

Issue # 16

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BATTLE TECHNOLOGY

THE MAGAZINE OF COMBAT IN THE THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY



Rasalhague Falls!

The Inner Sphere has never been a stable environment for communication. BattleTechnology, as a medium for information, has always labored to report the facts as fairly and as completely as possible. In that task, the magazine's staff has been opposed by politicians seeking to control the truth, by soldiers wanting to prevent the spread of information with possible military usage, and by the disruption and violence of war itself.

Professor Donald L. Harrison and Professor John Merriken Preston, who had previously collaborated to discover a cache of de-circulated copies of BattleTechnology, have combined their efforts once again. And — again — they have been successful. This time, they have accessed a number of copies of BattleTechnology issues which were, for various reasons, not fully-circulated. These magazines are virtually unknown in some parts of the Inner Sphere.

We are very pleased to be able to present

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BattleTechnology



The Lost Issues

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Photography: Nelson Snook is on his honeymoon;
one issue sabatical

Art in this issue:

art for *News Photographs, Champions of a Lost Cause*
Occasional Art by James Greeson
Art For What Now, MechWarrior? by David Schultz
Jumping Spider BattleMech by John Gannon
Art for A Matter of Timing by Aaron Walker Long
art for Enemy of My Enemy by BJ. Rosen
Art for Weasels by Stephen D Snyder II
Column Headers, Opening Shots by William H Keith Jr

Writing in this issue:

Champions of a Lost Cause, A Matter of Timing,
What Now, MechWarrior by Glen L Mitchell
Rampage, CEF: 3050, Tanks for the city
by Spydre Connors

About the Cover: BT photographer Stavros Ploumitsakos caught this Marauder II from the Fourth Kufstein Planetary Guard preparing to defy Wolf Clan invaders in the Hrafnir Plains, Kufstein's perpetually dark southern latitudes. Despite skilled fighting, the Wolf Clan took the planet in seven days.

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for the best Assault 'Mech

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OPENING SHOTS

Bless Your Greedy Little Hearts

You almost had a new editor this time, folks.

One of the things our publisher Arvid Thorkillson hates most is spending money.

When he saw my editorial two issues ago in which I told the Known Sphere that I didn't care how much it cost to get hard facts about the Clans I am told that his face turned red and his eyes bulged **Thiis Muuuch!** I was promising to get rid of his money in amounts more suitable to mending holes in a roadway than to actually (shudder) spending. The only factor that soothed him was that he didn't think anyone would be able to *get* hard facts, so he wasn't going to be out of pocket.

I know you-all better than that.

You see, mercs are well used to being scared till there's no more brown stuff in them and still thinking of the bottom line. The line where they sum up the C-bills.

So I've been getting audio transcriptions and vid diaries and scrawled pieces of plaswrite and even chicken scratches on paper. And you know what? That's the only information we've been able to get! House news briefings have essentially told us "We lost these planets this week — we think — and the situation is grave. Don't panic. Donate blood, buy bonds, and stay out of our way."

Right.

We toured several fronts, got ourselves kicked off of Sudeten for trying to help ourselves to too much information, sent out staffers to interview returning troops — the usual stuff that news services rely on.

But you folks made the difference. In this issue we have *Champions of a Lost Cause*, an account of what we are coming to think of as the First Wave of Clans Invasions. We have an account of the Marshdale Conference between the Second and Third Waves, *The Enemy of My Enemy*, which has actually been passed by Kurita censors (they made us hold onto it for three months, but it's still timely). We have suggested tactics for use against the Clans from one MP Hoare. (*A Letter to the Archon.*)

As a courtesy to the graduating class of the Tamar College of War, we publish their choice for best assault 'Mech. Many of this class won't be at graduation. A cadre taking a specialist course at the Blackjack Academy participated in the defense of Blackjack, fighting gallantly, but losing half of their number. Three cadets turned the tables on reporter Jake Halloway, who was trying to interview them about the fight for Blackjack, and insisted on showing him their choice then & there. And the Rampage is impressive! We've also got a pair of good light 'Mechs for you, some updates on tanks, and Marcus Killegrew's attempt to make sense of the new technique of dual cockpits.

You folks made the difference — and you didn't do it solely to Preserve the Inner Sphere or To Save the Future of Mankind. You did it because it pays.

Some of you are fighting to keep somebody or a home world safe; some of you are fighting just to be stubborn, or because your buddies are. All of you on the frontlines are fighting to keep alive, to survive from day to day.

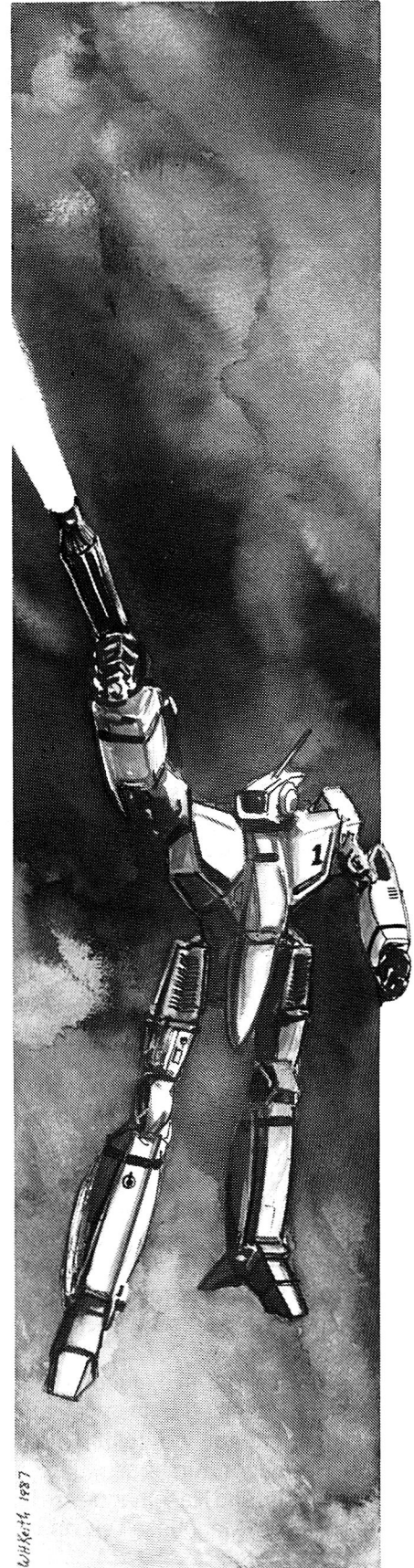
But you still believe in a tomorrow. If you didn't, you wouldn't care to earn C-bills to spend month after next. You wouldn't send us these long letters of speculation. You wouldn't petition the FedCom High Command to get us reinstated as reporters.

Your greed is a sign that you expect to survive this thing.

And best of all, Thorkillson hasn't fired me yet.

You see, the only thing he likes better than counting money is a hot story!

Hilary Ayer, Thun, Free Republic of Rasalhague, December 3050



Rasalhague

Bites the Bullet

The inferno round has had mention in the Ares Conventions. The Federated Suns-Lyran Commonwealth protocols of 3021 are only the latest to reaffirm that infernos are forbidden by the Convention's clause against "causing undue suffering; methods meant to maim rather than to kill."

Yet infernos are cheap to produce; they are highly effective, and they are the only possible weapon a non-armored unit can use with effect on a Battlemech or tank.

Not even the restraints against biological warfare are as continuously ignored as the restrictions on inferno rounds. The only real restraints are the safety difficulties of transport and storage of the volatile flammibles.

Using infernos has in some times and places been illegal. Making them has never been. Engadin is high in naturally occurring phosphorus and petroleum deposits. It is rich in little else. The two resources of Engadin combine very well in the making of infernos. The Hades Works and the Red Devil Manufacturing Company compete as the two top employers of Engadin.

— *Atlas of the New Free Republic of Rasalhague*, Sisu Press, Stanzach 3038.

These are the Invasion Waves of the Clans to the present date as they affect Rasalhague:

The First Wave, March-April 3050.

Rasalhague loses two planets to the Ghost Bears and eight to the Wolf Clans, for a total of ten. Among the lost are Alleghe, The Edge, New Caledonia, Outpost, Skallevoll, Balsta, and St John.

The Second Wave, May 3050

Rasalhague loses six more planets. Lost are Csestreg, Leoben, Lovinac, New Bergen, Rodigo, and Verthandi (The Second Battalion of the Second Kell Hounds was used here, together with the Third Battalion of the Second Rasalhague Drakons; the first real cooperation of Rasalhague regular troops with mercenaries in two decades.)

The Third Wave, June-July 3050

Rasalhague loses eight planets, including the capitol world of Rasalhague. Bruben, Hermagor, Kirchbach, Liezen, Feltre, Harvest, Moirje, and Rasalhague are lost. Elected Prince Haakon Magnussen escapes on the *Norseman*.

The Fourth Wave, July-October 3050

Rasalhague loses fourteen more planets. Lost are Dawn, New Oslo, Unzmarkt, Basilano, Ferleiten, Hohenems, Kufstein, Engadin, Kandis, Svarstaad, Moritz, Skokie, Stanzach and Radstadt.

WHAT WILL RASALHAGUE DO? WE'LL CONSIDER THIS LOSS LIKE BATTLEFIELD SURGERY. WE'VE LOST A PART OF US, LIKE LOSING A LEG OR SOMETHING. BUT WE'RE STILL ALIVE. WE STILL HAVE PLANETS TO STAND ON, AND ARMS TO FIGHT WITH.

IN TERRAN DAYS, IF THERE WAS NO MEDIC AND YOU LOST SOMETHING THAT NEEDED CUTTING ON THE BATTLEFIELD, THEY SLIPPED A LEAD BULLET BETWEEN YOUR TEETH SO YOU'D HAVE SOMETHING TO BITE AGAINST TO HELP BEAR THE PAIN. RASALHAGUE JUST HAS TO BITE THE BULLET, THAT'S ALL. WE DON'T EVEN CONSIDER WHETHER THERE'S A CHOICE ABOUT GOING ON. WE WILL CONTINUE, AND WE WILL WIN.

— GENERAL TOR MIRABORG, VALDHERRE OF GUNZBORG

Radstadt is the last planet to fall, following a panicky improvised defense as the *Norseman*, containing the Elected Prince, arrives insystem just as Radstadt comes under serious attack. The Drakons' aerospace fighters made a suicidal attack to keep the Wolf Aerospace fighters away from the *Norseman* while she powered up her lithium-fusion batteries to get offsystem. The House Leader made his escape as the Drakons died to defend him. Drakon Flight Leader Capten Tyra Miraborg seems to have flown directly into the bridge of the Wolf flagship as the last move of her severely damaged fighter.

That's thirty seven worlds out of seventy gone. Rasalhague is severely damaged. Can she go on? Or with the Clans concentrating their attack on this small state, will their next attack be the end of Rasalhague?

Rasalhague is fighting for its life. We have always been a small fish surrounded by large mouths with teeth in them.

The rest of the Inner Sphere can afford to sit on their high moral thrones while they lose spare planets. We do not consider any of our people to be spares.

Stanzach has taught us that our peoples must work together to defeat the invaders. Citizens of any ancestry will not be discriminated against by any other citizens. Mercenaries working with our forces will be treated as honorable allies. I have in the past implored my fellow citizens to show understanding. Now as supreme commander of our fighting forces, I command it. Civilian or military, abandon this behavior or be shot.

Late in November of 2411, on the planet Tintavel, poorly disciplined militia attacked battleweary regulars with homemade inferno rounds, provoking a three-day massacre in retaliation. Civilian casualties totaled 400,000. Every leader in the Inner Sphere professed to be shocked and horrified. One really was.

Chancellor Aleisha Liao of the Capellan Confederation found the pictures of dead children, ruined homes, destruction of expensive technology "horrifyingly familiar — and that familiarity was even more horrifying." She devoted her considerable intellect for the next several months to drafting a preliminary agreement to make war less barbarous. She drew on some of the old Mercenary's Professional Association contracts, and called the best minds of her realm to aid her. The Confederation had the least industrial base of the Successor Houses; it was therefore the first to see the impact which high-tech warfare could have on the industrial future of a planetary system.

In summer of 2412, eight realms met in the city of New Olympia on the planet Ares. As Captain General Peter Marik put it, he was afraid that "these rules would transform warfare into a kind of pavane better suited to ballerinas than to soldiers." After weeks of argument, of passion and counter passion, The Terran Hegemony, House Steiner, the Free Worlds League, the Draconis Combine, the Federated Suns, the Outworlds Alliance, the RimWorlds republic, and of course the Capellan Confederation signed agreements limiting the atrocities of warfare. The 80-page document requires battles to occur away from population centers, and attempts to force warfare away from massive destructive force. It also gives conditions for mercenary exchange, for treatment of captured troops, limitations on certain methods of war, etc.

It is worth noting that this was seventeen years before the trial of the first BattleMech.

Over the years the agreements have been modified. The mercenary forces which are so often the straw that tips the balance in a major war enforced the Conventions in the interests of their own survival.

Whatever the Clans are, they did not sign these agreements. Of course, neither did Rasalhague, which was then technically an independent state...

— Marina Kingsley, Auburn Scholar, Sanglamore Military Academy First Cadet

BattleTechnology News

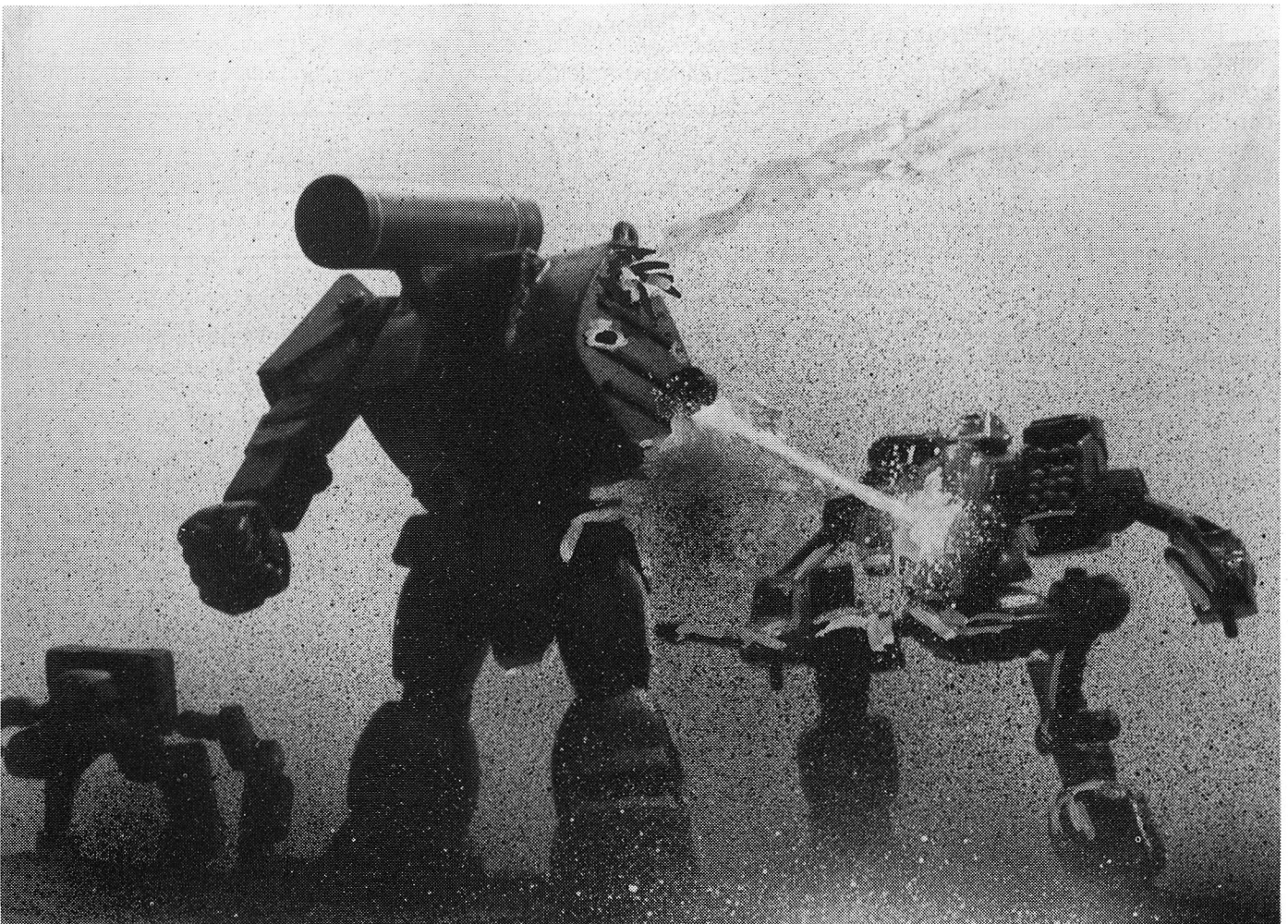
FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE CLANS FRONT

September 30, 3050

The forces on this Federated Commonwealth Planet fought valiantly, but they were no match for the Clan Forces arrayed against them.

So what else is new?

Unit photographer Moritz Abrams of the 2nd Vulcan Planetary Guard managed to get these photographs to us, inside a package to his sister with a christening gift for his niece Karin Anna.



As the sequence begins, the Thunderbolt has already been hit once by the Clans 'Mech. At the moment of the first shot, the Thunderbolt is hit for the second time. by the Clan 'Mech referred to by Inner Sphere forces as the 'Vulture'.

BattleTechnology News



The next second, another hit!



The last hit. Total elapsed time, 52.5 seconds.

BattleTechnology Presents

Archon Melissa Steiner Davion is a great believer in necessity as the mother of invention. Elsewhere in this issue you will see the first of a proposed Inner-Sphere-Wide Tactics learning and discussion series, *What Now, MechWarrior?* The Archon has also requested strategic and tactical observations and suggestions from all troops associated with the Federated Commonwealth, including Mercenary units. This letter was provided to us by a member of the AFFC headquarters on Tharkhad, on condition of anonymity. It is not known for certain if Archon Melissa has seen this letter. We at BattleTechnology feel that this information is important enough to you, our readers, to risk the anger of the Tharkhad government in publishing it.

To Archon Melissa Steiner Davion

Your Highness

I must admit that your request for my thoughts on tactics to defeat the Clans seems strange, but I will do my best. Thank you for the hearing.

Let me start with some basic observations on the tactics of most Inner Sphere units. The base unit of our 'Mech regiments is the lance of four 'Mechs, battalion of three 'Mech companies, and the regiment of three 'Mech battalions. Now for starters, notice that in all of these formations, there is seldom any integration of support units other than that dedicated to direct maintenance of the 'Mechs themselves. This is not quite so true for the Federated Commonwealth regimental combat teams, but even they do not use combined arms as such.

Now the first problem we have in our present method of operation is command, or more properly the lack of it in our formations. If you are a lance commander, your 'Mech is such an integral part of the lance formation that once battle is joined you have few options but to be involved in direct combat. The lance commander therefore loses direction of operations and is nothing more than a highly-paid 'Mech gunner. This same symptom continues on through the chain of command up to the regimental level in many of our formation.

Another problem of the present lance formations is the tendency of these small units to fight their actions with little recourse to any tactics other than linear formation. With only four units to the basic formation this is one of the only options to a commander that brings maximum power to

bear on their opposition.

Even worse than this is the almost total lack of coordination between divergent battle units. Many of our commanders lack any capacity to coordinate their operations with armor and infantry units. This to a lesser degree continues with support fire units such as artillery and aircraft-aerospace formations. Some of this lack of coordination can be attributed to the dominance of BattleMech mentality in the tactics of the last three hundred years or more. Another is that outside of the RCTs many units do not have the units available to work with in combined operations.

As noted above, with most units lacking a dedicated command staff, even in many cases up to regimental level, it creates a situation where coordinated efforts are almost impossible. How can an officer who is blazing with all PPCs be paying any attention to the situation beyond the front of his 'Mech cockpit?

Now I will shift focus to the invaders' forces for a moment to give a glimpse of their formations. The Clans' basic unit is the five 'Mech lance. This is continued in the company of three of these lances and extends up to regiments not unlike our forces. Most of these units take into battle integrated infantry able to fight alongside the 'Mech units. This opens the tactical options of the invader commander as his force has greater depth and firepower over his opposition. With five 'Mechs up on line the Clan force can use more divergent formations such as wedge formation, or hold back units in reserve. Along with this, his infantry can carry out many tactically important tasks from soaking off attacks, directing support attacks, area denial, even to tactical reserve operations.

There are some important areas that the Clans do seem to be weak in. They do not seem to use combat vehicles to any extent that has been recorded to date. Also I have not heard of any use by the Clans of long-range artillery. If these prove to be true, then these are two areas that should be rapidly exploited to our advantage. Our armor units could be used to negate some of the advantages they have with their armored infantry units, and be used by our commanders in the same sort of tactical roles alongside of our 'Mech units. Combine this with the use of long-range artillery to soften up Clan units before contact would go a long way in lessening the advantages enjoyed by the Clans.

A Letter to the Archon

Now to the heart of the matter, and that is — what is the best way to defeat these people, if they are people? Let me give you a piece of history. In the Hitler War of the mid-20th Century the forces of Germany were known to use what they called a *Kampfgruppe*, or as we would call it, a battlegroup. They created these forces out of desperate need. These forces were mixed groups of available armor and infantry fighting as combined arms teams. These forces combining the advantages of both kinds of resources were able time after time to defeat numerically superior foes.

My recommendation to you, my Archon, is to give serious consideration to the formation of similar units in the Federated Commonwealth forces. We are facing a situation not unlike that of Germany, and new ideas and tactics must be tried. Let me explain what I have started with my own force and try to state the advantages.

