more human prisoners. Defeated and cut off from their warp portals the Dark Eldar fell back to their fleet. They did not expect that Admiral Quarren would have set his fleet in motion so swiftly after fighting the Chaos fleet though. His vanguard smashed into the Dark Eldar fleet inflicting terrible damage and driving them out of the war in the Cadian sector.

As the war raged on, even the universe itself seemed to conspire with Chaos. A subtle change in the hue of the Eye of Terror itself triggered madness on the Ulthwé Craftworld as suggestions implanted over millennia by the minions of the Changer of the Ways were activated. Then, on the heel of the original wave of warp storms, solar flare activity magnified throughout the sector adding to its confusion, despair and isolation. Confusion can be a two-edged sword though, and in the Cadian system the Lord Castellan, Ursarkar Creed, transferred three regiments of Shock Troops from the Prosan training grounds to Kasr Barrus on Cadia. The movement was undetected and the traitorous Ubridius Light Infantry were completely unprepared for the Cadian counter-attack. It was to be the last significant victory for the beleaguered Cadians as, faced by a seemingly limitless horde led by Chaos Marines who burned with ten millennia of hatred, they were inexorably driven back to Kasr Partox. There they turned at bay, but high above them oblivion beckoned in the monstrous form of a corrupted Blackstone Fortress.

The Blackstone Fortress' weaponry beat down on Kasr Partox remorselessly slaughtering the warriors of both sides. Faced with the certain destruction of Cadia's last defenders Admiral Quarren had no choice but to muster his battered fleet for yet another battle. One by one the screening Chaos vessels were peeled away from the Blackstone until eventually it was forced to cease its attack and concentrate upon its own defence. With the end of the Blackstone's attack an uneasy lull settled on Cadia during which Creed evacuated Kasr Partox while he still could.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
Belisar (System)	80%	68.3%	Dependable
Cadian (Sector)	85%	100%	Faithful
Cadian (System)	92%	29.4%	Unreliable
• Kasr Sonnen	95%	39.1%	Unreliable
• Cadia	95%	39.8%	Unreliable
• Kasr Holn	95%	52.5%	In the balance
• Macharia	90%	DESTROYED	
• Vigilatum	95%	14.6%	Anarchy
• Kasr Partox	95%	21.8%	Unreliable
• St Josmane's Hope	75%	DESTROYED	
• Solar Mariatus	80%	32.3%	Unreliable
Demios Binary	85%	79.2%	Dependable
Kantrael	85%	84.9%	Faithful
Xersia	85%	88.2%	Faithful

SCARUS



Abaddon recruited massed warbands of Orks to act as mercenary auxilia to his Chaos Legions for the Thirteenth Crusade. Following up on terror raids and cunning feints by the Night Lords and Alpha Legion many of the Orks banded together into ever-growing tribes that declared themselves as part of the 'Green Krosade' (or Kroosade in some sources – Ork spelling is always a matter of conjecture) in imitation of the grand assault of Chaos. The unstoppable force of the Green Kroosade inundated the Scarus sector

(Skar-Uz to the Orks), battering down Imperial defences with sheer doggedness and not a little help from Chaos Space Marines, particularly of the Night Lords and the Black Legion. Now the Orks rule Lethe Eleven and Mordax, along with most of Imbrium and Ulant. Gudrun and Nysa Stromolo stand on the brink of anarchy and the weapon forges of Mordax (rechristened Moredakka by the Orks) are infested with lootas of the Death Skull clan, a truly terrifying prospect to the devotees of the Machine God, who know full well the depths of blasphemy against the Omnisiah to which these barbaric xenos will sink.

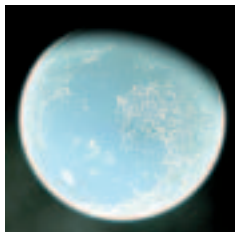
Battered survivors speak of hundreds of Gargants being built from the debris of war by enslaved servitors and their brutal Greenskin overseers. The squat, menacing forms of more Gargant construction sites

climb over the plains of Mordax daily as Ork Mekaniaks race to be the first to complete their machines. Imperial strategists are now regarding the Green Kroosade as a full-scale Ork Waaagh! Its Warlords are unknown but it would appear that Ghazghkull and Nazdreg are not among them. Only Thracian Primaris and Elnaur Delta have held firm against the Green

Kroosade, bolstered first by the intervention of a Black Templars Crusade, and later by the stalwart defence mounted by the Salamanders Chapter and many other Space Marine contingents. The situation is grim in Scarus, and none can see an end to the infestation given the dire situation across the region.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
Scarus (Sector)	77%	75%	Dependable
Thracian Primaris (System)	90%	90.6%	Faithful
• Elnaur Delta	90%	83.8%	Dependable
• Gudrun	70%	20.2%	Unreliable
• Imbrium	70%	4.4%	Anarchy
• Lethe Eleven	70%	0.1%	Anarchy
• Mordax Prime	65%	0.4%	Anarchy
• Nysa Stromolo	65%	19.6%	Unreliable
• Thracian Primaris (Planets)	90%	92.4%	Faithful
• Ulant	60%	14.8%	Anarchy

