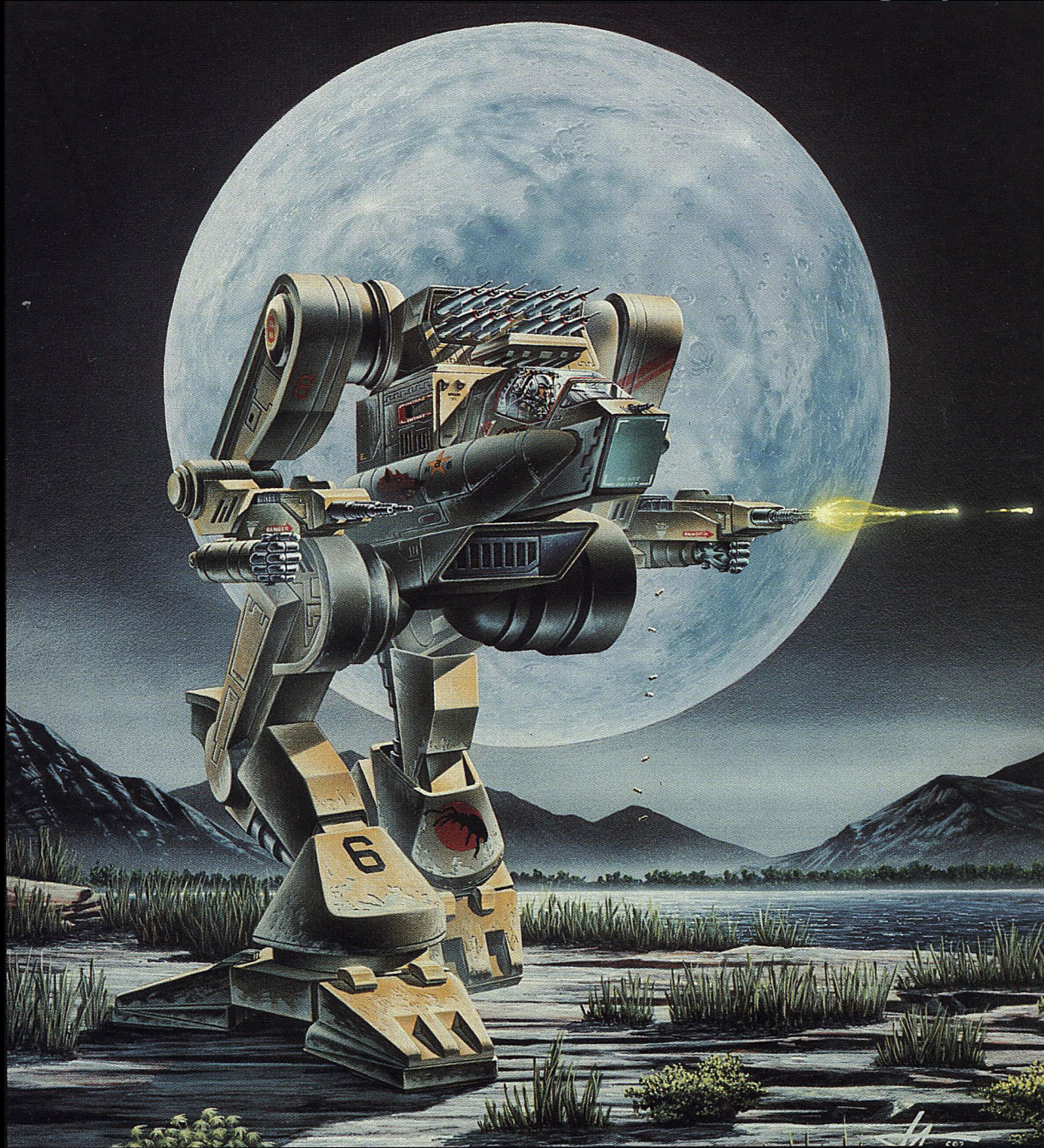


Issue # 18

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BATTLE TECHNOLOGY

THE MAGAZINE OF COMBAT IN THE THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY



In Trouble **NOW** !

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.

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by Aaron Froke
Art for Achilles, the Clan Stopper and Achilles BattleMech
by Peter Siekierski
Art for The Secret of Kepler Station
by Angela Hyatt and Johannes Huber
Romano Liao Portrait
by Thena MacArthur
Maps
by Richard Falkner and Hilary Ayer
Column Headers, Opening Shots
by William H Keith Jr

Writing in this issue:

Intersecting Lines,
What Now, MechWarrior
by Glen L Mitchell
CEF: The Clans,
The Archer Fells the Hawk
by Spydre Connors
Bushido
by Roland Kent Schmidt
UrbanMech Variants
by Stephen Hess
SuburbanMech
by Robert Madsen and Craig Reed
Candace and Justin Deaths
by Ronald Knox
Man in the Street Interviews
by S Craig Harris
Assault on Kepler Station,
Other Interviews
by Hilary Ayer and Richard Falkner
all other writing this issue
by Hilary Ayer

About the Cover:

BT artist-photographer Steve Venters caught this *Ryoken* from the Wolf Clan in the non-volcanic Highlands of Satalice early in November, 3051. A terrifying beauty, this BattleMech!

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A Scenario for MechWarrior II

The Secret of Kepler Station 24

.....
• Importers: this version of this issue is not for sale in Clan-
• occupied space. Subscribers in those areas will find an article
• on interference by native aquatic life on ocean-capable
• 'Mechs instead of the sections on the Inner Sphere's knowl-
• edge of the Clans. PLEASE COOPERATE IN NOT ALLOW-
• ING OUR INFORMATION TO GET INTO THEIR HANDS!
•

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OPENING SHOTS

After spending so much of Publisher Thorkillson's money to acquire information about the Clans, I wanted the pleasure of giving you the results of our anti-Clan research here in my editorial column. Their technology is flexible, but their tactics aren't. Hit 'em from several sides; improvise; change tactics on 'em! One commander on Marshdale went so far as to flip a coin to randomize his tactics! It worked until 'Shell them from long range' came up on his chart and he didn't have the sense to skip it. They don't seem to have any conception of guerilla tactics like pit traps with a conventional mine at the bottom. They can slowly adapt to change, but not in the course of a battle.

Tactics that seem to work: from the beginning, Inner Sphere commanders have worked out ways to force close-in battle, which nullifies the Clans' long range superiority. Try also what's been called the 'bandit defense': scatter your forces in company sized units which utilize hidden supply caches and which report to HQ only by courier. When Clan troops are out of contact with the enemy, they like to split up into stars of five for search-and-destroy missions. Our companies can squash a star with no problems IF WE KEEP INFANTRY SPOTTERS TO WATCH FOR THOSE DRATTED ELEMENTALS!

Contrary-wise, some experts are urging concentration of forces. Defend most probable targets with a heavy force, take advantage of the Clans' habit of fighting one-on-one to initiate concentration of fire, while keeping a mobile reserve to hit attackers in the rear. So far, this has proved good policy. But when the policy is extended to a whole front, we at *BattleTechnology* aren't so sure. Inner Sphere strategy was to concentrate forces on a few key systems in each sector, while leaving reserves centrally available with plentiful transport. The problem is that the Clans have chosen a similar strategy, only attacking a few key planets. A front makes a direct-line penetration toward its objective, say the Smoke Jaguars and the Nova Cats toward Luthien, while the allied Clans (Ghost Bears in Draconis space, Steel Vipers in Lyran space) follows more slowly picking off systems which could be a problem behind the lines. Luthien is under attack as I write this. We'll keep you posted.

The following has been sent by ComStar priority message to the head of each of the Clans attacking the Inner Sphere with a prepaid reply form:

"You dishonor General Kerensky by claiming descent from his forces. You show conduct more befitting Amaris the Usurper. The Star League promoted the Ares conventions from the time Aleisha Liao first presented them. General Kerensky several times spoke in praise of these conventions which limit the scale of war's destruction. Not only do you casually flout the sections which deal with captured mercenaries and their rights to keep their freedom and their BattleMechs if they surrender, but you fight in cities, destroy factories, food storage, power plants — even attacking hospitals on Chupadero and Icar! Most criminal of all, the Smoke Jaguars destroyed an entire city with nuclear devices from orbit. Even before the Ares Conventions, the Star League Defense Forces Charter prohibited such a genocidal practice.

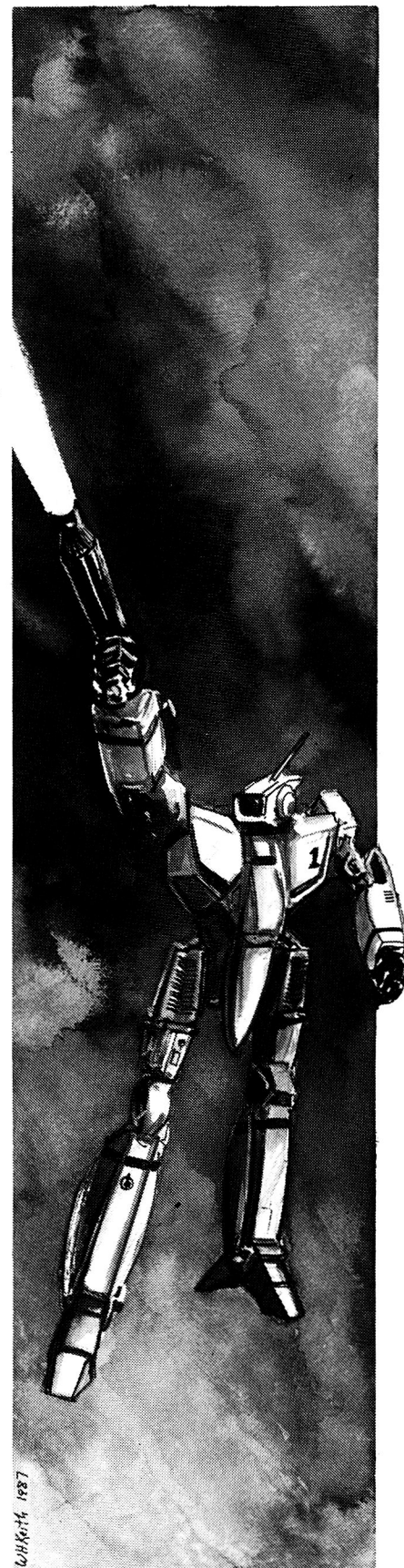
We have nukes. We have not used them on you, nor have we used the various Chemical/biological horrors in leftover labs that we save for an Armageddon against a potential alien foe.

Even Periphery Pirates fight according to the Ares Conventions!

Have you any excuse to offer or promise to amend? Or shall we decide to hold you *nothing*, sociopathic killers who have no rights because they are too insane to grant the ordinary rights of humanity to their foes? You have millions of our fellows of the Inner Sphere hostage true, but a hostage is only valuable if his people can count on the word of his captor. How can we trust yours?

I offer the forum of a magazine read by 94% of all MechWarriors in the Known Sphere. We do not wish to slide into the hellpit of total warfare if it can be avoided. Yet if our enemy is committed to such a course, we will use any means necessary to defend even a small fraction of our beloved way of life against the incursion of the Thirty-First Century's version of the horse barbarians.

— Hilary Ayer, Robinson, January 3052



BattleTechnology News Service

Inner Sphere Factories Retool For Clans War

September 11, 3051: Exeter, Fed. Commonwealth

As a response to the shocking technological advantage the Clan invaders have demonstrated in their military equipment, all of the governments of the Inner Sphere except the Capellan Confederation have begun a massive manufacturing effort, the likes of which has not been seen since before the First Succession War.

Facilities for producing recently rediscovered battlefield technologies such as ferro-fibrous armor and enhanced energy weapons have reportedly been ordered to double their output by the end of the year. The conversion of older, outdated manufacturers, and even the construction of new factories, are being pressed forward, even in obviously threatened systems such as Summit and Tamar. Additionally, rumors abound that secret new BattleMech designs in the prototype stage — or even still on paper — are being rushed into production in an attempt to offset superior Clan technology.

When asked if these efforts would allow the Inner Sphere to achieve parity with the Clans any time soon, one Lyrans official stated, "Equality, drek, no! It's going to take us ten years just to replace the losses we've suffered already!"

A more restrained response came from Graf Patricia Yeager, Archon Melissa Steiner's press spokesperson: "While it's serious, the Clan menace is not yet critical. Increased defence production is a prudent step to safeguard the people of the Federated Commonwealth and to hasten the liberation of occupied territories."

Mercenaries Refuse to Fight

November 1, 3051: Memmingen, Free Republic of Rasalhague

BattleMechs and troops moved warily through the gates leading to DropShips that will take them away from the world they were contracted to defend. Militia units stood guard over the withdrawing mercenaries, alert for any last minute pillaging.

The cause of this tension was the demand of Major Bill Tranger, commander of the company-strength mercenary unit known as Bill's Bullyboys, for a renegotiation of the unit's contract in light of the Clan invasions.

"It's only fair," said Major Tranger just before his last



A brand new MAD-5S Marauder undergoes final testing at the Bowie Ind. Facility on Carlisle.

meeting with officials from the department of mercenary relations. "They want us to fight the Clanners for them, using obsolete junk, while they treat us like drek the whole time! 'Least they could do is pay us a little more!"

Following the heated and unsuccessful negotiations, Överste Franklin Hastelson stated, "The merc's terms were just too outrageous. He wanted well over three times the going remuneration values for this year alone. We tried to compromise with him, but I guess he just doesn't want to face the invaders in combat."

Major Tranger attempted to assault the Överste at this point, and had to be taken into custody by guards. Following his release, the mercenary commander immediately began preparations for his unit's departure.

Ominously, other mercenary units in the FRR and the Federated Commonwealth have also called to question their standing contracts, including several large regiments such as The Green Machine and The Hsien Hotheads.

BattleTechnology News Service

Conference on Outreach

While the Inner Sphere leaders were meeting several times a week, their heirs were training in Clan battle tactics. Neither the meetings nor the lessons went smoothly. A month-to-month overview of the conference would reveal the following:

February: Hohiro Kurita, grandson to the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, and Victor Steiner Davion, heir to the Federated Commonwealth, clash sharply. Isis Marik, heiress after her brother Joshua to the Free Worlds League, refuses to take part in the training. Kai and Cassandra Allard-Liao both participate. Omi Kurita is kept at her father's side.

March: although it costs him a battle, Sun-Tzu Liao baits his cousin Kai instead of cooperating with him; they had been assigned as partners in a training exercise.

April: Chancellor Romano Liao accuses Kai of deliberately endangering his troops on Twycross. He is called to testify in this Council of leaders, none of the other young royals being present. A surprise witness clears him, a doctor serving with the Tenth Lyran Guard.

Also in April, Victor Steiner-Davion's relationship with Omi Kurita causes comment in gossip sheets across the Inner Sphere. Ragnar Magnusson, youngest of the royal warriors, attempts to keep the peace between Sun-Tzu Liao and everyone else.

May: Romano Liao comes close to refusing to cooperate with the Inner Sphere-wide effort against the Clans. She remains convinced that the Outreach conference is an effort by Hanse Davion to trick the Capellan Confederation into lowering defenses along the Davion border. Following a clash with her sister, Candace Liao is overheard to say, "I will protect those I love. If she ever strikes at one of you or the twins or Quint, even death itself will not keep me from avenging them."

June: Sun-Tzu clashes with Victor Steiner-Davion, refusing to be under his command during an extended training exercise.

July: Economics bog down the conference table as the hard facts emerge: if the Combine, Rasalhague, and the Commonwealth are to bear the frontline fighting, then they need spare parts to upgrade their 'Mechs to meet the clash with Clans troops. The Free Worlds League realizes that almost 90 percent of the next five years' production would be pledged to making these field modification kits, while the payment schedule would drag on until the next century.

August: the severely ill Joshua Marik is sent to state-of-the-art medical facilities by Hanse Davion. The First Prince's own command circuit of JumpShips hurries the boy to the leukemia ward attached to NAIS. Hohiro Kurita and Victor Steiner-Davion are presented with Clans-type 'Mechs from Wolfs' Dragoons' BattleMech factories. Romano Liao refuses to join the alliance, returning to the Capellan Confederation.

September: The young royals' training is completed. Victor and Omi say an affectionate goodbye. Victor, Hohiro, Kai, and Ragnar return to the battle zone with their aides and friends.

Miraborg Surrenders to Wolf Clan

Ginzburg, December 31, 3051

Ginzburg will not be torn apart by battle after all. Her people will not be pauperized; her children will not be orphans.

A man in gray landed in the plaza of Stortelar City today, a cloaked and hooded man wearing the ceremonial mask of a snarling wolf. One man walked into the Waldherre's palace, his hands at his sides, his weapons sheathed. What he said to Waldherre Tor Miraborg remains unknown. Whatever it was, it was convincing. General Miraborg voluntarily surrendered the planet to this single warrior of the Wolf Clan.

"The JumpShips at our system's zenith point contain enough force to crush us utterly. The forces available to crush us *will* crush us if we take this matter to battle. Despite the spirit of our people, we have no chance to win. Let us decide to live and learn, people of Ginzburg. Accept this surrender; obey their orders as lawful. If there is dishonor here, I take it upon myself alone." So ended Tor Miraborg's speech to the citizens of Ginzburg. So fell the capital planet of the third and last region of the Free Republic of Rasalhague. Only fifteen planets now remain to the Republic.

Man in the Street Interviews

Ed Note: The opinions expressed by the persons interviewed here do not necessarily represent the official editorial opinion of BattleTechnology Magazine. Most names have been changed to promote freedom of speech.

In the Federated Commonwealth, public opinion on the Clan invasion runs the gamut, from aroused indignant patriotism to complete indifference.

Hesperus II, outside the main gate of Defiance Industries:

BT: Sir, what is your personal reaction to the Clans invasion and the fall of Rasalhague.

Freddie: My biggest gripe is the double shift I've been on the past eight months. Oh, the money's great, but I haven't really spoke to my kids in all that time. They must think I'm sick or tired of them. My wife has been great, though, and has tried to explain why I'm gone or asleep all the time.

As to Rasalhague, so what? If you ask me, they had it coming. Always with the mountain-sized chips on their shoulders, thinking everybody was out to get them. If they'd treated their mercs like humans, maybe they'd have fought better for them. Who knows, really? I...

BT: Sir, pardon the interruption, but what of the tales of the Clans taking their prisoners into slavery?

Freddie: You wanna know about slavery *(Leans close, whispers)* Why don't you work here for a while and they maybe you'll understand slavery! How could the Clans be any worse than their high-and-mightinesses, the Brewers? *(Ed Note: Dame Jaqueline Brewer is the CEO of Defiance Industries)* *(Freddie abruptly turns away as the shift signal blares over the area).*

Tharkhad, outside the door of the Estates-General Building:

BT: Ms Jadwell, would you care to comment for our readers on the Clans invasion?

Jadwell: Certainly. We face an extraordinarily evil foe, who, while he does show a certain debased honor, is really no different from the worst Periphery pirate king. The only significant problem with these 'Clansmen' is their apparent higher technology. Can we but salvage enough of their equipment, then it can certainly be copied and turned against them.

I can only say this much: These people will be defeated. The good guys will not finish last this time. And when we stand victorious on their homeworld, then we'll see who's so superior. Thank you. *(Hurries back into building).*

Summer, the main square in Curituba City

BT: Sir Walter, excuse us, could you spare us a moment?

Walter: Certainly, young lady. What is it?

BT: Could you give us your thoughts on the Clans invasion?

Walter: Of course. The way I see it, far too little attention is being given to protecting the Tamar and Skye districts, while Hanse Davion drags our Archon off to some farcial conference on Outreach. While we're at it, we should use all these fat, incompetent mercenaries that Hanse is so fond of, to lay into the Snakes. Now is the best time we'll ever have to slay the Dragon forever. *(Takes the microphone).* But no, off they go and leave us loyalists in the breach. Besides, if the Skye regiments had been properly supported, the way these so-called Regimental Combat Teams are pampered, then I expect they might not have been so

badly mauled. *(Obviously angry now)* Leave it to Davion to betray us all.

I say that it's time for Skye to handle its own affairs! Let Davion tend to the Federated Suns, not destroy the Lyran Commonwealth to protect them. If...

BT: Thank you, sir, for your time. We must be off to other interviews.

Skondia, in the Benjamin District of the Draconis Combine. A DCMS officer stood by, but carefully did not interfere with our gathering of information.

BT: Pardon us, sir, could you spare a moment for an interview?

Tai-i Benjy Stratton: Yes, but my time is limited. Ask your questions.

BT: Thank you. Well, sir, we need to hear your opinions on the Clans invasion.

Stratton: *(looks at the observer, then shrugs)* I think that these invaders are the most serious threat ever to face the Combine. Having fought them, I can tell you this: they are warriors such as I have never seen. They seem to share tenets of our sense of honor, but theirs is differently directed, I think. BT: What of the reports of people being taken into slavery?

Stratton: That is the one truly repugnant aspect of dealing with the Clans. Warriors and civilians too, I hear, are torn from their homes and loved ones, never to return. It is said that the Clans honor those so taken; I cannot answer you on that. I have only the knowledge of what I've seen.

BT: What of the Turtle Bay incident? Stratton: *(angry, but under extreme control)* The guilty will pay, reporter. Such an action reminds one of the habits of the Great Usurper, Amaris

continued on next page

BattleTechnology News Service

Only an animal would do such a thing. Notice also that the act was carried out against the defenseless. No warriors were involved, only children of the Dragon, protecting his realm from invaders.

BT: Thank you for your time, *Tai-i*. (*Stratton moves off, soon becoming lost in the crowds. Skondia is nearly overrun with refugees, mostly from Rasalhague, though many are from border Combine worlds.*)

BT: You, sir (*choosing a bystander at random*) Yes, you! A moment please. Man: Frank Nitta. What do you want? BT: A few moments of your time, Mr Nitta. We are conducting a survey on the average citizen's reaction to the Clans. Would you be willing to help us?

Nitta: Yes, but I know only what the newsvids tell us.

BT: We understand that. What we want is your opinions on the subject.