The basic reconfiguration involves upgrading the basic tactical unit to a seven 'Mech, seven tank combined arms team. This would create a company of two platoons for practical purposes. The first advantage of this is the greater firepower available to the company commander. It will also help to prevent the squandering of units in penny-pocket lots as has been the case so often in the past. Note that the company commander's options have increased as to formations that he can deploy and units at his disposal.

The options that he has are now almost limitless, but for starters: he can hold back one platoon while advancing, use support fire overbounding attacks, use one platoon to support fire and the other for flanking operations, etc... There are now possibilities to use wedge formations, put tanks in direct support of 'Mechs (not a bad answer to close combat with armored infantry), or even to break his platoons into two-unit fire teams.

In all of this the company commander should try to bring maximum firepower concentration to bear on his opposition. Effort should be made to be flexible while trying to maintain concentration of force at the area of tactical contact. Use the force to rapidly overwhelm the invaders, using concentrated units to defeat the enemy while he is disadvantaged.

If the clans, as it seems, do not use artillery, then maximum effort should be made to use this to our advantage. Company commanders can extend the depth of their defense or attack with the thoughtful use of this type of

weapon. With artillery alone the range of a unit extends to kilometers versus a few hundred meters available in 'Mech firepower. Add to this the use of aerospace and conventional aircraft, and you have added thousands of kilometers to the range that you are able to rain destruction onto the enemy. While the company commander will not have these weapons at his direct command, he should make every effort to stay in contact with them and to use them to his full advantage.

The battalion reconfiguration involves three companies forms as is the above company. Along with this there should be a battalion command staff and a battalion weapons platoon (long range artillery). When possible it would be advisable to attach VTOL units to these formations for added versatility.

The command staff would be responsible for control of the battalion and coordination of artillery assets. They should not engage in combat unless there is no other option. They will also be responsible for synchronization of battalion operations to those of higher commands.

The battalion commander's tasks are going to be much the same on a larger scale to those of the company commander. To a great extent the battalion commander should strive to keep his companies dispersed enough to discourage massed aerospace-air attack as possible while being in position to concentrate forces at the point of decision in lethal mass. Delivering the combined weight of attack of such a battalion in like-sized enemy formations should prove to be devastating.

Continued next page

*BattleTechnology recommends:
serious study of the suggested
organization and tactical methods.
Have YOU information or
ideas which will help us in
our ongoing battle against
the Clans? Write to Editor at our
Terran office right away.
Tomorrow MAY BE TOO LATE!!*

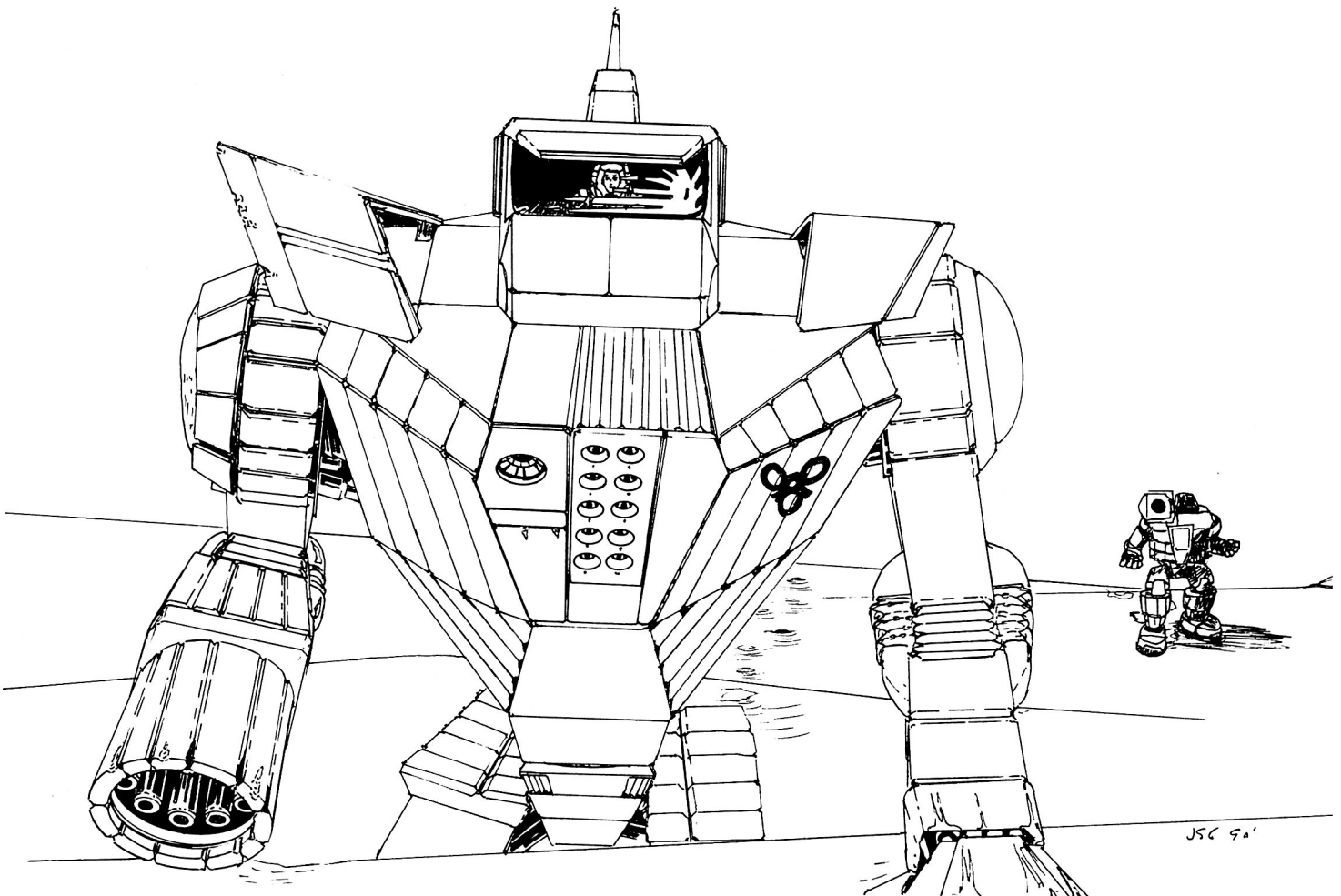
New emphasis must be instilled in unit commanders of the value of concentration of force. The ability must be fostered to maneuver and place the enemy in a position of weakness in relation to our forces. Even if the enemy 'Mechs are superior technically, attacks by concentrated battle groups should prove to negate their advantage. Even if a force is outnumbered, it should with careful use of these ideas be possible to gain local superiority over the Clan units and gain victory over them.

All effort should be made to attack Clan forces at the greatest ranges possible creating a battle zone of a depth no used in hundreds of years. No more is it practical to consider only the immediate area controlled by the BattleMech. Unified command of the entire battle, ground and air, must be used. All units need combined arms training and established coordination centers to exploit this.

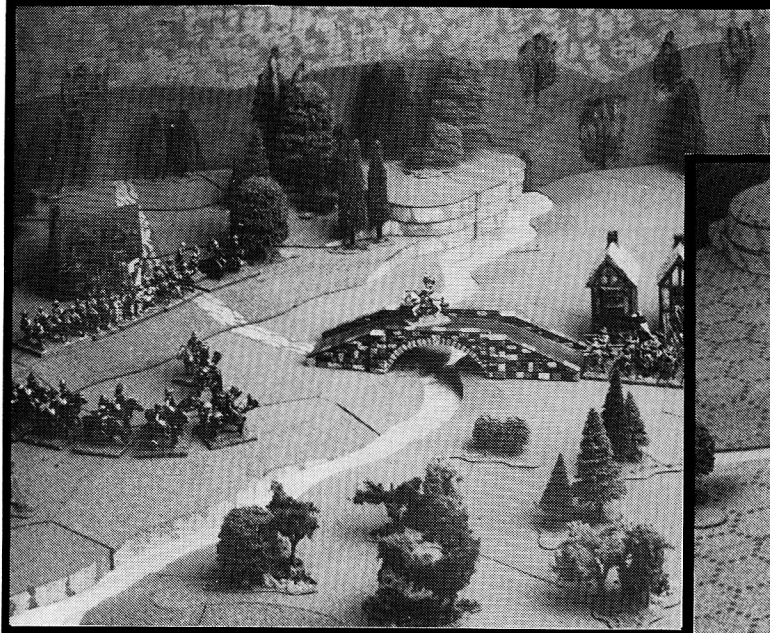
When I speak of concerted attacks by all possible strength, look to the actions of some of the great commanders of the past. If you look to the battles of Generals Manstein and Guderian, you will see the expert use of combined-arms assault. Their tactics were able to defeat enemies of superior strength and in many cases enemies with technological superiority. The basic principle of these operations was the concentration of strength at the point of attack to ensure victory. Again if you look to the battles of Napoleon such as Austerlitz where the French launched their attack with decisive weight and gained the victory over numerically superior forces.

I cannot overstate that we must strive for tactical flexibility. To revive the study of tactics and to develop and adopt newer, more useful tactical methods is imperative. Our military systems have become intellectually bankrupt, living as if time and theory died with the Star League.

Your loyal soldier,
MP Hoare



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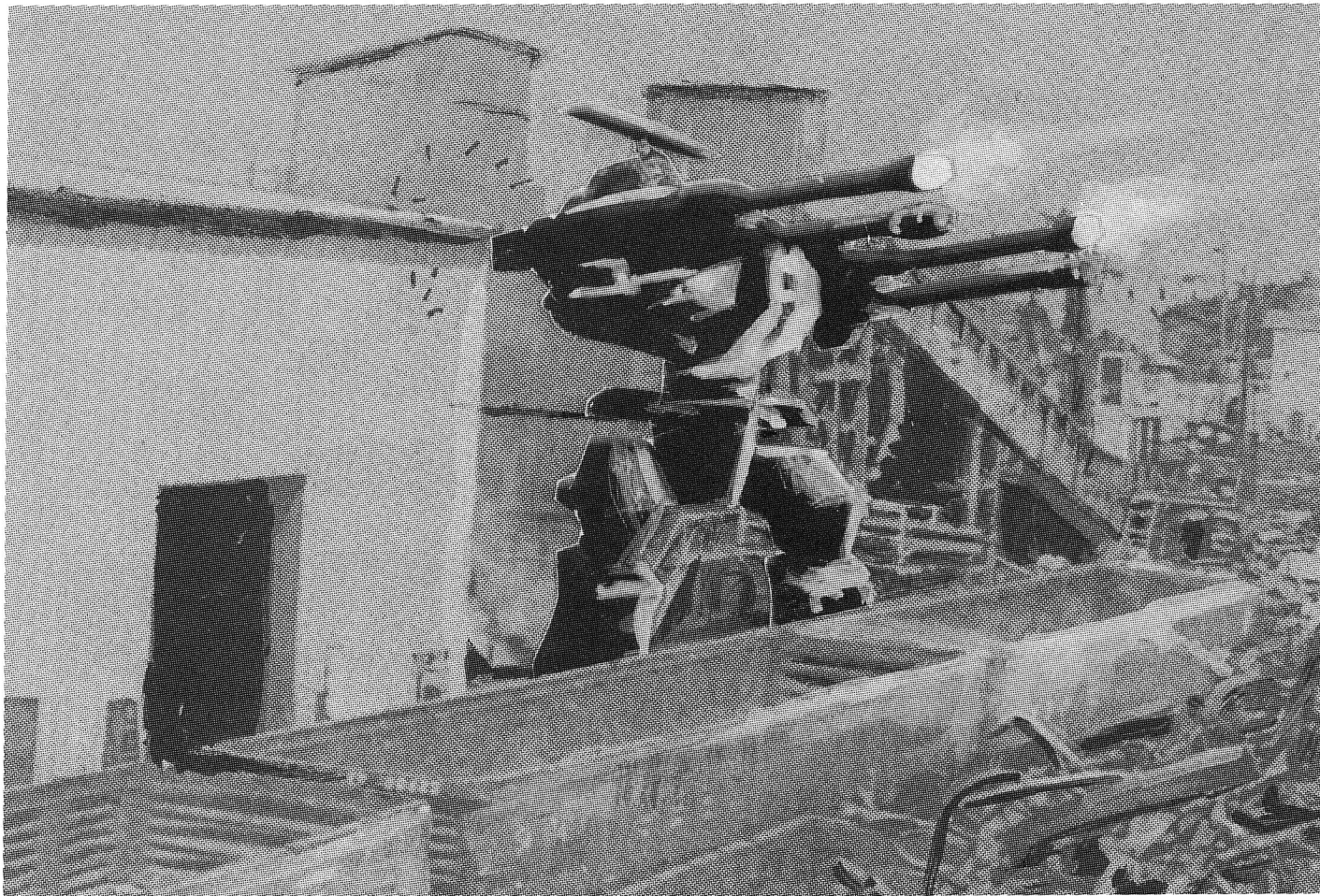
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Champions of a Lost Cause



Editor's note: What follows is a series of extracts from interviews granted by survivors of the Battle of Romulus. For those of you unfamiliar with this system, Romulus is a small star system in Federated Commonwealth space, specifically, the Tamar March or Blackjack Operations Area. The only inhabited planet (also called Romulus) is a 0.8 G rock ball with a cold, thin, marginally breathable atmosphere. The planet is mined for iron and nickel. Romulus' companion Remus, a huge asteroid in a stable orbit around the planet, is a source of fresh water-ice.

At the onset of the Clan invasion, Romulus was garrisoned by a mixture Lyrans Commonwealth and Federated Suns units. The planetary garrison was attacked on April 14. A scant handful of troops evacuated the planet on May 6. This is the story of those 21 days. The full transcript will be issued in book-tape form within four months of this publication.

BattleTechnology Magazine strives to maintain neutrality at all times and present an unbiased source of complete information. The Clan invasion is an exception. In this war, no one can stand aside. With this in mind, BattleTechnology has requested that a Federated Commonwealth military censor edit the information presented. This is not done to deny the reader of his right to know, but rather in understanding of the realities of combat. As the ancient Terran philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli said, "Knowledge is Power." Therefore certain passages that might have been included concerning Federated Commonwealth technology are absent, and specific information that might be of military significance has been deleted. Let the Clans gather their own information.

Lt Sasha Kent: Garrison Command operations, Combat Information Sector

"We'd all heard of the Clans, what with the first wave. Who'd have thought we'd be in the second? Our first warning came when something popped in on a pirate jump point, neatly avoiding our picket satellites at the primaries. Long range telescopes gave us a look at the bogey. It appeared to be a non-standard JumpShip without any attached DropShips. The emblem on side told us more. It was a huge green bird, posed as if striking something below it. The Jade Falcons had arrived.

The pirate point was eight light-minutes out from Romulus, so precisely eight minutes after they jumped in-system, the message came in. I'll never forget it. A cold, almost inhuman voice said, "This is the *StarRunner*, scout of the Jade Falcon Clan. We request information of you. How many units stand ready to defend and what are their names?" That nearly panicked us. Here was the enemy, knocking at our door and asking who was home and how were they doing. The old man reacted quickly. I guess he wanted to bluff them.

"A full regimental combat team's here, Birdy," he shouted, "Come on in and we'll pluck your feathers!"

Time dragged by, and twenty-two minutes later the same voice came back over the link. This time it sounded slightly puzzled. "Are you sure?," it asked. "We have been observing you for some time and make your total strength to be as follows..." It then read off a complete, accurate list of all our units, their locations, strengths, and their commanding officers. That sparked a bedlam of shouted questions in the command-communications-operations station. Before the old man could respond, the ship vanished into a fold in space. They must use dual array batteries on their scout ships; not a bad idea. Instantly the commander began issuing orders to shuffle our positions.

"Blake's Blood, we'll make their intelligence reports useless," he swore. Instead we played right into their hands. They hit us while we were moving out of our fortified positions.

Captain Obediah Sain: Federated Commonwealth AeroSpace Corps

Once that message came in, everybody went on full alert, and word spread that the so-called 'Jade Falcons' were coming spread like wildfire. It was a great tactic on their part. We were keyed up and wired after twelve hours on constant alert and the poor ground pounders were in the process of moving their units. While we watched the pirate points, they came in at the nadir jump point, five JumpShips loaded loaded for bear and escorted by two frigates. In less than five seconds all of our remote watch satellites were reduced to clouds of expanding dust. None even got a shot off. Then the DropShips cut loose and burned towards

Romulus. They came in fast, about three and a half G's. We calculated our intercepts and waited, planning to meet them just inside the orbit of Remus, but they got us again. They passed their turnover point and just kept accelerating down our throats. For a while, everybody wondered what was going on. Best guesses were that it was either a massive guidance failure or a suicide run with loads of atomics. Both were far wrong. Suddenly, they made turnover and began to decelerate, and I swear to you they pulled five Gs easy! We were caught with our shorts around our ankles.

We did manage to intercept about three kilo-klicks [3,000 km, ed] outside the outer atmosphere, right in our backyard. My wing was a mixed pair, two *Seydlitz* light fighters and two sixty five ton *Lucifers*. Our tactics called for a quick run on on the DropShips with the *Seydlitzes* spotting targets and pulling off any escorts, allowing the *Lucifers* to bore in for some serious ripping and tearing. We closed, and the *Seydlitzes* selected one of the outer DropShips in a cluster of five. They boosted towards them while my wingman and I followed.

The two light fighters made a quick run at the DropShip and cut for space. Instantly, two of the five Falcon fighters on picket duty pursued. I didn't wait to watch. The other three fighters were scattered around the convoy, giving us a free run on our target. We kicked in our overthrusts and flew in, dodging energy beams and long range missiles. We cut loose with our LRM's and poured on everything we had. Halfway in, my wingman ate a heavy laser shot and blew. I made it to laser range, hit the ship twice, and pulled out. The DropShip kept going. Before I knew it, the two pickets were back and I figured the *Seydlitzes* were gone. I had a quick look at two long shark-like shapes as they flashed past, weapons blazing. I took a spread of SRM's and my targeting system went down. You don't dogfight in space on visuals, so I dove for the atmosphere.

Somehow I made it in, though I pancaked on landing. That's when I lost both legs and the arm. Still, I was luckier than most. Only eight percent of the Aerospace fighters made it back. They cut through us like a laser through cardboard. We didn't even slow them."

Lt Jessica Standish: Fire Lance Commander

A lot of us saw the aerospace battle, if you can call it that, since it was just beyond the atmosphere. We realized that we were in deep trouble. The ground fighting started almost at once — and, by all the gods, it was something else! Those Jade Falcons hit the ground running and before you knew it, we were staggering back on all fronts and counting our rapidly mounting casualties. And they didn't stop or slow down. It was like trying to fight an avalanche or a typhoon, a force of nature rather than of man.

As far as hardware, they used everything from 'Mechs to

ground troops. A lot of their equipment looked like vintage Star League gear but heavily modified. Without a doubt, it was better than anything we could field.

Since the data core was released by the Grey Death Legion, a bit of LosTech has been rediscovered and put into production. My *Warhammer*is, was, a good example. It had been in the family for generations, and had just been refitted with experimental new extended range Particle Projection Cannons and improved heat sinks fresh out of <Deleted>. The rest of my lance was field-testing similar improvements. Lot of good it did us. We crashed and burned on April 27.

We'd been assigned guard duty at one of the last ammo dumps in our sector. We picked up some garbled radio chatter about two hours before sun up. Someone was taking a pounding about five klicks north. Twenty minutes later, the ammo dump exploded in a series of ripping detonations and blinding flashes. Koning's *Griffin* was too close; it disintegrated in the firestorm. The attackers weren't satisfied at blowing the dump and taking out one 'Mech, they came at the other three BattleMechs in my lance. It gave me my first look at the so-called Micro-Mechs.

Micro-Mechs look like three meter or so tall versions of BattleMechs, and gods, do they move fast. We couldn't seem to hit the things, they moved so quickly. As best we could figure, twenty five of the things came up a dry wash and infiltrated the dump. They opened up with some sort of shoulder-mounted short range missile launchers and the dump was history. Then they swarmed Simkins in her *Phoenix Hawk* using more missiles and lasers. It was like watching a swarm of ants cut up a grasshopper.

We killed a few. When we were able to target one of them

with our weapons, we tended to blow them apart. But they did their work. The ammo dump was gone, and while Inkar and myself were fighting the micros their larger siblings took us from behind.

My *Warhammer* was ripped open by concentrated pulse laser fire. It went down and I went out. I couldn't have been unconscious for more than a few seconds but when I recovered, Inkar's *Catapult* was a heap of smoking wreckage and five Falcon BattleMechs, each with that same damned red star and green bird, were moving around me. They were evac'ing the Micro-Mechs. It was weird, the micros would jump up and latch onto special hand grips all over the body of the BattleMechs for a rid off the battlefield. I still can't believe the level of skill and organization those Clansmen displayed.

I should have lain still and played dead. I couldn't. I could tell my *Warhammer* was almost shot but the fusion engine was still providing power. Without even standing, I targeted both PPCs on one of the Falcon 'Mechs and poured every kilowatt of energy into the PPCs. My 'Mech screamed as the tortured coils over-loaded and blew micro-seconds after the power hit them. But it was enough. Twin spears of over-charged blue lightning caught the Falcon square in the chest. His armor vaporized and for an instant, I saw the miniature sun of his fusion engine burning gold in the core of his crippled machine. The it erupted in a fountain of light and plasma. The Falcon 'Mech was gone. Only the stumps of its legs were left, and a half dozen of the micros went with it.

I lay on the sand, the smell of burning coolant filling my cockpit, and knew I was going to die. The *Warhammer* was crippled; it would never fight again. Too much waste heat

from the coil overloads had bled into the old thing, cooking the inner circuits. I waited for the execution. One of the Falcons walked over and stood over my destroyed 'Mech. Suddenly a loudspeaker blared his oddly accented words across the desert.

"You fought well," he said. Then all four surviving 'Mechs and the rest of the micros left. I was picked up by our units in the general retreat two days later. Gods, these Clansmen could teach the Dragons the true meaning of warrior's honor.