NEMESIS



The fortress oubliette of Nemesis Tessera, its existence supposedly unknown to all but the highest of the Inquisition, came under fierce attack during Abaddon's Thirteenth Crusade. The systems surrounding the Inquisition fortress experienced hitherto unknown levels of civil insurrection that could not be explained without recourse to the malign influence of the Ruinous

Powers. In one such incident, a previously peaceful sect of contemplative monks turned on the populace of Trionora, engaging in a series of bloody massacres across the planet's surface. Ordo Hereticus strike teams were despatched to cull these killing sprees – they discovered the barricaded monasteries to be full of corpses, the monks having chosen to end their lives in an orgy of self-mutilation. The monasteries were burned to the ground, the ruins sown with salt and reconsecrated.

While the agents of the Inquisition policed the systems surrounding their fortress, many strange omens and portents were unearthed, all indicating great disaster. Many believed this simply to

be the invasion of the Despoiler, but other, more cautious Inquisitors believed it to be something more. These doomsayers were proved correct when the blind scryers of Nemesis Tessera detected unauthorised psychic activity within the depths of the fortress itself. Inquisitor Van Hel, a Radical Inquisitor who delved too deeply into mysteries best left alone, had been seduced by the whispered promises of the Ruinous Powers and only the timely intervention of Inquisitor Cyarro prevented a warp rift of

cataclysmic proportions. At almost the exact same time, a determined force of Chaos Space Marines launched an attack on the Inquisition fortress and laid siege to it for many months. Only the timely arrival of the Space Wolves saved the beleaguered Inquisitorial forces and the combined forces of the Inquisition and the Sons of Russ were finally able to repulse the attack. Though why the Space Wolves abandoned their station to deploy throughout the Nemesis Tessera sub-sector remains a mystery.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
Nemesis (System)	99.5%	100%	Faithful
• Nemesis	99.5%	98.1%	Faithful

THE BATTLE FOR THE STARS

The Imperial Navy is vast, stretched out across the thousands of light years of Imperial space, dispersed across a hundred warzones, patrol routes and shipping lanes. This means that it can be slow to react to a threat but once in motion it is a giant, an unstoppable behemoth which sooner or later will, inevitably, arrive to unleash its vengeance, no matter how powerful the foe.

So it was that as Abaddon's Thirteenth Black Crusade swept throughout the sectors bordering the Eye of Terror, the immense warfleet which he had amassed

initially proved unstoppable. In comparison to Abaddon's Grand Fleet and the Plaguefleet of Typhus, Admiral Quarren's ships were thinly spread, even around the Cadian Gate where the Bastion fleets stand as the largest standing force outside of the solar system.

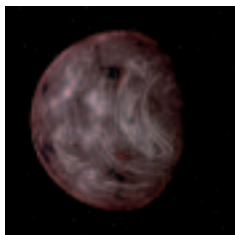
Thus in the early stages of the war Abaddon's fleet held orbital supremacy across most of the sectors within the warzone allowing him to bombard worlds, terrorise their populace and deploy Chaos forces. In such times it was the heroism of individual ships and captains which tipped the balance against

their numerically superior foes. The time they won allowed the web of battlefleets and ships of the Emperor to close in around the Cadian Gate

Where Imperial defences had been overstretched at the outset of the war, by the end they stood reinforced by dozens of neighbouring battlefleets. Tiny patrols, at first hopelessly outnumbered and often overwhelmed by Abaddon's invasion, mustered together into battlefleets numbering hundreds of vessels. Space Marine Chapters committed their own fleets to the war in space and soon the Imperial Navy stood as

an unbreakable circle of iron around Abaddon's forces. Where they had once failed to contain Abaddon's fleets as they emerged from the Eye, they now did just that to Abaddon's forces across Cadia, Agripinaa and a dozen other sectors, isolating them completely from one another. Abaddon's conquest of the worlds outlying the Eye of Terror may be almost complete, but by the grace of the Imperial Navy, few reinforcements were able to bolster his forces toward the end of the campaign. Some have said that it is for this reason alone Cadia still belongs in the material realm.