Nitta: Well, I have to tell you that before these *yabajin* (barbarians) take this world, we will burn it in their faces. They are powerful, yes, but so is the Dragon, and he will prevail. I would give my life to stop them. (*Leaves the interview site*).

BT: *Chu-sa*, as our observer, I must ask you if there has been any influence placed upon these people? Observer: No. I am here to observe your operations, and to assist in translation, should it be necessary. I am not to interfere with or influence your subjects in any way. If you like, I will go into the noodle shop across the street and wait through the next interview.

Better, since it is nearly midday, would you all join me for the meal? I am instructed to help you, after all.

In the restaurant:

BT: Excuse us, Miss (to the waitress), but we would like your impressions of the Clan invasion?

Waitress: (*Smiles politely*) I'm sure I couldn't tell you anything interesting. I rely on our brave warriors to protect me. (*Giggles*) Like the handsome *Tai-i* escorting your party. He looks so very brave.

Further interviews in the Draconis Combine show the same pattern of fear, and yet a resolution to defend the Combine "to the last ditch," to quote an ancient Terran statesman. We salute their fighting spirit.

Edwards, Crucis March of the Federated Commonwealth

BT: Excuse us, Hauptmann, could you give us your views on the Clans invasion?

What do you think

Hauptman Frenton: Certainly. As I see it, the Clans are the greatest foe ever to strike at the Suns, I mean the Federated Commonwealth. The comment stands, including the entire Inner Sphere as well. We have seen elite and crack regiments destroyed or mauled time after time. The invaders show little or no mercy, and seem not to have heard of the Ares Conventions, or any other concept of civilized battlefield behavior.

This business of asking the numbers of defenders so that the battle might be 'fair' strikes me as more than a little silly, considering their technical superiority. If not for that, we'd wad them up and toss'em aside, like any other Periphery trash.

In sum, let me ask you a question. How can a people be considered honorable, who use nuclear weapons from orbit against a civilian target, a city full of noncombatants?

Liao, in the Sarna March of the Federated Commonwealth

BT: Madame, could we have a moment of your time, please?

Lady Esmeralda Marcos: You may.

BT: We would like to hear your opinions on the Clans invasion, please.

Marcos: Put succinctly, the Clans are ravaging, bloodthirsty beasts, out to destroy the very essence of all our lives. Until now, I had no regrets about retirement from the military, but this makes me wish to be back in harness. My son, Richard Antonio, serves the Commonwealth today. His father and I are very proud.

Back to the point. The Clans endanger us all. Being in the Sarna March, we unfortunately hear a lot of 'news' from the Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League, telling us that this is a hoax dreamed up by Prince Davion and Colonel Wolf for their own purposes. Tommyrot! This is

no more a hoax than Kerensky's Exodus, and has just as serious implications.

I quote from the ancient philosopher Benjamin Franklin: "We must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately!" If the Human Sphere could unite against these savages, even temporarily, we could destroy them. We could at least push them back into the darkness they came from.

BT: Our thanks, Lady Marcos.

Capella, in the Capellan Confederation

[*Ed Note: During the time spent interviewing in the Confederation, we were both accompanied and followed by apparent Maskirova personnel. It is a certainty that this has had a profound influence on the content of the replies we received.*]

Man in the Street Interviews continued

BT: Citizen, a moment, please. We are seeking opinions on the Clans invasion and what you think of it.

Feng Li: I know only what the Lady Chancellor thinks is good for me to know. The so-called 'Clans invasions' are little more than a plot between Ghost-Fox Davion and the notorious mercenary Jaime Wolf, to divert our forces in preparation for a renewed sneak attack on the Confederation.

If the reports from abroad are true, I rejoice in seeing the so-mighty Federated Commonwealth taken down a few notches. Perhaps the invaders will teach Davion a needed lesson in humility. I regret that the Dragon, our ally, has been slightly hurt as well.

If these invaders reach the Confederation, we will show them what warriors are bred in this land. They will never defeat the Confederation and Chancellor Liao.

BT: Commander Conover, your opinion, please, on the Clans invasion?

Conover: I am truly sorry that security needs prevent my replying to your request. We may not speak to the foreign press since the Chancellor's Edict of September 3050. *(Nods to our 'escort' and leaves us.)*

BT: Citizen Catlin, why did the Commander nod to you before leaving?

Catlin: Simple courtesy. Here in the Confederation, we believe in the old ways of shared respect. How unfortunate that most other realms do not.

BT: Could you, then, discuss with us the Clan invasion?

Catlin: *(Calmly)* I must also invoke the September Edict regarding the foreign press.

BT: Can you at least discuss the Edict?

Catlin: Alas, that too is covered. *(Smiles to himself).*

BT: So the Edict is a catch-all, which prevents any official from discussing

anything he doesn't want to? Catlin: If I were able to discuss it, I would essentially agree with you.

BT: I see. Citizen, yes, you there, could we ask you about the Clans invasion?

Blutarski: Yes, please ask. I must tell you, though, that I know very little about it.

BT: Surely you know something?

Blutarski: I know, from reading your and other magazines, that portions of the Draconis Combine, Rasalhague Republic, and the Federated Commonwealth have been invaded, and that the Federated Commonwealth is reeling from the blows *(smiles broadly)*, and the Rasalhagians are losing ground steadily, though the

on the Celestial Throne."

Conquista, in the Free Worlds League

BT: Pardon us, sir, but could you share your views on the Clans invasion?

Vladimir Tunstall: Sure. The Clans are simply another combatant in the Succession Wars. Granted, their technology is higher than that of the other claimants, but that's just the way it is.

One thing I do know; the invasion has been good for business, and that's what the League is all about. I expect great things from the business community, and their prosperity can only strengthen the League vis-a-vis the other states. If it strengthens us enough, we may look into the possibility of retaking some worlds that Hanse Davion owes us.

of the Clan invasion?

The Free Worlds League has denied us access to Irian, therefore we next de- toured to Van Dieman IV.

BT: Your pardon, Ma'am, but could you talk to us about the Clans invasion, and how it effects you?

Constance Desiree: As a fashion designer, it hardly effects me at all, except that with the new taxes, people have less money to spend on the finer things in life, like my line of high-fashion clothing, sold across the Inner Sphere and perhaps beyond.

BT: But has the invasion had any personal effect on you, Ms Desiree?

Desiree: No, no personal effect. Have you seen my new Fall line? It's...

Combine is holding up well under the assault.

If the invaders ever get here, the Chancellor will destroy them by her mighty warriors, and if we fail, *(a slightly glazed look in the eyes here)* she will destroy them by her occult powers. However it happens, they will be defeated, and will thereafter be our servitors forever.

[Ed Note: After leaving the Confederation, we discovered, in a holocam case, a note without signature: "We are in great fear of what the Clans may do. The Chancellor is misled or perhaps truly mad to think she can banish them with a snap of her fingers. With deep regret, we true patriots of the Capellan Confederation must ask for help to unseat this usurper and set Maximilian's true heir

Amity, in the Silver Hawks Coalition

BT: Mr Jamison, what is your impression of the Clans invasion?

Jamison: They seem, from what news we get, to be a formidable battle force. However, I expect that, as honorable warriors, they will respect our wishes to remain at peace with our neighbors. Of course, if the Lyrans manage to stop them, we needn't worry!

BattleTechnology News Service

The Sergeant Speaks his Mind

Interview, *Gun-Sho* Akihito Tomo,
Third Militia Company of Luthien

December 26, 3051, Luthien

Q: *Gun-sho*, what was your understanding of the situation between the Draconis Combine and the Federated Commonwealth as of yesterday morning?

A: I had assumed that we were at a tentative cease-fire, with occasional skirmishes on both sides of the borders. Business as usual, I mean to say.

Q: What did you think of the withdrawal of 90% of the FedCom troops from the Benjamin and Dieron borders that has taken place over the last several months?

A: From what I have heard, the Clans are impossibly strong. We are as strong, or stronger than the forces of the Federated Commonwealth; otherwise, we would not have beaten them back during the 3039 War. Yet the Clans are cutting through our forces like a hot *hocho* through butter. A couple of vague rumors on the street are that these forces were pulled out in order to aid us in our fight against the Clans. If Prince Hanse Davion believes that he can launch a full-scale attack against the Draconis Combine and win; it is possible, now that we have been weakened by our fight, that he could win. But it would be for nothing. Any fool can see that if Luthien falls, then the Draconis Combine will collapse. If the Combine falls, the ALL THE OTHER HOUSES ARE FORFEIT. Hanse Davion has to be more of a fool than any of our Public Information Sources have ever suggested if he believes that an attack on, and eradication of the Draconis Combine, would result in his gaining control over the Inner Sphere for any length of time. For these Clans would surely eliminate his forces as easily as they have been shown

to eliminate ours. If he is instead intending to muster his forces to bring them to our aid against a common foe, then we have indeed misjudged him on this matter, for though his forces are not as strong as ours, they would be a valuable aid against a common adversary.

Q: It is widely believed that if Federated Commonwealth House Troops enter the Draconis Combine, the Coordinator and the old-style regiments will attack them, assuming them to be invaders. What is your reaction to this?

A: The old school would think that. I would say that the Coordinator would have to view them with guarded suspicion, to have them watched. If Federated Commonwealth forces were to enter our system to attack us, they would surely die, either by our hands or by the Clans' attack. The Prince of the Federated Commonwealth may be a sneaky dog, but he is not wasteful of his troops.

Q: Would it not be a volatile situation to have regular

Incoming!

Scene: The Defence Coordination Center, Luthien

Gunji-no Kanrei Theodore Kurita, his son Hohiro, Hohiro's aide Shin Yodama, and Narimasa Asano, leader of the elite Genyosha, are present. Yodama is at a communications console.

One of the ComTechs calls "I have multiple JumpShip contacts in-system, within the orbit of our farthest moon!"

Another Tech cries out, "Confirmed! Fighters scrambling on the Orientalis moon base! Expect visual confirmation in two-zero minutes!"

"I have deployment! Multiple DropShips with fighter screens!"

Yodama begins working at his controls. A three dimensional hologram of Luthien and its system materializes above the briefing table. The JumpShips are shown at a pirate JumpPoint. As the focus narrows in on the DropShips and their escort, you hear Yodama's voice explaining that this is Inner Sphere equipment, not Clans.

A Tech breaks in, estimating eleven hours to landing.

Asano identifies the ship classes, Union and Overlord primarily. "Perhaps as many as seven regimental combat teams!"

"Unconfirmed correlations with ships we know!" says Yodama. "Shall I put them on screen?" As the ship IDs with their high-percentage probabilities pop onscreen, they are read aloud with shock. "*Fitzlyon, Chieftan, Lugh, Manannan Mac Lir?* These are the ships of the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons!"

Suddenly on the hold appears the face of Colonel Jaime Wolf. "*Konban-wa, Kurita Theodore-sama!* We request permission to land. Hanse Davion sent us a report that you would soon have a fight on your hands. How could we let you keep all the fun for yourself?"

FedCom troops as allies?

A: Indeed it would be a volatile situation. But given the situation we now face against the Clans, with five BattleMech regiments against an unknown number of Clans, we are already between the proverbial rock and hard place. With the accuracy and effectiveness that has already been demonstrated against the outer worlds, the Clans may only have to match half our numbers to be successful on Luthien. Or have you so soon forgotten your own holovid of one of our Warhammers being cut to pieces by a Clan 'Mech that failed to set off a fifty-ton setting on a vibrabomb? One that had to be 45 tons or less?

Q: I am now showing you a vid which will be released across the Combine tomorrow for your comment. *(see box inset left)*

A: *(speechless for a moment, then speaks quietly)* That is the typical attitude of the Wolf's Dragoons, and of the Kell Hounds. If they truly wish to assist us, then their presence is welcome. This...This...Of course. Perhaps one of the reasons we have been beaten back so handily is that we have been following such conventional methods and tactics. What better way for Hanse Davion to assist us, should he choose to assist us, than by sending his most unconventional mercenaries? Perhaps unorthodoxy is the answer, is our key to fending off the Clans.

Don't you see, neither we nor the FedCom want their troops within our borders! But these are mercenaries. *(Laughs)* Therefore, they are technically not his troops! The Fox is playing the technical angles again, as he has always done. He will not allow his own forces in because of the long-standing animosities that may arise between our troops. But mercenaries, what do they know of borders? They live to fight for the highest bidder. The Federated Commonwealth has always relied rather heavily on mercenaries to defend their borders while they used their main forces for attack.

Q: How do you recommend that the people of Luthien receive the Kell Hounds and the Dragoons?

A: Listen to their ideas, follow from their methods; understand and adapt as necessary. Now is the time for us to learn flexibility from those who are masters of it.

Luthien Attacked

*January 5, 3052: Imperial City, Luthien, Draconis
Combine Information Office*

At 0830 hours today, the battle for Luthien began. Further communiques will be issued as...and if...we are able.

Q: Until I showed you this certified vid, what chance did you think we had to keep Luthien from falling to the Clans?

A: In all honesty? Next to none. We are massively outnumbered. They have far superior equipment. And they seem to know our tactics like the back of their hands.

Q: And now that we have these reinforcements?

A: The only chance that one may have from superiority in most areas may be a change in tactics. This much we have learned from our numerous engagements against the Federated Commonwealth, with their striking when and where we least expected it. Prince Hanse's forces have shown us time and again that small numbers of poorly equipped forces can defeat a numerically and technologically superior opponent through use of unconventional tactics. Due to the often numerical and technological superiority that the Draconis Combine has enjoyed over the centuries, our command structure has neglected to evolve tactically, deeming such changes unnecessary. Now our positions are reversed; the Clans have superiority, and we must turn to those who have always fought from the other perspective.

Q: Do you believe that this reinforcement will make a difference to the defense of Luthien?

A: If they are willing to instruct, and we are willing to listen, then we stand a chance. Otherwise, the whole of the Inner Sphere is doomed.

News Flash

January 5, 3052, was a day of catastrophes; in addition to the attack on Luthien, here is what was happening:

Kai Allard-Liao Plunges to Death

January 5, 3052: Alyina, Federated Commonwealth

They were the two best MechWarriors of their generation. Growing up in proud MechWarrior families, they had a chance to learn early, and to polish their skills against the best of the best. Victor Steiner Davion was practicing against cadets from NAIS and The Nagelring when he was 13 years old. Kai Allard-Liao fought simulator battles against his father, a former Solaris Champion, and his mother, one of the prime MechWarriors of House Liao in her generation.

They were the two best MechWarriors of their generation. During their first cadet year together at NAIS, before Prince Victor transferred to the Nagelring, they outfought their classmates, and each succeeded in outfighting instructors. Their simulator battles ended in a draw two times in three.

They were very different men. Prince Victor has been encouraged to assess his abilities and flaws honestly. During a press conference in 3051, he explained, "I'm better at strategic-level thinking, but in BattleMech combat, Kai is

a genius. He has a gift which I doubt even his father in his heyday could have matched, as if he had been bred for it."

Kai didn't think as well of his own abilities. Upon leaving NAIS, cadets are asked to rate themselves. He rated himself as category 'fair', only one step above 'poor'. It seems that he had been measuring himself against his parents and their friends since he was a youth. He thought of Victor as a far better warrior than himself.

The two men, who could have been rivals for a crown only nature can confer, instead became loyal friends. During the long wait on Alyina, knowing that this prime planet must be attacked yet never knowing when, the friends celebrated Christmas together. It was their last.

In a fight today with the Jade Falcons, Kai Allard-Liao gave his life to save Prince Victor. Near the shores of Mar Negro, two stars of Jade Falcon 'Mechs trapped Prince Victor's Command Lance. As elements of the lance retreated, the four remaining Jade Falcon 'Mechs concentrated fire on Prince Victor's Daishi. Kai Allard-Liao, leading

the Fire Lance, attacked the Clanners from the rear to give the Prince time to retreat. During the resultant chaos, Kai's Centurion, the famous Yen-lo-Wang, wrestled with a Hagetaka at the edge of a high cliff. The edge of the cliff broke off and both 'Mechs fell into kilometer-deep water. Both transponder beacons cut off when they hit the water.

Prince Victor was successfully evacuated.

No statement from Prince Victor is available at this time.

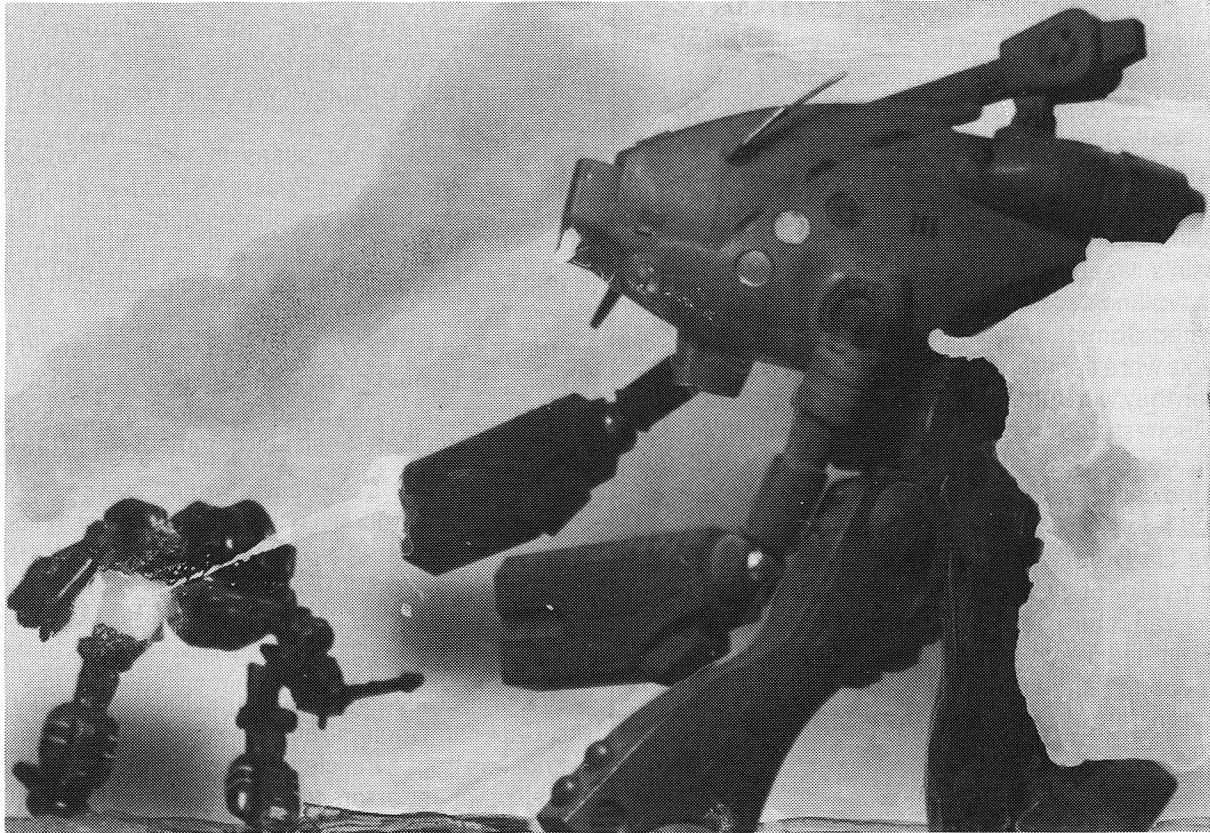
Archon-Princess Melissa Steiner Davion sent a priority message to the surviving sisters and young brother of Kai Allard-Liao. The message reads, "It is some consolation to realize that your parents never knew of the death of your beloved brother, nor the loss of Yen-lo-Wang. Neither did Kai know of the dastardly assassination of your parents. The two of them would certainly have chosen to die together if they'd had the choice. We grieve with you in your losses."

On Left: Archer & Crusader from 10th Lyran Guard on patrol near Kiev, Alyina



Opposite page: Clans vs Fremen, Satalice, November 3051

News Flash



Ragnar Magnusson Lost

January 5, 3052: Satalice, Free Republic of Rasalhague

Satalice fell today after two months of bitter fighting. This planet high in tectonic activity, with its mountain ranges and chains of volcanoes, opposed the attacking Wolf Clan forces with determination.

Satalice used what has been termed the 'Bandit Defense', scattering the defenders in company-sized units to utilize hidden supply and ammo caches in order to attack isolated stars of attackers. When Clan troops are searching an area, they tend to deploy into an irregular 'star-skirmish' line, with stars attacking in parallel as they move forward. The stars maintain radio contact, but are too widely separated for visual, especially in areas like Satalice's thermal plains and swamps. The 'Bandits' fall on isolated stars, taking them out quickly and decisively. Where iron content or mountainous terrain interrupt radio contact, as in the uplands of Satalice, this strategy is extremely effective, cutting down star after star without a single warning passing between endangered units.

Satalice is no easy fighting ground. "Steam sprouts from the ground, see, and then before you can stabilize the heat in your legs, the steam has frozen on your lenses and viewscreens," grumbled a wounded MechWarrior evacuated from the Doomfighters mercenary company. "I/R is non-existent; footing's uneven; visual's gone to — Look, just say it's an unhandy place to fight and leave me alone with my aching head, will ya!"

Ragnar Magnusson, despite his youth, was Clan Tactics Resource Officer for the world. He was a bold and innovative thinker, particularly after he returned from an eight-month training course on Wolf's Dragoons' world, Outreach.

Magnusson, son of the Elected Prince of Rasalhague, was an Ostsol pilot with a Drakon Company which fought in the west wing of the attempted flanking action at Blue Lava Fields. Reports indicate that his 'Mech' was destroyed by a unit of the 'Wolf Spiders'. His body was not found, leading to speculation that the courageous young warrior is alive in enemy hands. The Wolf Clan has been rumored to treat enemies less savagely than the other known Clans.

News Flash

Disaster on New Avalon

January 5, 3052: Consulate of the St Ives Compact, New Avalon, Federated Commonwealth

Lt Commander Gaylon Knox reporting

As night settled on the capitol of the Federated Commonwealth this evening, another dark chapter was added to the story of the Successor States.

Sources inside the St Ives Consulate have confirmed that an assassin's laser has claimed the lives of Duchess Candace Liao and her consort, Minister of Information for the Federated Commonwealth Justin Allard.