Staff Sergeant Mickal Preston: Jump Marine

You could say I was one of the last people to see combat on Romulus. Orders came down to abandon the planet and head for <Deleted>. We set a perimeter around what was left of our DropShips and waited for units to straggle in. They had forty-eight hours from notification to liftoff.



Some never made it. Don't know if they simply couldn't make it in time or the damn birds got 'em. Does it really matter now?

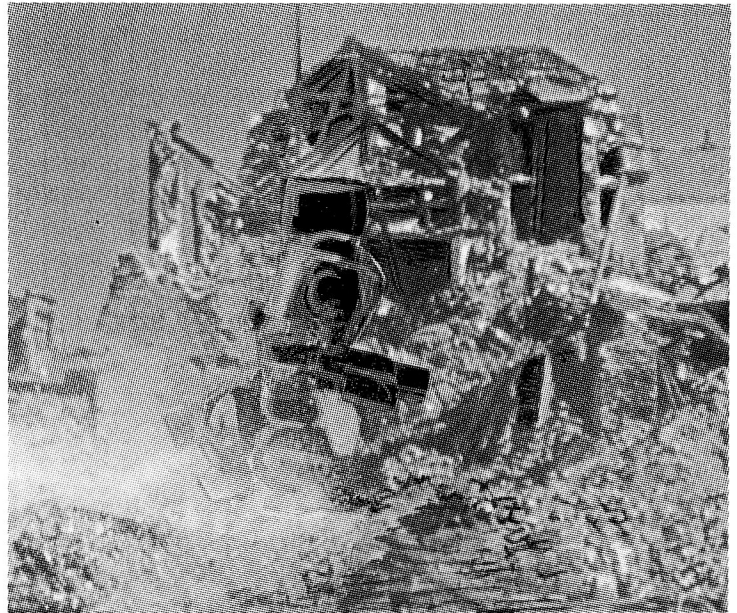
Any case, my unit had part of the north-east section of the perimeter. Yah, jump troops don't normally take a static defense but remember, we'd been through nearly three weeks of constant mauling. You did what was needed. Besides our small arms and rocket launchers, my unit was given two of the new StarSword Pulse lasers. They were mounted on skimmer bodies and had a better rate of fire than the older model tripod lasers. We knew we'd get the chance to use them.

That chance came during our second day. The bird air cover had been very intense. Our last fighters hadn't been up for five days; they were being held back to escort the DropShips off planet. But the birds seemed content to mostly watch us. At 0730 we picked up some garbled Comlink broadcasts. What was left of one of our BattleMech Companies was coming in with birds on their tail. We spotted the dust cloud beyond the northern ridge and soon a battered bunch of light and medium 'Mechs led by a *Crusader* crested it. The bird flyboys made a run on the 'Mechs, but we had four *Riflemen* guarding that fire lane. One of the birds went down in flames; the others broke off. The 'Mechs staggered in and General <Deleted> started a quick debriefing while they loaded. Those boys must have done something to torque off the bird, because they weren't letting go yet.

Full dark was just about on us when a wave of Micro-Mechs poured over the ridge line. They came on fast in a long shifting line. Somehow, they seemed to anticipate where we were going to fire and always seemed to dodge away. Missiles began to land on our position and more men died. I was sure I was going to be one of them. A micro landed four meters from me and I found myself looking down the tube of a rocket launcher.

I cut loose with my assault rifle and the bird staggered under the sleet of bullets. But they all bounced off its armor. I saw my reflection in the thing's face plate as it targeted me. Then it got hit by both pulse lasers. The right leg and arm were cut off by the searing light. It toppled, and I thought I was going to be OK. Then the damned thing started moving again and I think I screamed.

At first it only twitched like a crippled insect. Then the micro started crawling across the sand in an awkward sideways scuttle. It got hold of its severed leg, the end of which was still smoking from the laser hit, then went after its arm with the severed leg held awkwardly under its good arm. It was too much for us. We all hit the ungodly thing with every weapon on hand just to stop it. We did. It exploded in a rain of SRMs. After a few stunned moments, we went back to the fight. It didn't last much longer.



The birds pulled back. Of the six 'Mechs that had come in, one was destroyed and three more were piles of junk. Over forty people were dead and another six two seriously injured. Thirteen Jade Falcon Micro-Mechs were destroyed and I understand some relatively intact samples of their hardware were recovered. We lifted that night and I've never been so glad to leave a planet behind me. You know, I really wonder if we're going to win this thing.

EDITOR'S NOTE: CAPTAIN SAIN DIED SIX HOURS AFTER GRANTING THE INTERVIEW INCLUDED ABOVE. DEATH CAME DURING SURGERY TO REPLACE HIS LOST LEGS AND ARM. FIGURES ON THE TOTAL CASUALTIES OF MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE STILL UNAVAILABLE PENDING NOTIFICATION OF THE FAMILIES, BUT BATTLETECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE ESTIMATES THE DEAD AND MISSING AT APPROXIMATELY 7,500.

LASTLY, THE STAFF OF BATTLETECHNOLOGY SALUTES THOSE THAT FELL IN THE BATTLE OF ROMULUS. THEIR FAILURE IN NO WAY DIMINISHES THEM. WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THEY DIED FOR ALL OF US, BUYING TIME AND INFORMATION WITH THEIR LIVES. IT IS UP TO US TO USE WHAT THEY PAID FOR. WE MUST MAKE THEIR BLOODPRICE WORTH WHILE.

Ed Note: The picture on these pages are not of the fight described, but of cityfighting at the suburb of Catesby. No photographs survived of the actions recounted here. The photograph on this page is a Clan 'Mech called a 'Thor'. The pictures on the previous pages are of the desperate street-to-street fighting for Catesby.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY



A couple months ago, after our disorderly retreat from Bjarred, the Marauders needed a place to hole up and lick our wounds. The Smoke Jaguars had left us half a company. Six 'Mechs, two tanks, my *Pegasus*, newly rechristened "Patches". We hired on as a 'support team' with the Draconis Combine, on Marshdale way up near the new border in the Pesht district. Our contract included major medical support; a bionic eye for the new Captain, little necessities like that. Need I say we were working for dirt wages? We'd have signed anything, just let us rest for a month or so. We were extremely pleased when the healing time extended to two months. We got edgy around the beginning of the third month when nobody attacked us and ...nobody attacked ANYBODY. The Clans were quiet. No news came out of the Conquered Worlds. And there was no intelligence.

Usually you can get a liason officer to hint that there are things that *he* knows that *you* can't know, and thus get scuttlebutt intel from the things he doesn't say. Ours wasn't afraid to drink with us, because he had no secrets to safeguard. The Penguin, Julian, and I were trying to pump him, largely for something to do, in a small bar (pretending to be a classical inn) in a smaller town called Calebsville when the waitress came up to the bar with a drink tray and I overheard her order.

"...and another flask of *sake* for Matsuo-sama's party in room Twelve."

Once when I was in the dentist's chair, the drill hit a nerve. The strength of the adrenalin reaction that hit me then almost obscured the pain. It's the only thing I can think of to compare to my reaction to that hated name. I was up from the bar stool with my hand clamped around the waitress's arm before my brain caught up to my body. I could see a bouncer starting toward me, and the barkeep gesturing him back.

"If the honorable..." his eyes hastily scanned my insignia "...Tank Commander...would release the servitor's arm?" he suggested, eyes burning into me. I tried to think. *Etiquette, Kurita, subsection C-12: How to Recover From a Blunder While Not Losing Too Much Face.*

First, let go the woman's arm. "My apologies to the honorable establishment." I said slowly. *(That implies, my respect to the proprieties here, but not particularly to you, cauliflower-brain!)* "Imagine my excitement when I overheard the name of an honored *(Think, girl, lie fast and lie well!)*... former instructor on this young lady's lips. *(Nice one, Laura! Not a total lie — the lady had taught me plenty! Now keep those er- creative truths flowing!)* Naturally, an establishment of this quality would not reveal the name of a guest in a private room. But is it possible that a letter to the Lady Sakkura Matsuo could be delivered without annoyance to the lady's party?" Overriding him as he began to speak, "And is it possible that an ink stone and brush, and paper of a quality suitable to the lady's rank be found for me? For a suitable fee to compensate your efforts, of course." *(Julian, you're stuck for the drinks, I'm sorry.)* The size of the K-bill my hand laid on the bar conveniently close to his made his eyes pop despite his best efforts to be cool.

I turned without waiting for his answer. *(They're fellow scouts; they've known me a long time; sure hope they'll back my play. I gotta keep the upper hand or risk playing burglar later on.)* There was a desk in the entry way. I sat at it, looking back at him expectantly. *(Yowsah! Julian and Penguin had turned back to the LO, hanging on his words just like he had brains. And the barkeep was sending the waitress on an errand...either very good or very bad.)* I concentrated on looking contemplative, and fought my scattered wits into formation.

Lucky thing my martial arts instructors insisted on an art form as a mental discipline. Lucky thing mine was inkbrush painting. That leads naturally to calligraphy. Poetry comes harder. But in this case, I didn't need to come up with anything new. I just had to remember a transmission I'd sent on a battlefield more than a decade ago.

Bingo! He'd sent a servant over with a pot of tea...and an elderly cup with a crack. *(As I recall, I'm supposed to admire the sublimity of the crack. This is a compliment, not an insult.)* So I studied the crack, just like I had subtlety. It looked like a root system, that sort of meandering branch. It actually entered a brown streak in the cup, like a root

looking for nurture... Maybe I wasn't as bad at this game as I'd thought. *(Careful! Keep humble! As long as you feel outclassed you stay attentive, remember that!)*

A nice ink stone arrived, with a little ceramic box with two holes *(the old-style water well; wonder if they thought I wouldn't recognize it)*, a selection of brushes, and — one piece of grey rice paper. *Great! I get one try. This is either a compliment, a challenge,...or maybe they only have one decent piece of paper.* I flexed my wrist and looked soulful. I ground ink, partially closed one opening of the well, and sprinkled water, spilling just a little to wet the ink...Medium Brush was safest, something like a # 3. I did the merest suggestion of a flippant bird-wing at the top of the page, then in my best calligraphy:

Yellow bird aloft
Rode above lightning's currents —
Scorch'd, the frail peony! *

If the honorable Lady Warrior remembers the writer of this poem, perhaps she would allow a few moments' speech in the press of her weighty affairs? I may be reached through the garrison here.

Lt. Laura Casey
CO 2nd Armor Lance,
Yellow Bird Co,
Selah's Battalion

(The Battalion and Selah haven't existed since the 3039 War, and the 1st Armor Lance hadn't existed since Bjarred, but heck, this was a formal occasion. Best foot forward and like that. No need to tell her the name of my former CO. After all, she was the one who'd put him in that wheelchair for life.)

I folded the note into a simple circle and brushed the name "Matsuo" on the outside. No honorifics needed for the House Leader. The servitor took my letter with a bow. *(Stay and wait for an answer? Nah, looks too much like I cared. And I do care. So I can't show it.)* Circular logic again. Only my pride got me on my feet. I walked slowly to the garden shrine, admiring it to calm my thoughts, reassumed my footwear and made a dignified exit. Alone.

*Ed Note: The Yellow Bird is the legendary enemy which is the only possible slayer for a dragon. The Peony appears on the heraldic circular crest of House Matsuo. The poem is a challenge. The inclusion of a past verb makes this a battle boast.

It is also imperfectly scanned, having six syllables in the last line instead of five.

I have a better ability to simulate calm than I'd thought. I didn't sleep all that well, but I did manage to get some work done the next day. I found time for a private conversation with Julian (*the words "next pay day" came up more than once*).

A couple of lifetimes later, I got her message. A haiku, of course.

Autumn falls early
bright, the frail leaf coloring
my path with its death.

Her note said, "The honorable warrior underrates herself if she imagines she can be forgotten. My time just now is at the convenience of the Kanrei. Important issues are being discussed relating to the current hostilities. Due to the pressures of the conference, I must set a meeting time which is rather late. This Thursday, 8:30 in the evening; ask for me at the inn." Good. She knew *my* culture well enough not to ask me to eat with her. I don't break bread with enemies.

It had occurred to me that the CO might just need to know what I was up to. McInerny was a seasoned Mechwarrior when I was a greenie. At first I'd been leery of him; until he showed two traits that changed my mind. Unlike most Mechwarriors, he actually preferred working with combined arms, *and* he trusted our employers about as far as he could throw a Battlemaster. This endeared him to me. I've seen the inside of too many House-sponsored company stores.

"So," McInerny's good eye bored into me (*they have a new joke about McInerny since he took over the unit. How do you tell which one is McInerny's false eye? It's the one with the kindly expression!*) "Tell me everything you know about House Matsuo."

"It goes back almost two centuries as one of the richest Merchant Houses from Albiero in the Pesht District. They were ennobled as a direct result of their contribution of money and resources during the 2899-2901 Albiero Plague. Their 'voluntary contribution' to the Draconis Combine Mustered Forces has risen from company to regimental level over the course of the last century and a half. Not Sword of Light level, but a good tight force all the same. Lady Matsuo became their war leader after the 3039 War, and is designated her father's heir. This unit has some history with them, as you know. Sir."

"What are the odds she's in the high level planning sessions?"

"As the best reserve regiment left in this end of the district, native to the only planet in the Albiero Prefecture which hasn't yet seen a Clan invasion, I hardly think Theodore

Kurita will overlook her specialized knowledge."

"Those planning sessions...wouldn't you like to be a fly on the wall, so we can find out just what they do know?"

I nodded agreement. He went on, "A fly, or maybe a bug?" I nodded again, more slowly. He hitched his chair closer to the table and we began considering means and methods.

It wasn't all that hard, really. I expected a much worse time of it. I suppose that we'd have had a lot of trouble getting into the conference, or trying to broadcast a signal through the walls. We didn't try those things. We didn't look for secret passages, try bribing a servant, or making a listening hole in the roof, either. That sort of stuff is for C-grade Marik vids.

We put microrecorders the size of burrs on the floor of the teashop closest to the conference hall, in the sawdust next to the coat rack. We put them in the ladies' and gentlemen's rooms in front of the mirrors and other fixtures, right where they had max chance of attaching to uniform pants. The minis don't cost a lot to make because they're one-shot recorders; not reusable. They debrief through a one-time dump on a radio link, or you can recover them physically. Nice little gadgets. A teacher of mine called Tremaine showed me how to make them once on Canopus IV, just before we backed the wrong side on the Duchess-daughter thing and had to leave with informal suddenness.

We lost a couple to trompling and jostling. We got some odd glimpses of servants' hall private life. And we guessed it right as usual. The second-level people for the conference weren't second-guessing each other at the conference table, nor playing etiquette games at formal receptions. They were having tea at convenient places and talking nonstop. There are sixteen basic types of 'Mechs used by the Clans, maybe ten of which are favored by the Smoke Jaguars. It is confirmed that they use a modular type of construction, with different packages of weapons and equipment being interchanged according to the 'Mech's mission. So the recon 'Mech of Tuesday might be part of Wednesday's Fire Lance. Ouch. But it did explain a lot we'd seen, like the 'Vulture' Medina's autocannon-10 had torn a chunk of right-torso armor away from that showed up the next day with a new pair of extended-range large lasers and an attitude you wouldn't believe.

Matsuo-sama was right up there with the planners. It seemed from the commentary that her intel was up to date and a little more. Many of the generals there seemed to think they were fighting the last war but one. From her bleak expressions, Lady Sakkura seemed to have a better concept of just how heavy an enemy she was fighting.

I was a little surprised at our own daring when I heard one of our second-level types told to stand close to the Kanrei. He was holding a briefcase, I think. We heard this top level, ultra high clearance speech about how far the Clans had

gotten and how they were going to try some new tactics. It seems that the Clan types, at least the Smoke Jaguars, take our word at face value. There'd been a couple of units built of re-formed Ryoken troops which the Jags had misestimated. They seemed to know unit histories, at least up to the '39 War, but units that didn't have reputations were another story. Mercenary units were discounted; they seemed to share the Inner Sphere Conservative's disbelief in merc morale and commitment. So certain units were due for a renaming before the campaign began on...

About then the bug began a shattering whine; Julian & I raced to shut down our equipment as it popped and melted. We rescued maybe half of it from the little room we'd rented. Anything that gave off a traceable frequency, we just abandoned. Then we stashed the goods, went to our backup room, disarranged our clothing and put one of those pointless Kurita pillow vids on play. The house to house search caught us apparently napping.

Yawn.

Thursday.

I have dressed for a hot date with less nervousness. I had a clean uniform, praises be. It wasn't pressed, but then, I could hardly impress her with my couth anyway. No weapons, not even my ceremonial dagger. My uniform has the Dragonslayer ribbon, with the '39 war campaign ribbon next to it. Well, she knew all about that campaign, and our participation in it. She was chasing us for most of it.

At precisely five minutes before the appointed time, I was in the outer garden. I asked for Sakkura-sama's room, and was shown instead to the back garden. What had she in mind?

She certainly had worn well. There she was, lovely in vermillion and cream formal kimono, BOWING to me in the doorway of the teahouse. I bowed back, feeling clumsy. The scent of evergreen was suddenly strong.

She did the whole bit, tea, whisk, water heated over a small wood fire, three times offering the cup. As far as I could tell, she did it perfectly. The silence grew around us as the ritual unfolded. In spite of myself I felt welcomed. I drank the tea in an equal silence, set it down, bowed again. Courteous again, she did not make me open the meeting.

"I have wanted a meeting between us. It is my fortune that we are in.... a neutral place when we met."

"If there is such a thing as a neutral place in this conflict." The proper honorifics fled my mind. Never mind, she'd have to take it in my crude soldier's speech.

"Do you see this conflict as different from others?"

"Infinitely different." *Had I interested her yet? Hard to tell. It was cool in the teahouse, but I was sweating. Careful now. Let her ask you first. Maintain polite interest in her topic.* "But I am remiss. What had you wished to discuss with me?"

"There is a matter between us which puzzles me. My mind

is so constructed that an unsolved puzzle does not quiet itself, but teases me at unexpected times and places."

"Puzzles you, Matsuo-sama?"

"On the last day of the campaign for Oshiba, your three lances triggered an ambush I had set. Your captain was almost destroyed, rendered unconscious. Your second in command fought well, but you were in an untenable situation. Your armor conducted a fighting withdrawal all the way back to the ship. We managed to destroy only two of your vehicles. As your DropShip lifted, you sent me a message, replying to my haiku to your captain, and declaring yourself personally my enemy."

"That is approximately as I remember it, yes." *Oops, that's a little strong for politeness.* "I am flattered that it remains in your mind so clearly."

"If it were not offensive, a question wishes to be asked.."

"It is not offensive," *Just how much can you sweat, girl?*

"Why?"

"Why did I declare enmity? Or why did I have the presumption to consider myself sufficiently your equal that my enmity would matter?"

"The first was my question. The second...did not require to be asked." *That means she wasn't curious, but now she is! Wonderful! Laura the diplomat strikes again! Now, let's see if we can word this with any delicacy at all. Remember, you are asking her for a favor. And you haven't let yourself ask it yet.*

"It has come to my attention from time to time," I began slowly, "that you have been interested enough in me personally to ask questions about my background and current actions. Not just the Captain; I could see that with the families feuding and all. But me, the nameless kid from the Periphery. By your terms I have no standing by birth or by training. Add to that that I am a mercenary, and proud of my skills AS A MERCENARY. And your people think of mercs as only fit for killing. And then add that I'm not even a MechWarrior, only a tank gunner. Well, frankly, I didn't think it would matter a rat's...a bit to you what I declared. But *my* kind of honor demanded that I not let what you did go by!"

Her eyebrows went up. Her face was lit with amusement. I lost it, no excuse, just lost it totally.

"Look, back then I was just the junior tank lance leader. What I really did then — what I really do now — is covert ops. You found that out a long time ago, didn't you? Some of the time we shoot at people and skitter around under the 'Mechs feet and go boom, then run. Some of us do that while others are breaking into safes. Or into computer files. I hate it when my people die pulling fire as a diversion."

"I have a cynical attitude about 'most people' and their motivations. 'Most people' can be moved by appealing to greed, fear, or vanity. 'Most people' don't have what it takes to put themselves on the line, even for those Big Three. 'Most people' won't pay what it costs to stick to a principle



when times get tough. I saw a body once — a dead mother in a cellar. Kid was next to her. Kid was alive, barely. Mom had starved herself to feed kid. Literally; there was food on plate next to kid. That's what it takes to impress me nowadays. I can't claim that kind of guts. But when I can, I look after my people. Don't tell me about the honor of the Big House. My unit is all the allegiance I can afford."

She regarded me steadily. "And you say I cannot understand your form of honor? I believe you do me less credit as an enemy than I do you!"

"Lady, my people were frying alive in that tank, and you laughed and sent my Captain a haiku! Don't tell me about honor, and don't *ever* wonder why I called you out! 'Mech or no 'Mech, if I could have reached you just then, I'd have tried to kill you!"

Her side of the room radiated ice. "You believe I laughed at their deaths? You honestly believe that I would do such a thing?"

"Why not? They were mercenary scum to you, lowest of the low. *And* you've spent the last decade arranging little pitfalls and potshots for us. Stealing our rescued prisoners on Robinson! Dropping a hint in the ear of the Liao consul so we didn't get hired, but ambushed instead! Not to mention that stock market manipulation that wiped out the unit pension funds!"

"All of those attacks I have made. They were legitimate exercises of wit against your captain, who pilots my father's 'Mech, and who is my avowed enemy. I do not target you because you sell your services. Not all citizens of the Draconis Combine despise mercenaries. Many of us have the good sense to recognize quality where we see it, even in a pig's snout! Even serving an unworthy fool! Never, never, would I laugh at the deaths of brave warriors! "

There was something here that didn't add up. Something she wasn't saying. Something she was hinting at telling... Carefully I began, using her words "A question requires to be asked. It may be an impertinent question, but honor requires it..."