CHINCHARE



Imperial forces largely ignored the mostly uninhabited Chinchare sub-sector in the early stages of the war, though the forces garrisoned throughout the system were hard-pressed to contain the initial surge of invaders. Reports of increased Chaos activity drew more forces there as the war went on and Eldar forces of Ulthwé fought hard and spilt much blood in order to wrest control of the

sub-sector from the Ruinous Powers. Ulthwé Strike Forces struck at key points within the systems surrounding Chinchare to deny the forces of Abaddon any cohesion to their armies. Striking behind the lines of the main Chaos thrust, precious resources were diverted from the front line to deal with the raiding Eldar in the rear. Those forces despatched to deal with the Eldar were themselves ambushed and destroyed piecemeal. Such superiority brought with it an arrogant belief that the Strike Forces were invulnerable, but such was not to be the case as Ahriman, sorcerer of Magnus the Red, wove powerful magicks to disrupt the path of the webway,

twisting it and ripping portions of it asunder. Much was the lamentation of Ulthwé as many Strike Forces were trapped forever in the webway or lost in the haunted depths of the Warp.

While Ulthwé reeled from these terrible losses, the Chaos forces pressed their attack and launched a devastating counter-attack against Imperial forces, particularly those based on Balzac. The Imperial troops were in danger of being overrun completely, before being suddenly and decisively aided by Eldar emerging

from shimmering warp portals. These mysterious benefactors asked nothing in return for their aid and vanished without a word of explanation. As more and more reports were collated, it appeared that these silent Eldar had appeared virtually simultaneously throughout the sub-sector – effectively stymieing the Chaos attack. As the Chaos forces reeled, the vengeful Eldar, combined with the might of the Imperial forces, were able to rout the followers of the Dark Gods from the sub-sector completely.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Chinchare</i>	45%	95.2%	<i>Faithful</i>

BELIAL IV



Aeons ago, the crone world of Belial IV was a capital world of the Eldar empire. Deep in the heart of the Eldar homelands, the verdant paradise was all but obliterated when the cataclysmic Fall of the Eldar stripped away thousands of years of culture and beauty and replaced it with madness, desolation and evil. Belial IV became a dust-strewn wreck of daemon-infested ruins and crackling, baleful skies.

Maugan Ra, a Phoenix Lord and therefore a veteran of webway

travel, braved the depths of the Eye of Terror on a pilgrimage to the shattered crone worlds, intending to find a faction of Eldar he believed trapped in the Eye of Terror. Taking with him a few of his favoured disciples, Maugan Ra eventually reached the hex-system of Belial. What he found there he would not speak of and he was not seen again until he appeared upon Ulthwé to form the infamous Strike Forces, filled with renewed energy and determination.

Towards the end of the Thirteenth Crusade, many of the Eldar in the system departed from warzones in the Imperial space and gathered upon Belial IV under Maugan Ra's command. They took the fight to the indigenous Chaos forces with such unrelenting fury that vast areas were reclaimed by the Eldar.

The battle also raged around Belial IV in the labyrinth dimension of the webway, but it seemed that without the guidance of their leaders the Strike Forces were suffering heavy losses to the Dark Eldar and Thousand Sons. The otherworldly guardians of the Black Library, fearing for their shadowy realm's safety, revealed hitherto unknown capillaries of the webway to the Ulthwé Eldar, enabling them not only to escape from the net drawing around them but to stage a series of ambushes that broke the deadlock and turned the tide once and for all.

The final, and most decisive, twist to this peculiar theatre of war

came when a Daemon horde led a counter-attack against the Eldar consolidating their hold on the crone worlds, as sudden as it was devastating. To the great shock of the Eldar below, the withered and broken Craftworld of Altansar, thought lost to the Warp for 10,000 years, drifted into orbit above the crone worlds. Hundreds of pallid, ghost-like Eldar joined their brethren on the field of battle, throwing back the Daemon tide with wave after wave of silent, grim warriors. Since that great victory Belial IV has been reclaimed by the Eldar. What this, and the reappearance of the Lost, bodes for the Eldar race remains to be seen.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Belial IV</i>	35%	79.4%	<i>Dependable</i>

SENTINEL



The barren sentinel worlds in the south-west quadrant of the Eye of Terror have always been thought to be a collection of mostly featureless rocks held together by specific gravitational anomalies. The Adeptus Mechanicus have done much to discourage

development in this region due to their facility stationed on Hydra Cordatus, a relatively unremarkable planet holding a potent secret. Remaining undisturbed for centuries, there have recently been unconfirmed reports of a great Iron Warriors invasion into the system, preceding even the Hive Teriix disaster in the opening phases of the Thirteenth Crusade.

During the opening stages of the Crusade, the sentinel worlds had little in the way of full-scale engagements, although a node in the webway stationed above the void worlds saw a lot of conflict

between the Eldar and their enemies. The most notable development emerged from this unregarded backwater system just as the wars reached their peak, with hordes of silvered Necron warriors emerging from hidden tombs on the four planets surrounding Hydra Cordatus in a rough pyramid pattern. The Imperial forces stationed nearby feared the worst, but were amazed when the

Necrontyr fell upon the soldiers of Chaos, turning the tide in favour of the forces of Order. Since that time, increased Necron activity in the sector has prevented any Imperial forces from capitalising upon these victories, and remote orbital pict-captures have even revealed several structures almost identical to the Cadian Pylons sprouting across the landscapes of these four sentinel worlds.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Sentinel Worlds</i>	20%	24.1%	<i>Unreliable</i>



War came without warning to the Agripinaa sector, the opening moves made by the forces of Disorder as the newly installed governor of the planet Lelithar was assassinated whilst travelling in his ceremonial motorcade. The heretics responsible were gunned down without mercy by the attendant Planetary Defence Force troops, but within hours, first the world, then the entire system, was in open rebellion.