The couple were apparently getting ready for a diplomatic dinner when they were attacked. The assassin first shot and killed the Duchess and then fatally wounded Minister Allard. Before his demise, Minister Allard managed to kill the assassin and call for assistance, but it was too late to save the beloved rulers of the St Ives Compact.

Tormana Liao, brother to Duchess Candace, has been appointed regent of St Ives until the heir, now Duke Kai Allard-Liao, can return from the Alyina System where he is stationed with the Tenth Lyran Guard, fighting Clan Jade Falcon for control of the system.

A statement from First Prince Hanse Davion is said to be forthcoming.

Thugee Assassin Was a Sleeper

January 6, 3052: New Avalon, Federated Commonwealth

Lt Commander Gaylon Knox reporting

In a prepared statement, the First Prince of the Federated Commonwealth gave details of the brutal assassination which claimed the lives of Duchess Candace Liao and Minister Justin Allard last evening in their suite at the St Ives Consulate.

The First Prince stated that the assassin was an apparent agent the the service of Chancellor Romano Liao, ruler of the Capellan Confederation and sister to the late Duchess Candace Liao.

The man, whose name is being withheld, lived in the Sarna March of the Federated Suns on the planet Shipka, but had recently relocated to New Avalon and changed his citizenship.

The assassin secreted himself in a closet in the bedchamber of the Duchess, after bypassing the security systems of the Consulate. There he awaited his victims. The assassin fired two shots. The first killed the Duchess instantly and the second mortally wounded Minister Allard.

Minister Allard, a former Solaris Champion, responded out of reflex. He fired a single shot at his murderer, killing the assassin. The events that followed are only speculation, but it appears that the minister was able to sound the fire alarm before his demise.

When asked if the assassin was a member of the Thuggee cult, the First Prince responded with, "No Comment!" Speculation by various insiders points to the repression of the Thuggee cult on Highspire (See BattleTechnology #13) as a possible added motivation for the slayings.

Prince Davion also stated that reprisals would be forthcoming. He would give no details on the matter.

As of yet, there has been no word from Duke Kai Allard-Liao, nor have there been any comments from the Capellan Confederation.

Chancellor Romano Gloats

Sian, January 6, 3052

In a prepared statement issued today, the Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation rejoiced, "The act of a single patriot has begun the cleansing of the blood of House Liao. Let all other imposters tremble. The mercy of the Capellan Crown is exhausted. Now its vengeance begins."

The Chancellor graciously allowed a few questions as follows.

Q: Yes, Ma'am, what exactly was your reasoning for ordering the assassination of your sister?

A: The longer she lived, the longer she would be bearing whelps to threaten the stable and orderly succession of the Capellan Confederation. In addition, she and her brood supported Hanse Davion's false war, which is a ploy to divert the resources of his rivals against an enemy which does not threaten them.

Q: I see. So you believe therefore that there was no true purpose behind your sister's support of the effort against the Clans invasion?

A: Certainly there was a true purpose. Her purpose was to divert attention away from the illegitimacy of her St Ives separatists and toward a manufactured 'common enemy'. I know for a fact that her husband tricked her into supporting Hanse Davion with Capellan lives.

Q: But, was it not correct that originally your sister was designated the heir to the Capellan Confederation and she resigned in order to limit herself to looking after St Ives?

A: Originally, my father designated Candace the heir *pro*

News Flash

tempore, until he could see which of us children would grow up to be worthy of his title. During the Fourth Succession War, my qualifications showed themselves as outstanding. Candace had lost her chance and therefore decided to flee with her paramour.

Q: But, didn't she leave the system initially because you had assigned death squads to hunt her down?

A: It was not I, but the Maskirova, our loyal intelligence service, that made such a determination. (Ed Note: The Maskirova at that time was headed by Tsen Shang, Romano's long-time lover). Candace had proved herself unable to maintain a standard of behavior suitable to the head of our house.

Q: And what, pray tell, was that standard of behavior which she had violated?

A: In beginning an affair with Justin Allard, she was aiding and consorting with an enemy agent. I had clearly shown her several times that he was an enemy. After that, I had to allow her to set her own path. Additionally in 3013, she had an affair with Jaime Wolf. (Ed Note: *In a youthful indiscretion that embarrassed them both in later years, the young Duchess Candace made an offer to Colonel Wolf and pursued him with such vigor that the Dragoons left the employ of House Liao.*) I am convinced that it was by her persuasion that he set up that elaborate farce on Outreach. Wolf's agents Kai Allard-Liao and Ragnar Magnusson attempted to cast doubt on the military ability of my genius son, Sun Tsu! They are clearly a pack of madmen and traitors!

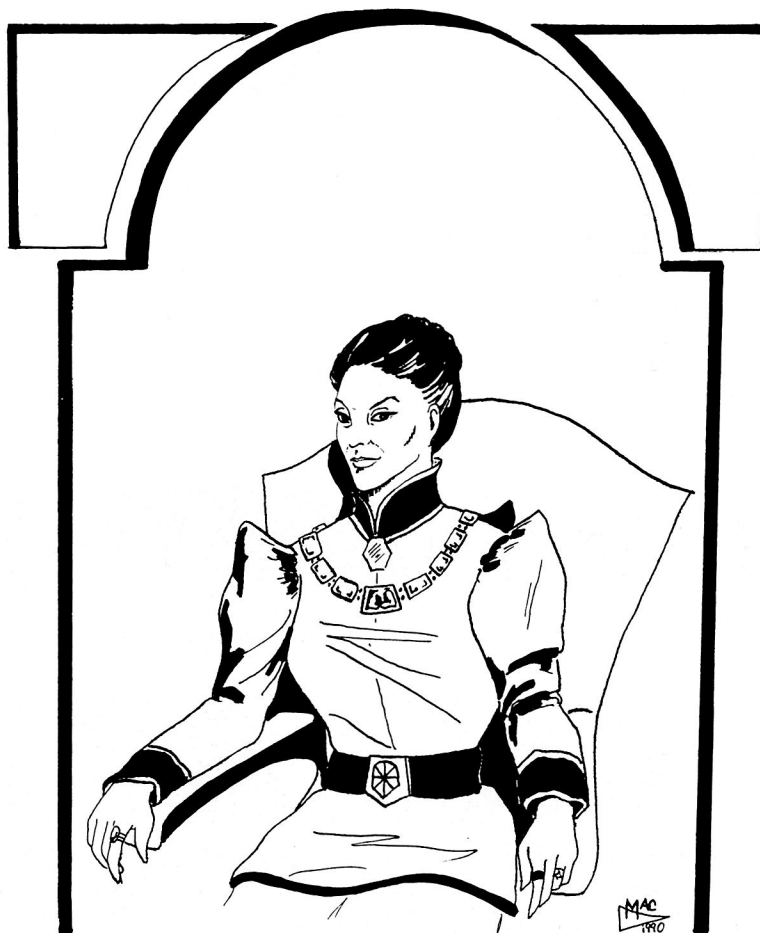
Q: That being the case, referring to the death squads, had you not received information before that the Duchess and her consort had been assassinated? What source of information have you this time that the assassination has been successful?

A: A priority message was brought to me this morning by Precentor Sian of ComStar, the head of ComStar within the Capellan Confederation. The message had been dispatched by Precentor New Avalon and sent with ComStar's utmost priority. The transmission was Precentor-to-Precentor; the two individuals are personally known to each other. An unimpeachable source, I'm certain you'll agree.

Q: And what were your sources of information the other times you had received reports that your sister had been killed?

A: Coded messages through various sources which I shall not reveal at this time — Fools, all of them. At least members of the Thuggee cult, with which I, of course, have no connection, choose to die if they are unsuccessful at their holy mission.

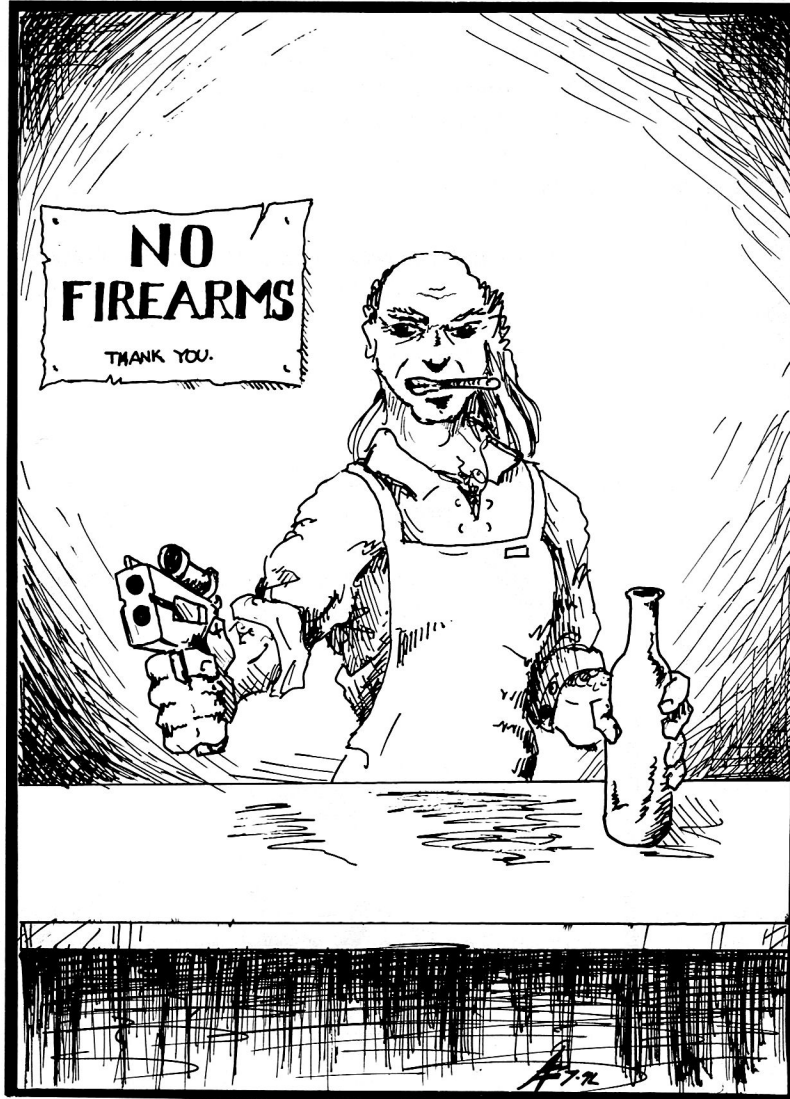
Chancellor Romano Liao, Coronation Portrait



INTERSECTING

LINES

Part 1



A Tale of the Cobalt Coil

The times are unbalanced. Several factors in our lives which we thought were set have had to change. BattleTechnology tries not to run serial stories, but this climactic episode in the history of our favorite bar was just too good to pass up. For those of you who like to save all the parts of a serial before you begin to read it, be warned; this is part one of three.

bar. It seemed like I'd just been there a few hours before. I had. I switched the sign on, unlocked the doors, and fixed a pot of street-lethal coffee, figuring it was going to be a long day. It was.

The morning passed quickly. Tannian dropped off the latest set of over-run newzes and 'zines on her way to work. I checked for updates on the invasion. The Clans were still

That's the thing about truly bad days, they never let you know how bad they're going to be until it's too late. I'm not talking about bad days, the ones that start with the fritzing coffee maker burning your last packet of Steiner Triple Java, and then get steadily worse. No. Truly, awesomely bad days always blindsides you with something monumental that makes you sure you're on some cosmic hit list. This day was a perfect example.

It started out innocently enough. Lenth called me early to say he couldn't make his shift. Since I'm chief bartender down at the Cobalt Coil, that odd little bar on the backwater planet of Solaris, the task of filling in fell to me. But that wasn't too bad. Day shift was always light, 'cept for the lunch crowd, and we have pre-packs from a few local restaurants for them so there's no cooking. I figured I'd have time to balance the receipts, maybe run the weekly orders, and not have to stay late that night. What could go wrong?

I threw on some clothes, slipped my gun into a back holster, then hurried down to open the

quiet, though I suspected that wouldn't last. The beer delivery arrived, then the lunch rush showed up and things got busy for a couple of hours. The latest arena standings were out, so I got embroiled in a long discussion about the relative strengths of 'Mechs and those who fought in them. People came, talked, ate and drank, then left, promising to return. The Coil's like that. Of all the things I've ever been part of in my life, I think I'm proudest of the Coil. I wonder if it's as unique as I think it is. And I wonder if the Inner Sphere will be a darker place once it's gone.

Sarah and I were discussing the latest NewTech coming onto the market and how that might help against the Clans. Since the night she told her first story, Sarah had become a regular at the Coil. She'd found a job Teching at one of the arenas, and had paid off most of the money she'd borrowed. (Some of us advanced her the cash for reconstructive surgery on her right hand. With the new myomer implants, she now had a grip that could pulverize brick). We were just getting started with trashing Successor House military doctrines when Kio Toner walked in, sat down, and politely asked for a draft beer. I filled a mug, took his money, and tactfully showed my admiration of the elaborate tattoos that showed on his wrists as he lifted his drink. The tattoos were a complex intertwining of flowers and waves that I didn't understand. They told something of Kio's life, sort of an illustrated history preserved on his body. Sarah's eyes opened with surprise, and the muscles along her jaw clenched once she noticed the marks. I saw her flinch towards her sidearm, and quietly pulled her further down the bar to explain things. Being from the Combine, it's not surprising that she recognized Yakuza tattoos. You see, Kio's the bag man for the local Yaks. We pay him the monthly protection money.

Some of you may be shocked. Don't be. The Yaks have been part of the Inner Sphere since mankind left Terra. They had the most adaptable structure of all the criminal organizations from Old Terra and, as far as I know, they were the only one to reach the stars. They're organized along some sort of clan or family lines that make the Free Worlds League's political web look simple. The Yaks are intertwined with dozens of planetary governments and deeply entrenched in hundreds of interstellar companies. They've spread far beyond the limits of the Combine. Blake's blood, some think they're almost another, hidden Successor State in themselves. The upshot is that on a world like Solaris, you have to deal with the Yaks. The old lady paid them monthly; she grumbled, but she paid. They didn't ask for too much. Not my problem.

Kio never bothered the patrons, paid for his drink, was always polite, and collected the money without comment. His only affectation was the casual-seeming display of his tattoos. Since he was missing two fingers on his left hand, I figured he had messed up big at some point in his career.

Probably how he'd managed to wind up as a simple bag man on Solaris. Kio was all right for a gangster. Wish I could say the same for his boss.

Toma Sakuro was the *Oyabun* of the Neon Orchids, the local Yak clan, and *that* man could give mean lessons to a Dragon POW camp commandant. Ruthless, brutal, but graced with a serious case of megalomania, Toma ran the Orchids with the style of a paranoid bandit lord. The fact that he was a sadist and bully only helped. He got results. I figured the only reason he wasn't off running a major portion of the clan himself was that he hadn't gotten the chance. His masters knew he was dangerous, and kept him bottled up on Gameworld for their own safety. To make matters worse, he was a frustrated 'Mech pilot who'd washed out of the Combine military for incompetence. Not a nice man, in any respect.

Toma and I seldom crossed paths. A good thing, since he hated anyone from the Commonwealth and in particular, loathed ex-Lyrans military. And, for better or worse, I'm about the highest-ranked Lyrans expatriate on this dirtball world within his reach. I stayed out of his way and dodged his attempts to lure me into conflict. I've had more than enough war for anyone.

Kio finished his beer and asked for another. Along with it, I slipped him the month's envelope of C-bills. He bowed slightly and did me the honor of not opening it to check. After draining his beer, he quietly got up to leave. People called out to him as he climbed the stairs. He paused at the top, smiled and returned their greetings. To me, he looked happy—or at least, at peace. Then he opened the door and I set out the next round for the bar.

"Pleasant enough man." Sarah commented as the door swung shut, blocking sight of Kio.

The rip of submachine gun fire shattered the afternoon and the big window exploded in a spray of plastic shards. I went over the bar and hit the floor, not wanting to be trapped where I couldn't maneuver. Everyone was down, weapons drawn, looking at the entrance. I pulled my Viper, scuttled up the stairs and flattened alongside the door. From outside came the hum of an idling skimmer. With the barrel of my gun, I knocked open the door, then combat-rolled outside, right into one of those weird moments when time seems to slow down.

I was on the sidewalk, facing north towards the space port. Kio was sprawled about ten meters from me, his body nearly cut in half from close range fire. Blood splattered the cinder block wall behind him, forming stretched floral patterns that called to mind his tattoos. A black skimmer hovered beside him, dust rising around the plenum chamber. I saw someone duck through the vehicle door as I came up. With a whine of revving turbines, the skimmer sped toward me. I snapped off two shots, then leaped aside. The skimmer clipped the curb facing, threw sparks, and bore in. I rolled

across the pavement, knowing I was about to die. Then a brilliant flash lit the street as a laser bolt burned into the speeding vehicle. It swerved, and the wind of its passage buffeted me as it shot by. It cut around a corner in a g-turn that must have plastered the passengers against the sidewall. I stood and saw Sarah in the doorway, a KK 98 laser pistol in her hand. A half dozen other people were clustered behind her.

"Thought you might need some help," she said.

"I never turn down a well-intentioned lady, particularly one with heavy firepower." As I got up, pain lanced through my

and I picked two. I knew they were trustworthy (most of the regulars are) and that the receipts would balance tonight if I ever got the chance to check. This might be just the excuse Toma was looking for to fry me. Still, I wasn't going to just call Toma and tell him what happened. Kio deserved better.

As we started off, I glanced back. They were draping a monofilm sheet across Kio. I got a last look at his dead face before it vanished beneath the black plastic.

"I'll square it for you," I whispered, too low for Sarah to hear.

. . .

Toma lived on the east side of the central star port. It was a slum, one of the worst. Toma selected it for the anonymity it offered, then he blew that to frax and gone. He tore down the entire block and built something that looked like a high-tech version of an old Terran Japanese castle. No one ever ac-

cused Toma of being too subtle. At the front gate, a short, squat heavy-worlder so covered in armor he looked like a miniature 'Mech asked us our business. I knew he was looking for an excuse to shoot us into very small pieces. I didn't give him one.

"I'm a bartender down at the Cobalt Coil, sir. We're here to tell Mr. Sakuro that one of his people was robbed and killed outside our door."

Short-Dark-and-Ugly grinned, showing off a set of battered, betel nut-stained teeth.

"He'll want to see you," he said, making each word a taunt. "Go to the temple; Sakuro-sama will meet you there."

The courtyard was thickly planted with trees, which, considering what the city air's like, must have cost him a fortune to maintain. As I walked across, I saw that they were carefully planted in rows that formed good, defensible positions. The buildings, despite the fanciful designs, were made of state-of-the-art woven metal composites that a medium-sized BattleMech would have to strain to get through. This was a fortress set to defend someone who had powerful enemies — real or imagined. Since no one on Solaris was apt to tackle him, I figured it had to be his off-planet masters.

Just what this place needs, I thought, *a Yakuza blood feud!* Then Sarah pointed out something odd. Screened by a grove of trees, a few Techs were replacing the body panels of a skimmer. Beside the stripped-down body lay a stack of old, matte-black panels. Before I got a better look, we were at the temple where a half-dozen Yak enforcers with automatic rifles slung across their backs took charge. They patted us down, took Sarah's laser and my Viper, then led us into the temple. I tagged them as amateur toughs, more for show than for effect. They didn't even find the

'I'll square it for you,' I whispered

shin. I hobbled over to Kio. Street acrobatics and skimmer-dodging are for younger men than I.

He was deader than a month old glowstrip, his eyes open, a look of blank surprise etched on his face. I shut his eyelids so he wouldn't stare, then quickly searched him. Yeah, I should have left it for the planetary militia to take care of. Sure. They'd tack it up to 'Homicide by person or persons unknown', and let Toma handle it as he saw fit. Somehow, that didn't seem right.

I noticed at once that the protection money was missing. This was the last stop on Kio's monthly run, so we're talking about roughly 50,000 C-bills. It looked like someone dusted him for the cash. But if it was just a robbery, it was a well-planned one. They knew this was the end of his pick-up run, and they knew which day of the month to hit him. The day changed each month just to prevent this sort of thing. There are a lot of desperate people on this planet, some even crazy enough to rob and kill a Yak, thinking they could get off planet before the Yaks retaliated.

"Some one has to tell Toma." Sarah looked down at Kio's body. Her face was locked in an expressionless mask. I'd seen that look too many times before. It was the look of someone who wanted to care, but couldn't allow it. I wondered if I had it too.

"May as well be me; I won't send any friend of mine into that snake pit."

"Mind if I come along? I've heard you and Toma aren't exactly close friends."

I laughed without mirth.

"Watchdog, huh? Don't worry, I won't pick a fight." I stood and winced at the pain in my leg. "Let's walk. It's only a klick."

I turned to Suntroy and asked him to pull Lenth out of bed. A few of the regular people volunteered to watch the bar,

combat knife I keep strapped to my leg inside the boot.

The temple was another odd mix of styles. Holo's of 'Mechs topped bronze pedestals that were adorned with Japanese characters. A large statue of a bearded man in traditional samurai armor stood by the back wall, a naked katana in his hand. Wall screens showed 'Mech battles. In each, 'Mechs of House Kurita trashed opponents, mostly Lyran. Soft martial music sounded from hidden speakers and shifting red-orange light gave the room an other-worldly feel.

"Hachiman," Sarah shivered, pointing at the statue, "the ancient Japanese God of War."

"Yes. My patron," Toma said as he entered from a side door.

I'd seen him before and still wasn't impressed. For a man who wielded so much power, Toma cut a disappointing figure. He was short and squat; with bulging eyes, a wide mouth, and sagging jowls. His hairline was receding and his sparse, black mustache was lost against his dark skin, making his upper lip look dirty. You'd think he resembled an over-sized toad stuffed into a kimono until you looked into his eyes and saw only cold madness. Then you realized what you were dealing with. I knew I had to play the whole scene very carefully. Toma often killed bringers of bad news. I didn't think he and Kio were close, but you never knew what might set Toma off. He was crazy, though the madness was primarily focused on his mania for 'Mechs. Toma sometimes braved the arenas. He always went in backed by his three lieutenants, and never fought when he didn't have a substantial advantage. So far, he hadn't lost.