A nod was my answer.

"Whose was the other 'Mech — the Panther — that my Captain took out in that fight?"

Her lips compressed. She lowered her head so I could not watch her face as she told me what I must always have known.

"Your Captain used the weapons of the 'Mech he piloted — MY FATHER'S DRAGON WHICH HIS FATHER STOLE — to kill my brother on that battlefield. And yes, I laughed as I fought you, as my reserve forces blew your murderers into that same netherworld Yatsuo had just entered. Fighting laughter that keeps the fighter from knowing what losses he has taken! I was high on the fight until long after you whimpered your ways to the DropShip. And then...But that is all honor demands I reveal. The rest is of interest only to

my family."

As she bowed to me, I knew she was dismissing me. I hadn't had a chance to tell her my purpose yet. I might be judged an uneducated barbarian, but I was going to get it across to her.

"Lady of Matsuo, at the risk of being presumptuous..." No answer from her. "I came here to you to speak of something beyond our lives, or even the quarrel between your house and my unit. I have put my pride aside to speak with you. Please grant me a few more moments of your time." *I'd beg if I had to.* An appreciative lift of her eyebrow showed she knew that, even enjoyed it.

"Our unit had to retreat from Bjarred. There were...there were extensive losses. I suppose you know that the Captain's old injury was aggravated, that he is now permanently retired?" A nod from her. "What we saw on Bjarred...what we saw on Bjarred was not warfare. At least, not warfare as we know it. It was sheer slaughter, like cattle in a pen. These Smoke Jaguars, they're like...they're not like...They do not fight as either of us would consider honorable! They fight us warrior for warrior, or two of us to one of them, or three! But their weapons pick us off at ranges where we can't even aim! And their infantry keep fighting until they are literally blown apart! You and we aren't very alike, but compared to them, we're identical." I was doing this so badly and it was so critical. I found myself sputtering. "We can't win against them unless we get new weapons and new tactics. And considering that it takes four or five of our deaths to account for one of theirs, we need a coordinated strategy. It may easily take more than the Draconis Combine can muster to beat them back. And it certainly won't be done if the forces of the DCMS and we mercenaries remain at odds."

I saw her now as the leader of thousands. Her face was all business. "Continue."

"Look, we're not the worst of the forces you have at your command in this theater. But even militia units get supplies before we do. We've got adequate medical care, and enough field rations, but we can't get mortar rounds resupplied, let alone 'Mech ammo. As for repairs, forget it!"

"Look, we could be digging in on a planet or even two planets on your frontier, giving early warning and slowing down their next advance — and you **KNOW** there's going to be a next advance, you've got to know that!"

"Such is the DCMS contempt for us that we haven't even been debriefed. We fought the Jags on Bjarred, and we pulled fifteen 'Mechs back out of that bloodbath. I've been nose to armpit with those nasty Elementals of theirs. And I have a fair analysis of one of their battlecodes. But when I tell the liaison officer that I have something to contribute to Intel, he just says they'll get around to us 'in due time'. By the time they do, this planet may well be under attack."

"No," she returned absently, "I'm not sure that it's on their path..."

**RECORDING: 24 JULY 3050,
MARSHDALE, PESHT MILITARY DISTRICT, DRACONIS COMBINE
INCLUDED WITH COM PACKET, NOT REFERRED TO IN TEXT**

"CAPTAIN MCINERNY, DO YOU KNOW OF THE OFFER WHICH LIEUTENANT CASEY MADE TO ME?"

"I DO NOT APPROVE, NOR WAS I CONSULTED. I THOUGHT OF FORBIDDING SUCH A FIGHT, BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT CASEY HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE A CHOICE HERE. YET I CAN'T SEE IT AS T HONORABLE OF YOU TO GET HER INTO A FIGHT SHE CANNOT WIN..."

"NOR DO I. I ONLY WISH IT WERE THAT SIMPLE. SHE HAS DECLARED FORMAL ENMITY. SHE HAS OFFERED ME A FIGHT IN WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, SHE DOES HAVE A CHANCE. NOT A VERY GREAT CHANCE, OF COURSE. BUT HOW CAN I DISHONOR HER BY REFUSING TO FIGHT? SHE HAS GREAT COURAGE, THOUGH LITTLE SENSE."

"I WONDERED HOW YOU MIGHT BE THINKING ABOUT IT. IF I MAY SAY SO, LADY MATSUO, YOUR DOUBTS DO YOU CREDIT. NOW, IF YOUR CUSTOMS ALLOW A LITTLE VARIATION FOR LOCAL TRADITION... YOU ARE THE CHALLENGED PARTY, TECHNICALLY, AND THAT GIVES YOU SOME RIGHTS YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE OF." *RECORDING DETERIORATES.*

"If this is because of that old fight, if you consider that you and I are enemies, and that you must kill me, I'll...I'll guarantee to give you your shot at it. As soon as the frontier is safe, I'll meet you anywhere. Tank to 'Mech, hand-to-hand, whatever."

Her eyes warmed to amusement. "You think that you could take me in either battle?"

I grinned right back at her. "My odds are one in seventy eight in the first instance, maybe as good as one in five in the second. But you haven't heard the other half of the bargain."

"Which is?"

"You help the unit. You authorize our ammo, our repairs, our consumables. And you get us something real to do, so we aren't just sitting ducks in a shooting war. My home planet used to talk about a 'straw death', a death in bed of old age. That was the worst death for a warrior. For me — for us — the worst death is one that could have been prevented IF WE WERE ALLOWED TO FIGHT!"

"You mercs will fight and die for the Draconis Combine?" Her voice was meant to sting.

My reply was equally contemptuous. "Of course we will. That's our *job*, lady!"

"No, I didn't blow it completely. She said that there were places we could be of use, that she'd consider my offer, and talk to me early next week. But look, Mac, I'd appreciate it

if we kept the terms to ourselves. It sounds like bad vid drama even to me. Whatever she comes up with, it's up to you to say yes or no." *Please, please don't remind me that the unit needs every trained officer it has. Let me find out if I'll be alive next week, then we'll make plans for the future.*

McInerny eyed me soberly. He didn't say anything about my choice. I was grateful. Then his eyes changed, as an incoming call distracted his consciousness.

"This is a private call, Casey. I'll let you know when she contacts us."

Our new employer was coming to dine. Captain McInerny put me in charge of the arrangements. I think it was to keep me busy.

I pulled battalion funds for the dinner. Fugu fish, a mutated variety of a poisonous Terran blowfish, smoked eel, fried flowers. Every delicacy that I could think of that was proper to the season and the honor we wished to pay her. It had to be catered from the inn; we sure couldn't generate it from the food synths. We wanted to welcome her onto the DropShip though, because that was our territory. We had akavit instead of sake, and lutfisk instead of sushi, but then we gave her food we knew she would like. The Matsuo Kanrei brought two of her aides, and dinner was an amazing, cheery affair during which nothing at all was said. The aides composed poems. So did Captain McInerny, surprisingly well. Then the aides went into a corner with some of

our personnel to look at viewvids, while the three of us got down to business. She didn't haggle, but let us have it directly. We were to be resupplied. We were to proceed to some planet called Wolcott as a special operations group attached to a private regiment. Her *house* regiment. Unit pensions were to be prepaid into a ComStar account or a Games Foundation account, as we chose; she gave no sign that she was providing for the future of her old enemy as she signed on the dotted line. McInerny's real eye was suspiciously wet. Then she dropped her bombshell.

"Captain, your unit regulations are based on traditions of what world?"

"Originally, those of New Caledonia, Ma'am, modified over the years."

"Then your traditions would allow a duel to select a regimental champion?" What in seven ice world's frozen halos was she getting at? And why was McInerny trying not to grin?

"That's correct, Ma'am."

"I am formally notifying you that Lieutenant Laura Casey has challenged me to such a duel." Huh? I had challenged her to a fight, yes, but not this kind of fight. Duelling? The notion is as antiquated as a lace fan! *Pardon me, sir, may we politely discuss the conditions under which I am allowed to kill you? That sort of drek.*

"As challenged party, ma'am, you have the right to name the time and conditions of battle." *Thanks a lot, McInerny, you really know how to back your people up.*

She wasted no time. "Place: an empty cargo bay, in atmosphere, null gravity. Weapons:" she paused to look at me for reaction "hand-to-hand." *She must know I'm competent in the martial arts, I thought wildly. She's probably trained as well, but why, why is she giving up her advantage to fight me in freefall?*

"And, Captain? I believe that the parties involved in a duel must bear themselves with restraint, that in fact they may not fight until the duel takes place."

Why was Mac grinning? "That is entirely in accord with tradition, Ma'am."

"Time:" she continued, "two weeks after this regiment's officers agree that a peace has been signed. "

Two weeks after ...huh? You mean I get to fight with the unit? You mean you aren't going to strap me in a cockpit for target practice after all?

"Until then, the issue is to be dropped. We are employer and employee. And..." *after all this, she had the gall to smile at me demurely* "If the honorable leader of Midnight Ops thought she knew some dirty tricks, she had best prepare herself to be educated..."

The enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend.
But I'm sure glad that we're on the same side.

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a hot 'Mech gets newTech

A Matter of Timing

Tales of the Cobalt Coil #5

by S. Jansfield

I've always hated tour groups. Fortunately, here at the Cobalt Coil, we don't have to put up with too many. Solaris does a brisk tourist trade but most of the off-planet groups are more interested in the big, flashy places like Chez Juan, Valhalla, or LosTech Nine. The Coil's a local's bar with a fairly small, quite loyal clientele most of whom think of the Coil as 'their secret'. But Donovan and his groups we put up with—long as he lets us know when he's bringing a bunch of blue-haired old site-seers by, like last Friday.

But first, I should explain why we put up with Donovan. Simply, he's one of ours, you know, a regular and an old timer. That's it. At the Coil we take care of our own.

Any case, Donovan let us know a week ahead he'd be bringing in a small group from the Federated Suns who wanted to see "the real ethnic side of Solaris", which is kind of like asking for real Star League ammo from a Free Trader. I've never met a native Solarian over the age of twenty. But Donovan's group wanted to see "the real Solaris" and if he took them to a regular bar, the odds were on most of them coming out either missing their valuables, or feet first. So I let the regulars know what was up and come Friday we had a nearly full bar with everyone in the know. And a little something planned. We figured it would be O.K. Donovan was a quick thinker.

They came in right on schedule, half past four in the afternoon, and Blake's Blood, they stood out like a *Locust* amid a lance of *Marauders*. Donovan led them in, pausing at the doorway to roll his eyes in almost mock-embarrassment. That came close to breaking us up but we held it. He led them to a conveniently empty table and tried to keep them from staring. But they kept gawking like they'd never seen a mechwarrior bar. Why anyone would find a motley bunch of men and women in dirty coveralls interesting I'll never know. At least they didn't pull out pocket 'vids to record it all.

After letting them bask in our ambience for a while, I wandered over to take their order. I bumped into a table on the way. I don't know why I decided to wear that stupid eyepatch over a perfectly good eye. Lenth, the day man, loaned it to me saying it would give me a more piratical look.

Any way, it was almost worth it when Donovan got a look and almost started laughing himself. Served him right. I refrained from trying a Butte Hold accent.

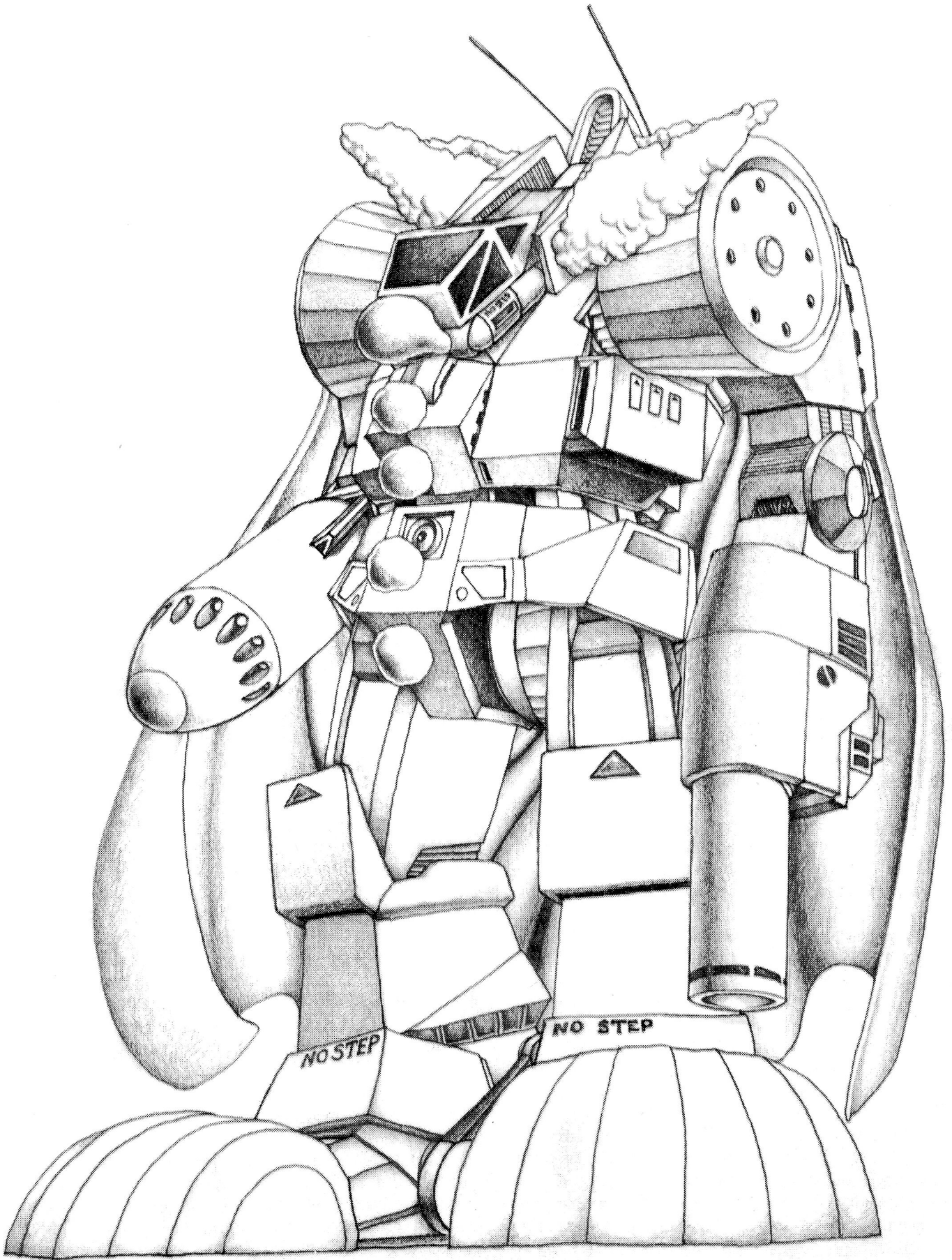
The drink orders were simple, a round of draft beer for the table with a seltzer water for Donovan. Then one of them asked for a Capellan March PPC. I looked the drinking man over. He had a retreating hairline and an advancing belly, the latter cinched in by a fashionable one-piece suit. His mussed-up neo-leather jacket was draped over the back of his chair and I could tell he wasn't armed. By the way he kept looking at the younger woman across from him I could tell he was trying to impress her with his manly drinking habits. Well, the customer is always right.

I headed back to the bar and drew five from the tapped keg and then filled another glass with UV flashed seltzer water. Now for the PPC. If any one drink has ever been invented that could double as an industrial de-greaser, it is the Cappellan March PPC. Composed of equal amounts of tequila and pure grain alcohol, it has to be the most lethal drink this side of straight arsenic or the 'fruit punch' in Class IV survival rations. At the Coil we mix all our PPCs real strong. Some places dilute this sort of drink with a good measure of water, a drink jokingly called the Partial Projection Cannon, but not the Coil. Chubby got what he ordered.

I was halfway back from delivering the drinks when a harsh gasp followed by a strangled, choking cough let me know he'd tried it. It's nice to know your work is appreciated.

Things were quiet for a while and the table ordered another round of drinks (six beers and a water this time), and the visitors were starting to look a little bored. Time to give them their money's worth, I decided. A nod from me was all it took.

Within seconds, an argument broke out in a back corner. It escalated. While the tourists watched, mouths agape, a fight erupted. Boy did it spread fast. Almost instantly, the Coil was filled with flying punches and bodies, which, interestingly enough, weren't damaging the furniture or the patrons. The fight was centered around Donovan's table but nobody was crashing into them. Then a gun came out.



Right in front of the tourists, a solidly built woman pulled a gun. She pointed it at a man and fired. The sharp crack of the Tokave automatic silenced all other noises in the bar as the struck man tumbled backwards. He smacked into a wall and slumped down, red leaking from his mouth. Then everybody drew guns.

Gun shots crashed and smoke rapidly filled the air. People dove for cover and some of the tourists started screaming. I pulled my Viper, switched to autofire and joined the fun from behind the bar, popping up long enough to snap off a quick burst and a shouted curse before ducking back. Donovan drew his laser and headed for the door, his tour group right behind. No one paid attention to their hasty departure. About a minute and a half after they left, I

Then everybody drew guns...

shouted out that it was enough. Everybody stopped shooting. Then we started laughing.

When Donovan showed up three hours later, Half-price night was in full swing. He came in madder than a cheated street walker but the moment he hit the bar, everybody started laughing again. That mellowed his mood and he joined in.

"You should have seen the looks on their faces when we got outside," he said, once the laughter had subsided. "I felt for sure that between the panic and the exertion, Mr. Simpkins was going to drop from a coronary, he was the PPC drinker. All right, I knew all you idiots were firing blanks, someone should sweep up the wads it makes the place look trashy, but that Tokave fired a like round. You can't fake that sound. What happened?"

I grinned.

"I don't think you know the Toshiros," I said and gestured towards a pair of ex-draconians who smiled back. One was the gunwoman, the other, the man she shot. "In their day they were some of the best fight choreographers working for the Combine. They came in on my request and set the whole thing up."

Sara Toshiro continued the explanation.

"Our devilish barkeep said he wanted something special for you so my husband and I pulled out an old, but very effective trick." She took out her gun, ejected a shell, and tossed it to Donovan. "It's only a half load but it sounds about the same when fired. Sam?"

Sam pulled up his tunic, exposing an armored vest.

"The gun only fires a six millimeter round," she said, "And the vest is rated for up to a standard ten millimeter round. All I had to do was make sure I hit him in the chest. At nine meters I could do that with my eyes closed."

Donovan shook his head.

"Jansfield, you're a prize bastard," he said.

"Nope, my parents were legally wed, more than I can say for most of the riff-raff we let in here," I replied. "Don't you know how dangerous it is to insult the bartender? Who knows what might end up in your drink."

Donovan put up his hands in surrender then stood a round to all of us who had participated. The drinks flowed and Donovan swore revenge on each and every one of us. We'd see. The story telling started, just as it always does on Half-price night and the subject of practical jokes wound up as the topic of the night. And boy are humans devilish inventive. Like the aerospace jock who put itching powder in his wingman's helmet or the tank crew who rigged their gun to blow smoke rings. Most of it was actually rather tame, just people blowing of a little pressure in their respective war zones. Everyone deals with stress in their own way but a lot resort to humor. Then Ressa took the floor.

Ressa stands under two and a half meters but she sports more muscles than most men I know, myself included; rumor has it she grew up under 1.4 earth standard G's. She drinks and swears with the best and can field strip a Mech actuator with her eyes closed in under five minutes. She's good as any Tech and always welcome in the Coil for her wit, humor, and never-ending string of bad jokes. But this was her first time center stage on Half-price night. We all gave her attention when she climbed onto the railing by the door.

"This happened back when I was Teching for an outfit called Gerstin's Gorgens," Ressa said after downing the dregs of her Steiner PPC. "Of course, the Gorgens had been attached to Seventh Syteris for so long, they were almost a full part of the Lyrans Commonwealth army. No one complained. The pay was good, supplies were plentiful, and the duty rather light. When I joined up for six years, the Gorgens were part of the garrison on Strexal, that's a good sized agro-world in Steiner space out towards the Free Worlds League. Strexal hadn't seen action in about twenty years so the garrison wasn't kept at full readiness. Mostly it was used as a light duty station for units undergoing refit with the Gorgens as the permanent guard force. Two years after I showed up, a new Steiner line-unit moved in and

Major Strotz became the CO of the planetary defense force. Things changed quite quickly.

"When Strotz and his unit arrived, the 'Mechs under his command were all very badly mauled. Despite that, they all looked to be in top condition. You know, like a new machine that went through a tough fight. We found out why rather quickly; Strotz wasn't on planet for five hours before he called a dress inspection. You see, the Major was a parade soldier.

"The only thing Strotz really cared about was how his unit looked. It was his bright, shiny toy and he loved to watch it march with all the bright colors and polished steel glinting in the sun. And once it was cleaned up, it looked great. It still couldn't fight its way out of a wet paper bag but that didn't concern the Major. He just liked the look. Which is why we saw the unit in such bad condition. It went up against a line Combine unit and barely disengaged before it was destroyed. The toy soldiers wound up on Strexil to lick their wounds and polish their chrome. Strotz, convinced the key to his unit's disastrous showing was insufficient parade drill, pitched in to putting them back together. He must have paid for the refit out of his own credit account. That boy was loaded. Just proves that money and brains don't have to be linked.

"If Strotz had restricted himself to his old unit, everything would have been fine. The Gorgens would have laughed at him behind his back and kept to their own business. Granted they weren't the most experienced soldiers but they knew what standards to judge a warrior against and the how bright the finish was on his 'Mech was not one of them. But Strotz decided that because the Gorgens were technically part of his command, they'd do things his way. So it started with that first inspection.