As the full force of Abaddon's invasion hit the sector one man, Regu Hane, was hailed as a saviour – he led a bold counter-attack that succeeded in banishing a horde of Khornate Daemons, and earned himself the title of Beati. Later the

mysterious Harlequins intervened in the fighting, but the defenders were stymied when the notorious Dark Apostle of the Word Bearers Traitor Legion, Lord Erebus, caused the raging tempest of Warp Storm Baphomael to surge forth and engulf the outlying systems of the sector.

It was only in the closing stages of the conflict that the Imperium was able to mount an effective defence against the raging hordes of the Ruinous Powers, when the combined forces of a number of Space Marine Chapters broke through the storms and fell upon the invaders with a righteous hatred born of 10,000 years of conflict.

By the end of the war, the planets Albitern, Amistel, Lelithar, Malin's Reach, Ulthor and Yavor lay in ruins, and a number of other key systems hung in the balance. Though Agripinaa itself still stands, without the agri-worlds of Yavor, Ulthor and Dentor, its populace may yet starve to death, and without the vital materiels provided by the Hive worlds of Albitern,

Amistel and Tabor, its mighty forges may yet fall silent. The so-called 'Herald of Nurgle', Typhus of the Death Guard Traitor Legion, has claimed the now blasted world of Ulthor as his own realm, and the nightmare visions of a thousand Astropaths tell of the birth of a new daemon world within the domains of Man.

Further, unconfirmed reports state that one of the Blackstone Fortresses were destroyed by raiders of the Necrontyr off the shoulder of the Lustitia Belt. Senior members of the Ordo Xenos are en route to the area, and Deathwatch strike cruisers are already engaged in ensuring no vessels other than their own enter the area.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
Agripinaa (Sector)	65%	77.9%	Dependable
Agripinaa (System)	85%	82.7%	Faithful
• Morten's Quay	85%	95.6%	Faithful
• Agripinaa (Planet)	85%	80%	Faithful
• Aurent	85%	97.2%	Faithful
• Narsine	65%	68.9%	Dependable
Albitern	65%	14%	Anarchy
Amistel	50%	14%	Anarchy
Bar-El	75%	39.9%	Unreliable
Dentor	65%	20.3%	Unreliable
Finreht	75%	33.3%	Unreliable
Lelithar	35%	0.4%	Anarchy
Malin's Reach	35%	0%	Anarchy
Tabor	70%	26.9%	Unreliable
Ulthor	75%	0.4	Anarchy
Yavor	50%	12.4%	Anarchy

WORLD-WIDE CARNAGE

In Games Workshop stores, battle bunkers and event halls the world over, thousands of gamers were taking part in the bloody struggle for the Eye of Terror. Canada and the US made particularly stunning efforts to save (or destroy) Cadia. Here are some of the highlights:

NORTH-EAST US BATTLE TOUR

The Imperial commanders of Kasr Sonnen, holding out stubbornly and refusing to close the gates to allow their fellow Cadians inside, were washed away by a tide of Chaos minions whilst a Titan tried in vain to step over the Kasr's walls, falling and crushing hundreds of trench-bound Guardsmen beneath its vast bulk.

The Space Wolves captured the legendary Axe of Khorne, using it (and some say a contingent of Imperial Guard) to bait a trap and subsequently spring an ambush that wiped out the followers of the Blood God to a man.

Over 2,000 gamers took part in this tour alone, with 74 stops over the course of the summer. Sounds like those guys need a holiday...

MIDWEST US BATTLE TOUR

The Agripinaa Sector saw a titanic battle between a Lost and the Damned/Death Guard alliance and a host of Cadians reinforced by the Relictors in a massive canyon.

The Imperials were winning convincingly when the Relictors picked up and left for no apparent reason! The Cadians faced their doom, given false hope by the arrival of an Ulthwé Strike Force that proved too little too late... another victory for the forces of Disorder.

GW CANADA

In the hotly contested war for Kasr Vassan, the main battle was played across a table as vast as it was detailed. Imperial Titans strode onto the field mid-game, Dreadclaw assault boats rained down onto the battle, and Cadians by the truckload gave their lives to halt the relentless advance of Chaos. Carnage was duly wreaked.

Despite a crushing Imperial victory at Kasr Bane, Chaos won by the tiniest of margins; 102 forces of Disorder wins versus 101 victories for the forces of Order!