I bowed, and he returned the gesture with the minimum possible courtesy.

"Speak!" His voice was thick with contempt. I ignored the jab, determined not to be drawn into conflict.

"One of your men, Kio Tonera, was killed and robbed outside the Coil. We saw the vehicle the killers escaped in."

Toma dismissed my words with a negligent wave of his hand.

"I will find the black skimmer you speak of." His lips twisted into a condescending smile. "The Neon Orchid will take its revenge. Do not worry; I do not think you are involved. Considering your war record, I doubt you capable of such bravery."

For an instant, I felt a wash of white-hot anger at this tin-plated swaggering crook washed through my mind. I fought it back, knowing it was what Toma hoped for. By now, you'd think I'd be used to it. I'd stood courtmartial without saying a word; there was no way this chunk of human refuse was going to force me into doing something stupid.

"By your leave, we go," I said as I turned. Then the retros ignited in my mind. How did he know the killer used a black skimmer?

"On the skimmer outside, did you spot the laser burn on

the frame?" Sarah's whispered words confirmed my suspicion and it all fell into place. Fury overwhelmed my good sense. Anger heated my face as I spun back towards Toma. It came out in a single burst, like a salvo of autocannon fire. I never stopped to think of what I was doing. Kio had been one of us. And in the Coil, we watch out for our own.

"It must take a lot of money to run this place and your pet 'Mech lance," I snapped, "so this is how you finance it, stealing profits in a way that your masters won't spot. How many of your own people have you killed in the years you've run the Orchids?"

Toma recoiled as if I'd slapped him.

"Your accusations mean nothing. Even if you leave alive, who would believe you, or act if they did?"

I saw him reach for a weapon in the folds of his kimono. Sarah swore under her breath and I cursed myself for bringing her into this. I thought of going for my knife and trying a throw before he butchered us. But I realized that even if I killed him, we'd never fight our way past his guards outside. A needler cleared the crimson fabric of his kimono; it looked as big as a laser cannon. Then I spotted a possible way out. I laughed.

"That's it, kill two weaponless people! So much for the famed Kurita honor! I thought even a failed Dragon warrior had some measure of *bushido*!"

My words cut like knives. Toma turned purple and for an aching moment, I thought I'd overplayed my hand, and he was going to kill us. So I did the only thing I could. I played on.

"If you kill me now, you'll never know if you could have beaten me in the only honorable way. With one of these!" I swept my arm through one of the hologram 'Mechs. Rainbow light scattered across the room from the worn stone in my old regimental ring. The look of insane fury ebbed from Toma's face. An evil smile of triumph swept it away.

"You have a 'Mech?" he asked.

I nodded.

"I always suspected as much." His eyes shone with pleasure. "Very well, in four weeks you will stand against me and my lance of master warriors."

Toma shouted a word in Japanese, and all the hologram displays winked out. A single large holo materialized in the room's center. It was a one-tenth scale model of Toma's lance of arena 'Mechs. In the front rank stood three machines: a gun-metal gray Griffin, a flat black Dervish, and a Wyvern painted with red and orange scales. Behind them stood Toma's Grand Dragon. An elaborate floral design said to mirror his body tattoos was painted across the 'Mech's armor. Each of the 'Mechs bore the Neon Orchid emblem on the torso.

Toma walked around the display, his chest puffed out with pride.

"I do not care what sort of machine you pilot," he snapped,

still admiring his creation. "We will destroy you. If you fail to show or attempt to tell anyone about your groundless suspicion, I will bomb the Coil. Go and prepare. I will sell the scrap from your 'Mech and raise a fitting monument to Kio!"

I stalked out. Sarah followed. She must have sensed my mood because she didn't say a thing. We collected our guns and kept going. The skimmer was gone, the only real evidence of Toma's treachery destroyed.

"Sorry about that crack on ex-Dracs and broken honor," I said once we were clear of Toma's fortress.

"It's history." She flexed her rebuilt hand. "I've learned to live with the consequences of my actions. What now?"

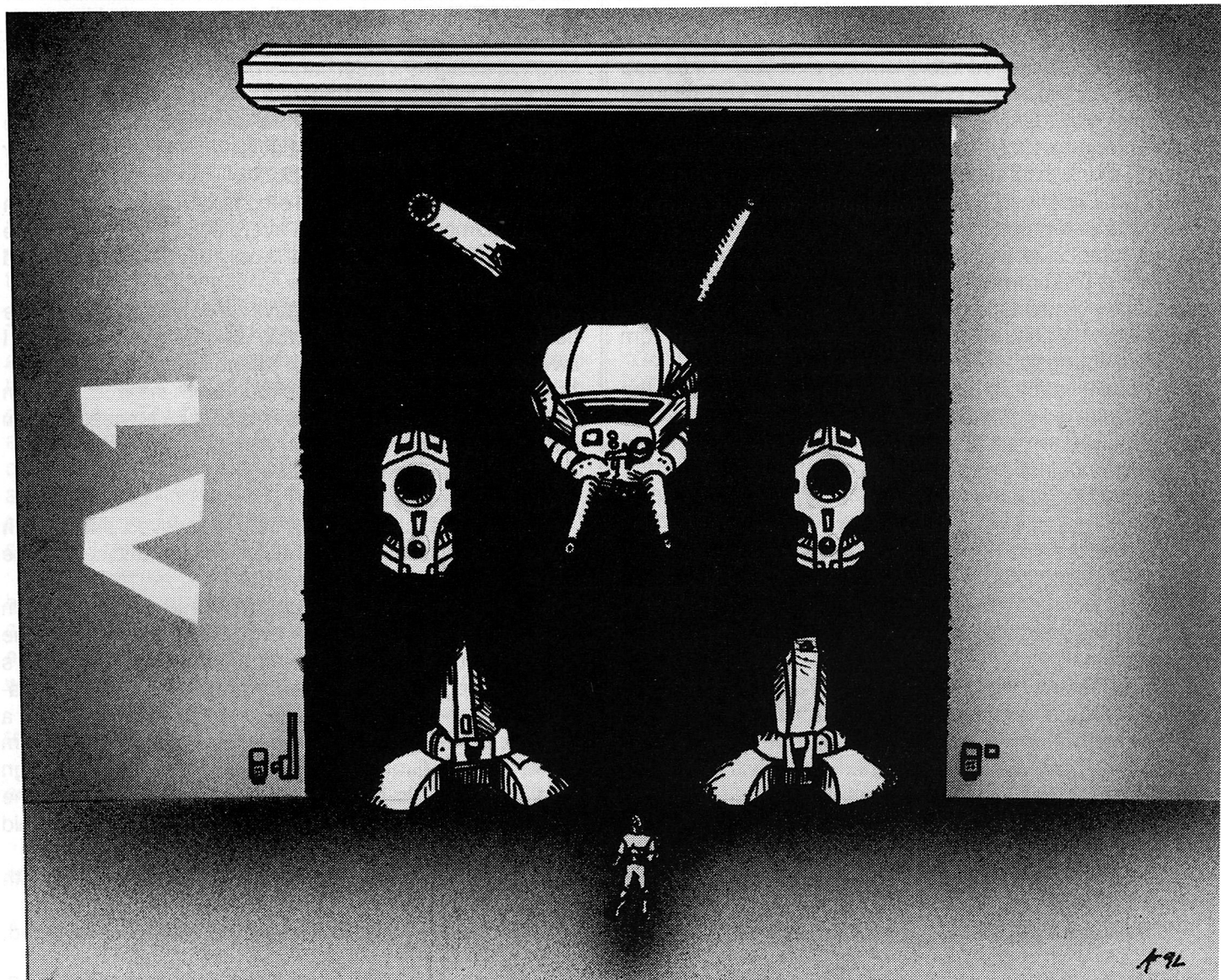
"I'll see you back at the Coil. I've got things to see to." I avoided looking at her.

She stopped and stared at me, her hazel eyes piercing my

heart. "You can't do this yourself." Her words were soft but emphatic.

"I can't ask anyone to share my grave," I countered. I knew what she wanted. She was waiting for me to ask for help from her and the rest. I couldn't. Not because of pride or any such foolishness. The Coil's special to me, as to its clientele, because of the people who make it that way, the ones who share their lives and dreams. I'm not really one of them. I'm a fixture, like the tables and taps. In a way, perhaps, I'm a catalyst for what happens, but the magic is beyond me.

I left Sarah and quickly headed down a narrow side street, walking without thinking, knowing my feet would guide me where I had to go. Two hours later, I was there, standing in front of a decrepit warehouse. It was a derelict district, the neighborhood nearly abandoned as the city grew away



from it. Weathered trash littered the alleyways and faded graffiti stained the decaying walls. The whole place felt tired, the buildings weighed down by broken, forgotten dreams and hopes. From my pocket, I took out an old key-card.

For a long while I stared at the slice of plastic in my hand. It brought back so many memories. I'd rented the building years ago, a century's lease for a handful of C-bills. I hadn't been back since. The information printed on the card was long worn away, the plastic itself discolored with age. One corner was broken off, taken by a bullet in a fight ten years ago. In a word, the card was old, and well past its useful life. As I slotted the card, I figured it must have lost its magnetic coding. I was wrong.

With the scream of un-oiled metal, the door rolled open. A few automatic lights flickered to life in the dusty interior as I stepped in to confront my past. It was crouched in the center of the cracked cement floor, its outline shrouded by crumbling plastic tarps tied with yellow cord. Huge and silent, *Apshai*, my BattleMech, waited for me. She'd last moved over a decade before when I piloted her into this tomb, swearing I'd never take her out again. *Apshai* had been in my family for centuries; her name came from an ancient god of insects. I always thought it appropriate: Marauders all look like some sort of giant, killing bugs, with their claw-like arm-mounted weapons pods and back-bending legs. When I was drummed out of the service, a sacrificial victim on the altar of political necessity, the family refused to take her back. They said it was because she was stained with my dishonor, and no proper warrior would choose to pilot her now. But I think the real reason was that *Apshai* was a token. By giving her to me, the family was letting me know I was forgiven in their eyes. They probably expected I'd join a mercenary company on the other side of the Inner Sphere to make a new name for myself. I couldn't. The memories of that last devastating battle were too vivid.

When I grounded on Solaris, I stored *Apshai* and planned to sell her some day. Some day never came. Now I had to ride her into battle again to defend something that mattered to me. I was sure I was going to die, but at least my friends would live.

I walked towards her; fragments of the decayed plastic crackled under my feet like dead leaves. Dust motes danced in the shafts of light. I set my hand on the pitted armor of one of her legs. *Apshai* was cold; her star-hot engine hadn't burned in years.

I had no illusions. I hadn't been inside a 'Mech since longer than most of my opponents had been alive. I'd be facing four opponents who, while not top-ranked gamesmen, knew their jobs and were in top flight machines. *Apshai* still bore the scars of that last desperate retreat from Severn. I wondered if the fusion plant would still fire up, or how many systems might have quietly died in the dark years she sat alone. It felt as if I'd betrayed her by letting her rest

forgotten for so long. My eyes stung with unshed tears.

"How will we fight, old girl?" A hard knot twisted my stomach as I reached for the access ladder.

"With some help from your friends," a voice echoed from the doorway.

I spun, reaching for my Viper, thinking that Toma had decided to take the easy way out. A crowd filled the door. I lowered my gun. Sarah was there, supporting a very sick-looking Lenth. I spotted Donovan with his ridiculous saber, and even the Toshiros, whom I'd thought had shipped offplanet. Most of the regulars from the Coil were here.

"I followed you," Sarah quickly explained, "and called the rest when I saw where you were going. They all came, I didn't even ask. We'll help."

"I've got a few ideas on how we can improve the output of your old Vlar engine," someone shouted from the back.

Ling MacCormack shouldered her way to the front.

"I think I can hustle a pair of pulse lasers to replace your old beam lasers," she said, adjusting her short cigar with her teeth. "Dust is bound to have pitted the focusing mirrors of those artifacts."

More voices chimed in, offering advice and hardware. They suddenly surged forward and swarmed over *Apshai*, shouting out to each other as they poked and examined the old war machine. I laughed, feeling hope swell within me. I was a part of the magic after all.

"Someone call Tsing Tao, and have a couple of kegs delivered; I'll track down food. Sarah, you're in charge of overall operations. Ling, handle any one who thinks they can do Tech work. Pherson, I'll trust you to deal with supply, and give you my account number; it's got some C-bills to work with. Lenth, get back to bed." I found myself yelling in my old parade ground voice. Years seemed to slough off my shoulders like spent heat shielding. Things got quiet and everybody looked to me. I shook my head and glowered.

"Move it, people, we've got to be combat ready in four weeks!"

With whoops and war-cries, they fell-to as Sarah, Pherson, and Ling shouted, trying to impose order on the friendly bedlam. I shook my head, chuckled, and quietly walked outside. I looked toward the setting sun. The red light burned my eyes, and I looked away. In that moment, I thought I saw a stocky figure in a Davion Home Guard Jacket by the doorway, but when I blinked, he was gone. I knew we had a lot of work to do. Even if we succeeded in resurrecting *Apshai* from her own ashes and I managed to kill Toma, I still might have to deal with his masters. But that was yet to come. That evening, I felt better than I had in years, even with the specter of Toma and his killers looming over me. My friends were with me, and I couldn't think of anything more worth dying for.

End of Part One

Achilles, The Clan Stopper

by Peter Siekierski, Lord Byston

Exploration within the Inner Sphere is no longer practiced; occasionally a new system is discovered through a mis-Jump. From time to time a system reappears which has been cut off – even lost – for several hundred years, even though it was present in the Inner Sphere all along. The planet Rourke (see map) is the most recent of these reappearances. In Star League days, Rourke was affiliated with House Steiner, which has expanded to surround the system on all sides: sovereignty and allegiance are being negotiated even as this is written. Rourke had the misfortune to rejoin the Inner Sphere just in time to be invaded by the Jade Falcon Clan. As you'll see, this Dukedom on Rourke had a few surprises of its own. For a further explanation of the planet's history, see the Technical Readout for the Achilles, which appears later in this issue.

By the calendar of the old Star League, the year was 3050. I'm still having trouble dealing with all that we have learned recently. My homeworld, Byston Well, had been isolated for just over two hundred years. My father told me that originally the Well had been a secret weapons testing facility during the late 2700's, and that most of the civilization here had been eradicated by orbital bombardment. Since we lost our only hyperpulse generator during the war, ComStar must have assumed that we were all dead. We'd continued experimentation and development with what resources we had remaining.

Just this year, we regained contact with the Inner Sphere as pirates began trying to raid my world for food and water, but the old BattleMechs that survived the bombardment were more than enough to repel them. The captured pirates filled us in on several gray areas in our history of the known universe...the Exodus, the Succession Wars, and the rise of the various noble Houses. By far the strangest tale was that of alien invaders from beyond the Outworlds (which they kept referring to as 'The Periphery') that crushed everything in their path with bizarre and futuristic weapons (and had

driven these pirates coreward in search of easier targets). We wondered about the pirates' sanity after hearing that story, but we were given a first hand opportunity to see these 'aliens' in action upon their invasion of Byston Well.

The attack began early one August morning. A farmer who lived not 70 km from our holding, The Well, reported the appearance of a DropShip and half a dozen or so BattleMechs on his land. The call was cut off, so we assumed pirates were attacking again, and prepared for the worst. I called for the vassals immediately, and within the hour we had assembled all of our world's heaviest fighting machines. Jason the Younger piloted a swift Commando. My brothers each had powerful 'Mechs: Douglas a heavy Warhammer, and Scott a Phoenix Hawk LAM. From nearby Kenningshire, Lady Caroline brought a wing of aerofighters; Sir Charles brought a massive 80-ton Awesome. The aged engineering vehicles left by the Earthwerks engineers dug trenches from which our 'Mechs could emerge. My post was deep within the armored Well, a fortress that once served as a staging ground for testing new Earthwerks hardware. It was here that I ran our country. From this mighty fortress we would make our stand. I reached across the control board, flicking switches and activating the computers that control The Well's defenses. All was in readiness – now the enemy needed to do their part.

We had not long to wait. The Well's computers signalled the advance of three BattleMechs at speeds of nearly 100 kph. The targeting reticle clicked into place over my eye, giving me a readout of battle conditions. I trained The Well's main guns on the enemy and crossed my fingers as the computers accounted for wind speed and target velocity. There was a series of thunderous reports, followed seconds later by explosions on the monitor. Although damaged by the barrage, the attackers continued at breakneck speed. I activated the control cell's comlink to advise my cohorts on the situation. Jason was the first to answer.

"I'll go out an' kick their bloody bums, I will!" Before I could stop him, his Commando lurched out of its protective trench and onto my monitor. Just before he could release even a salvo of missiles, however, his 'Mech was peppered with laser and autocannon fire from the enemy. Such range I had not seen before! As Jason's Commando collapsed into wreckage, I again let fly with an artillery barrage. This time, one of the attackers exploded into a bright red fireball as the shells rained down upon him. His cohorts responded with a barrage that fell just short of The Well's armored walls.

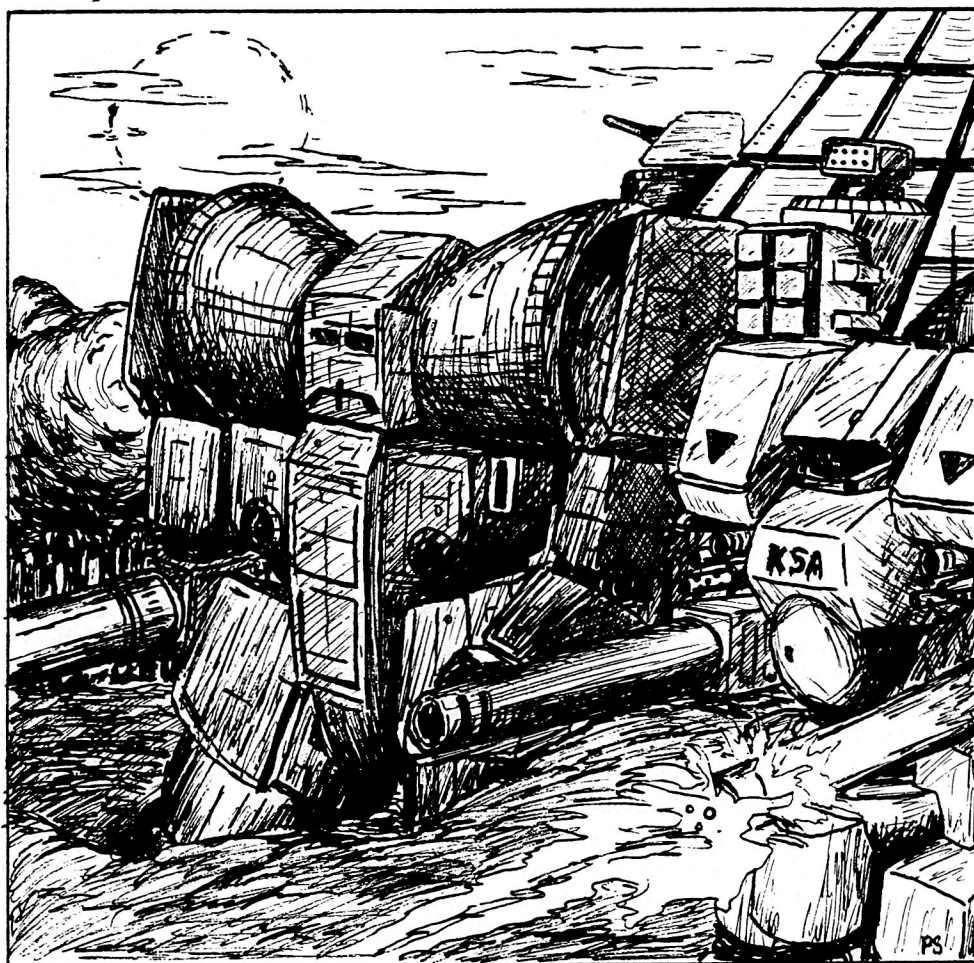
As the blasts edged nearer, I answered the comlink, to be greeted by the unfamiliar face of a tough soldier in a green uniform. "This planet now belongs to the Jade Falcons," he said, "and you will cease your attack or be destroyed." I proudly displayed my middle finger, then switched over to the emergency channel. "Men – and you too, Lady – we must crush this invasion or they will surely be back." My statement was greeted by a wild cheer and the roar of fusion-powered Aerospace fighters.