"After looking over every piece of the Gorgens' field equipment without pausing to comment, he proceeded to give a three hour lecture on how we couldn't possibly be soldiers with such disreputable looking weapons in our possession. I can still see him, standing on the aerospace fighter runway, the sun glinting off the dozens of self-granted medals and meters of gold braid that decorated his uniform, screaming at the Gorgen commander who silently took it all. Once Strotz was finished and the unit dismissed, we spent the next week trying to get into the sort of shape he demanded. We failed the next inspection as well. A pattern quickly formed.

"No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't live up to his standards and, interestingly, it was always the fault of the Tech staff. The warriors still got a share of the abuse but most of it was saved for the Techs. We couldn't do anything right, even though we were expected to work on the Gorgens' machines as well as refit the walking show pieces the Major brought with him. We were over worked, always short of sleep, and never credited with a milligram of wit or

skill. The Gorgen CO tried to help us but Strotz was like a force of nature, inescapable and ever present. We hated him.

"Inspections were a weekly torture. Our work would be ridiculed and we would be reprimanded. Strotz was constantly saying what a bunch of clowns we were and how we would never amount to anything more. We hated him. It's a miracle his neuro helmet didn't experience an inexplicable short that fried him. The CO came to talk to us within the second week of Strotz's reign to prevent just such an occurrence. Out of respect for him, we didn't kill Strotz, but we all wanted to. So did most of his own people.

"Not all of the Major's people were walking clothes racks. Some of them wanted to be real MechWarriors and actually do their part to defend the Commonwealth. They'd just wound up in the Major's unit by happenstance and it would have been political and social suicide to request a transfer; at that time, Strotz had some very powerful friends in the Lyran court. They offered what sympathy they could and provided advice on how best to avoid the Major's ire. It helped.

Six months of this purgatory passed, then word came that a delegation of Lyran generals were coming to review the unit. They would assess how well Strotz's command had been refitted and judge if it would be reassigned to a combat position. Strotz was ecstatic, sure he was going to get another chance to prove himself on the field of battle. To demonstrate the readiness of this garrison, Strotz didn't think to do something like stage a war game or simulated raid. Instead he opted for a grand parade that would meet the visiting dignitaries at the Star Port with cheering citizens providing the backdrop. The locals would be given streamers and told when to cheer the Major. Strotz was going to lead the parade with his unit behind him. The Gorgens, if we could get our act together, would be allowed to march in the back. Oh joy.

"Late one night, the Tech staff met to discuss the situation. Over a bottle of hijacked whiskey, a plan was formed.

"The next few weeks passed amid a flurry of activity. Every 'Mech and battle vehicle had to be given a complete checkout, at least for all visible portions. Oddly, the Tech staff accepted the extra duty without complaint. That would have alerted any competent commander. Strotz was oblivious. Then the big day came.

"The orbital platforms marked the arrival of the delegation right on time. A squadron of fighters rose to meet the incoming DropShips and escort them to the planet. The locals assembled as requested and sat back, banners in hand, to enjoy the show. Strotz and his men scrambled for their 'Mechs. Strotz had a *Zeus* assault 'Mech that was in prime condition. Unfortunately the elevator that normally took him from the 'Mech bay floor was out of service. Strotz, in full dress uniform, started up the interior passageway

towards the 'Mech's head. We figured it would take him slightly under two minutes to make it to the cockpit, during which he couldn't see what was going on around him. That was our signal.

Forty Techs came down from the ceiling beams on spider lines. Each one carried a paint bomb, an 'addition' for the Major's 'Mech, or a pot of contact cement (You know, the stuff that sets in less than five seconds. While they were busy, another team with two low-haulers brought out some stuff for his feet. All total, we were on his 'Mech for fifty seconds and long gone before Strotz was in his cockpit powering up his 'Mech. Then he was off to lead his parade. We lost it. Laughing hysterically, we rushed for the 'vids to watch the parade. It was an eyeful.

"The unit's 'Mechs, tanks, and APCs looked great. They shone like jewels in the afternoon sun. But they marched behind a clown. Strotz's 'Mech looked like something from a giant-scale circus. The entire body was a riot of warring

The entire body was a riot of warring bright colors...

neon-bright colors. A wreath of spun aluminum wire, painted bright red and kinked into a wild perm, ringed the 'Mech's head, forming a bizarre fright wig. Six huge mylar pompoms, each over five meters across, formed a line of buttons down the front of the 'Mech while two huge clam-shell extensions tripled the length of each foot. The latter clanged very impressively with every step the *Zeus* took. Lastly, a giant green nylon cape billowed behind him. Emblazoned on the cape in brilliant yellow letters was the slogan 'Liao for Archon'. We were rather proud of our work, and the crowd loved it.

"Strotz didn't catch on. He strutted down the reinforced roadway, waving to the gathered people on his way to meet his commanding officers. For whatever reason, none of his own people bothered to tell him what was going on. Officially, they all claimed that they did not want to be insubordinate. We knew better. In any case, Strotz made it to the spaceport just as the DropShips were landing. His unit formed up behind him in a double crescent and waited.

They didn't have to wait long.

"The DropShip hatchways cracked open and the delegation, led by General Steiner stepped out onto the ferrocrete slab. They started to walk forward then stopped, stunned by the appearance of Strotz's 'Mech. Strotz, astute judge of character that he wasn't, misinterpreted. His 'Mech paced forward.

"I, Major Strotz, and my command stand ready to be judged," he proclaimed. Back at the 'Mech bay, we wished we had thought to add a modulating circuit to his commlink that would end each sentence with a loud raspberry.

"General Steiner turned and said something to one of her aids. She was handed a commlink with a built in amplifier.

"Get out of that ridiculous 'Mech at once and explain what is going on!" she snapped.

"That did it. I suspect the entire planet, with the exception of Strotz and some of the General's staff joined us in laughing at Strotz. The Major soon emerged from his violated 'Mech, and when he got a look at our handiwork he almost blew his heart with fury. He ordered the instant arrest of everybody even faintly connected with this matter but when the General pointed out that this order was phrased in such a way as to include her and her staff and might he rather have a private conference on this subject, he calmed down enough to follow her into her ship. Then, in pieces, the entire story came out.

Ressa paused and someone handed her a beer which she quickly downed.

"Not a lot else to add," she continued. "A full investigation was launched into 'the incident'. Accusations flew and when the dust finally settled, Strotz was promoted into a non-command staff position, his unit was broken up between other units, and the Gorgens got to see some action on the Free Worlds League front. I mustered out when my time was up. I saved a copy of the vid we made of the Major strutting his stuff. Whenever I want a chuckle or just want to remind myself not to get above myself, I take the time to run it. If you want, I'll bring it in tomorrow."

There were a number of requests as Ressa started for the bar for another round. I started mixing up the next set of orders. A few seconds later, a series of coughs, gagging sounds, and shouted complaints sounded from the patrons of the bar. It took us a few moments to figure out what had happened. Someone had put salted soy nuggets in everybody's drinks, must have been while we were all caught up in Ressa's tale. We looked for the culprit but no one had seen anything. Oddly, Donovan was gone.

Like the lady said, it's a matter of timing.

What Now, MechWarrior?

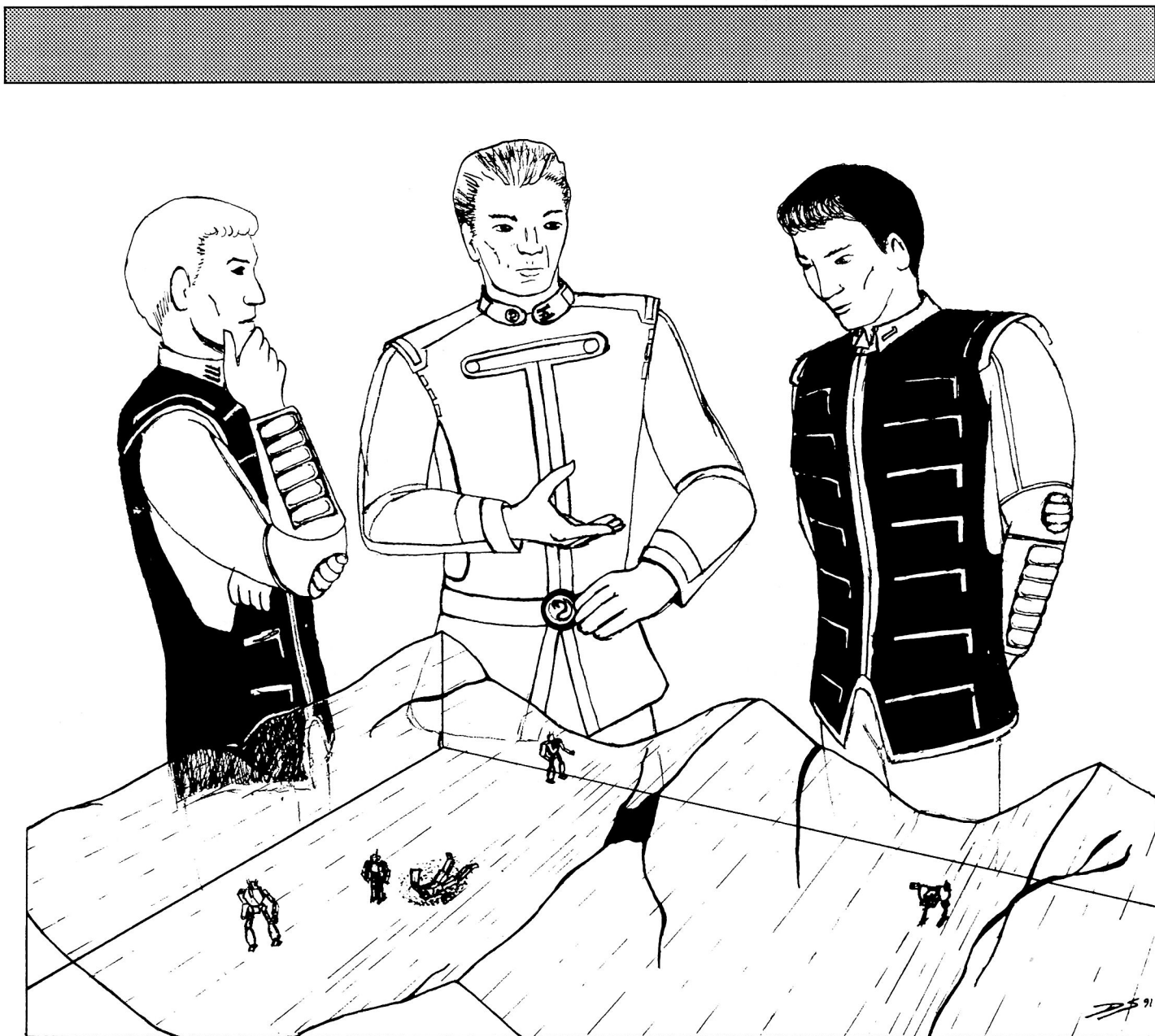
First Contact

"What Now, Lieutenant" is a war-game prepared as a set of training exercises for an unknown reasons by order of Archon Melissa Steiner-Davion, who requests that we reprint them here. Presumably, these exercises will be used in some way to train the Federated-Commonwealth Military. BattleTechnology is happy to cooperate with the Archon in this project. The scenarios presented are versions of historical battles along with the decisions made by the unit commanders. The scenarios are intended to be used to start discussions. Each of the participants offers their recommended actions to each of the decision points then discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the offered solutions. In BattleTechnology's test of the workability of this method, we discovered that such discussions are apt to become quite heated so we recommend that they be conducted in a relaxed, informal atmosphere conducive to the free exchange of information. (The BattleTechnology Editorial staff wishes to apologize to the management of Jameston's Bar and AmmoShop for the damages incurred. Full payment will be forthcoming.) It is worth noting that there are no 'right' answers to the presented problems. The historical information simply shows how one commander handled the presented problem. Someone may well come up with a better solution. The information contained with in these scenarios is not classified or considered militarily sensitive.

BattleTechnology magazine wishes to thank Capt. Roquan of the New Avalon Military Information Center for his help in providing the information presented in this article. Copies of standard simulator programs are available for 100 C-bills from your BattleTechnology magazine distributor. Please include the scenario name and programming language when ordering.

FIRST CONTACT-

You are in command of BattleMech recon lance on a small, thickly forested planet near both the Periphery and a hostile successor state border. An unknown jump ship has jumped in system to a pirate jump point in the planetary orbital plane. All attempts to communicate with the invaders have failed and orbital telescopes show that neither the jump ship nor the six over-lord class DropShips it carried show insignia. ComStar communications with your district command reveal no indication of the onset of a major war. The six DropShips burning towards your planet may indicate otherwise. The drop-ships entered the planetary atmosphere twenty minutes ago. Your lance has been sent out to recon a sector thirty kilometers from the main star port and planetary defense headquarters. The terrain is overgrown with trees and light brush and is cut by a series of north to south running ridge lines approximately 60-meters high. Spaced between the ridges are flat bottom valleys between 20- to 25-meters wide. Rain has been falling, making the ground quite muddy and generating small streams in the valleys. Heavy lightning and the resulting atmospheric ionization has made communication with base command erratic. Your lance consists of the following: two Valkyries and a Locust, all of standard configurations controlled by average pilots, and your own Clint. All the 'Mechs are in prime condition, have sustained no damage and are fully supplied. In your scouting, you come across signs of fresh damage to vegetation. You investigate and find a wrecked Dervish 'Mech down on its side in the center of a good sized crater. As best you can tell, the 'Mech was dropped from low orbit and its ablative drop cowlings managed to clog its jets, resulting in a crash. The insignia on the 'Mech's torso matches that used by a band of periphery pirates who are known to operate in the area, but this BattleMech, aside from the crash damage,



looks like a front line unit. At the same time, the Locust pilot who is at the foot of the next ridge forty meters further west of your position, informs you she is picking up the sounds of large objects moving through trees beyond the ridge. What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: Displacement of forces in the terrain, intention of reconnaissance patrols, meaning of insignia on the Dervish.)

(Historical: The Lieutenant attempted to contact command and was unable to. He dispatched the Valkyries to move up to the ridge line and scout for enemy units, instructing them to walk rather than jump or run so as to avoid slipping on the muddy slopes. While the Locust stood guard, the Lieutenant dismounted his machine to enter the fallen 'Mech.)

Continued

The Valkyries wait until the advancing 'Mechs begin climbing the ridge. Then, from concealment, they each snap off two flights of long range missiles into the Vindicator. The 45-ton 'Mech staggers in the rain of missiles, then slips on the mud. It tumbles back down the slope, knocking over trees. It doesn't get up but its two lance mates begin firing towards the concealed lighter 'Mechs. What now, MechWarrior?

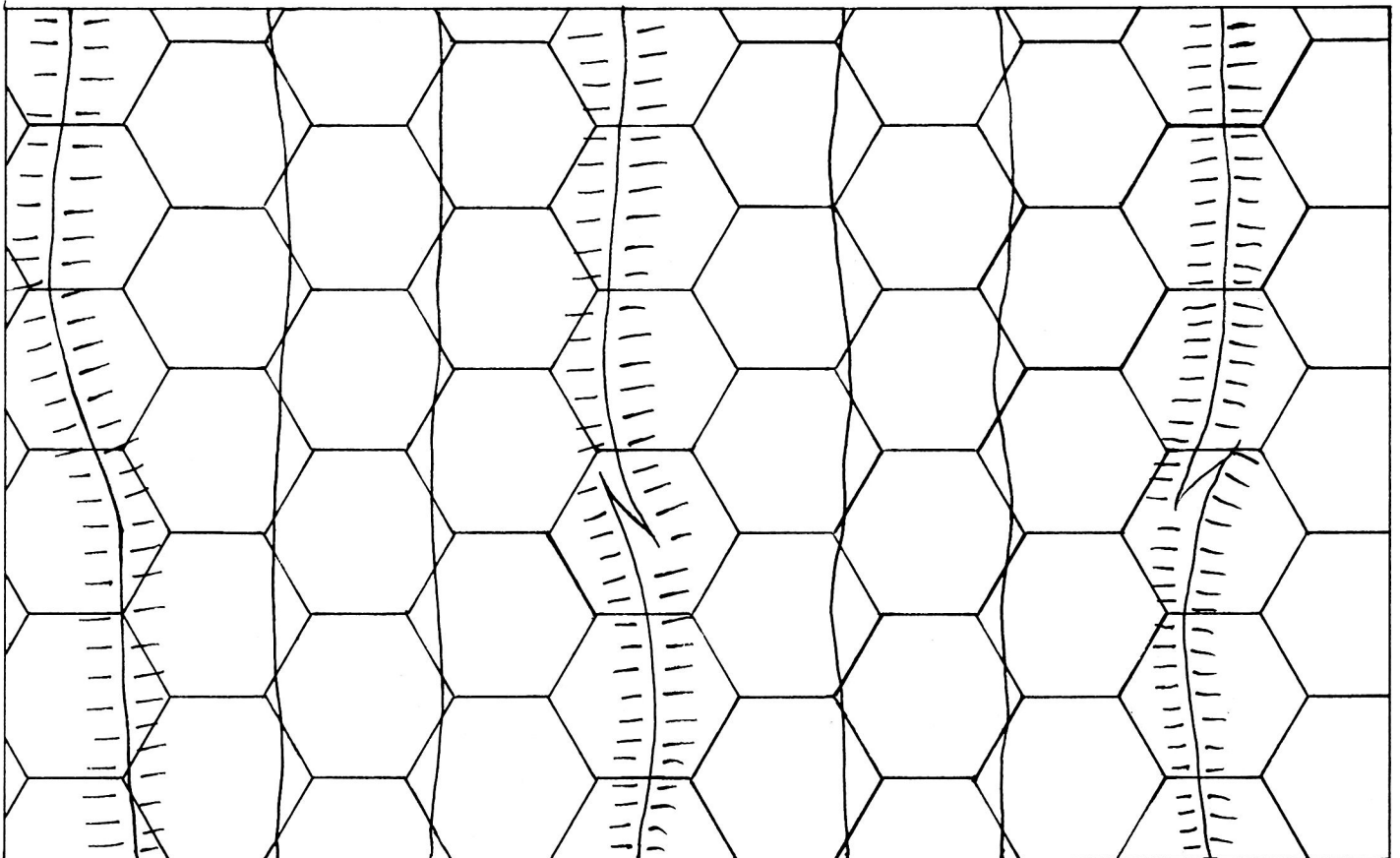
(Recommended discussion items: Best way to fight larger, heavy armed foes, Effects of terrain.)

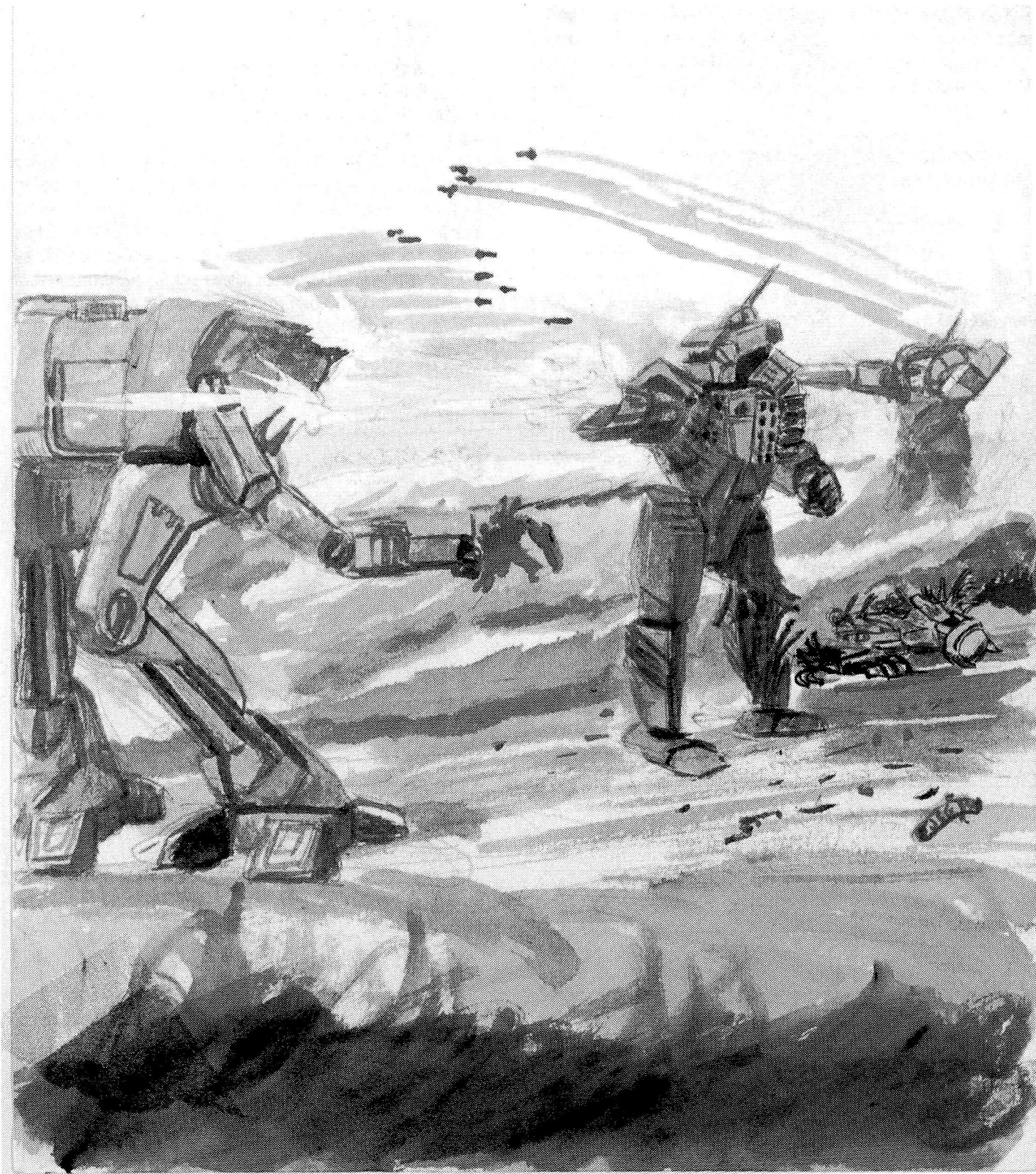
Historical: The lieutenant ordered the Valkyries to jump down from the ridge rather than engage a superior foe. He gave the battle recorder to the Locust pilot with orders to take it back to headquarters as quickly as possible for analysis. He then remounted his 'Mech.)