BELIS CORONA



The hive world of Subiaco Diablo was the first planet in the Belis Corona sector to come under the heel of the forces of Disorder, as the Plague Marines of the Death Guard Traitor Legion unleashed their foulest contagions upon its populace. Soon, the shattered streets were home to the unquiet dead, the Plague Zombies of Nurgle, reanimated victims of the

Plague God's choicest gifts. Throughout the opening phase of the invasion, only the convent of the Order of the Ermine Mantle held out, though at terrible cost, against the shuffling hordes of undead.

At the height of the invasion, something truly unexpected occurred. Defenders on the outlying systems reported contact with Tyranid organisms – at first individual vanguard-organisms such as Lictors, but soon entire broods of Genestealers and Hormagaunts. A splinter fleet of Hive Fleet Leviathan, a Tyranid fleet known to be attacking up through the galactic plane, was taking advantage of the mass destruction initiated by the invasion to gain a

foothold in strategically vital Imperial space.

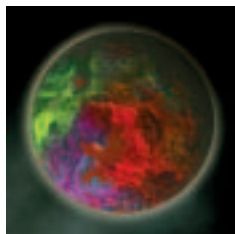
Faced with both the pustulant forces of the Death Guard, and the voracious hordes of Tyranids who were, unlike the human defenders, immune to the Plague God's blessings, the forces of the Imperium were hard pressed to defend the vital worlds of the sector. It was first the intervention of Eldar of the Ulthwé Craftworld and then the orbital bombardment

of Laurentix that allowed the forces of the Imperium to fight back, despite the disastrous ambush of forward elements of Battlefleet Solar at the Bairsten Prime jump point.

In the closing days of the war, it was only through the coordinated assaults of a number of Adepta Sororitas Orders that the line was held at the Belis Corona sector, thanks to the actions of the renowned Canoness Astra.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Belis Corona (Sector)</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>74.3%</i>	<i>Dependable</i>
<i>Belis Corona (System)</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>60.4%</i>	<i>Faithful</i>
• <i>Subiaco Diablo</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>58.3%</i>	<i>In the balance</i>

EIDOLON



The mysterious sector of Eidolon, deep in the heart of the Eye of

Terror, is one of the most remote and peculiar of the daemon worlds fought upon during the Thirteenth Crusade. Divided into several continents where a different Chaos power reigns over each, the battlezones of Eidolon present a panoply of strange and excruciating ways to die. Its shifting landscapes defy all reason, and, although it was once a

beautiful maiden world of the Eldar, it has changed so irrevocably that no real trace of its former glory exists. Nonetheless, the victories won by the forces of Order, notably the Eldar of Biel-tan, have established several enclaves

of sanity in the roiling seas of possibility that characterise Eidolon. The Eldar hope that one day these islands can grow and become stable, and that eventually the secrets of Eidolon can be reclaimed.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Eidolon</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>25.1%</i>	<i>Unreliable</i>

TAU EMPIRE



The Tau made several major expansions to their empire over the course of the Thirteenth

Crusade. With Imperial attention elsewhere, and the local Tyranid and Ork menace temporarily contained, Tau settlement colonies and pioneer teams reached far and wide into the outlying systems of the Damocles Gulf, the Perdus Rift and much further afield. Although the encroachment on Imperial space has been relatively minor, the Tau have established no

fewer than five 3rd phase colony systems in a halo around their existing sept worlds. These massive areas of expansion are already being referred to as the Third Sphere Colonies by the diplomats of the Water caste, and are rumoured to include

unprecedented numbers of human auxiliaries. That the Imperium's attention is focused elsewhere is no doubt of comfort to those humans who have pledged their support to the burgeoning Tau empire.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>The Tau Empire</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>132.6%</i>	<i>N/A</i>



SCELUS



Scelus was the homeworld of the renegade Space Marine Chapter the Sons of Malice, and was declared Perdita at the time the Chapter turned upon the Imperium. A cold, desolate place, Scelus is home to the savage and barbaric tribes from which the Sons of Malice recruited their number.

Though reports from the front line at Scelus are unclear on the subject, reliable sources state that the invading forces of Disorder joined with the native tribes, establishing a potentially huge power base within a short space of time at a strategically vital location. The forces of Order were in no position to oppose this state of affairs in the initial stages of the invasion, as every available Imperial Guard regiment was committed elsewhere and none could relocate swiftly enough to oppose Abaddon's plans for Scelus.

However, Abaddon's plans were in fact opposed, and very

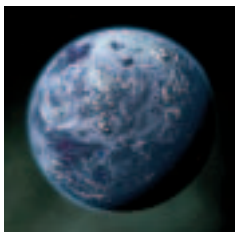
soon the Imperium was in full control of Scelus having slaughtered the invaders without mercy. The exact identity of the Imperial forces that liberated the system is unclear, though this is far from unusual in a region within which uncounted millions of soldiers are fighting, with more arriving every single day. That the liberators were Space Marines is known, though the exact chapter is not. It was reported that several chapters were fighting

within a short warp jump of Scelus in the days leading up to its liberation, including the Night Watch, the Subjugators and the Howling Griffons.