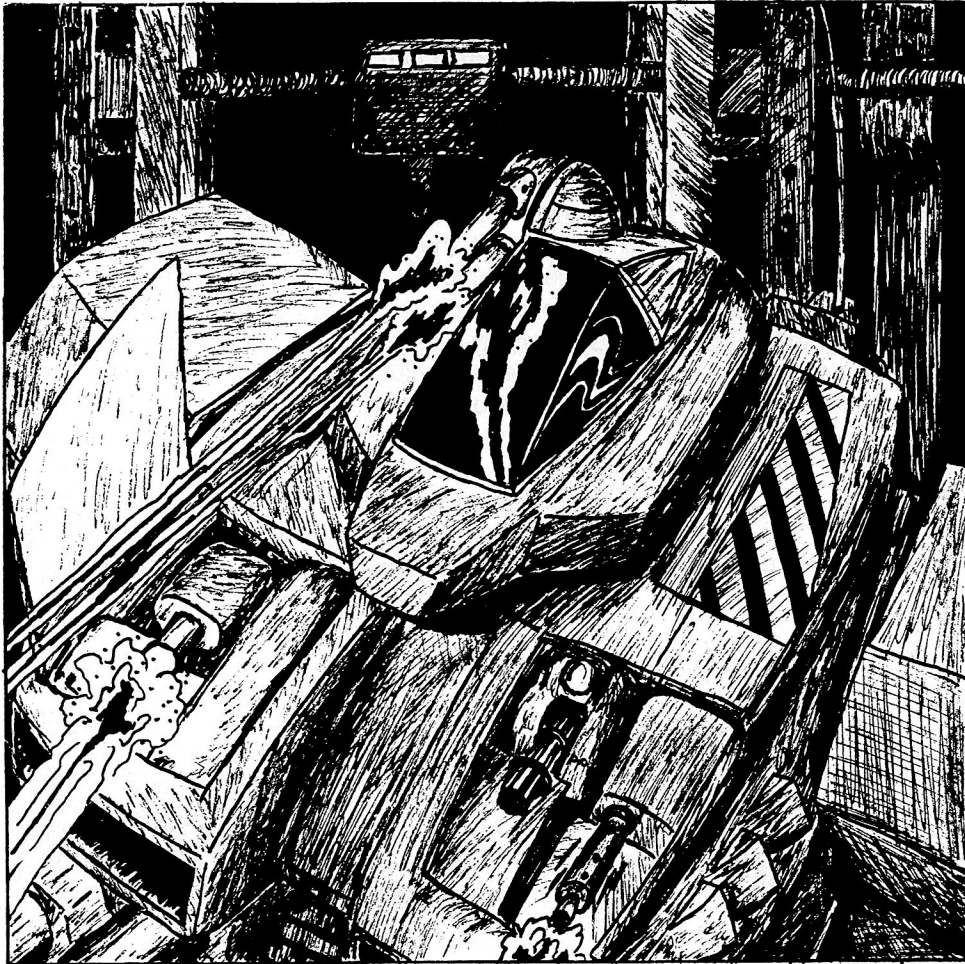
I watched with satisfaction as incendiary and explosive munitions rained down on our attackers, engulfing them in a small firestorm. Only two attackers emerged, damaged and flaming with Dragon's Breath™ gel. As they approached, I could feel The Well shudder as laser blasts and cannon fire assailed its hardened structure. I looked at the panel marked 'experimental combat system' and smiled. Although I was not sure what it would do, father used to speak highly of it. It was a last-ditch defense to be used under the threat of great danger, an experiment left from the earlier days which he had brought to successful operation...

A raging battle cry from my soldiers brought me around. Charles and Douglas rose from their trenches, belching fiery blue death at the Jade Falcons as only an Awesome and a Warhammer could. The attackers fell back from the sudden burst of firepower, limbs shorn from their bodies and torsos smouldering. Scott's LAM took to the air to perform a series of aerial drop kicks (known as DFA or 'Death From Above') on the nearest enemy 'Mech, ensuring that its pilot would not be available for later interrogation. What followed was a

complete shock. As he touched ground, he was assailed by five small metal robots!. They began to beat at his Phoenix Hawk, shooting at his cockpit and wrenching steel with their hands. A salvo of anti-'Mech missiles came from the wood below, and he quickly disappeared into it, trailing smoke. Second later, he burst from the wood, making a mad dash for the safety of The Well. There was a loud screech as his battered craft came to rest on the rooftop elevator pad. I hung my neurohelmet on the console and rushed to him. As I waded past the technicians and medics, I gasped in disbelief at the damage he had sustained, but that was not all. A robot soldier remained clenched to the fuselage, its body severely battered by the Phoenix Hawk's attempts at removing it. A human torso leaned out of the robot's body, coated in blood and a strange black goo. First the large man in green, and now this... perhaps they were not so alien after all...

Loudspeakers resounded with the voice of the Well's combat computer: "Invasion imminent — please return to your stations — invasion imminent — this is not a drill!"





Before I could even see if my brother was alive, I had to return to the master control cell. As I slipped on my neurohelmet, I could see that the situation was grim. Douglas and Charles were engaged in a PPC contest with two new attackers. Just as I was about to support them with the Well's own PPCs, the screen lit up with the images of robot soldiers – a score at least, just on the end of the defensive perimeter. As the local militia began shooting at them with support weapons, I punched all the arming buttons I could reach. The Well came alive, spewing laser and missile fire at the attackers, and making toothpicks out of the nearby trees. The two giant enemy 'Mechs approached, blazing green hellfire from bulky Marauder-style arms. Doug's Warhammer fell over in its trench. Charles lasted only long enough to disable the smaller of the two enemy 'Mechs (the one which I later learned is called a Loki). The other (which I now know as a Thor) shelled my weapons banks. I clutched my fists in frustration as the damage control lights for the Sniper cannons lit up. "This has gone far enough!" I

thought, pressing the large red button on the experimental panel.

The lights went out. I could feel the control cell rotating like the gun turrets of the old Terran Hegemony bombers, and it dropped like a stone into some sort of socket. The lights came back on, accompanied by the hum of a fusion reactor and the three-tone chime of my father's Hyper Operating System (HOS) software booting up. The control panel folded back to reveal a second set of controls and the monitors turned to running line displays – I was in the cockpit of my father's experimental BattleMech!

There was a jolt as the 'Mech moved on an elevator to the operations floor of the Well. The huge blast doors opened, revealing the light to day – and my opponents. I quickly grasped the controls. The words 'ACHILLES UNIT 01 ONLINE' appeared on the screen, and the huge 'Mech broke out of its pitifully weak maintenance gantry. My enemy struck me immediately

with a blast of hot plasma from his PPC. Reacting instinctively, I returned fire with the three weapons marked 'GAUSS RIFLES'. There was a series of three reports, and I watched in amazement as fat slugs of metal struck my opponent in his chest, knocking him off his feet. I moved in to engage him with my lasers, but my 'Mech's huge bulk moved only at a slow pace. I pressed the button on the control console marked 'CLOSE SUPPORT'. The Achilles's chest opened up, revealing lasers and anti-infantry machine guns. A new button lit up, labeled 'ANTI-MISSILE DEVICE'. I armed them all, and just in time, as my opponent rose. His PPC struck my left leg, and his cannon shot out a blast that I can describe only as something similar to a giant shotgun. He launched several missiles back at me, but a roaring antimissile system mounted in the Achilles's chest disintegrated half of them. My lasers blazed, scarring his arms and legs with glowing red cuts. Just as I was about to use the Gauss rifles again, his legs spewed hot gasses, lifting him high into the air. He set down

right in my face and unleashed a combination punch that seriously dented my torso armor. I fired the lasers and autoguns point blank, hoping to disorient him long enough to use the cannons. As his arm swung again, I instinctively rose my arm to block and then countered with a punch of my own.

As the Achilles's right arm swung up to greet his shoulder, I saw that it had no hand—just one huge cannon barrel. The extra mass of the gun must have really hurt him something fierce, because the missile pod on his left shoulder snapped off like the handle of a porcelain teacup. I pressed the Gauss Rifle button again, and this time my opponent was finished — or so I thought. One slug missed completely, but the other two hit home, tearing out his right arm and punching straight through his left torso. The Thor stepped back, shuddered like an epileptic, and spewed flames and shrapnel from the rear panels of its left torso armor, blowing off the attached arm in the process.

He slowly backed out the blast doors toward the safety of his DropShip. I turned on the ComLink to congratulate him on his effort to invade Byston Well — NOT*. Once again I was greeted by the man in the green uniform. "Greetings, Jade Falcon," said I. "Tell your superiors that Byston Well is too expensive to invade. Take your toy soldiers back to your ship and explain why you failed. Tell them that should they attack again, Achilles will be waiting."

That night we celebrated well. Jason had escaped death, using a camo suit to hide from the battle-armored infantry (which were later identified as 'Elementals'). Both Douglas and Charles would be able to repair their 'Mechs with the salvage we captured from the invaders. My brother had indeed survived, though he admitted jokingly that next time he "would look before he leapt." I showed them the building plans and diagrams that our father had hidden in the control cell. His message explained that if the existence of the Achilles had been known, the neighboring countries of our world, even our own allies, would have invaded us to gain it. We had already begun discussion of a planetary government, unified in defense, so that objection no longer held. The highlight of the night came as a breathless Tech burst into the Great Hall waving more papers.

"Commander!" he gasped. "I found these maps in the repair booth attached to the Achilles' maintenance gantry! They detail the location of several other Achilleses!"

"Achilles?" I asked, correcting the Tech's Latin. Lady Caroline gagged on a sip of wine. "This is going to be very interesting."

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*An old Terran expression which invalidates the remark just preceding it.

Ed note: like several of the Clans' early targets, Lord Byston confused the highly-armored 'Elementals', the Clans' version of infantry, with mini robots. BattleTechnology staffers were privileged to examine these masterpieces of parallel development before O5P technicians declared the Byston Well system off limits.

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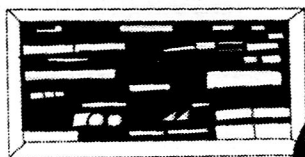
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The Secret of Kepler Station

A Scenario For MechWarrior 2

Kepler Station is not a glamorous post. It's a research station on a small planetoid, founded on a Star League Astronomical facility, orbiting the edge of the Bangor System near Brocchi's Cluster in the Draconis Combine. Kepler Station is positioned two days from the nadir Jump Point of the system; while Bangor III, the system's inhabited planet, is five days from the nadir Jump Point. The zenith Jump Point is only three days from Bangor III, but is six days from Kepler Station.

The station itself is above ground, in a domed environment. It originally had a crew of fifty, so there is plenty of room for the people here. The planetoid has a gravity of 0.2. Each of the larger rooms has airtight emergency doors. Several of the larger rooms are on a central ventilator system, with small inconspicuous grills near the floor. These grills are controlled by the same computer which closes the blast-tight doors. The main danger the station has faced over the years has been meteor showers; nevertheless, over 90% of the station was found undamaged and with constantly-freshened air.

There are two archaeologists on permanent duty there to examine any equipment found, and to cross-reference astronomical finds with the centuries-old data from the fragmentary memory core. The rest of the station's complement are the station commander, Senior Professor of Astronomy Nobu Muramasa from the Imperial Institute of Technology; his wife, Keiko; Assistant Professor Tadashi Matsumoto; and six graduate students who do the scutwork. Muramasa's nephew, *Tai-i* Kenichi Muramasa from the 1st Sword of Light regiment, returning to his company from convalescent leave on Bangor, has pulled strings to borrow a modified Mark VII Landing Craft to visit his uncle and aunt. His BattleMaster-K* is on board the ship.

As the scenario begins, *Tai-i* Muramasa has been on station since yesterday 'afternoon'. At 1930 hours, a dinner will be held to welcome this hero. It is now 1630 hours, and the station is on Greenwich Mean Time. Keiko, Sara, and Beryl have spent most of the day persuading the food synth to create delicacies...

Persons aboard the Station:

The Senior Professor is a non-player character. Tadashi, Reina Erikson, two of the graduate students, and the *Tai-i* MUST be player characters. The other characters may be NPCs.

NOTE: These are not beginning level characters. In all cases improvements for 'previous experience' have been made.

Senior Professor Nobu Muramasa (NPC)

In his late fifties, he has white hair and eyebrows. He is fussy in mannerism, pompous in appearance. Muramasa is a short man, with the classic features of his samurai ancestors. He dresses in a bureaucrat's uniform. He has a secret weakness – a bad heart limits him to a low-stress, low-gravity environment.

Attributes

BLD 2 (10+)
REF 4 (8+)
INT 4 (8+)
LRN 6 (6+)
CHA 5 (7+)

Characteristics

Athletic 11+
Physical 9+
Mental 7+
Social 10+

Skills

Advanced University Package

Administration 3 (4+)
CS/Astrophysics 6 (1+)
Computer 5 (2+)
Perception 4 (3+)
Security Systems 2 (5+)
Training 4 (6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped x2

Edge: 1

Keiko Muramasa

Now in her forties, with gray hair, she was once a beauty. Keiko's face shows the ravages of years of sheltering her husband from the world (and vice versa). Her field of interest is Star League history. She is a quiet person with an impish sense of humor – one that is seen in her response to events rather than being expressed verbally. Keiko will not wear classic formal dress on a space station, but her clothes somehow carry the feel of kimono and obi.

Attributes

BLD 3 (9+)
REF 4 (8+)
INT 6 (6+)
LRN 5 (7+)
CHA 5 (7+)

Characteristics

Athletic 10+
Physical 8+
Mental 9+
Social 7+

Skills

University Package

CS/SL History 4 (5+)
Computer 5 (4+)
Medtech 4 (5+)
Negotiation 3 (4+)
Perception 4 (5+)
Protocol 3 (4+)
Training 2 (5+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 1

Tadashi Matsumoto

An energetic black man in his late thirties and member of an old Kuritan noble family, he lacks a sense of humor; but he is a true scholar. He puts up with the Senior Professor's fussy mannerisms because the man is brilliant in his field

and Tadashi is still learning from him. Tadashi is usually seen carrying a reader or pile of printouts. To him, his work is his life. He exercises regularly but not enthusiastically, so he is reasonably fit.

Attributes

BLD 4 (8+)
REF 4 (8+)
INT 5 (7+)
LRN 5 (7+)
CHA 4 (8+)

Characteristics

Athletic 9+
Physical 8+
Mental 7+
Social 8+

Skills

University Package

Administration 3 (4+)
CS/Analysis 4 (3+)
CS/Astrophysics 4 (3+)
Computer 5 (2+)
Perception 4 (3+)
Training 2 (6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped x2

Edge: 1

The archaeologists are a couple, **Peter and Reina Li Erikson**.

Peter Erikson, 55, was directing a dig on Vega II as the young Assistant Professor of Archeology at the University of Radstadt when Rasalhague declared its independence. He chose to remain a Kuritan citizen, seeking new sponsorship for his work from the Albiero Prefecture chapter of the Order of Five Pillars. Peter is completely loyal to the O5P mysticism, serving as a lay member of the order. His faith, his work and his wife complete his existence; he has no curiosity or interest beyond them.

Attributes

BLD 3 (9+)
REF 3 (9+)
INT 5 (7+)
LRN 5 (7+)
CHA 4 (8+)

Characteristics

Athletic 11+
Physical 8+
Mental 7+
Social 8+

Skills

Advanced University Package

Administration 3 (4+)
Appraisal 2 (5+)
CS/Archaeology 5 (2+)
CS/Architecture 1 (6+)
Computer 5 (2+)
Medtech 1 (6+)
Perception 4 (3+)
Security Systems 3 (4+)
Training 1 (6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped x2

Edge: 1

Reina Li Erikson, 52, was a scout assigned to the 10th Legion of Vega. She retired fifteen years ago to pursue the archaeological career that lack of finances had forced her to abandon in her youth. Reina met her husband while spending one summer working on

a dig, and completed her education while working with him. Her doctorate is honorary, but well deserved. She writes both the scholarly reports for the University and the popular accounts of their joint works, which have ensured the Eriksons' financial security. Reina was an asset to her unit as a scout; and she has forgotten none of her training. In a combat situation, she will consider and suggest close-quarter fighting, booby traps, and diversionary tactics.

Attributes

BLD 4 (8+)
REF 5 (7+)
INT 6 (6+)
LRN 6 (6+)
CHA 3 (9+)

Characteristics

Athletic 9+
Physical 6+
Mental 6+
Social 8+

Skills

Academy Package

MOS: Scout

University Package

CS/Archaeology	2	(4+)
Climbing	1	(8+)
Disguise	1	(5+)
Drive/Conventional	1	(5+)
Medtech	1	(5+)
Perception	4	(2+)
Quickdraw	1	(5+)
Scrounge	2	(6+)
Small Arms	2	(4+)
Stealth	2	(4+)
Survival	2	(4+)
Tactics	1	(5+)
Tinker	2	(4+)

SP Weapons/Traps

Tracking	2	(4+)
Unarmed Combat	2	(7+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 2

The graduate students have all been chosen for their ability to get along in a limited environment; rather than neuroses, their quirks are traits of their individual personalities.

Bhajan Singh, 25, is a Sikh, wearing the turban of his religion with a light environmental suit. Born in space, he is the most used to a ship or station environment, and has more of the discipline required to live there of any of the party. He keeps to himself, but is always polite; though he is more friendly with the men of the party than with the women. Bhajan loves to pour over the data which accumulates, and to look for patterns and clues to the formation of planetary systems.

Attributes

BLD 4 (8+)
REF 5 (7+)
INT 5 (7+)
LRN 6 (6+)
CHA 5 (7+)

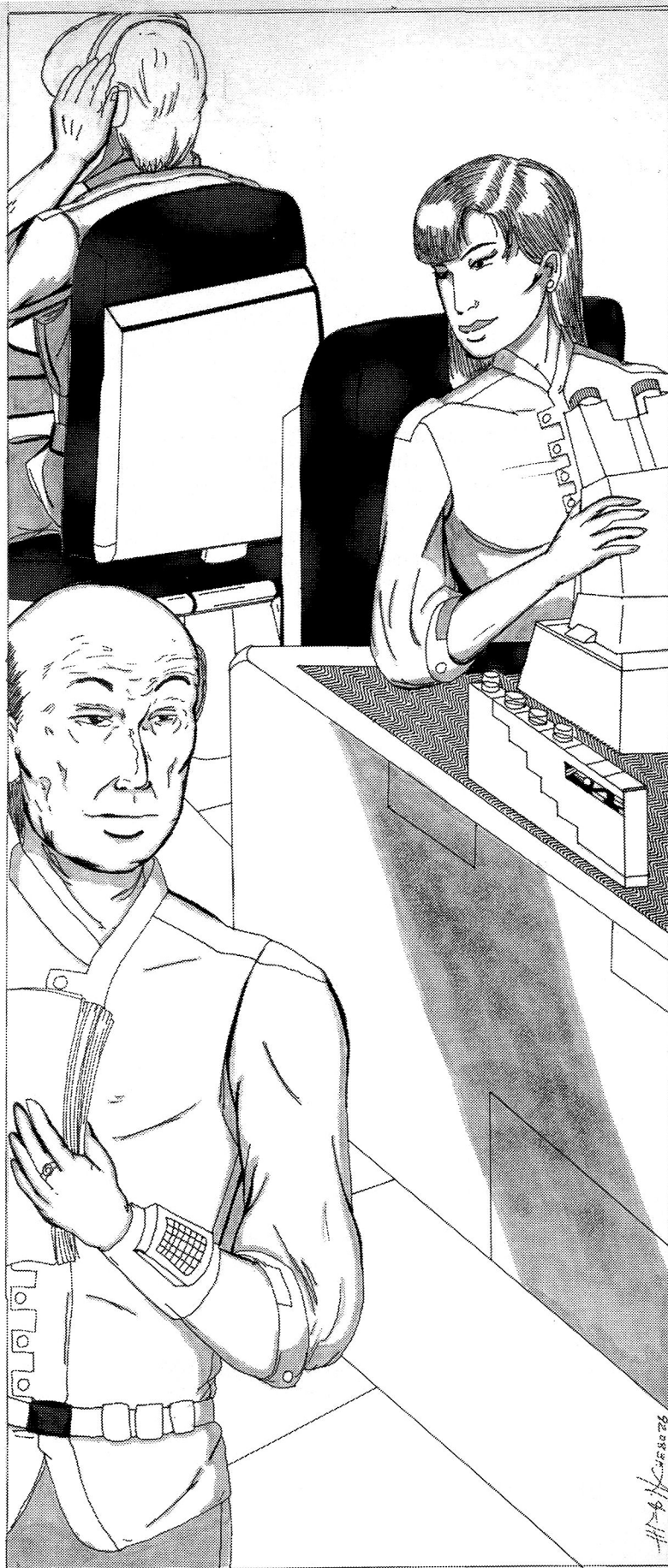
Characteristics

Athletic 9+
Physical 9+
Mental 7+
Social 8+

Skills

University Package

Appraisal 2 (5+)



CS/Astrophysics	2	(5+)
Communications/ Conventional	1	(6+)
Computer	2	(5+)
Gunnery/Spacecraft	2	(7+)
Navigation	2	(5+)
Negotiation	1	(7+)
Perception	2	(5+)
Piloting/Spacecraft	2	(7+)
Security Systems	1	(6+)
Scrounge	1	(7+)
Small Arms	2	(7+)
Training	2	(6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped
Ambidextrous

Edge: 1

Marlon Stone, 30, is a dramatic man. He is the outgoing sort of person who makes a humorous tale out of every small incident. His chief astronomical interest is stellar life cycles, while his main hobby is Irish poetry. With the ladies, he is flirtatious, and is friendly in a familiar way with all the men. He records long messages to his wife, who is back on Luthien awaiting their first child. Dark of hair and eye, he sports a small beard.

Attributes

BLD	4	(8+)
REF	4	(8+)
INT	5	(7+)
LRN	4	(7+)
CHA	6	(6+)

Skills

University Package		
Administration	1	(7+)
CS/Astronomy	2	(6+)
Computer	3	(5+)
Medtech	1	(7+)
Perception	3	(5+)
Security Systems	1	(7+)
Training	1	(6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped
Edge: 1

Characteristics

Athletic	10+
Physical	9+
Mental	8+
Social	7+

Tobias Darren looks like the popular image of a scholar. He is round-faced, seeming younger than his twenty seven years; and his mouse brown hair perpetually falls in his face. His current project is the collation of four centuries of photographs of the Andromeda galaxy. He is indeed absorbed in his work, always carrying photographs around with him. Tobias is something of a practical joker. His jokes are usually elaborate, painless, and anonymous. Bhajan Singh and Sara Nakamura know about his jokes; the others think him a colorless, meek sort of person.