As auto-cannon rounds begin to fall on the ridge line, the Valkyries jump back into the valley. The Locust departs at top speed to deliver the recorder. By the sound from beyond the ridge, you can tell the Centurion and the Shadow Hawk are slowly climbing the ridge, possibly expecting another ambush or infantry support fire. What now MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: Providing a rear guard for the Locust. The relative benefits of a static defense versus a mobile one. Possible use of terrain on your tactics.)

(Historical: The Lieutenant managed to reach command but was turned down for tac-air support. He advised them that the Locust was in-bound with potential time-sensitive intelligence and established a cleared land corridor for the 'Mech. He then set up a Leapfrog defense using the ridge lines. The Valkyries would cover one ridge using the same procedure as the first ambush while he moved his Clint to the next ridge. The Valkyries fired only their LRM's then faded back covered by the Clint's autocannon. They continued retreating until they were under the umbrella of their own air support. The final results of this action included the destruction of the enemy Centurion and the capture of a large body of military intelligence, with only minor damage sustained to the scout lance 'Mechs.)





Desiderio Kawabata, Political Analyst for the Porrima Conservative Review:

These Clans clearly have never heard of the Ares Conventions, let alone signed them. The treatment of the citizens of Turtle Bay alone puts them outside the civilized boundaries of that agreement. Show me where the Ares Conventions condone the reduction of a city of two million inhabitants to radioactive glass! They used nukes! From orbit! On a major civilian center! Three flagrant violations just for starters!

Nobody claims that garrison duty on a not-too-pacified planet is easy, but their response was barbarism.

You showed me a copy of a dispatch, 'Champions of a Lost Cause', in which a Steiner MechWarrior describes the Clans as having a Kurita style of honor. On the contrary, I hold that these Smoke Jaguars and Jade Falcons are uncivilized, dishonorable, and not entitled to the benefits and protections of the Ares Conventions! Nuke them, use chemicals, use bugs, find **their** home planet and slag it, whatever! Wipe 'em out as unworthy to join the human community.

**THAT'S
WHAT
YOU
SAY**

Aprilmae Francizsky, columnist for the Summer Star

I have two quibbles to voice about my colleague's opinions as expressed.

If, as my honorable opponent claims, these Clansmen have no sense of honor, why do they inquire as to the nature of our defending forces? And why then do they match us number for number in an attempt to make the odds more equal?

Why have especially gallant Inner Sphere warriors been given the chance of honorable withdrawal from contested planets? Why have last messages been so scrupulously forwarded through ComStar?

Our foes do indeed possess a sense of honor. It has different concerns and boundaries from our Inner Sphere notions. And with their recent victories, it makes the most hardheaded common sense to attempt to understand them.

My second point is this — if they **are** barbaric in behavior, if they **are** honorless brutes, and if **we** then choose to behave in their manner —

WE WILL ourselves become without honor.

WE WILL become the same as the disgusting opponent we are defending against.

Or does my colleague wish to concede that he is already a mannerless barbarian?

COMBAT EFFICIENCY FACTORS : 3050

Professor Eieon McCleary P.H.D,P.H.D. M.A. NAIS

As technology advances so do the training programs associated with them. Not fully ten years ago I published The Star Simulator Ratings system. Since then we have gradually enhanced and modified it to keep up with the military and technological changes of the Inner Sphere.

Normally it is after years of testing that we release the highly classified training simulators to the public. Yet with this new barely understood threat to the Innersphere, Prince Davion has authorized NAIS to release the full simulator system to anyone who wishes to prepare themselves. Despite dismayed protests from many of my colleagues I think his Highness is quite correct that any information that can save a life or planet should no longer be hidden.

As more information comes in on the forces known as the "Clans" we at the Tactics department of NAIS promise to update the simulator systems and send any one asking a full computer simulation system.

What follows is the current written information on the Federated Commonwealth Star Simulator system, including

the before unreleased Conventional Armor simulator data used at NAIS and NAMA for decades and now at all training centers across the F-C. To all warriors across the Inner Sphere, God speed and may Kerensky's luck be with you.

Notes

1 Some BattleMechs are designed for specific missions, or for operations in specific terrain. Example: both the UrbanMech and the Hatchetman are city fighting 'Mech. When a BattleMech is operating in such a specific environment, add 5.0 to the CEF. When it is operating outside of it, the gamemaster may choose an appropriate negative modifier. Example: in open terrain where speed and long-range firepower are major factors, the UrbanMech especially will be at a serious minus. This only applies to 'Mechs which are designed with such a specialty in mind.

SEFR Table

Item	Rating	Additions
Anti-Missile System	Add .5	per ton of ammo
Artemis IV System	Add .2	to all missile WFR
Beagle Active Probe	Add .5	
Built-in Hatchet/Club	Add 1/2	DFR
CASE	Add .5	per CASE system
C3 Targeting Computer	Add 4	to CEF (use only when running multi 'Mech battles)
Dual Combat Cockpit	Add .7	
Ferro-Fibrous Armor	Add	armor tonnage Multiplied by .12
Guardian ECM Suite	Add .5	
LAM Conversion Gear	Add .3	
MASC	Add 1/2	"Mech Walking MP
NARC Missile Beacon	Add .4	to all missile WFR
Swarm LRM Rounds	Add .2	to missile WFR
Target Acquisition Gear	Add .5	

DFR Table

Tonnage	Rating
15	3
20	4
25	5
30	6
35	7
40	8
45	9
50	10
55	11
60	12
65	13
70	14
75	15
80	16
85	17
90	18
95	19
100	20

Mercenary Handbook Unit Strength Chart

Squad Type	Aerospace	Maneuver	Combat
Infantry regular	Unchanged		
Jump Infantry		3	1
Motorized Infantry	Unchanged		
Light Armor		3	4
Heavy Armor		2	5
Artillery		1	5
Scout	Unchanged		
Support			
Light Mech		7	3
Medium Mech		6	4
Heavy Mech		4	6
Assault Mech		3	7
Light Aerospace	4		
Medium Aerospace	5		
Heavy Aerospace	6		
Light LAM	1	7	2
Medium LAM	2	5	4
Aircraft	3		
Air Mobile	3		2
Dropship	Unchanged		
Jumpship	Unchanged		

subtable from the Mercenary's Handbook.

No changes are made to the experience modifier

2: Many mercenary units use the famed Mercenary's Handbook (FASA Corporation) when preparing a mission. They use the tactical tables to determine percentage chances of success on any given mission. As BattleMechs and units in 3050 outperform their 3025 counterparts, use the added Unit Strength Chart presented here to calculate Star League Vehicles' superior operational capabilities.

4: By observing simulation curves and the performance of certain weapons we have come to the realization that some weapons limited short range ability is a deciding factor in simulations

As such a new Weapons Factor Rating Chart is provided. Please observe the changes in all weapons with listed minimum range in the BattleTech Compendium.

To calculate the Combat Efficiency Factor of a BattleMech,

you'll need a comp pad, Rating tables, and the performance specs for the 'Mech.

Step 1: Divide tonnage by 10 — Record

Step 2: Record armor tonnage

— If using Ferro-Fibrous armor, see SEFR table entry # 7

Step 3: Record walking MPs

— If equipped with MASC unit, see SEFR table entry # 5

Step 4: Add .75 for each jump jet

Step 5: Calculate Weapons Factor Rating and record

Step 6: Calculate Safe Weapons Factor Rating — Use WFR Table to calculate the most efficient use of "Mechs weapons short of overheating — record.

Step 7: If after Safe WFR is calculated one or more heat sinks remain unused, add 1.0

Step 8: Calculate Hand to Hand Damage Factor — record — Use DFR Table

Step 9: Calculate Special Equipment Factor Rating — record

— Use SEFR Table to add points for special equipment

Step 10: Total steps 1-9 to determine CEF.

WFR Table

Energy		Projectile	
Small Laser	0.6	A/C 2	2.3
Small Pulse Laser	0.9	A/C 5	2.1
Medium Laser	1.4	Kiwi Ultra A/C 5	2.7
Medium Pulse Laser	1.5	A/C 10	2.5
Large Laser	2.3	LB 10-X A/C	3.0
Large Pulse Laser	2.2	LB 10-X A/C	
		submunitions	2.7
ER Large Laser	2.7	A/C 20	2.9
PPC	2.6	Gauss Rifle	3.7
ER PPC	3.3	Machine Gun	0.5
Flamer	0.5		

SRM Munitions*

SRM-2	1.1
Streak SRM-2	1.3
SRM-4	1.5
SRM-6	1.9

LRM Munitions*

LRM-5	1.8
LRM-10	2.2
LRM-15	2.5
LRM-20	2.8

Artillery Munitions

Arrow IV standard	5.0
Arrow IV TAG assist	6.0
Long Tom	5.0
Sniper	4.2
Thumper	3.6

* One shot missile systems during Step 5 ONLY

-.5 for SRMs

-.1 for LRMs

To Calculate Combat Efficiency Factor for Infantry,

follow the listed steps

Step 1: Record movement

Step 2: If Jump capable add 1

Step 3: Calculate Terrain Propulsion Rating

- Use TPR table

Step 4: Divide number of men in the unit by 10. Record.

Step 5: Record Infantry Platoons Maximum damage as listed in BATTLETECH Compendium

- (this includes 1 heavy weapon per squad)

Step5A: Add Infantry WFR for all heavy weapons in unit to Step 5 result.

- Use I-WFR table, Remember a trooper can carry one primary weapon so subtract the WFR of the weapon he gives up (A rifleman is given a heavy flamer, the WFR for the heavy weapon is .9 [1.0 -.1=.9])

Step 6: Take results of Step 5 and 5A and divide by 10, Record

Step 7: If infantry has had Anti-'Mech training, add 3.

Step 8: Add Steps 1-5 to determine CEF

I-WFR table

Individual Weapons

Rifle	0.1
Flamer	0.2
Flamer, Heavy	0.6
Laser Rifle (Portable)	0.3
Laser, Semi Port	0.5
Laser, Semi Port Heavy	0.7
MG, Portable	0.2
MG, Semi Port	0.5
MG, Support	0.7
Mortar, Heavy	1.0
Mortar, Light	0.7
PPC, Man Pack	0.7
PPC, Semi Port	1.0
Recoilless, Heavy	1.0
Recoilless, Medium	0.7
Recoilless, Light	0.3
SRM Regular	0.3
SRM, Heavy	0.4
Grenade, Auto	0.2
GyroJet Rifle, Heavy	0.3
LAW	0.2
Portable Rocket Launcher	0.3

Note:

Unless an elite or special duty unit, infantry will not carry more than one heavier weapon per squad.

Terrain Propulsion Rating Table

Wheeled	.3
Tracked	.6
Hover	.6
VTOL	.8
Surface Naval	.1
Submarines	.2
Infantry	.2
Mechanized	.2
Jump	.3

To calculate Aerospace Combat Efficiency Factor, follow the listed steps

Step 1: Divide Tonnage by 10, Record

Step 1A: If Conventional Fighter divide by 15

Step 2: Record armor tonnage

If using Ferro-Fibrous armor see SEFR table

Step 3: Record Thrust rating

Step 4: Calculate Weapon Factor Rating

Step 5: Calculate Safe Weapon Factor Rating

-Calculate most efficient use WFR without over heating

Step 5a: If Conventional Fighter divide Step 5 by 2, Record

Step 6: If after Safe WFR is calculated there are heatsinks unused add 1 for each up the difference between thrust and overthrust

-example, a Thrust 6 Overthrust 9 fighter has 4 Heatsinks unused after Safe WFR. It would add 3 to its CEF (9-6=3)

Step 6a: Ignore this step if Conventional Fighter

Step 7: Calculate Special Equipment Factor Rating, Record

- Use SEFR table

Step 8: Add Steps 1-7 to determine CEF

Combat Efficiency Factor for Most BattleMechs

Mech	Where Published	CEF
------	-----------------	-----

10 tons

MTE-12C Mite	Star Date v 3/6	15.7
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15 tons

GRD-1N Guardian	BT #13	16.7
FLE-14 Flea	BT #8	24.3

20 tons

FLE-4 Flea	Wolf's	21.5
FLE-15 Flea	Wolf's	26.0
FLE-17 Flea	3050	26.9
HNT-151 Hornet	Wolf's	27.35
HNT-171	3050	26.07
MCY-99 Mercury	2750	30.36
MCY-97	3050	26.86
LCT-IV Locust	3025	23.8
LCT-3M	3050	26.96
STG-3R Stinger	3025	25.3
STG-5M	3050	25.3
THE-N Thorn	2750	27.2
WSP-1A Wasp	3025	25.5
WSP-3M	3050	26.0

25 Tons

COM-20 Commando	3025	27.1
COM-5S	3050	27.96
MON-66 Mongoose	2750	31.2

30 Tons

FLC-4N Falcon	BT / Wolf's	33.7
FLC-4P	3050	31.65
FFL-4A Firefly	Wolf's	37.7
FFL-4B	3050	36.1
HER-1S Hermes	2750	31.2
HER-3S	3050	32.4
HSR-200-D Hussar	2750	26.08
JVN-10N Javelin	3025	32.1
JVN-10P	3050	33.5
N4A Nate	F&A 1	34.6
SDR-5V Spider	3025	33.1
SDR-7M	3050	33.36
UM-R50 UrbanMech	3025	25.7
UM-R63	3050	28.5
VLK-QA Valkyrie	3025	31.95
VIK-QO	3050	33.77

35 Tons

FS9-H Firestarter	3025	37.6
FS9-S Firestarter	3050	36.8
JR7-D Jenner	3025	37.65
JR7-K Jenner	3050	38.07
OTT-7J Ostscout	3025	32.8
OTT-7K Ostscout	3050	30.5
PNT-9R Panther	3025	32.6
PNT-10K Panther	3050	38.9
WLF-1 Wolfhound	BT #6/Wolf's	37.1
WLF-2	3050	38.9

40 Tons

ASN-21 Assassin	3025	38.35
ASN-23	3050	36.75
CDA-2A Cicada	3025	31.8
CDA-3M	3050	38.3
CLNT-2-3T Clint	3025	37.8
CLNT-2-3D	3050	39.1
HER-2S Hermes II	3025	34.5
HER-S2	3050	35.9
STN-3L Sentinel	2750	31.7
STN-3M	3050	34.9
VL-2T Vulcan	3025	37.9
VT-5M	3050	37.9
WTH- Whitworth	3025	40.6
WTH-2	3050	39.0
WFT-1 Wolftrap		43.6

45 Tons

BJ-1 Blackjack	3025	48.0
BJ-2	3050	47.0
HCT-3F Hatchetman	3025	43.1
HCT-5S	3050	48.52
PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk	3025	42.9
PXH-3M	3050	48.1
VND-1R Vindicator	3025	42.3
VND-3L	3050	44.2
WVE-5N Wyvern	2750	46.04

50 Tons

CN-9A Centurion	3025	41.1
CN-9D	3050	46.0
CRB-27 Crab	2750	41.28
ENF-4R Enforcer	3025	41.8
ENF-5D	3050	45.23
HBK-4G Hunchback	3025	41.0
HBK-5M	3050	43.7
MLS-1A Malleus	BT #11	51.45
TBT-2H Trebuchet	3025	41.9
TBT-7M	3050	53.25

55 Tons		
DV-6M Dervish	3025	49.65
DV-7D	3050	55.97
GLD-3R Gladiator	BT #3	48.5
GRF-1N Griffin	3025	43.15
GRF-3M	3050	49.65
HOP-4C Hoplite	Wolf's	41.6
HOP-4D	3050	42.6
KTO-19 Kintaro	2750	49.02
KTO-20	3050	51.6
LYN-5XL Lynx	BT #9	49.6
MNS-Monster	BT #13	44.4
OSP-15 Osprey	BT #12	56.7
SCR-1A Screaming Hawk	BT #7	49.25/47.65
SHD-2H Shadow Hawk	3025	47.05
SHD-5M	3050	54.15
SCP-1N Scorpion	3025	37.6
SCP-1O	3050	40.9
WVT-6R Wolverine	3025	46.55
WVR-7D	3050	53.07

60 Tons		
CHP-1N Champion	2750	48.16
DRG-1N Dragon	3025	46.8
DRG-5K	3050	53.5
LNC-25-01 Lancelot	2750	49.3
OSR-2C Ostroc	3025	47.1
OSR-2D	3050	50.0
OTL-40 Ostsol	3025	48.3
OTL-5M	3050	51.8
QKD-4S Quickdraw	3025	50.55
QKD-5M	3050	53.81
RFL-3N Rifleman	3025	49.1
RFL-5M	3050	56.6
RHN-10 Rhino	BT #12	55.9

65 Tons		
ACN-6B Archon	Game Review #5	60.08
AXM-1N Axman	3050	63.22
BMB-12D Bombadier	2750	53.5
(Swarm Missiles)		
CPLT-C1 Catapult	3025	54.5
CPLT-C3	3050	56.5
CST-35 Cestus	Spacegamer #79	61.5
CRD-3R Crusader	3025	55.1
CRD-5M	3050	63.8
EXT-4D Exterminator	2750	58.8
JM6-S Jagermech	3025	52.7
JM6-DD	3050	57.28
TDR-5S Thunderbolt	3025	57.3
TDR-7M	3050	61.78
TMPL-1R Templar	BT #15	64.7

70 Tons		
ARC-2R Archer	3025	54.4
ARC-4M	3050	60.9
BTX-7K Battleax	BT #5	53.9
CES-3R Caesar	3050	62.0
CTF-3D Cataphract	3050	63.6
GHR-5H Grasshopper	3025	60.4
GHR-5S	3050	56.1
GLT-3N Guillotine	2750	62.54
GLT-5M	3050	59.5
WHM-6R Warhammer	3025	54.6
WHM-7M	3050	56.8

75 Tons		
BL6-KNT Black Knight	2750	61.3
CNA-9 Centurion Maximus	BT #15	66.7
FLS-8K Flashman	2750	69.5
MAD-3R Marauder	3025	55.2
MAD-5D	3050	66.4
ON 1-K Orion	3025	56.8
ON-1M	3050	64.3

80 Tons		
AWS-8Q Awesome	3025	57.2
BLR-1A Brawler	BT #13	59.39
CGR-5B Challenger	BT #3	62.4
CGR-1A1 Charger	3025	46.0
CGR-3K	3050	63.37
GOL-14 Goliath	3025	57.3
GOL-3M	3050	61.7
HTM-27T Hunchback	Chi	62.76
THG-11E Thug	2750	65.36
VTR-9B Victor	3025	56.5
VTR-9K	3050	60.9
VNT-1A Ventilator	BT #15	73.06
ZEU-6S Zeus	3025	57.6
ZEU-9S	3050	62.12

85 Tons		
LGB-OW Longbow	Sorenson's	59.1
BLR-1G Battlemaster	3025	67.4
BLR-3M	3050	72.3
CRK-5003-1 Crockett	2750	72.35
CRK-5003-2 Katana	3050	66.15
SHG-2E Shogun	Wolf's	65.55
SHG-2F	3050	77.5
STK-3F Stalker	3025	71.0
STK-5M	3050	77.5

90 Tons		
BRN-1 Brian	BT #13	76.3
CP10-Z Cyclops	3025	55.5
CP-11A	3050	59.2
HGH-732 Highlander	2750	71.21
MAL-1R Mauler	3050	78.88

95 Tons		
BNC-3E Banshee	3025	59.1
BNC-3S Banshee	BT #3	75.2
BNC-5S	3050	79.4

100 Tons		
ALI-1A Alliance	BT #7	72.8
ANH-1A Annihilator	Wolf's	72.9

ANH-2H	3050	79.5
AS7-O Atlas	3025	74.2
AS7-K	3050	78.9
HNT-1S Huntress	BT #14	70.4
IMP-2E Imp	Wolf's	74.8
IMP-3E	3050	78.7
MAD-4A Marauder II	3025	74.35
MAD-5A	3050	77.25
MTM-4B Matchmaker	Star Date	70.6
OMG-137A Omega	BT #14	99.25
PLG-1N Pillager	Star Date v3 #5	70.1
RMG-2A Rampage	BT #16	79.4
KGC-000 King Crab	2750	69.82
TIT-1A Titan	BT #11	85.6
TYR-9T Tyrant	Game Review #4	78.0



Optional Rules: Ejection from a BattleMech

Ejection from a BattleMech is not something a MechWarrior enjoys. Neither safe nor particularly honorable, the procedure has only this to recommend it: it can often save both man and machine by taking both out of the battle, leaving the MechWarrior to be recovered (ransomed if caught by the other side), and the 'Mech to be salvaged by whoever conquers the battlefield.

The major question that must be answered in a hurry and in combat is, "When SHOULD a MechWarrior Eject?" Below is a general set of rules as to when it is appropriate to consider ejection.

1. Reactor shutdown in a high combat situation.
2. Permanent immobilization in combat for any

reason.

3. Destruction of the majority of the 'Mech's weaponry with further combat unavoidable.

4. The BattleMech is overheated and outnumbered by the enemy.

5. Catastrophic damage has been received sufficient to ruin the 'Mech, render it uninhabitable, or it is about to explode or fall over.

There are two methods of ejection — manual (usually voluntary), and automatic:

1. If this is a voluntary ejection the MechWarrior announces his intent during the 'Mech's turn in the Movement Phase. Once stated, the decision is irreversible, as this indicates that the MechWarrior has removed the locking caps from the from the ejection system activation bar or lever, and pulled it down or across right against the stops. This sequence arms the ejection system and starts the timer (giving the MechWarrior time to brace, check posture, etc.) and the process may not be stopped or reversed at this point.