Nothing has been heard from any Imperial forces in the area, and it is suspected by some that a Space Marine Chapter has claimed Scelus as its homeworld by right of conquest. In the current climate, none in Imperial High Command would argue against such a move.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Scelus</i>	20%	95.4%	<i>Faithful</i>

MEDUSA



Just as Dark Eldar raids beset the Cadian system, the feral population

of Medusa was attacked and enslaved. The Iron Hands sent battle-brothers to train and lead the tribesmen, rather than send entire units. Thousands of barbarians died, or were carried off, but the strongest of the tribes survived and the battle strength of the Iron Hands was not significantly reduced.

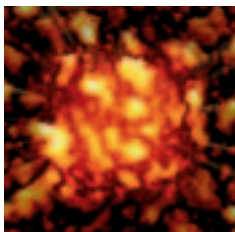
This enabled the Iron Hands to commit their full strength to battle

aboard their massive tracked fortress-monasteries. If this force did not stop the traitor armoured forces it was clear they would be able to destroy the lightly equipped feral auxiliaries at will. What resulted was a massive tank battle in which the

Iron Hands withstood the assault of over ten thousand tanks and then crushed them with their counter-attack. Many Iron Hands had to be blessed with cybernetic augmentation by the Iron Fathers that day, but Medusa was saved.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Medusa</i>	85%	93%	<i>Faithful</i>

CALIBAN



Caliban was the site of many bitter battles throughout the war, and the Dark Angels Chapter was forced to defend the ruins of their former homeworld against the

blasphemous hordes of the Despoiler, who were intent upon desecrating the holy ground. But, despite the vindictive campaign of lies and profanity conducted by the heretic known to his followers as 'the Voice of the Emperor', which were seemingly designed to draw the Dark Angels into pointless battles away from the main fronts, they did in fact prove invaluable in many conflicts across the region – despite the generally held view that the Dark Angels fought exclusively

and selfishly for the ruins of Caliban while Cadia burned.

At the close of the war, Caliban is firmly in the hands of the Dark Angels, its secrets safe, for now. The Voice put much effort into sewing disunity amongst the defenders of the Cadian Gate, seeding doubt as to just what the Chapter was hiding amongst the frozen ruins of its homeworld.

Having suffered the presence of the servants of the Ruinous Powers, the holy places of the Caliban system have now been reconsecrated by the most senior Interrogator-Chaplains of the Chapter, and it is clear that, whatever the result of the larger war, no devotee of Chaos shall ever again approach within a light year of the Caliban system again.

WARZONE	INITIAL CONTROL	OUTCOME	STATE
<i>Caliban</i>	50%	100%	<i>Faithful</i>

THE FINAL HOURS

By Graham McNeill

EYE OF TERROR

WARHAMMER 40,000 WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN

The lance beam tore through the mid-deck of the Bastion of Light, vaporising its plasma reactor in a heartbeat. The rear quarter of the ship heaved as the colossal energies released tore her apart in an explosion that lit up the darkness of space above Cadia with oxygen-rich flames. Admiral Quarren watched its demise through the viewing bay of his battle-scarred flagship, *Gathalamor*, and felt what little chance of victory they had had in this battle slip away. Over a dozen Imperial vessels were little more than blazing hulks drifting in space and they had barely scratched the surface of the corrupted Blackstone Fortress. The Eldar ships had taken a savage beating, their alien magicks unable to protect them from the horrendous amount of firepower directed against them. Two listed drunkenly, their curved foresails sagging and broken across their ripped hulls and a third blazed from prow to stern. But the fourth... whoever its captain was, Quarren had to admit he was a master of manoeuvre, slipping through the deadly barrages from the Chaos fleet like liquid. Men and ships of the Imperial Navy were dying to give the Eldar ship the opportunity to close with the Blackstone Fortress, and Quarren just hoped their sacrifice would not be in vain.

Eldrad Ulthran, Farseer of Ulthwe, felt utterly blind, senses attuned to the whispers of futures not yet born rendered mute by the encroaching darkness. He could sense nothing of the future and his sudden impotence left him feeling cold and alone. Was this how the Mon-Kigh felt all the time? How could they stand to live in such blindness, stumbling towards the future with no possible idea of what awaited them? For a brief second he was moved to pity this sightless, upstart race, before remembering the injustices they had inflicted on his race; the unthinking xenocidal massacres, the theft of Eldar Maiden worlds and the arrogance to believe that the galaxy was theirs to do with as they wished. The *sha'ra* rocked with nearby explosions from ordnance launched by

the Chaos fleet, but Craftmaster Kaelisar was the best ship's captain of Ulthwe and he deftly piloted his vessel through the storm of fire unscathed. The corrupted Talisman of Vaul loomed before them, its twisted spires warped beyond the subtle grace crafted long ago by Eldar hands. Hundreds of explosions burst around it as the combined Eldar and Imperial ships fought desperately to reach the Talisman.