Attributes

BLD	4	(8+)
REF	4	(8+)
INT	5	(7+)
LRN	4	(7+)
CHA	3	(9+)

Skills

University Package		
Administration	1	(7+)
CS/Astrophysics	2	(6+)
Computer	3	(5+)
Medtech	1	(7+)
Perception	4	(4+)
Security Systems	1	(7+)
Training	1	(9+)

Advantages: Well Equipped
Edge: 1

Characteristics

Athletic	10+
Physical	9+
Mental	8+
Social	10+

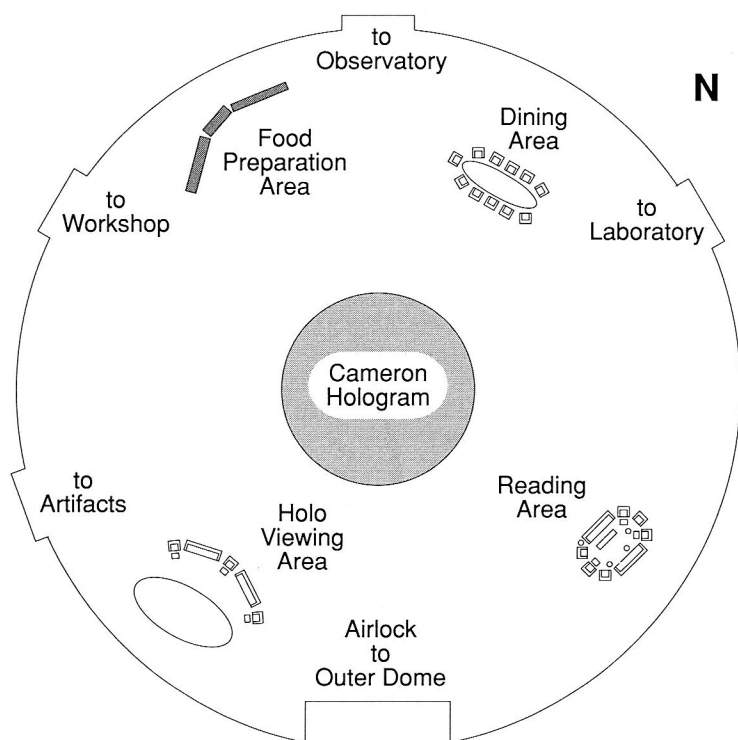
Ralph Alvarez is the best looking of the students. At 28, he is ambitious to publish and go on to the next stage of his career. He defers to the Senior Professor's vanity, and has succeeded in winning Muramasa's favor. His particular interest in astrophysics is the dynamics of solar wind phenomena. Ralph wears a small mustache, and clothes which show off his excellent musculature. He has published three monographs jointly with the Senior Professor.

Attributes

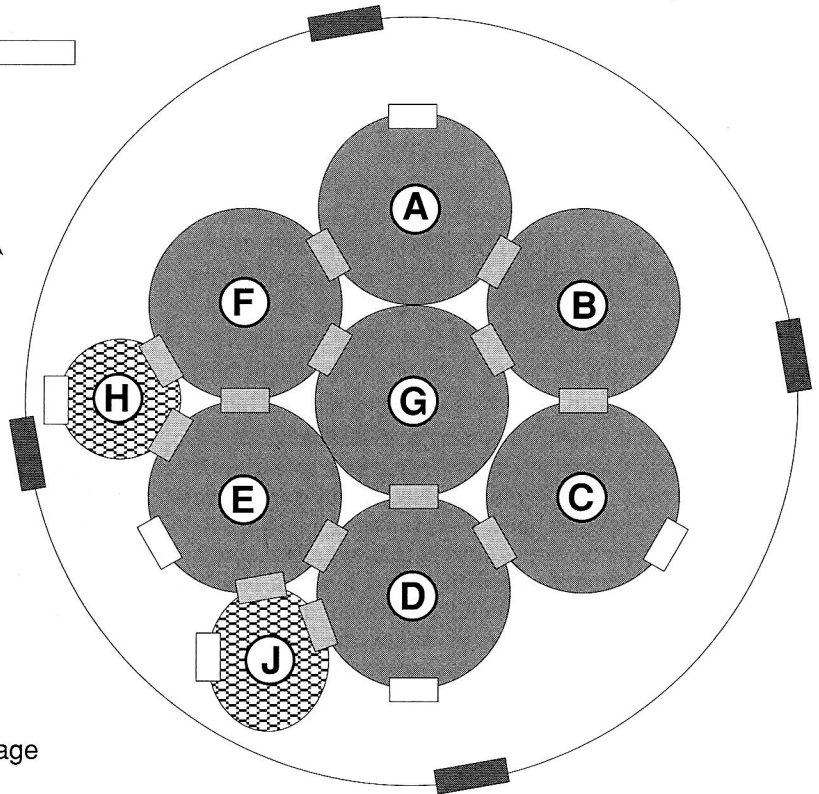
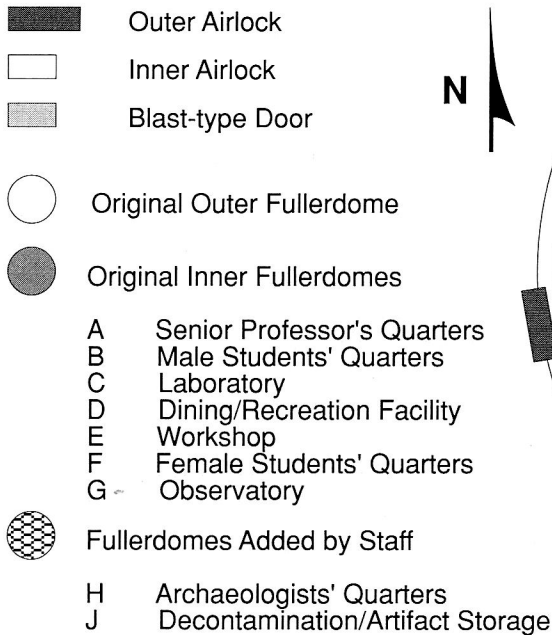
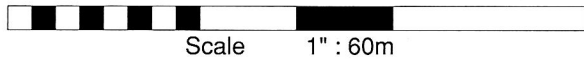
BLD	5	(7+)
REF	4	(8+)

Characteristics

Athletic	9+
Physical	8+



Scale 1" : 15m



INT 5 (7+)
LRN 4 (7+)
CHA 6 (6+)

Skills

University Package

Administration 1 (7+)
CS/Astrophysics 2 (6+)
Computer 3 (5+)
Medtech 1 (7+)
Perception 4 (4+)
Security Systems 1 (7+)
Training 1 (6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 1

Muramasa is a traditionalist; therefore, his female graduate students cultivate a subservient manner.

Sara Nakamura, 29, was raised in a traditional family, so her manners are automatic and do not reflect any real feelings of deference. She has already published a monograph on the dynamics of asteroidal orbits. Sara wears her black hair in a long braid, and is tidy as a cat. Her ambition rivals Ralph's, but she is more skilled at concealing it.

Attributes

BLD 4 (8+)
REF 5 (7+)
INT 5 (7+)
LRN 4 (7+)
CHA 6 (6+)

Mental 8+
Social 7+

Characteristics

Athletic 10+
Physical 8+
Mental 8+
Social 7+

Skills

University Package

Administration 1 (7+)
CS/Astrophysics 2 (6+)
Computer 3 (5+)
Medtech 1 (7+)
Perception 4 (4+)
Security Systems 1 (7+)
Training 1 (6+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 1

Beryl Papadopoulos, 32, is striking. Commandingly tall, her features are like Athena on an old Greek coin. As expedition recorder, she keeps the official log, arranges time-sharing for the sensor array, and acts as a peacemaker when conflicts arise. Her first doctorate was in psychology, so she is able to keep her sense of proportion despite any ego-storm that arises. She is one of the fortunate people who need little sleep; six hours a night suffices for her. Beryl is currently working on a doctorate in astrophysical engineering; she is studying the Star League equipment and evaluating it for use in combination with modern tech. She likes reading petry with Marlon, having published a small volume, *Star Spawn* (Jeanette University Press, 3048).

Attributes

BLD 4 (8+)
REF 4 (8+)
INT 6 (6+)
LRN 6 (6+)
CHA 4 (8+)

Characteristics

Athletic 10+
Physical 8+
Mental 6+
Social 7+

Skills

University Package

CS/Psychology	5	(2+)
Computer	4	(2+)
Engineering	4	(2+)
Perception	4	(2+)
Security Systems	2	(4+)
Tinker	3	(3+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 1

The *Tai-i* (PC)

Tai-i (Captain) Kenichi Muramasa, is conscious of being a hotshot warrior in the best of the best regiments in the Draconis Combine, which is the best of all possible realms. Surprisingly, he is as good as he thinks he is at what he does. Being stationed on the capitol of Luthien, he has friends who are aides to the general staff and knows as much as anyone can about the Clans invaders. Normally he would be closed-mouthed about the Clans and their tactics, however, once the station is under attack, he will volunteer whatever information he knows (whatever player actually knows). He has agreed to wish to duel a Clans Warrior one-on-one. To him, honor is all, and he often daydreams of dying a heroic death.

Attributes

BLD	5	(7+)
REF	5	(7+)
INT	6	(6+)
LRN	5	(7+)
CHA	5	(7+)

Characteristics

Athletic	9+
Physical	8+
Mental	8+
Social	8+

Skills

Advanced Academy Package

MOS: MechWarrior

Bureaucracy	2	(6+)
Gambling	1	(7+)
Gunnery/Mech	5	(3+)
Interrogation	1	(7+)
Leadership	2	(6+)
Medtech	1	(7+)
Perception	1	(7+)
Piloting/Mech	4	(4+)
Protocol	2	(6+)
Small Arms	1	(7+)
Strategy	1	(7+)
Tactics	1	(7+)
Tech/Mech	2	(6+)
Unarmed Combat	1	(8+)

Advantages: Well Equipped

Edge: 2

* **Battlemaster-K:** A variant of the 3025 'Mech, using a Battlemaster captured during the 3039 War as a base. The machine-guns and ammunition were removed, as were the rear-firing medium lasers. The PPC was replaced with two large lasers, and one extra ton of ammo for the SRM-6 was added. This keeps much of the long-range firepower of the original design while adding a heavy punch for close-in fighting. The loss of the rear-firing capability makes the Battlemaster-K a 'Mech for the experienced MechWarrior only. The *Tai-i* worked closely with his unit's Techs on his refit of the design.

Attention Players:

READ NO
FURTHER
Gamemaster Data
Follows

Gamemaster Data: Kepler Station was actually a Star League counter-intelligence reconnaissance post, which had to be abandoned. Since there were no weapons, it was left intact; there was only enough time to damage the above-ground portions of the memory core. When Kuritan archaeologists discovered the outpost, they concluded that since the equipment was directed towards systems with one or more interesting astronomical features (and since legends of the Star League never discussed a counter-intelligence core), they thought the station was an astronomical observatory.

What the Clans know about the station: The Steel Viper Loremaster is descended from the last commander of the station. The station, *not the planet*, is the primary objective in the Bangor system. Two of the grills (in the 'Dining Room' and the 'Observatory') have one screw too many holding them to the wall. When ALL of the blast doors in the central station have been closed and both of these screws are turned one-quarter turn to the left, a panel is unlocked under the room-height holo of Simon Cameron, founder of the Star League (the only indication being a slight 'click'). The picture will then be able to open like a trapdoor. Behind it are stairs to the underground computer room, where the real data collection has been recording since 2512. The Steel Vipers know how to access the doors.

The Steel Viper JumpShip is at the zenith Jump Point.

• • • • •

Have the players roleplay their way until dinner. The Senior Professor will begin the dinner with a toast to the *Tai-i*. He will mention the exploits of the Muramasa family at

least five times in ten minutes (yes, the food is getting cold). You will have the soup, the main course, and a speech from the *Tai-i*. He is condescending to non-warriors; he is trying to be gracious about the necessity of their research, but everyone can tell he considers MechWarriors to be the only real form of human life.

Then, just as dessert is being served, the on-duty graduate student, Bhajan, interrupts. There is an incoming message for the station commander.

The Senior Professor has had rather a lot of sake. "Patch it through!" he says, waving his hand expansively.

A stern faced female in her forties, wearing a gray uniform, comes on screen. "I am Cluster Commander Obeth of the Steel Vipers. This system is now part of the Steel Vipers' territory. If you dispute this, name the forces with which you will defend the station."

The Senior Professor, who is used to surprise questions in committee meetings, will manage to stammer out, "I am not the military commander. Please allow a few minutes for us to locate him and patch him through."

The characters now have ten minutes to plan what they will say to the Clans. Station sensors will

show unfamiliar DropShips already at the planet. At the climax of their argument, the Senior Professor suffers a heart attack. Keiko leads him off to the medical center, where a Star League autodoc begins to minister to him. The final decision as to how to defend the station must depend on the players. If the characters cannot agree on a strategy, Tadashi, being second in command, must decide.

The com will be answered by Star Commander Jacson Sati, who will inquire again, "With what forces will you defend the station?" If the *Tai-i* offers a duel, the Star Commander will accept at once, naming the surface of the planetoid for the dueling ground, "in order to cause as little injury as possible." The terms agreed to will not include

retaining possession of the station.

If the *Tai-i* wins the duel, he and his 'Mech will be permitted to leave, with the other characters, after all belongings and the DropShip have been searched. If he loses, the Steel Vipers will keep any agreements previously made as long as the characters' belongings and the DropShip are searched.

If the characters have decided to abandon the station and ask permission to surrender, the Star Commander will leave the screen for a moment, then return with, "We have no wish to retain cowards or fools among our bondsmen. You will be subject to search before you may depart, but you may then find refuge where you will. The decision to surrender must be made by all of you; no subsequent rebellion will be tolerated."

Scrounging for Tricks Table

Margin of Success	Result
0 (no success)	light environment suits with helmets for everyone, two heavy environment suits
1	nine survival knives, four heavy wrenches, two 10-meter cords, suit sealant and solvent from the emergency survival kits of the suits, seven sharpenable 1-meter stakes
2	door overrides which remote-control the blast doors through the central computer banks
3	sealed digging equipment for other possible sites (which were never found) for digging pits and trenches, an acetylene torch with three spare tanks.
4	ten pressure sealed aerosol cans and ten nicostick lighters, which can be used as point-blank flame throwers and/or fuel-air explosive grenades
5	two additional plausible items of player's choice which were not intended as weapons by the original manufacturers
6	three additional items as above

If the characters take off in the DropShip within the first two days, they will be able to join the refugee fleet before it leaves the Bangor System. After that, the Smoke Jaguars will be close enough to the planet to prevent this. If they try, they will be warned, then attacked by a Steel Viper DropShip many times their size. The purpose of that attack will be to hole the ship and search it thoroughly.

The DropShip crew are noncombatants. The *Tai-i* borrowed a modified Mark VII landing craft which has been reconfigured for cargo from his merchant father-in-law. It will hold the station personel and the *Tai-i*'s 'Mech, but it will be a tight squeeze. It has only five anti-meteor large lasers in the way of armament.

If characters defy the Steel Vipers and give no data, the speaker will break off communication and the station will be attacked in six days by a star of 'Mechs to handle the DropShip crew and any outside opposition, while two stars of Elementals attack the domes. The Elementals will come from a different direction from the 'Mech star.

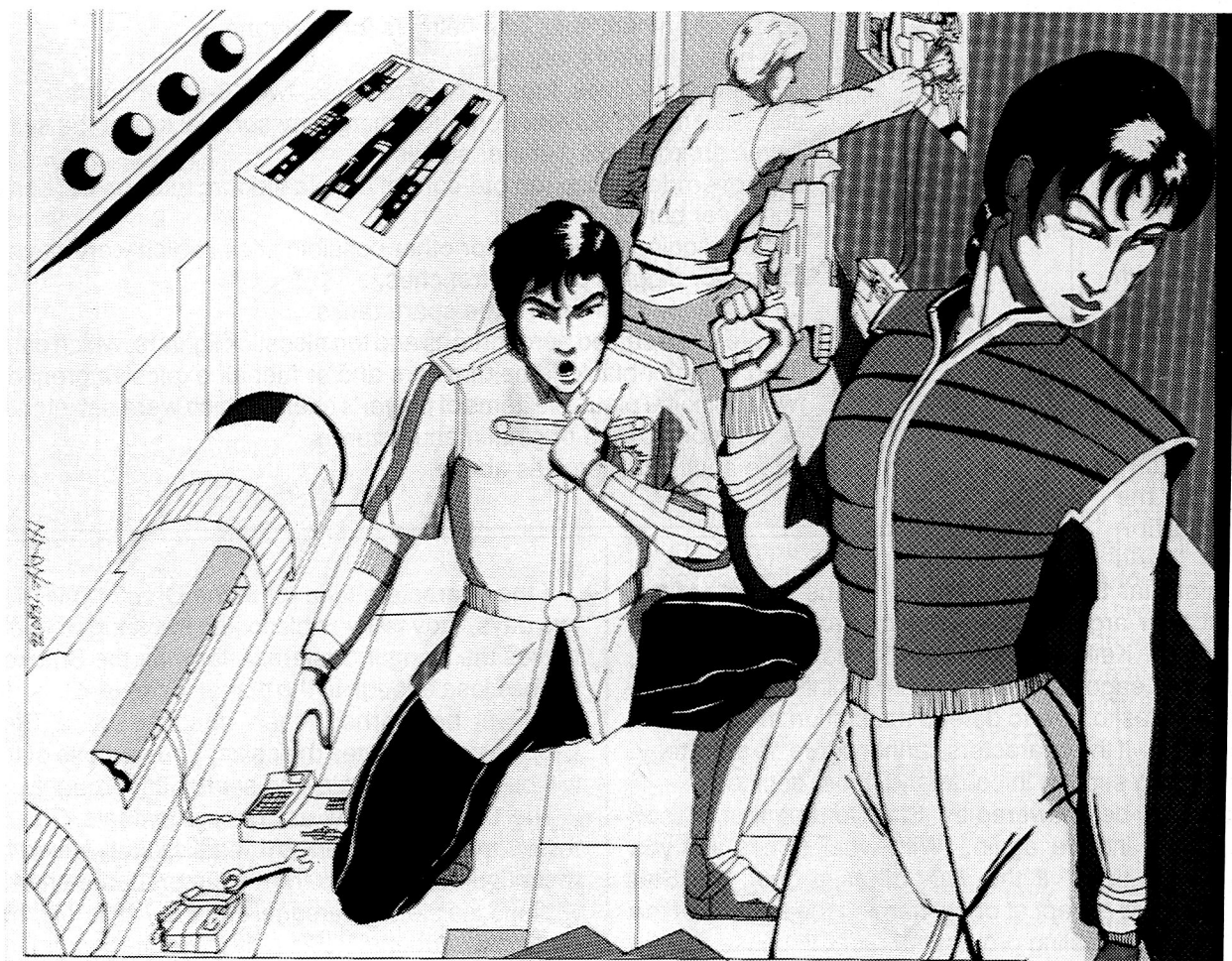
The Elementals know that the walls of the domes must not be damaged as they do not know where the grills are. They will breach the roof of the tallest (center) dome, opening it to vacuum. After that, their strategy is to breach the doors. They will attempt to annihilate or drive off the station personnel quickly and sharply, while destroying as little of the domed structures as they can.

If Reina sets up improvised defenses, use the following success table. Bhajan Singh may roll at a -1 on the table. If someone else is helping them, that person rolls at a -2. The players will probably ask "Is there a _____?", and "Do we have a _____?" Consult the table for the total number of items allowed. Gamemaster may have to suggest an item

or two in the persona of an NPC. If all of the characters have players, there should be plenty of fiendish ingenuity between them, hopefully making such gamemaster assistance unnecessary.

If, by some unlikely coincidence, the players open the grills before the Clans get there, the lower computer will be accessible by the Eriksons, Keiko, or Beryl. The Eriksons would need a margin of success of two; the others would need four. The station will assume that the people accessing it are authorized, and will activate its considerable defenses.

The program in the system will ensure that the Steel Viper DropShip will be destroyed half a day from landing, no matter what the player characters say or do. After the emergency, the memory system will demand further authorization before it allows continued access. Unless somebody manages a margin of success of five at computer use, the system will then shut down..



The Steel Vipers:

The Steel Vipers are from Alpha Striker Star of the 250th Assault Cluster of Alpha Galaxy. The Steel Vipers have detailed some of their best warriors to this mission. They are all fanatical Crusaders: they will treat the station personnel with contempt unless the player characters use Clan etiquette, which only the *Tai-i* knows. If the *Tai-i* challenges a champion or suggests a duel, he will fight Star Commander Jacson Sati. If the *Tai-i* actually uses the phrase 'Trial of Possession', Cluster Commander Obeth will duel with him personally.