2. If this is an automatic

Ejection Modifiers Table

Automatic Firing	+1
Per Hit to MechWarrior	+1
'Mech Received Damage During Turn of Ejection	+1
Per Head Hit	+1
'Mech Walked During Turn of Ejection	+1
MechWarrior Fired Weapons During Turn of Ejection	+1
Sensor Hit	+1
'Mech Received Damage to Leg During Turn of Ejection	+2
'Mech Ran During Turn of Ejection	+2
Gyro Hit	+2
Manual Firing	-3
'Mech Jumped During Turn of Ejection	+3
'Mech is Falling	+3
MechWarrior is Unconscious (assumes auto-eject)	+3
MechWarrior is Uninjured (no hits taken)	-3

ejection, usually the result of an ammunition, explosion or the impact of an Inferno SRM, the MechWarrior exits the 'Mech at the end of the Combat Phase. Since this system can be modified by the Ejection Modifiers Table to successfully avoid ejection. Another option is to disable the entire system, but then you're stuck in the 'Mech until you can crawl out. (NOTE: You must announce at the START of TURN 1 your ejection system is disabled, and notate this on the 'Mech's SSD; if you haven't done this, you're live.)

Once the ejection system activates, several things happen in rapid succession:

1. The outer armor of the 'Mech (Usually the Head or Rear Center Torso) is first blasted clear by explosive bolts. This eliminates all of the external armor in that location.

2. Several seconds after the canopy clearing, the rocket ignites under the seat and the MechWarrior is propelled upward and to the front or rear one hex.

3. This action causes the following events to take place:

- a. The 'Mech's Reactor shuts down automatically.
- b. A distress signal is activated on a friendly frequency informing the other friendly 'Mechs that an ejection has taken place.

- c. The head takes an automatic critical as a result of the rocket ignition. If the item damaged is already destroyed, there is no additional rolls made (it's a freebie).

The MechWarrior must decide, all alone, whether or not to 'pull the double D-rings and go.' If he chooses to eject, he must roll to see if he makes a successful ejection. The base chance of success is a roll of 6 or less on 2 D6. He adds his Piloting Skill Modifier and the modifiers from the following table to this roll:

Once the decision to eject is made, and ejection roll MUST be made. If the MechWarrior makes a successful Piloting Skill roll AND if this is a manual ejection, he or she may pivot the torso one hexside before making the ejection roll so long as at least one Center Torso Internal structure box remains. No torso twists are allowed for automatic ejections. If the number rolled after modifications, is 7 or

Ejection Mishap Table

Difference between Target Number and Actual Number rolled	Result
1	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 1 hit
2	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 2 hits
3	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 3 hits
4	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 4 hits
5	Successful Ejection. MechWarrior takes 1 hit, Seat twists, -1 to Landing Roll.
6	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 2 hits, Seat Turns, -2 to Landing Roll.
7	Successful Ejection MechWarrior takes 3 hits, Seat tumbles, -3 to Landing Roll.
8	Successful Ejection. MechWarrior takes 4 hits, Seat tumbles severely, -4 to Landing Roll.
9	No ejection. MechWarrior takes 2 hits from explosion of seat charge but remains in cockpit. Fire starts on roll of 6+, does 1 hit per turn until extinguished (8+ on 2 D6 to put out fire). Life Support is destroyed.
10+	No ejection. Seat explodes. MechWarrior is killed instantly. Cockpit/Life Support is destroyed.

more, a mishap has occurred. Compare the number actually rolled to the target number and consult the table above.

In the event of an unsuccessful ejection, all of the items discussed during the ejection process still transpire. If the MechWarrior survives the failed ejection, the priority shifts to fire fighting or manual extraction (crawling out), and no other action may be taken. The 'Mech is dead. It cannot be restarted until a Tech can repair the Cockpit/Life Support system.

If a successful ejection has been made, the MechWarrior still must deal with landing impact. At this point the direction the MechWarrior ejects in is vital, for it determines in which hex the landing takes place, and the chance for surviving the landing. Consult the various BattleTech Technical Readouts or other sources for the type of ejection system used. Evaluate the terrain in the hex ejected into and roll 2 D6. Add or subtract the modifiers in the table below. A successful modified Piloting Skill roll means the pilot landed safely.

If the roll is unsuccessful, compare the number rolled to the target number and consult the following table:

Landing Modifiers Table

Clear	-2
Water (any depth)	-1
Rough	0
Rubble	0
Into Lower Elevation	+1 per level
Building	+1 per level
Light Woods	+2
Hostile Infantry	+2
Heavy Woods	+3
Vehicle or Wreck	+3
Other 'Mech in hex (Functional or Not)	+4
Fire	+6

Landing Mishap Table

Difference between Target Number and Actual Number Rolled	Result
1	Landed upright. MechWarrior takes 1st Hit.
2	Landed crooked. MechWarrior takes 1 Hit.
3	Landed upright. MechWarrior takes 2nd Hit.
4	Landed crooked. MechWarrior takes 2 Hits.
5	Landed crooked. MechWarrior takes 3rd Hit.
6	Landed on side. MechWarrior takes 3 Hits.
7	Landed on side. MechWarrior takes 4th Hit.
8	Landed on side. MechWarrior takes 3rd Hit. Make a 2D6 roll. For each 6 rolled, a limb is broken. Movement is reduced to 1 hex per two turns.
9	Landed on side. MechWarrior takes 4th Hit.
10	Landed on side. MechWarrior takes 4th Hit and
is unconscious for 1 D6 turns.	
11	Collision with obstacle. MechWarrior is critically

A wounded MechWarrior, or one surrounded by hostile forces or terrain may elect to make a manual exit instead of ejecting. After announcing his intention during the Movement Phases, the 'Mech may not take any other action during the turn. It remains completely functional, or as functional as it was when the turn started. The MechWarrior rolls 2 D6 and compares the result to his or her Piloting skill. +1 is added to the to the dice for every hit taken by the MechWarrior, and one for every Center Torso internal structure box crossed off the 'Mech's SSD. If the result is equal to the skill rating or lower, the MechWarrior has made a successful manual exit without incident and is now standing in the same hex as his or her 'Mech. He or any other MechWarrior may re-enter the 'Mech at any time. After a one-turn delay the MechWarrior or another MechWarrior from his unit (who has the chance of knowing his codes) may re-enter the 'Mech and return it to combat. (If the 'Mech

is in condition to do so). An enemy may move the 'Mech after a delay, but he may not fire its weapons. If the modified roll is greater than the Warrior's modified Piloting skill, consult the following table for the result. Only one roll may be made for a manual escape. If it fails the MechWarrior is trapped unless he or she makes a successful ejection. If the result calls for a delay in exiting the 'Mech because the Warrior is trapped, the Warrior need not escape on the turn called for, but may chose to wait instead. AT LEAST The called-for number of turns must be expended before the MechWarrior may exit. If circumstances seem to warrant it (hostile infantry in the same hex, hostile guns, vehicles or aircraft within range) the MechWarrior need not exit at all. The better part of valor is, after all, discretion.

Manual Escape Mishap Table

Difference Between Piloting Skill and Actual Number Rolled	Result
1	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 1st Hit.
2	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 1 Hit.
3	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 2nd Hit.
4	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 2 Hits, trapped for one turn.
5	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 3rd Hit, trapped for two turns.
6	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 3 Hits, trapped for 3 turns.
7	Successful escape. MechWarrior takes 4th Hit, trapped for 4 turns.
8	No manual escape possible. MechWarrior takes 4 hits.
9	No manual escape possible. Fire in cockpit, 1 hit per turn until fire extinguished. (8+ on 2 D6). Life Support is destroyed.
10+	Ejection seat charge detonates, canopy bolts do not. You are splattered all over the inside of the canopy. Cockpit/Life Support systems are destroyed.

'GOSSIP' OVER RADIO

Almerio's Flat, Engadin

Sep 12, 3050

"Lightfoot, this is Lightfoot Leader. Take a break here. I repeat, take a break. Sensors indicate no unusual readings in several * clicks."

"Lieutenant, do you still have any of the Skondian** chocolate? Perhaps you'd care to wager some on a friendly game of Skat?"

"In your dreams, Al. Not unless you want to put up some of those anime*** vids you've been guarding so jealously!"

(A new voice, female.) Lightfoot Leader, Lightfoot Leader! (the tone becomes suddenly more casual) "Permission to take my I/R offline to plug in my coffee-pot?"

(A stifled sound that might be a smothered laugh)

"Permission granted, Cindy. In fact, Lightfoot Three, make that five**** cups."

"OMIGOD!" (there is a theatrical note in this MechWarrior's voice) "How can it be? They're...they're all around us, Lightfoot Leader! What'll we do?"

"Execute Plan Banana Peel, Lightfoot Lance. On my mark...Now!"

(Sounds of running 'Mechs, Jump Jets, a line of cursing in Swedenese, etc)"

Prearranged Code Words:

* 'Several' = my seven o'clock position

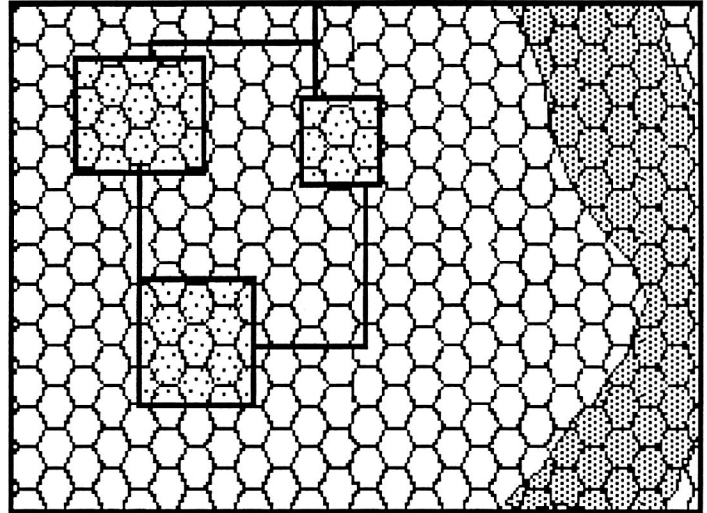
** 'Skondian' = MAD confirms (from a local joke about bad-tempered Skondians)

*** 'anime' = sensors confirm they have scanned us

**** five attackers

TO COOL DOWN THE CLANS....

N



Set Up: set up the two maps lengthwise as shown, with the joined rivers leading into the lake. Defender's Light Lance may be anywhere on Map # 1, as in regular set up. Defender's Assault Lance may be anywhere on Map #2. Fire Lance uses optional hidden movement rules, or the following special rule. Before play begins, Defender writes down the number of the hex each 'Mech is occupying. The 'Mechs are not placed on the board until either the 'Mech moves, the 'Mech fires, or an Attacking 'Mech moves into the same square as the hidden 'Mech. In the last case, the Attacker may not fire during the turn which reveals the hidden Defender.

Attacker enters from anywhere on the north edge of board #1.

Defender:

Light Lance

Lt. Knut Kawabata, *Cicada*, Veteran

Piloting: 3, Gunnery 4

Al Wong-Olafson, *Spider*, Veteran

Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

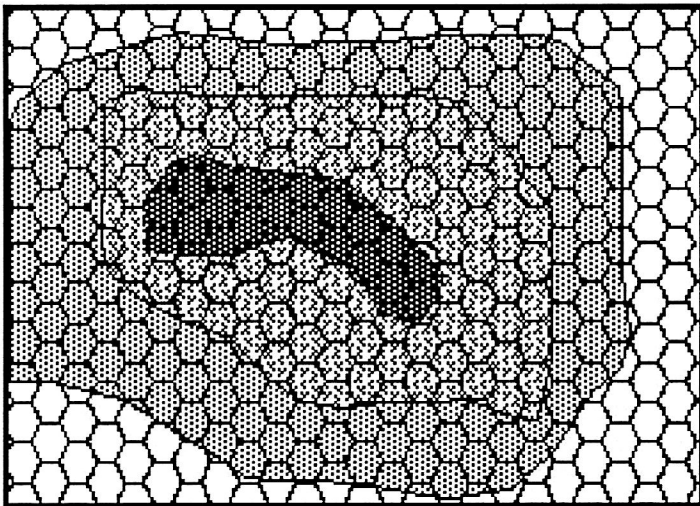
Cindy Echevarry, *Wasp*, Regular

Piloting: 5, Gunnery: 3

Martin Hollander, *Spider*, Regular

Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

Fire Lance



Ramie Ramirez, *Highlander*, Regular
Piloting: 4, Gunnery 3

'Pappy' Mukerjee, *Warhammer*, Veteran
Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 4

Thorbjorn Andersson, Rifleman, Regular
Piloting: 4, Gunnery 3

*James Wrath, *Charger*, Veteran
Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

* Wrath was the last survivor of the Command Lance of Delta Company. He had joined the unit informally three days prior to the battle.

Attacker: Unit is not known: The insignia was a black neurohelmet topped with a black crown on a blizzard-like background. The numeral designation was '341'. They also wore the patch of the Wolf Clan.

?, *Man O'War*, Veteran Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

?, *Daishi*, Elite Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 2

?, *Fenris*, Elite Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3

?, *Man O'War C*, Elite Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 1

?, *Vulture*, Elite Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

Sept 12, 3050

Engadin, a manufacturing planet in the Rasalhague Sector of the Free Republic of Rasalhague. Engadin, a planet with one major industry — the manufacture of inferno rounds. Engadin, a planet which managed to slow the invasion of the Wolf Clan by — literally — making things too hot for them. Every Clan 'Mech found itself bombarded with infernos from SRMs, LRMs, artillery and infantry. The defense of Engadin proved one thing: given enough of the proper kind of encouragement, a Clan 'Mech can go into heat shutdown!

It took almost two weeks for the stockpiles to run out. Once they did, it was a matter of days before the defenders of Engadin lost their gallant attempt at saving their planet.

During those four days, two lances from the 3rd Company, Second Battalion, Third Engadin Home Defense Brigade used a bit of old-fashioned tactics to make their scant remaining ammo go as far as it could. And they proved something else — Clan 'Mechs can lose.

They used a 'bait and trap' scenario that is as old as the hunt. A fast Light Lance allowed themselves to be seen and chased — right into the marshy lake where their allied Assault Lance was hidden. Two of the light 'Mechs were lost before the trap was sprung. Only one of the Clan 'Mechs remained operational.

The two lances were later to take part in the battle for Bristle Cone Forest. No survivors are known.

Technical Readout

The MCT-5C Mauler Cititank & the UBS-1C Interloper Urban Scout

Overview:

Designed specifically for the urban combat zone, the Mauler and the *Interloper* have proved by survival their place in war. Designed 120 year ago, the two vehicles had the same design team. The intention was to create a cohesive recon and attack team. At the same time, Avalon Arms' designers hoped that each vehicle would perform well on its own. With few exceptions, these vehicles have served well in both roles for over twelve decades.

Capabilities:

The *Mauler's* main function is as a cheap defense measure for an urban fight. A Federated Autocannon and two Holly SRM Racks give the *Mauler* enough punch to ably fill this role. As it mounts eleven machine guns, it also fills the secondary role of infantry suppression with surprising ability. Its electronics systems are standard gear which has proven its sturdiness in centuries of different vehicle designs.

The feature that makes the *Mauler* unique is its easy ride tread system. This system has sold more *Maulers* than any other feature of the tanks. The tread system is wide and low to spread out the tank's 75 tons. In addition the entire outer tread is encased in rubber to avoid damaging the streets. The combined effect is to reduce by 90% the damage done to city streets by a tank of its weight class.

The addition of a micro command post with room for ten combat troops ensured the *Mauler* a place on the battlefield as a well-constructed multi-task city fighter.

Designed as first-line defense for 'Mech and tank units the *Interloper* has proven suitable in this role. The parameters of the weapons systems, armor requirements, and electronics systems were decided even before the frame was designed. In the end it was decided to purchase *Striker* tank frames from Valiant to defray the cost. With a proven sturdy frame,

Avalon's designers were not afraid to load it down with the sturdiest gear they could produce. Each of the two Avalon supershock SRM racks is encased in 2 feet of high density plastic before the armor is applied. The mini turrets on all seven machine guns are built with triple redundancy circuits and hydraulics. The eight tons of StarSlab armor are welded on with overlapping anti-buckle plates. The end design results in a heavy set blocky looking *Striker* tank. Yet design performance marks the *Interloper* as 50% more durable than its cousin the *Mauler*.

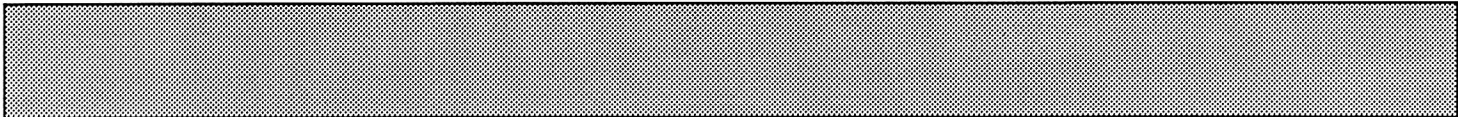
A mixed armor company of the Tenth Federated Commonwealth Regimental Combat Team was responsible for the defense of a large industrial center on Royal during the Kurita Counteroffensive in the 3039 War. The unit consisted of four *Mauler* Cititanks, four *Interloper* Urban Scouts and four *Savannah Master* Hovercraft. The commander of the company didn't expect his position to be attacked but prepared his personell for the worst as a good exercise. His preparations paid off when one of the *Savannah Masters* skirting the center reported a medium 'Mech company approaching up the road.

Using the *Savannahs* in a classic luring attack, the hovercraft lured the Kuritans further into the city. They were cautious of a trap, but when the light *Interlopers* rolled out in ambush the Kuritans threw caution to the winds and began in earnest to hunt down the eight light tanks. The *Interlopers* used their heavy construction to imitate a rout. The damage to city structures was high, but the effect was convincing. The *Interlopers* successfully led the majority of the 'Mech company right into the guns of the *Maulers*.

Notable Guns and Vehicles:

Captain Arthur Howser, the Grounded Revenant

Commander of the tank company responsible for the defence of Kanawa Industrial Center, his classic tactics destroyed half a 'Mech company before they forced the rest



to withdraw. Captain Howser has a PhD in Star League history. When reporters ask where he got his medals, he therefore says, "I found it in a box of cracker-jacks." Despite his modesty, Howser is known already as one of the ten best historians of the Star League in Davion space.

His command tank was named in honor of General Kerensky's famous Orion. The only non-factory parts are a spare ammo feed box for one of the turret machine guns. Captain Howser has been known to load this with paint filled bullets which he reportedly uses to mark targets.

Lt Scott Barnet, *Demolishing Derby*

Commander of the Second Tank Platoon, Barnet was the man that led the mad dash 'Mech retreat during the defense of the Kamura Industrial Center. While driving the vehicle himself, Barnet was personally responsible for destroying 37 light posts, 2 utility towers, 10 parked cars, 1 park fountain and 150 garbage cans. *Demolishing Derby* suffered no damage from the wild driving that led the Kuritans to believe that the unit was routing.