Behind Eldrad, a cabal of Warlocks surrounded a swirling blue nimbus of light, weaving their psychic powers into one powerful lance of energy that sought to unlock the ancient seals holding the wraithgate aboard the Talisman closed. Powerful wards held it shut, but now the Warlocks sought to undo those wards and allow their Farseer to travel through the webway and board the Talisman. Even as he watched, a dazzlingly bright light flared beneath the Talisman, a blazing column that speared towards the surface of the planet below.

"Hurry," said Eldrad. "We are running out of time."

Lieutenant Escarno slumped against the rockcrete parapet of the Kassar's bastion, feeling blood pouring from the gaping wounds in his side. He felt dizzy from blood loss and fatigue. On any normal engagement, he and his men would have been rotated away from the front line, but this was no normal engagement. There were simply no more men to feed the war machine and any man capable of holding a gun stood before the enemy. The soldiers of the Imperial Guard had fought beyond the limits of endurance and only their determination to do their duty to the God-Emperor kept them fighting.

Thudding booms marched through the ruins of the outer Kassar, its bastions reduced to rubble by constant bombardment from daemonic artillery. All that remained was the inner keep, its high adamantine walls proof against anything the enemy could throw at it. The fighting around him raged with undiminished ferocity as he collapsed to his knees, though the sounds seemed tinny and far away. He saw comrades and foe

alike, struggling atop blood-slick ramparts, bullets and lasbolts ricocheting around him as the rockcrete of the firing step rushed up to meet him and slammed into his face. He rolled onto his back, realising he was lying on the ground as he felt warm blood pool beneath him – though he could feel no pain.

Through the shattered parapet, he could see tens of thousands – more even? – of the warriors of the enemy massing before the walls. They stretched as far as the eye could see and even as his vision blurred, he knew there was no way they could stand before such a monstrous horde. But then he saw a miracle, a shining light piercing the heavens that lit up the clouds with a pure brilliance that could only be the fury of the Emperor come to punish these traitors that dared to defile his world. He smiled and watched as a rippling cascade of blazing light dropped from the skies and touched the surface of Cadia, setting its surface alight. White-hot fires leapt from the ground, a thousand metre high pillar of light that incinerated everything in its path. Distant screams echoed from far off and Escarno wept tears of joy as the kilometres-wide curtain of fire scorched the Chaos filth from the surface of his world. They had held for long enough and he smiled as he died, content to know that he had done his duty.

"We're finished..." said one of Creed's advisors, watching the incandescent curtain of fire searing its way towards the inner keep. Though tens of thousands of the enemy were dying, the lethal energy was slowly, but inexorably, moving towards them. It would kill those opposing them, but it would destroy them also, and with them, the last Cadian bastion of the east.

Ursarkar Creed rounded on his advisor and snarled, "I won't hear that kind of talk, damn it. Anyone else voices an opinion like that and I'll shoot him myself."

"Sir," said Arran Cell, softly. "He may be right. If the xenos do not succeed soon, there will be nothing left of Kassar Partox. The lexmechanics calculate the energy beam will reach the walls of the keep within the hour."

Creed said nothing, his face set in an expression of grim resolve as he stared across the blasted wasteland towards the deadly beam that reached from space to destroy his world.

"Come on," he whispered, raising his head skyward. "Do not fail us..."

V

An explosion of psychic energy lashed around the bridge of the sha'ra, crackling arcs of lightning leaping from the cabal of Warlocks and felling them with powerful psychic backlash. Eldrad clutched his head, gritting his teeth in pain as the screaming darkness of the long-sealed webway portal rushed free in a wash of shrieking souls. A howling gale of warp-spawned energies rippled from the rent in space, smashing delicate wraithbone columns and tearing gracefully curved panels free from the walls. Eldrad picked himself up as the screeching subsided and saw a dark edged ripple of energy gently spinning in a circle of dazed Warlocks. Some, he saw, were already dead, their spirit stones cracked and dark and he felt a great sadness at the thought of their souls devoured by the Great Enemy.

He glanced over his shoulder, seeing the Talisman's deadly beam still blazing in space, a column of unimaginable power that would scour the surface of the Mon-keigh planet bare of life. He limped across the buckled deck of the sha'ra, shouting, "Warlocks! With me!" before plunging into the newly reopened wraithgate.