Steel Viper Mechwarriors:

Cluster Commander Obeth, *Mad Cat*

Attributes			Characteristics		
BLD	5	(7+)	Athletic	7+	
REF	6	(6+)	Physical	6+	
INT	6	(6+)	Mental	6+	
LRN	5	(7+)	Social	7+	
CHA	5	(7+)			

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Gunnery/Mech	4	(2+)
Interrogation	1	(7+)
Leadership	3	(4+)
Medtech	1	(6+)
Negotiation	3	(4+)
Piloting/Mech	5	(1+)
Small Arms	2	(4+)
Survival	2	(5+)
Tactics	3	(4+)
Tech/Mech	2	(5+)
Unarmed Combat	2	(5+)

Advantages: Extra Edge x2

Edge: 3

Alpha Star

Star Commander Jacson Sati, *Thor*

Attributes			Characteristics		
BLD	5	(7+)	Athletic	7+	
REF	6	(6+)	Physical	6+	
INT	6	(6+)	Mental	7+	
LRN	5	(7+)	Social	7+	
CHA	5	(7+)			

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Gunnery/Mech	4	(2+)
Interrogation	1	(6+)
Leadership	3	(4+)
Medtech	1	(6+)
Negotiation	3	(4+)
Piloting /Mech	4	(2+)
Small Arms	1	(5+)
Survival	2	(5+)
Tactics	2	(5+)
Tech/Mech	2	(5+)
Unarmed Combat	1	(6+)

Advantages: Extra Edge

Edge: 2

Hanna, *Ryoken*

Attributes			Characteristics		
BLD	5	(7+)	Athletic	7+	
REF	6	(6+)	Physical	6+	
INT	6	(6+)	Mental	7+	
LRN	5	(7+)	Social	7+	
CHA	5	(7+)			

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Demolitions	2	(5+)
Gunnery/Mech	4	(2+)
Interrogation	1	(6+)
Leadership	1	(6+)
Medtech	2	(5+)
Piloting/Mech	3	(3+)
Small Arms	1	(5+)
Survival	2	(5+)
Tactics	1	(6+)
Tech/Mech	1	(6+)
Unarmed Combat	1	(6+)

Advantages: Extra Edge

Edge: 2

Henk, *Fenris*

Attributes			Characteristics		
BLD	5	(7+)	Athletic	7+	
REF	6	(6+)	Physical	6+	
INT	6	(6+)	Mental	7+	
LRN	5	(7+)	Social	7+	
CHA	5	(7+)			

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Gunnery/Mech	4	(2+)
Interrogation	1	(6+)
Leadership	1	(5+)
Medtech	1	(6+)
Piloting/Mech	3	(3+)
Small Arms	2	(4+)
Survival	1	(6+)
Tactics	2	(5+)
Tech/Mech	2	(5+)
Unarmed Combat	1	(6+)

Advantages: Extra Edge

Edge: 2

Jan, *Loki*

Attributes			Characteristics		
BLD	6	(6+)	Athletic	7+	
REF	5	(7+)	Physical	7+	
INT	6	(6+)	Mental	7+	
LRN	5	(7+)	Social	7+	
CHA	5	(7+)			

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Gunnery/Mech	4	(3+)
Interrogation	1	(6+)

Leadership 1 (5+)
 Medtech 1 (6+)
 Piloting/Mech 3 (4+)
 Small Arms 2 (5+)
 Survival 1 (6+)
 Tactics 2 (5+)
 Tech/'Mech 2 (5+)
 Unarmed Combat 1 (6+)
Advantages: Extra Edge
Edge: 2

Herb, Ryoken

Advantages

BLD 6 (6+)
 REF 5 (7+)
 INT 6 (6+)
 LRN 5 (7+)
 CHA 5 (7+)

Skills

Primary MechWarrior Package

Gunnery/'Mech 4 (3+)
 Interrogation 1 (6+)
 Leadership 1 (5+)
 Medtech 1 (6+)
 Piloting/'Mech 3 (4+)
 Small Arms 2 (5+)
 Survival 1 (6+)
 Tactics 2 (5+)
 Tech/'Mech 2 (5+)
 Unarmed Combat 1 (6+)

Advantages: Extra Edge

Edge: 2

Characteristics

Athletic 7+
 Physical 7+
 Mental 7+
 Social 7+

Elementals: Two Stars from Alpha Cluster, use archetype below

Attributes

BLD 8 (4+)
 REF 6 (6+)
 INT 6 (6+)
 LRN 4 (8+)
 CHA 3 (9+)

Characteristics

Athletic 4+
 Physical 6+
 Mental 9+
 Social 9+

Skills

Elemental Package

Blade 1 (3+)
 Gunnery/Battlesuit 3 (3+)
 Interrogation 1 (8+)
 Medtech 1 (8+)
 Piloting/Battlesuit 3 (3+)
 Small Arms 2 (4+)
 Survival 1 (8+)
 Tactics 1 (8+)
 Tech/Battlesuit 1 (8+)
 Unarmed Combat 2 (2+)

Advantages: Toughness

Edge: 1

Additional source material on Mechwarriors and roleplaying the Clans can be found in *MechWarrior, 2nd Edition*, the *Wolf Clan Sourcebook*, *Rhonda's Irregulars*, and *Bloodright*, published by FASA Corporation, and the *Legend of the Jade Phoenix* trilogy, published by Penguin Books USA under their Roc/New American Library trademark.

What Really Happened

In the actual attack, The *Tai-i* wished to engage in a 'Mech-to-'Mech duel with a Steel Viper champion, with the proviso that the civilians are allowed to leave in his DropShip, to join in the evacuation of the planetary system. Reina Erickson thought of trapping the station and fighting a room-to-room action. She did not know the full capabilities of an Elemental. The Senior Professor allowed the *Tai-i* to issue his challenge, and refused Mrs. Erickson's plea to fight room-to-room in the station. The challenge was accepted, and the civilians were allowed to evacuate after the duel was fought. The *Tai-i* lost, and died in the fight. The civilians and their belongings were searched before they were allowed to leave. Reina planted spy cameras in the domes, which the Smoke Jaguars did not bother to search. Her cameras dumped data to her data retriever aboard the DropShip. Thus we know how the grills were opened, and where the door to the room below was positioned. Kuritan intelligence has no idea what the room below looks like. They were able to deduce that it was small because only two elementals entered it at once. Smoke Jaguar forces were seen to carry out a computer memory core labeled 'SLDF Intelligence: Top Secret: *Defense d'accesse*'.

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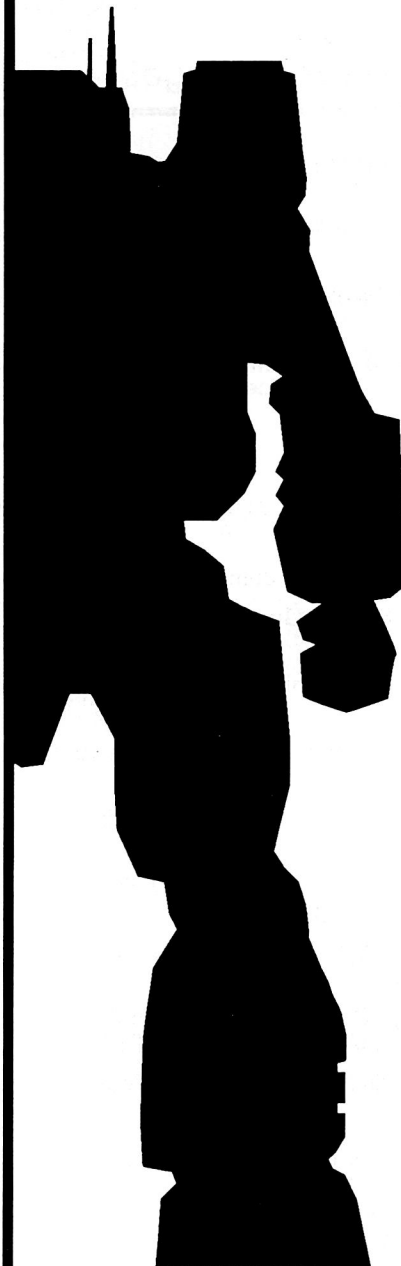
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WHAT NOW,



M E C H W A R R I O R ?

**ANALYSIS OF BATTLEFIELD
TACTICS AND STRATEGY.**

Decisions, Decisions

**Lesson:
Making the best of a
'No-Win' situation**

BattleTechnology Magazine is pleased to present the latest in our continuing series of tactical simulations for combat training. This scenario again puts the participants in command of a single BattleMech lance faced with a series of tactical situations. Groups of cadets or line officers discuss possible solutions to the situations described. The available simulation-programs are capable of dealing with most battle plans but some options (such as the use of proscribed weapons) are beyond the scope of this simulation. Copies of computer simulation programs are available through your local BattleTechnology Magazine distributor. When using computer simulations, reset to the central progress of historical events after each encounter. Recommended discussion items are listed after each section.

Please note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' solutions (except as judged against mission success and casualties). The historical information simply presents how one warrior solved the problem. Innovation is often the key to success in combat.

The staff of BattleTechnology Magazine wishes to thank Archon-Princess Melissa Steiner-Davion for her continued support and patronage in commissioning these simulations.

You are a MechWarrrior in command of a fire lance that is part of a House garrison forces stationed on a world near the border of another successor state. The planet is rocky and cold, but holds significant strategic importance. Ten days ago, the planet was attacked by the forces of the opposing successor Lord as part of a larger offensive. The fighting has not been particularly fierce, and your lance was saved for the counter-offensive when reinforcements arrive. Reinforcements grounded five days ago, and the push to drive the invaders off has begun. Now you are part of an assault on one of the enemy's forward landing bases.

Your lance consists of two Catapults, a Wolverine, and your Crusader — all of standard configuration, painted in an appropriate camouflage pattern, and lacking significant damage. All warriors are assumed to be of veteran status, and — as an added plus — the cold makes your heat sinks

twenty percent more effective. Your objective is to make your way to a specific ridge line, and conduct fire support with long-range missiles for the upcoming assault. You have been given four hours to cover twenty kilometers of rough, broken terrain — approximately half of which will be under enemy control. Heavy winds make flight amid the mountains difficult, so fighter support is not a significant consideration. You also lack accurate recon data. You are in command; your mission objective is to bring your lance into position by the required time and complete the fire support. That should require approximately half your missile supply. What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: order of march, possible effects of terrain and weather, covered watch-arcs for the lance 'Mechs, use of command frequencies within hostile territory, relative concern for air units.)

Historical: The CO formed his unit into a 'Y' formation with the Wolverine on point 50 meters in the front, then the Crusader and the two Catapults back 75 meters and 20° to each side. Communication between 'Mechs was by hand signals or, in emergencies, tight-beam radio. No unit was to fire unless it came under fire or the CO gave permission.

Your lance is advancing towards the objective. The going is slow; the rough and slippery terrain hampers your movements. Ice flurries cut visibility. You are about two kilometers from your objective. If you push hard, you should make it within a window of twenty minutes. The Wolverine on point suddenly raises its fist and points right, the sign that it has spotted something. You turn to look. To the right (east) of your position is a stretch of broken ground approximately two hundred meters wide that ends against a rough scarp slope about eight meters high. Beyond is a maze of rock falls and weathered hills. You see a flash of movement at the ridge line, but your magnetic sensors can not penetrate the metal-rich stone of the ridge. The infrared screen shows everything to be a cool blue. What now, MechWarrior?

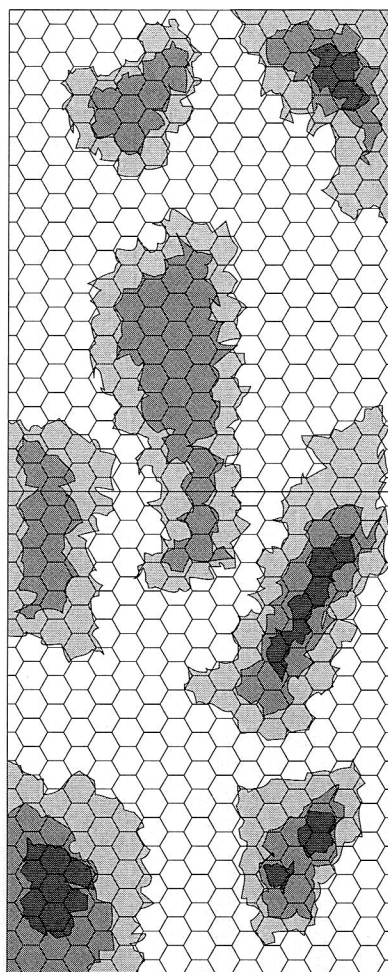
Historical: The CO continued on his line of advance after moving the BattleMech on point to right flank halfway to the ridge. The Wolverine was given permission to fire at her discretion.

You continue with your mission, screened to the east by the Wolverine. Moments later, the Wolverine pilot radios a warning just as a flight of LRMs impact around the Catapults, inflicting minor damage. The Wolverine snaps off a few quick autocannon shots, then reports the enemy driven from the ridge. It appeared to be a Dervish.

What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: possible threat to the mission, both from the attack and the radio transmission; appropriate response to the ambush with consideration to the overall mission.)

Historical: The CO sent the Wolverine to scout the ridge. While the two Catapults hung back, he moved to support the Wolverine.



Elevation



Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

The Support Lance begins at the southern edge of the map. The Harrassing Lance begins along the western edge of the map, out of line of sight of the Support Lance. The Support Lance's objective is to exit the mapboard at it's northeast corner.

You crest the ridge as the Wolverine staggers up from behind. Before you is another valley approximately seventy meters across. In small gorge on the far side, you see an enemy lance comprised of two Dervishes and two Dragons. Instantly, you come under autocannon and missile fire. What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: the same as last time, with added emphasis on time considerations and the use of the ridge line for defense.)

Historical: CO returned fire with his laser battery and called up the rest of the units to engage the lighter force.

The rest of your lance joins you at the ridge line. Under your combined fire, you drive the enemy 'Mechs back up the valley. All your 'Mechs have taken only minor damage, except the Wolverine, which has developed a minor gyro glitch. The four enemy 'Mechs vanish up the rock-littered gorge. What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended discussion items: relative benefit of pursuing the fleeing 'Mechs versus the mission objectives, the responsibility of command, use of terrain either in pursuit or defense.)

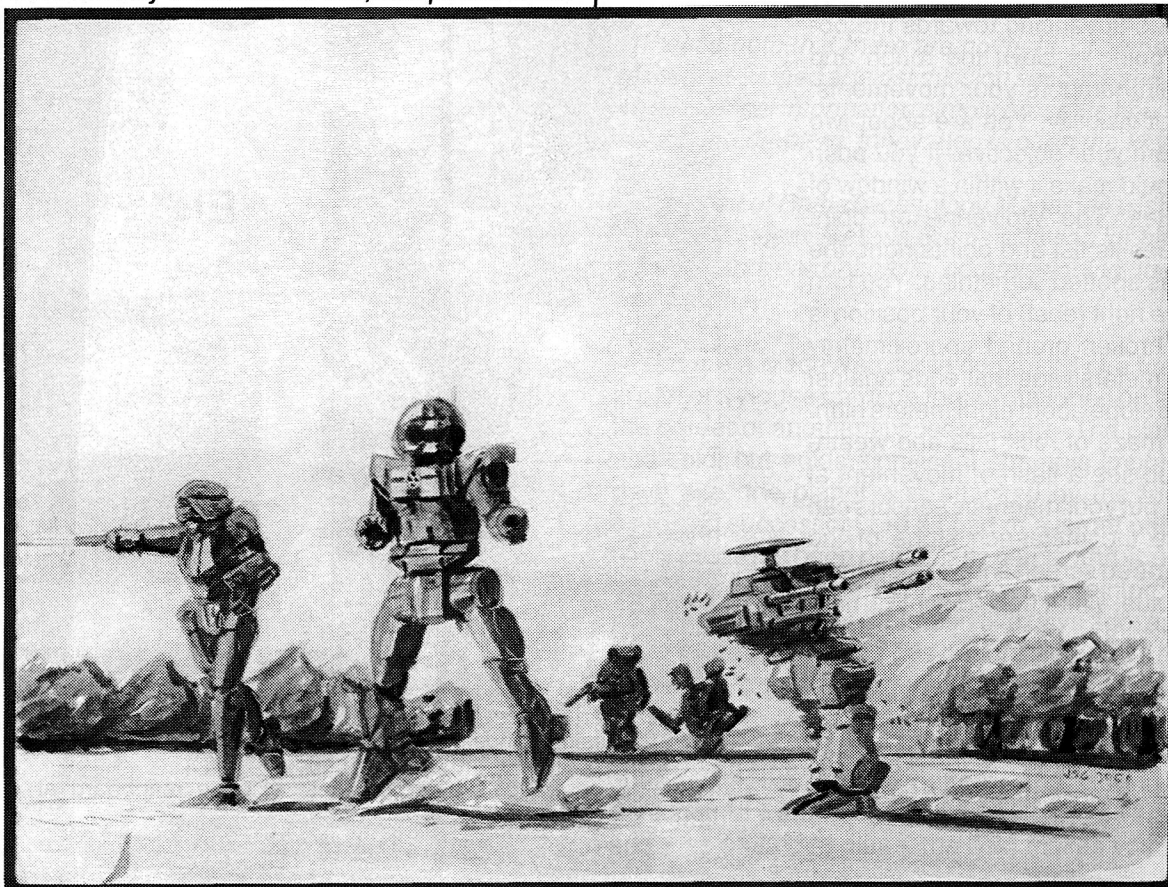
Historical: The CO ordered a pursuit rather than risk leaving an intact enemy force behind him, and pursued the

retreating lance into the canyon.

You follow the enemy 'Mechs into the canyon, intent on destroying them to protect your mission. The glacier-carved canyon is narrow, rocky. The broken ground makes progress slow, and your magnetic sensors are confused by the high iron content of the native rocks. Infra-red sensors show you the tracks of the retreating 'Mechs, warm yellow against the cold blue of rock and ice. You round a bend in the canyon and see the path widens into a former lake bed nearly four hundred meters across. The tracks lead on. You follow. When you are half-way across the valley, the enemy 'Mechs burst out of concealment and open fire. All four 'Mechs of your lance rock under the combined assault. What now, MechWarrior?

(Recommended Discussion Items: whether to fight or fall back, use of terrain for defense, ammo expenditure.)

Historical: The unit commander chose to fight for several minutes. In the battle, one enemy Dervish was destroyed and one Dragon crippled. The Wolverine was destroyed and all units took substantial damage. The CO ordered his lance to disengage. The enemy did not follow. The lance reached its mission objective forty minutes late and short on ammo. The CO received a reprimand and demotion.



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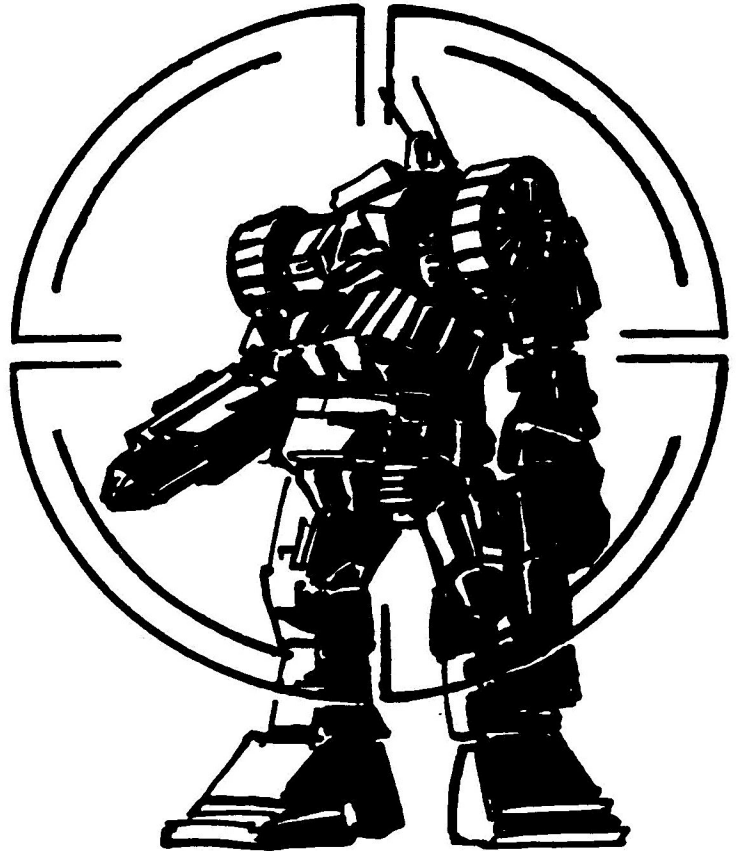
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Combat Efficiency Factor: The Clans

Professor Eieon McCleary, PhD, PhD, MA, MA

Greetings, battered brothers of the front lines. As we promised, here we give you the latest data on the Clans. From the NAIS simulators to you come the most recent CEF programs. We wish to thank Professor McCleary for his prompt forwarding of this data on the Clans.

—Marcus Killegrew, Staff Editor

When I last wrote to you, I ended my letter by wishing you “Kerensky’s Luck!” Well, warriors, I can only say it has come as a shock to us all. The Clans, conquerors from beyond the Periphery, are our own flesh and blood, descendants of the long-departed Regular Army who left the Inner Sphere when the Star League fell.

This emotional bombshell has been a boon in terms of information. With thanks to First Prince Hanse and Archon Melissa for allowing immediate release of this information, and to Colonel Jaime Wolf’s staff for providing much-needed facts, I give you the latest CEF simulations for Clans technology.

Kerensky has returned and his children wish to reclaim their forgotten lands. Let us all pray that we will survive.

CEF Data

The computation of the Combat Efficiency Factor for Clans OmniMechs is different from the normal Inner Sphere calculations. Modularization, power, range, and performance are all different from our own systems. Through further testing of our own simulations and the compilation of new data, we have noticed small gaps in our simulator systems. Tables covering these updates are also included, along with the latest data on Clan BattleMechs and Aerospace fighters. Lack of data has prevented us from listing each individual OmniFighter, though we include the necessary data to compute each OmniFighter’s CEF once its characteristics are known.

In the data section we list each of the main frontline OmniMechs. The Base Number is the CEF of the base design without modular equipment. Movement, armor tonnage, defense factor, and built-in special equipment (MASC)

are included in the calculations. Only modular equipment and weapons are left out.

As Clan BattleArmor is relatively uniform, we have included a CEF rating for the three styles known to exist.

To Calculate an OmniMech’s CEF:

Section A: Base Design CEF

- 1) Record Armor Tonnage
Most OmniMechs carry Ferro-Fibrous Armor. If this is the case, multiply Armor Tonnage by 1.2, then record.
- 2) Divide Tonnage by 10 and record.
- 3) Record Walking MPs
If equipped with MASC, add 1/2 the Walking MP
- 4) If jump capable, add .75 for each jump jet.
- 5) Calculate OFR and record.

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

- 6) Calculate Total built-in special equipment and record.
Use Clans SEFR table.
- 7) Add steps 1-6 to determine Base Design CEF (BD:CEF)

Section B: Specific Design CEF

- 8) Calculate total Weapons Factor Rating and record
Use Clans WFR table.
- 9) A – Calculate total Safe Weapons Factor Rating and record.
This represents the most firepower that a 'Mech may fire at once without overheating.
B – If, after SWFR is calculated, you have one or more unused heat sinks, add 1 to SWFR.
- 10) Calculate Specific Design Special Equipment and record.
Use Clans SEFR table.
- 11) Add Steps 8-10 to determine Special Design CEF (SD:CEF) and record.
- 12) Add Base Design CEF from step 7 to the result of step 11 to obtain the total CEF for the OmniMech design.