URS-12A Interloper Urban Scout

Cost 503,585 C-bills
Tonnage: 35 Tons
Movement Type: Wheeled
Power Plant: Interstar 175
Cruise Speed: 44.5
Flank Speed: 66.1
Armor: Valiant Buckler
Armament:
2 Avalon High Impact Heavy SRM Racks
6 Beretta Heavy Gatling Guns
Communications System:
Broadstar Excel I
Targeting and Tracking System:
Broad Star Multi Track MkII

Type:	URS-12A Interloper Urban Scout	
Movement Type:	Wheeled	
Tonnage:	35 tons	Tons
Cruise Speed:	4	
Flank Speed:	6	
Engine:		8.0
Rating:	120	
Type:	ICE	
Controls:		1.75
Internal Structure:		3.5
Turret:		0.75
Armor:	128	8.0
Front:	30	
Rt/Lt Side:	26	
Rear:	20	
Turret:	26	
Weapons & Equipment:		
SRM-6	Turret	3.0
SRM-6	Turret	3.0
Ammo (30)	Body	2.0
3 Machine Guns	Turret	1.5
1 Machine Gun	Front	0.5
1 Machine Gun	Rt Side	0.5
1 Machine Gun	Lt Side	0.5
Ammo (150)		1.5
Structural Bracing:		0.5

MCT-5C Mauler Cititank:

Cost: 1,606,937 C-bills

Tonnage: 75 Tons

Movement Type: Tracked

Power Plant:: InterStar 210

Cruise Speed: 32.5 kph

Flank Speed: 51.3 kph

Armor: Protech Ultra

Armaments:

1 Federated Auto Cannon

2 Avalon Multi-Launch Heavy SRMs

11 Berretta Gatling Guns

Communications Systems:

Broadstar Excel Mk II

Targeting & Tracking System:

Broadstar Mult-Track Mk IV

Type: MCT-5C Cititank

Movement Type: Tracked Tons

Cruise Speed: 3

Flank Speed: 5

Engine: 20

Rating: 225

Type: ICE

Controls: 3.75

Internal Structure: 7.5

Turret: 1.65

Armor: 192 12.0

Front: 42

Rt/Lt Side: 40

Rear: 35

Turret: 35

Weapons & Ammo:

AC/10 Turret 12.0

Ammo (20) Body 2.0

SRM-6 Turret 3.0

SRM-6 Turret 3.0

Ammo (30) Body 2.0

3 Machine Guns Turret 1.5

2 Machine Guns Front 1.0

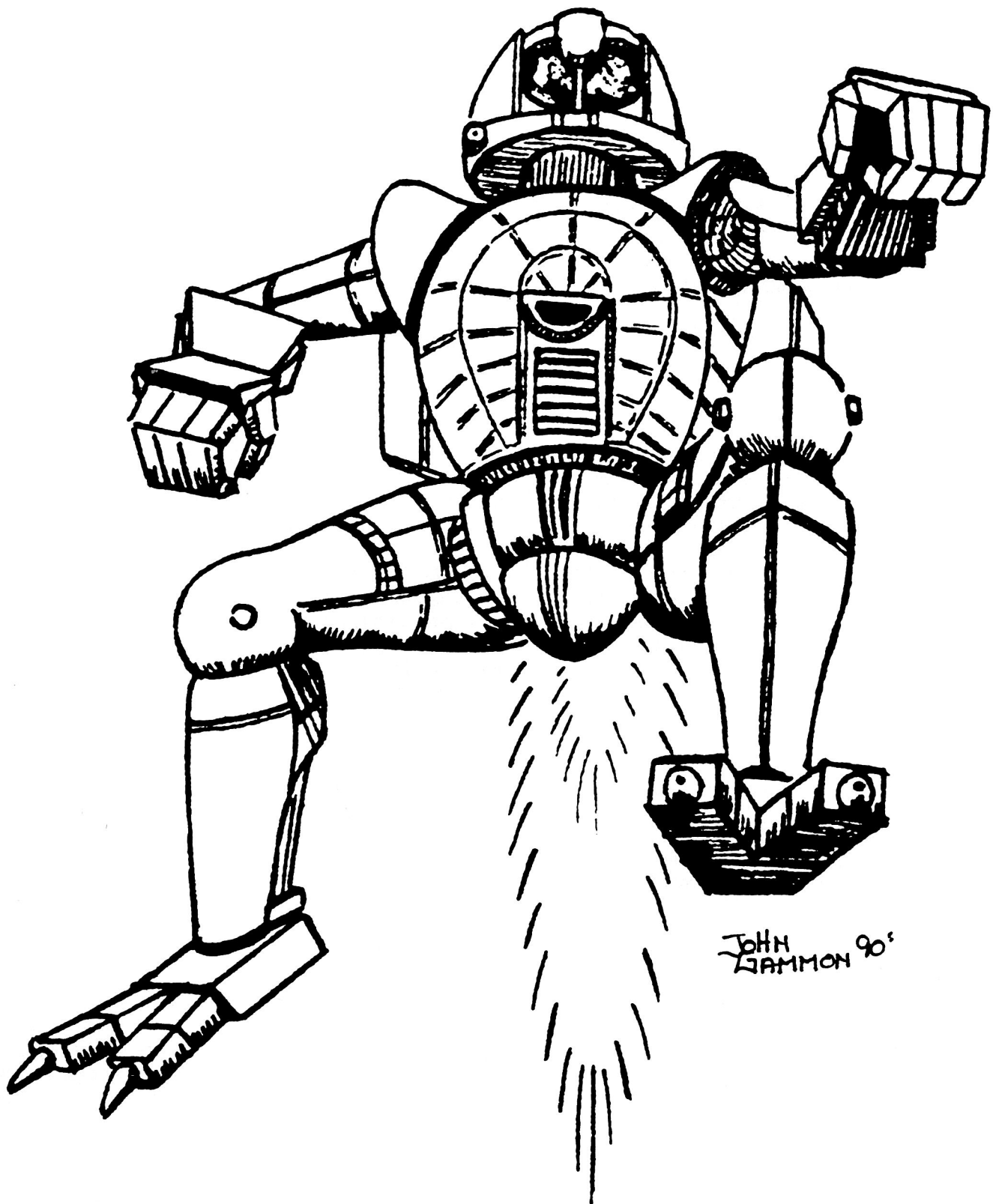
2 Machine Guns Rt Side 1.0

2 Machine Guns Lt Side 1.0

2 Machine Guns Rear 1.0

Ammo (200) 2.0

Infantry Compartment 1.5



Technical Readout

WS3-L Weasel & WS3-L2 Wild Weasel

Overview:

With the success of the Mongoose, designers in Diplan Mechyards of Ozawa decided to improve upon the 'Mech. It would contain all the advanced technology possible. The team came up with two designs. Both were accepted and built into the same 'Mech design. It was hoped that the Star League would see value in a 'Mech with two configurations.

The Amaris coup in 2765 brought the design to a halt. As Republic troops stormed the plant a group of the designers fled. A week later they were found. When the designs were not found on them, they were killed.

It wasn't until 3041 when the designs were found again. On the planet Ozawa, a Davion science team were looking in the ruins of a city. This city was in a radioactive 'hot spot', so it had been left untouched for centuries. The team came upon a capsule embedded in the foundation of a building. After carefully opening it they found a group of holoivid memory crystals and the memory core of a small but advanced computer. The contents seemed to have survived the radiation, so they were rushed to NAIS for further investigation.

Capabilities:

The Weasel and its counterpart the Wild Weasel were designed to be the ultimate in speed and technology. The 250 Magna XL gives them excellent speed without the normal weight. Together with their Endo Steel frame and Ferro Fibrous armor, this leaves the 'Mech with enough weight to equip it for its primary modes.

The Weasel has many rolls: quick strike and harassment, serving as an escort for its sister the Wild Weasel, and use as an anti-recon 'Mech. With its speed and pulse lasers, it can be capable of crippling almost any light scouting 'Mech or vehicle. It's small laser in the rear makes any attack from that direction a little more tricky.

The Wild Weasel looks almost identical to its sister. It drops the rear small laser and uses normal lasers to save weight for its Beagle Active Probe and Guardian ECM Suite. Both are tucked inside the torsos of the 'Mech. It is not meant to fight, depending on its speed to keep it out of trouble. The probe and ECM Suite combination make it a valuable recon and jamming 'Mech. It cannot use the probe and the ECM at the same time, due to a design flaw in the circuit card which ties them to the Central Processing Unit. If a careless pilot turns one on while the other is still operating, the circuit card will short out, rendering both pieces of equipment inoperable until the warrior gets a chance to replace the card.

Both 'Mechs are equipped with a Crossbow anti-missile system to protect it against any pilot lucky enough to lock onto this fast-mover in the first place. Both of them have their AMS ammo protected by cellular ammunition storage. The Wild Weasel holds only 1 ton of ammo to save room for its probe.

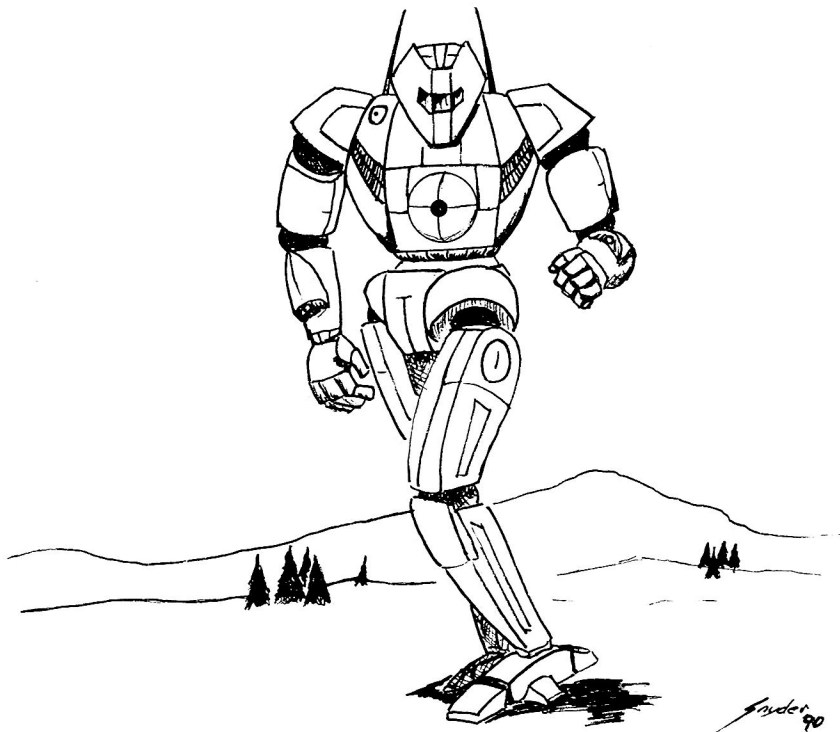
Variants:

The Federated Commonwealth, already having two prototypes in field testing, has made only one variant to this 'Mech type. It takes the Weasel's pulse lasers and replaces them with standard medium lasers. Then it exchanges the small laser for a smallpulse laser. This allows it to add half a ton more AMS ammo. The use of double heat sinks compensates for the added heat from the medium lasers. The WS-3-1A does show a lot of promise. Its Achilles heel is psychological. Its capabilities can fool a pilot into using stand and fight techniques which are inappropriate for the 'Mechs size and armor. A good 'Mech if you don't let it fool you into getting cocky.

WS3-L Weasel

Tonnage:	25	25.0
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel	1.25
Engine:	250 Magna XL	6.25
Walk:	10	
Run:	15	
Jump:	9	4.5
Heat Sinks:	10(20)	0.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	80	4.5
	IS	AV
Head	3	9
CT	8	11/5
Rt/Lt T	6	8/4
R/L A	4	6
R/LL	6	10

Weapons & Ammo:	LOC	Crit	Tons
Medium Pulse Laser:	CT	1	2.0
Small Pulse Laser:	RA	1	1.0
Small Pulse Laser:	LA	1	1.0
Small Laser:	CT/R	1	0.5
Anti Missile System:	RT	2	1.5
ammo 18	RT	2	1.5
CASE	RT	1	0.5



WS3-L2 Wild Weasel

Tonnage:	25	25.0
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel	1.25
Engine:	250 Magna XL	6.25
Walk:	10	
Run:	15	
Heat Sinks:	10(20)	0.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	80	4.5
	IS	AV
Head	3	9
CT	8	11/5
Rt/Lt Torso	6	8/4
Arms	4	6
Legs	6	10

Weapons & Ammo:

	Loc	Crit	Tons
Medium Laser	CT	1	1.0
Small Laser	RA	1	0.5
Small Laser	LA	1	0.5
Anti Missile System	RT	1	0.5
ammo (12)	RT	1	1.0
CASE	RT	1	0.5
Beagle Probe	LT	2	1.5
Guardian ECM	RT	2	1.5

Technical Readout

RMP-1C Rampage

Speculation

Clearly a mixture of Star League Technology with the best research the Inner Sphere has available, this 'mystery Mech' is tantalizing our staff techs. The Wyld Stallions promise us more information on the Rampage and its history for our next issue.

Capabilities

Weighing in at 100 tons, the Rampage known as Apocalypse is the only known prototype of an ultra heavy assault Mech designed to lay down accurate and deadly long range fire. Instead of LRMs the Rampage carries almost exclusively projectile weapons.

On its weapons computer the Rampage lists the two arm-mounted large lasers as backup weapons. The center torso LB-10X autocannon is listed as secondary firepower. Ever with this firepower, the Rampage would be a match for any Mech under fifty tons. The addition of torso-mounted dual Gauss Rifles means she can fell opponents of any weight class in four volleys of her guns. 10 double heat sinks eliminate heat problems with an ample margin.

The Rampage's one major disadvantage is maneuverability. Capable of only 34 kph at top speed, she cannot keep pace with the slowest advancing army, relegating her to defensive and planned assaults. Jump Jets cut the mobility

problem to some extent, as does the recent (and experimental) addition by Wyld Stallions master techs of triple strength myomer bundles. These are the 3026 double-bluff myomers, susceptible to certain gases, which older readers will remember from Jason Xiang Allard's hoax on Maximilian Liao during the climatic days of the Fourth Succession War. The Stallions are confident that until such time as the Federated Commonwealth supplies them with the rumored new brand, the gas-tight 17.5 tons of armor will provide sufficient clearance time to withdraw from such a gas attack. The gas combination is rare in nature and quite expensive to produce.

Battle History

None yet known. BattleTechnology is eagerly awaiting the debriefing of the Wyld Stallions so we can learn the role of the Rampage during the Blackjack campaign.

Noteworthy Mechs and Pilots

Major Sylvia Grant, Apocalypse

Major Grant is on record as commanding the Stallions' Special Operations group. No other information is known of her at this time. BattleTechnology hopes to gain more information on this MechWarrior to bring to you.

RMP-1C Rampage

Recorded transcripts of Jacob Halloway on June 15, Sudeten, Blackjack Operations Area, Federated Commonwealth:

JH: I'm standing here on the tarmac at Port Ceres Starport as the DropShips bearing survivors of the Clan invasion of the planet Blackjack go through final shut down before debarking passengers. We're hoping to get a first hand report of how these brave soldiers managed to escape the all-encompassing grip of the warriors known as the Jade Falcons.

(sounds of commotion in the background)

JH: The ship nearest us is now opening a passenger door and troops are coming out. I can't identify all the uniforms, but I can make out cadet insignias — which means that what's left of the Blackjack Training Unit is aboard these ships. I'm going to see if I can speak with some of the cadets.

(Jumble of voices as news crews vie for attention of cadets)

JH: Excuse me, cadet — BattleTechnology News Service here. Can I ask a few questions?

(Three cadets, arm in arm, turn to face Mr Halloway)

Cadet # 1: Did you say 'BattleTechnology'?

JH: Yes, we'd like to get your story...

Cadet #2: You're just the guy we've been looking for!

JH: (surprised) Really?

Cadet # 1: Yeah! You see, my friends and I are soon to be Tamar War College graduates. We want to nominate a 'Mech for the most awesome and unusual assault 'Mech there is.

(In the background there is the distinctive sound of a DropShip bay door opening.)

JH: Well, I'm all ears, lads. What's the name of this 'Mech?

Cadet # 3: Her name's Apocalypse.

JH: Apocalypse! I'm not sure I'm familiar with that 'Mech class...

(A great commotion breaks out among the news crews as a BattleMech emerges from the now-open DropShip bay)

(Rest of interview on personal audio recorder only)

JH: Holy...! What is that thing? Eric, are you getting this on vidcam?

Camerman: Sorry, Jake, my camera just fritzed out. I'm getting nothing but static.

JH: Dammit! It must be jamming us!

(Similar cursing from other news crews confirms his suspicion.)

JH: Try with the still camera, but I doubt you'll have much luck.

(He was right; not a single photo turned out.)

JH: Well, folks, Jacob Halloway here. I...uh...appear to be witnessing an unknown 'Mech departing from this DropShip. My guess is she's near a hundred tons, with what can only be large lasers. On its back it has three dorsal cannons, all at least the size of a Centurion Luxor Heavy Autocannon. I don't know what else to call it. This cadet here — is this the 'Mech you called the Apocalypse? (While Halloway's attention is on the 'Mech, another person has walked up to him.)

Unknown: Actually, that's what we call this particular 'Mech, but its actual class is the Rampage Assault BattleMech.

JH: Who might you be, sir?

Cadet # 1: This is Colonel Robert Michaels, the leader of the unit that got the cadets safely off Blackjack.

JH: And that 'Mech belongs to you?

Colonel Michaels: Yes, it does. While I can't talk about that mission just yet, I think it's high time I let one of my unit's bigger secrets out of the hat so more people are as positive as I am that we can beat the Clans, playing with our rules.

JH: What unit is that, sir?

Colonel Michaels: The Wyld Stallions Light Assault Group.

RMP-1C Rampage

Mass: 100 Tons
 Chassis: Star League (Classified)
 Power Plant: GM 200 XL
 Cruise Speed: 23.5 kph
 Flank Speed: 34.0 kph
 Jump Jets: Hildco Model 10.5
 Jump Capability: 60 meters
 Armor: Starshield
 Manufacturer: StarCorp
 (Originally Star League Weapons Research)
 Communications Systems: Transcom Beta
 Tactical Computer: Tacticon A-3000 early experimental
 Targeting and Tracking System: Tacticon 500

Internal Structure:	Tonnage:
Engine GM 200 XL	4.25
Walking MP: 2	
Running MP: 3	
Jumping MP: 2	
Heat Sinks: 10 (20) 10 double	0.0
Gyro:	2.0
Cockpit:	3.0
Armor Factor: 280	17.0
Location: Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head 3	9
CT 31	40
CT (Rear)	15
R/L T 21	30
R/L T (Rear)	12
R/L Arm 17	34
R/L Leg 20	32

Weapons & Ammo:		Critical	Tonnage
	Location		
Gauss Rifle	RA	7	15.0
ammo	RT	2	2.0
Gauss Rifle	LA	7	15.0
ammo	LT	2	2.0
LB-10X Autocannon	CT/LT	6	11.0
ammo	RT	2	2.0
CASE	LT	1	0.5
Large Laser	RA	2	5.0
Large Laser	LA	2	5.0
Guardian ECM	RT	2	1.5
Triple Strength Myomers		6	

Critical Hit Table

Left Arm

1. Shoulder
2. Triple Strength Myomer
- 1 3. TSM
4. Gauss Rifle
5. Gauss Rifle
6. Gauss Rifle

1. Large Laser
2. Large Laser
- 2 3. Gauss Rifle
4. Gauss Rifle
5. Gauss Rifle
6. Gauss Rifle

Left Torso

1. XL Engine
2. LB 10X
- 1 3. Ammo (GR)
4. Jump Jet
5. LB 10X
6. TSM

1. XL Engine
2. LB 10X
- 2 3. Jump Jet
4. Ammo (Gauss)
5. LB 10X
6. TSM

Left Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

Head

1. Life Support
2. Sensors
3. Cockpit
4. TSM
5. Sensors
6. Life Support

Center Torso

1. Engine
2. Engine
- 1 3. Gyro
4. Gyro
6. Gyro

1. Gyro
2. Engine
- 2 3. Engine
4. Engine
5. LB-10X
6. LB-10X

Engine Hits OOO
Gyro Hits OO
Sensor Hits OO

Right Arm

1. Shoulder
2. TSM
- 1 3. TSM
4. Gauss Rifle
5. Gauss Rifle
6. Gauss Rifle

1. Large Laser
2. Large Laser
- 2 3. Gauss Rifle
4. Gauss Rifle
5. Gauss Rifle
6. Gauss Rifle

Right Torso

1. XL Engine
2. Ammo (GR)
- 1 3. " (LB-10X)
4. ECM
5. Double HS
6. CASE

1. XL Engine
2. Ammo (GR)
- 2 3. Ammo (LB 10X)
4. ECM
5. Double HS
6. CASE

Right Leg

1. Hip
2. Upper Leg Actuator
3. Lower Leg Actuator
4. Foot Actuator
5. Double Heat Sink
6. Double Heat Sink

STOP PRESS * STOP PRESS * STOP PRESS

Wolf Summons Inner Sphere Leaders!

December 18, 3050 Wolf's Dragoons Planet of Outreach

BattleTechnology's sources with Wolf's Dragoons have to be guarded in what they tell us. The Dragoons are generous employer, but ... well, they have a short way with traitors and spies. The fact that we think of our employees as fearless guardians of the public's Right To Know does not blind us to the opposite opinion when expressed by a formidable group of warriors.

So — we will tell you the maximum we CAN tell without betraying where on Outreach our source is to be found.

Several of Col Jaime Wolf's most trusted agents have spent the last six months arriving and departing the planet at frequent intervals. Major Lilith Lang, for example, left four months ago, arrived just over a month later, left again six weeks ago, and she has just returned escorting...Theodore Kurita, his son Hohiro, and his daughter Omi.

That's not all. Other top Wolf aids have arrived in company with Thomas Marik, Romano Liao, Justin Allard, Haakon Magnusson and Hanse Davion. Each has brought at least one of his heirs.

Whatever's going on, it has brought the leaders of the five Successor Houses and the two smaller Inner Sphere states hurrying to comply in the midst of a campaign. It has called Hohiro Kurita, Victor Steiner Davion, and Kai Allard-Liao away from the frontlines.

Worth noting also are the presences of Col Morgan Kell and his nephew Christian Kell. The former CO and present Battalion Commander of the Kell Hounds seem to be very much in Jaime Wolf's confidence. Morgan Kell has spent much time here over the decades since the Fourth Succession War.

As the conference continues, BattleTechnology will inform you of as much as we are allowed to know. Perhaps those mysterious origins of Wolf's Dragoons will finally be made clear. Perhaps Jaime Wolf knows something that may help us in our desperate hour.

Oh, and one more item you might find as fascinating and as inexplicable as we do! Six months ago, Col Natasha Kerensky left the unit on one more of these mysterious errands. All of the Inner Sphere leaders are here now. Who was Natasha supposed to seek out? Why has she not returned?

MORE 'MECHS!

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TIME TO SEND IN THE REINFORCEMENTS, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!



BATTLETECH REINFORCEMENTS 2

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Where do they come from?

What do they really want?

The Wolf Clan Sourcebook,

the first of four volumes

concerning the invading Clans,

reveals the history, culture,

and military capabilities of

the Wolves, one of the

premier Clans. The Clan's

military tactics and internal

hierarchy are explored, and its

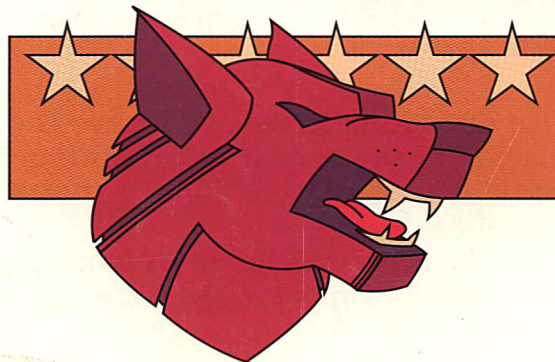
prominent personalities are profiled.

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WOLF

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The Wolf Clan Sourcebook

includes a detailed discussion

of the key Battle of Tukayyid,

and information on the

unique BattleMechs of this

group. Also featured is a

16-page section featuring Jeff

Laubenstein's color renderings

of the Wolf Clan's uniforms &

crests, and the battlearmor of

the mysterious Elementals! This

sourcebook is a must for

any Battletech fan!

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