V

The walls were abandoned, the stonework first vitrifying, then melting as the fiery beam swept slowly onwards. Where it had passed, the ground was nothing more than molten slag, smoking and dead, barren forever more. The outer walls of the keep were gone, its proud towers and barbicans sliding from the walls like wax from a candle, and Ursarkar Creed knew he had failed. They could not hold Kasr Partox and the only option left to them was retreat. The Commissars talked of dying to a man, but Creed knew that while there was still a chance to resist, they would not be needlessly sacrificing themselves. The order to pull out had been given and the soldiers of the Guard and the Space Marines were pulling back to the docks and loading bays at the shores of the Caducades Sea, ready to make for Kasr Gallan to stand once more.

Crushing disappointment settled over him like a shroud and he cursed the name of the Despoiler.

He cursed the Eldar seer for giving them hope and, most of all, he cursed himself for his own failure to defeat the Emperor's enemies.

V

Eldrad felt his soul smothered with darkness as he set foot on the perverted Talisman of Vaul. He retched, feeling the corrupted heart of the Talisman thirst for his essence. Like a dark mirror of the spirit stone he wore around his neck, it hungered to drink his very soul and torment it forever within its crystalline depths. A handful of Warlocks had managed to join him, two fighting to hold the wraithgate open that they might escape. Wasted effort, knew Eldrad, but he could not bring himself to tell them that.

He limped towards the centre of the chamber, a Warlock collapsing before him as his soul was drained from his body by the corrupted, thirsting heart of the Talisman. He passed the corpse, little more than a shrivelled sack of bones, making his way to where a great basalt wall displayed the furious battle raging outside. The Imperial ships were taking a heavy beating and it would not be long before they were annihilated. He squatted in the centre of the chamber, slowing his breathing as he entered a trance-like state that would allow him to commune with the Talisman's heart – the corrupted spirit stone at its centre. If he could somehow reach the part of it that remembered the glory it had once possessed, then there was a chance. A chance, nothing more than that, but it was all he had.

V

Admiral Quarren clutched the brass rail of his command lectern as another impact slammed into the side of the Gathalamor, red warning runes flashing and the sacristy bell chiming in alarm. Flames and smoke spewed from cracked vents and he could tell his vessel was dying. Through the viewing bay, he could see predatory Chaos battleships closing with his

vessel and knew that this was the end. A shark-nosed enemy cruiser turned its prow towards the Gathalamor and Quarren knew that a salvo of torpedoes was seconds away from being launched.

But then a series of rippling explosions blossomed along the flanks of the Chaos ship and portions of its hull were ripped from its structure as flaring bolts of lightning enveloped it. Confused, Quarren shouted, "Wide aperture on viewing bay!"

Seconds later, he saw a sight that he had never expected to see in all his years with the Imperial Navy. Huge, silvered ships, shaped like crescent moons swooped across the Chaos battle line, crackling bolts of energy hammering the Chaos vessels with devastating close-range firepower as they raced towards the Blackstone. Quarren's heart skipped a beat as he saw enemy ship after enemy ship reduced to wreckage by the unexpected arrivals. Quarren recognised the alien ships from the briefings he had attended at Cypria Mundi. Necrontyr. He knew them for the deadliest enemies, yet here they were attacking the Chaos ships!

X

Centuries of malice and hatred filled Eldrad's mind. Centuries of pain, torment and anguish. The heart of the Talisman burned with rage at what had been done to it, and as he opened his mind to its pain, he knew that he had made a grave mistake in attempting to reach out to what had once made this ancient Talisman Eldar. The anguished remnants of the Talisman's consciousness had long since died, replaced with a vile, hateful core of ever-thirsting darkness, and as it reached out to claim him, he realised in horror that it was no random power of the Dark Gods that had corrupted the Talisman. It was the

power of She Who Thirsts, The Great Enemy... Slaanesh.

Eldrad tried to free his spirit from the Talisman, but it was already too late. The darkness reached out to swallow him and his soul was dragged screaming into the depthless heart of the Blackstone Fortress for all eternity.

X

Ursarkar Creed stood on the shores of the Caducades Sea. He had watched with heavy heart as the dazzling beam of light from the heavens destroyed the last remnants of Kasr Partox. Its proud walls had collapsed in a blazing pyre, smoke billowing into the sky from the destruction of the fortress as intolerable heat advanced towards the shoreline. Though the beam had since vanished, the day here was lost, any fool could see that. All that was left to them was vengeance. The Eldar had been obliterated and the alien ships that had unexpectedly come to their aid were gone; wiped out in an instant by the Blackstone's terrifying defences. Admiral Quarren had informed him that victorious Imperial ships from other sectors were even now converging on Cadia, forcing the Blackstone to disengage – though the damage it had inflicted before departing was incalculable.

"Sir," called arran Kell, from the open hatch of a Valkyrie flyer. "We have to go."

"We lost..." said Creed, his voice hollow and flat.

"This time," replied Kell, "but there will be other times, sir. Kasr Gallan still stands and while we live, we have hope. The Emperor protects."

"Aye," agreed Creed. "The Emperor protects..."

Creed took one last look at the ruins of his fortress and turned to join his soldiers.