To Calculate an OmniFighter CEF

Section A: Base Design CEF

- 1) Record Armor Tonnage
If using Ferro-Fibrous, see SEFR table
- 2) Divide Tonnage by 10 and record.
- 3) Record Thrust Rating
- 4) Calculate Built-in Special Equipment and record.
Use Clans SEFR Table
- 5) Add Steps 1-9 to get BD:CEF

Section B: Specific Design CEF

- 6) Calculate Weapons Factor Rating and record.
- 7) Calculate Safe Weapons Factor Rating and record.
If, after SWFR is calculated, there are any heat sinks left over, add 1 for each heat sink up to the difference between Thrust and Overthrust. For example, if a fighter with 7 Thrust and 11 Overthrust has 5 heat sinks left over, its CEF is increased by 4 (11-7).
- 8) Calculate Specific Special Equipment and record.
Use Clans SEFR table.
- 9) Add Steps 6-8 to determine SD:CEF
- 10) Add Step 5, BD:CEF to SD:CEF, Step 9, to get the total CEF for the OmniFighter.

Clans SEFR

Item	Addition
A-Pod	No additions in 'Mech-to'Mech Add 1 per A-Pod when encountering Infantry
Anti-Missile System	Add 1 per ton of Ammo
Artemis IV System	Add 0.2 to all Missile WFR *
Beagle Active Probe	Add 1.0
CASE	Add 0.5 per CASE system
Ferro-Fibrous Armor	Add Armor Tonnage X 0.2
Guardian ECM	Add 0.5
MASC	Add 1/2 of 'Mech's Walking MP
NARC Missile Beacon	Add 0.4 to all missile WFR *
Swarm LRM Rounds	Add 0.2 to all missile WFR * #
Targeting Computer	Add 0.3 to all weapons WFR
Target Acquisition Gear	Add 0.5
Thunder LRM	Add 0.1 to all missile WFR * #

- * Add this number during WFR calculations and to SWFR only if weapon's fire is calculated as part of SFWR.
- # If only a partial load of these missiles are carried, divide the total bonus by 2. For example, if an Archer is carrying two tons of swarm ammo and two tons of thunder ammo, he would gain a bonus for both; but instead of a bonus of +0.6 (0.4 +0.2), the bonus would be +0.3 [(0.4/2)+(0.2/2)].

Notes

- 1) Some BattleMechs (such as the UrbanMech and Hatchetman) are designed for specific missions, or for operations in specific terrain. When a BattleMech is operating in such a specific environment, add 5.0 to the CEF. When it is operating outside of it, such as if an UrbanMech were in open terrain, the gamemaster may choose an appropriate negative modifier. This only applies to 'Mechs which are designed with such a specialty in mind.
- 2) Many Mercenary units use the famed *Mercenary's Handbook* (FASA Corporation) when preparing for a mission, using the tactical tables to determine the percentage chances of success on any given mission. As Clans Technology greatly outperforms even Star League designs, use the Clans Unit Strength Chart presented here to calculate Clans operation capabilities. Due to the OmniMechs' versatility and the high level of their technology, they do not always fit into a neat class. As an option, we are providing unit strengths for each individual OmniMech.
- 3) All 'Mechs in a lance receive the NARC Missile Beacon benefit for the appropriate missile weapons.

Clan WFR

Weapon	Rating	Cluster
ER Large Laser	3.7	
ER Medium Laser	2.2	
ER Small Laser	1.1	
ER PPC	3.8	
Flamer	0.6	
Large Pulse Laser	3.3	
Medium Pulse Laser	2.2	
Small Pulse Laser	1.2	
Gauss Rifle	3.7	
LB2-X Autocannon	3.2	3.3
LB5-X AC	2.9	2.9
LB10-X AC	3.0	2.7
LB20-X AC	3.2	2.6
Machine Gun	0.6	
Ultra AC/2	3.1	*
Ultra AC/5	3.1	*
Ultra AC/10	3.8	*
Ultra AC/20	5.2	*
LRM-5	1.8	
LRM-10	2.2	
LRM-15	2.5	
LRM-20	2.8	
SRM-2	1.1	
SRM-4	1.5	
SRM-6	1.9	
Streak SRM-2	1.6	
Streak SRM-4	2.0	
Streak SRM-6	2.4	
Arrow IV Unguided	6.0	
Arrow IV Guided	7.0	
Arrow IV FASCAM	7.0	
Long Tom	5.0	
Sniper	4.3	
Thumper	3.7	

- * If an Ultra AC is used as part of the SWFR calculation, it is treated as generating the heat of firing twice. For example, an Ultra AC 20 would be noted as creating 14 heat, not 7.

Remember, Warriors, even with Wolf's Dragoons' help, this data is not perfect. Just because the simulator says your Orion can easily beat a quintet of battle armor, that doesn't mean it will prove true on the field.

God Speed and Good Luck
Eieon McCleary

Mercenary Unit Strength Chart

Type	Maneuver	Combat
Elemental	4.0	3.0
Light OmniMech	8.0	4.5
Medium OmniMech	7.5	5.5
Heavy OmniMech	5.5	7.0
Assault OmniMech	5.0	8.0
Light OmniFighter	4.5 Aero	
Medium OmniFighter	5.5 Aero	
Heavy OmniFighter	6.5 Aero	
Arrow IV	2.0	6.0

OmniMechs by Type:

Dasher	11.0	4.0
Koshi	9.0	4.0
Uller	6.0	4.5
Puma	6.0	4.5
Dragonfly	10.0	5.0
Fenris	7.0	4.5
Blackhawk	7.0	4.5
Ryoken	5.0	6.0
Vulture	5.0	6.5
Loki	5.0	7.0
Thor	8.0	6.5
Mad Cat	5.0	9.5
Man O'War	5.0	7.0
Masakari	4.0	7.5
Gladiator	7.5	7.5
Daishi	3.0	9.5

Type	CEF
Dasher BA:CEF	23.4
Dasher-Primary Config	41.5
Dasher-A	31.9
Dasher-B	34.9
Dasher-C	35.1
Dasher-D	46.5

Koshi BA:CEF	24.2
Primary	35.8
Koshi-A	33.1
Koshi-B	43.3
Koshi-C	40.0
Koshi-D	38.5

Uller BA:CEF	19.8
Primary	40.9
Uller-A	37.0
Uller-B	39.8
Uller-C	42.5
Uller-D	38.8

Puma BA:CEF	24.9
Primary	37.2
Puma-A	42.9
Puma-B	44.3
Puma-C	45.1
Puma-D	47.4

Dragonfly BA:CEF	30.4
Primary	45.9
Dragonfly-A	52.7
Dragonfly-B	44.0
Dragonfly-C	50.8
Dragonfly-D	50.8

Fenris BA:CEF	21.5
Primary	37.0
Fenris-A	39.7
Fenris-B	40.1
Fenris-C	31.1
Fenris-D	41.6

Blackhawk BA:CEF	33.75
Primary	76.55
Blackhawk-A	53.05
Blackhawk-B	52.15
Blackhawk-C	48.05
Blackhawk-D	47.15

Clans CEFs

Ryoken BA:CEF	34.5
Primary	63.5
Ryoken-A	63.2
Ryoken-B	65.4
Ryoken-C	53.6
Ryoken-D	55.3

Vulture BA:CEF	33.2
Primary	61.8
Vulture-A	66.2
Vulture-B	69.2
Vulture-C	50.0

Loki BA:CEF	32.5
Primary	67.4
Loki-A	67.7
Loki-B	58.3

Thor BA:CEF	41.15
Primary	62.1
Thor-A	60.95
Thor-B	64.55
Thor-C	62.95
Thor-D	68.8

Mad Cat BA:CEF	41.9
Primary	79.6
Mad Cat-A	73.4
Mad Cat-B	70.5
Mad Cat-C	75.4
Mad Cat-D	72.1

Man O'War BA:CEF	42.2
Primary	65.6
Man O'War-A	70.8
Man O'War-B	58.8
Man O'War-C	75.8

Masakari BA:CEF	45.7
Primary	76.8
Masakari -A	81.3
Masakari -B	81.2
Masakari -C	75.7

Gladiator BA:CEF	50.7
Primary	76.1
Gladiator-A	83.6
Gladiator-B	74.1
Gladiator-C	70.0
Gladiator-D	85.3

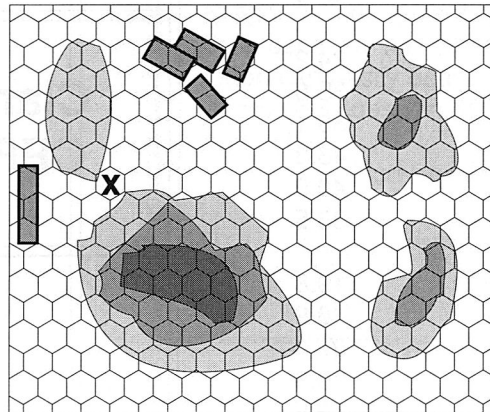
Daishi BA:CEF	52.0
Primary	110.0
Daishi-A	91.0
Daishi-B	103.4

Elemental w/ SRM Rack	9.25
Elemental w/o SRM Rack	8.50
Elemental w/ A-P Weapons	7.25

The Archer Fells the Hawk

Interview of bandit: 'John Smith'
*Transcript furnished by SAFE, Free
 Worlds League Intelligence*

"It was incredible, I tell ya! We had the trap laid perfectly. I mean, it was perfect! Then the prey walked right in. Odd 'Mech, I ain't never seen one like it. Well, Snake, he brought up his Warhammer just like we'd planned and we sprung the trap. Drak, that pilot was good! He turned towards me and ran right at me, guns blazin'. Just one damned salvo and he'd near blown off my leg. Next thing I know he was jumping back outside of range, leaving the three of us eatin' vapors. There was a heck of a racket over the com, but I couldn't see nothin' till I walked over the hill. I came into sight just in time to see him blow Snake's head clean off. Before poor Snake's Warhammer even hit the ground, he turned and fired on me again. Froze up my hip solid and shredded one of my gun arms. A" it was all downhill from there. Macky's Orion took a pounding until his engine decided to go nova. He blew both my arms and my left leg off before leaving me for dead. When the Captain and Missy left that 'Mech smoking and ran, they left a trail of parts a headless bloodhound coulda followed."



Elevation

Level 0
Level 1
Level 2
Level 3

Fall of a Legend

From the Sierra Times-Tribune, October 4, 3051

The mercenary company Mikalson's Mavericks, under Marik employ as part of this world's garrison, has just repelled a bandit attack. While they were successful, the Mavericks lost three BattleMechs, including a rare OSP-15 Osprey medium 'Mech. The backbone of the Mavericks' Fire Lance since it was discovered in 3036, this rare Star League 'Mech had time and again given the Mavericks the edge they needed to overcome superior opposition.

Having outdistanced its lancemates with its jump jets, the 'Spruce Goose' was cut off by five bandit 'Mechs, the lightest of which weighed in at 60 tons. Unable to retreat, the 'Goose' played a game of cat-and-mouse in the hilly region near the town of Outback, terrain for which this 'Mech is ideally suited. By the time the bandits finally felled the Osprey, it had destroyed three and damaged the other two. The Mavericks' Fire Lance arrived in time to drive off the bandits and rescue their commander. However, engine hits had reduced the Osprey to a shell of its former self.

Rumor has it that agents of the Wyld Stallions (finder-owners of the first Osprey to be reported in the Inner Sphere) have offered a brand new Canopian Shadow Hawk for the destroyed Maverick Osprey. No confirmation of the offer is available as of yet.

The Archer Fells the Hawk

Set-Up:

Lay out the BattleTech mapboard as shown. In the open area to the north, place a Level 3 building, three Level 2 buildings, and four Level 1 buildings. These buildings represent a Level 3 graded hill. Treat all light wood hexes as Level 1 hills, and all heavy woods as Level 2 hills. Ignore all woods already on a hill; treat these hexes only as hills. The scenario lasts ten turns.

Defender:

Element of Mikalson's Marauders Fire Lance
Commander Winston Strong, *Osprey*
Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3

Attackers:

Elements of unknown Bandit Force:

'John Smith', *Victor*

Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

'Macky', *Orion*

Piloting: 5, Gunnery: 4

'Snake', *Warhammer*

Piloting: 5, Gunnery: 4

'The Captain', *Archer*

Piloting: 6, Gunnery: 4

'Missy', *Rifleman*

Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

Defender Deployment:

The Osprey is placed on the 'X' on map.

Attacker Deployment:

The Victor, Archer, and Rifleman enter anywhere on the east side of the map. The Orion enters anywhere on the southeast quarter-edge of the map. The Warhammer enters from the southern section of the west edge of the map.

Victory Conditions: The Defender gains a Marginal Victory if it destroys one of the Attackers and remains in fighting condition until the end of the scenario, and a Decisive Victory if it destroys three of the Attackers and remains in fighting condition. The Attackers gain a Marginal Victory if it destroys the Osprey within 10 turns without suffering more than two destroyed 'Mechs, and a Decisive Victory if it destroys the Osprey without suffering any losses.

OSP-15 Osprey

First Published, Feb 3046

Type: OSP-15 Osprey		Tons
Tonnage:		55.0
Internal Structure:	Endo Steel II	2.75
Engine: DAV 220 XL	5.0	
Walking MPs:	4	
Running MPs:	6	
Jumping MPs:	4	
Heatsink:	10 (20)	0.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	184	11.5
	IS	Armor
Head	3	9
CT	18	30/6
Rt/Lt Torso	13	20/6
Rt Arm	9	17
Lt Arm	9	18
Rt/Lt Arm	13	26

Weapons and Equipment:

	Location	Critical	Tons
Gauss Rifle	RT	7	15.0
Ammo (GR) 16	LT	2	2.0
LRM-10	CT	2	5.0
Ammo (LRM) 24	LT	2	2.0
CASE	LT	1	0.5
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Jump Jet	LL	1	0.5
Jump Jet	RL	1	0.5
Jump Jet	LA	1	0.5
Jump Jet	RA	1	0.5

NOTE: The arms do not have hand or lower arm actuators, allowing the Osprey to perform the optional 'Flipping Arms' maneuver, as per page 55 of *The BattleTech Compendium*.

When the Osprey was first published in February 3046, we were not provided with complete information. The jump jets are split between the arms and legs. When the Osprey jumps, the arms swivel to allow the jets to fire downward. Originally an experiment, the swivel jets give the Osprey greater control in landing. This reprint also corrects previous errors in reported armor allocation.

TECHNICAL READOUT: BSD-7K Bushido

Overview:

The BSD-7K was initially designed as the Kuritan answer to the Hatchetman, but over the seven years of pre-design work, it was redesigned into a much larger, deadlier 'Mech. The 'Mech was created by Dr. Batu Ibinbachi of the highly respected Sun Zhang Military Academy research facility to be a close combat machine. Designed with the maximum amount of leg armor and heavy-duty leg actuators – as well as jump jets – the Bushido was created to execute both regular kicking attacks and the famed 'Death From Above'. The unusual combination of jump jets with an extra-heavy heavy 'Mech frame began as an innovative answer to the toe-to-toe combat which was appearing more and more in the later years of the Succession Wars.

Capabilities:

The Bushido is a very competent 'Mech design when used for its primary purpose, ie, to kill other 'Mechs in hand-to-hand combat. Using its large laser, two medium lasers, and PPC to 'soften up' an oncoming enemy, the Bushido will then attempt either to close to hand-to-hand range, or to execute a 'Death From Above' attack. The large blade, similar to the Hatchetman's axe, can literally cleave an enemy 'Mech in two! The Bushido has only energy weapons for two reasons: there can be no ammo explosions, and there is no need for resupply. The Bushido can operate for a much longer period of time in battle because it is not restricted by ammo amounts. The Bushido has ample heat sinks to deal with firing both of its heavy weapons, but only if it is not jumping.

The Spacely Corporation's 'Pondhoppers' prove more than equal to the task of lofting this 75-ton killing machine through the air with a minimum of clogging or malfunctions. The Magna-Hellstar PPC in the Bushido's right torso has a proven background in the Marauder, and has received only praise. The Sunglow Type 2 Laser utilized in the left torso also has a proven record of dependability. The two

Hyperdyne Model 351 Medium Lasers are very durable, but still are occasionally damaged in hand-to-hand combat. The sensitive lenses and frame alignments can be disturbed by the impacts common in 'Mech fighting. The two rear-facing small lasers provide some small rearward defensive capability. The Ginsu Corporation *Katana* is the amazing result of metallurgical technology only recently discovered in a Star League research facility found deep within the Draconis Combine. It was also found to be present on the memory core recovered by the Grey Death Legion. The metal that the blade is formed of is a mixture of iridium, titanium, and diburnium. The resulting alloy is 'folded' to produce multiple layers, much as the *katanas* of old Japan on Terra. This produces not only an exceedingly strong blade, but also a razor-sharp cutting edge that is very resistant to chipping or dulling.

Battle History:

As the Bushido is a fairly new 'Mech design, it has seen little use outside of the Luthien proving grounds. There are only 24 of these 'Mechs in existence at this time, but the number is due to become much greater as the RKS Battlesystems Plant on Pesht retools its facility to produce the Bushido. Four of these new BattleMechs have seen use. In June of 3029, two Bushidos that were being tested on Waldheim III's rough terrain were committed on the fight for the planet. Both units were destroyed, but in that destruction they accounted for a lance of Davion heavy 'Mechs. After the Fourth Succession War, the Bushido was put through a decade of further testing and modification: prototypes were then sent to the Periphery border for testing against Bandit raids. In city fighting on Schuyler, the Bushido held its own in hand-to-hand fighting against the Ghost Bears; two Bushidos each took out a Vulture, and did significant damage to a Koshi before being destroyed themselves.

BSD-7K Bushido

Mass: 75 Tons
 Internal Structure: RKS Masterframe BSD
 Power Plant: Vlar 300
 Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph
 Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph
 Jump Jets: Spacely Corporation Pondhopper-4000s
 Jump Capacity: 120 m
 Armor: Durachrome 232C
 Armament:
 1 Magna-Hellstar PPC
 1 Sunglow Type 2 Large Laser
 2 Hyperdyne Model 351 Medium Lasers
 2 Diverse Optics Type 10 Small Lasers
 1 Ginsu Corporation Katana Blade

Manufacturer: RKS Battlesystems
 Com System: AT&T CombatCom 21L
 Targeting/Tracking System: Sightsys Arclight 4T

Type:	BSD-7K Bushido	Tons
Tonnage:	75 Tons	75.0
Internal Structure:		7.5
Engine:	Vlar 300	19.0
Walking MPs:	4	
Running MPs:	6	
Jumping MPs:	4	
Heat Sinks:	15	5.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	232	14.5
	Internal	Armor
Head	3	9
Center Torso	23	30/16
Rt/Lt Torso	16	20/12
Rt/Lt Arm	12	24
Rt/Lt Leg	16	32

Weapons and Ammo:			
Type	Location	Critical	Tons
PPC	RT	3	7.0
Large Laser	LT	2	5.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Small Laser	RT (R)	1	0.5
Small Laser	LT (R)	1	0.5
Sword	RA	4	4.0
Jump Jets	RL	2	2.0
Jump Jets	LL	2	2.0

TECHNICAL READOUT: ACH-09S Achilles

Overview:

With the success of their early medium 'Mech models, most notably the Griffin and the Shadow Hawk, Earthwerks began experimenting with heavy assault designs. To keep their research secret, the testing grounds were moved to small planets, usually with little or no industrial capacity (to provide no incentive for pirating raids). The only known surviving facility is Test Site RW03 on the tiny planet of Rourke. Records show that the two other sites, RW01 and RW02, were destroyed by tactical weapons in the first Succession War. After completing only a few motive test bed prototypes, Earthwerks stopped production of the Achilles because they assumed all three test 'Wells' had been destroyed. The Mydron Corporation, which had supplied the Achilles with its main weapons, switched to other contracts such as the Rifleman and Jagermech, as Kallon Industries was still producing those models.

And so it came to pass that only a few Achilles models remained, hidden on Rourke for many years. Only recently were the plans rediscovered and the prototypes brought out of hiding. Unfortunately, there are no plans to produce any more than the four units on Rourke.

Capabilities:

The Achilles carries what could be described as the most devastating weapons array ever built into one 'Mech. Three powerful Mydron Gauss Rifles provide an unparalleled long range weapon, rivalled only by the Clans' heavier multiple ER PPC-bearing models. For close range combat, the Achilles carries three medium lasers and three anti-infantry machine guns. Also mounted on the chest is the Mydron Point Defensive Gauss Rifle (a forerunner of the Buzzsaw AMS) a radar-controlled mini-cannon that attacks incoming missiles. The left chest cavity has a high-tension alloy network (the forerunner of today's CASE) to prevent collateral damage due to exploding ammunition. Although it has been criticized for its lack of speed, the Achilles just might be a solution to the problem of the invading Clans. With a production price of only 7,818,666.7 C-bills, it could easily

replace some of today's assault 'Mechs, most notably the new Chargers and Annihilators. Perhaps it will once again find a place with Earthwerks Industries; one can never tell.

Battle History:

In the Battle of Rourke, a unit composed of a Commando, a Warhammer, an Awesome, a Phoenix Hawk LAM, a few aerofighters and an armored installation managed to fight two stars of Jade Falcons forces to a standstill. Upon reaching the outer walls of the installation, the Clansmen's CO, piloting a Thor, was greeted by one of the four Achilles prototypes. In the swift duel that ensued, the Achilles demonstrated its ability to survive hits by a Clan ER PPC while returning thrice the punishment with its Gauss Rifle. The Thor pilot was allowed to return to his DropShip — minus most of his armor and half his 'Mech's limbs. It is assumed that the Jade Falcons will probably return with increased firepower for a second attempt.

Variants:

Because there was never any production of the Achilles, there have never been any variants. The original blueprints reveal an attempt at grafting a GAU-8 Avenger autocannon to the right arm. This design was abandoned incomplete; the four prototypes bear the Mydron Gauss Rifles instead.

Notable 'Mechs and MechWarriors

Peter Siekierski

The first man in recent history to pilot an Achilles, Siekierski is apparently connected with its origin. It appears that he is descended from the Earthwerks technicians who were abandoned when the planet was ravaged in the First Succession War. Having seen the Clan's capabilities during the Battle of Rourke, he has expressed plans to create a hardened defense point from which to launch counterattacks at the Jade Falcons. The basis for this point will be the four Achilles prototypes that had been hidden during the first Succession War.

Optional Rules:

Like the Zeus, the Achilles carries a huge weapon in its forearm. If players agree, a punch from the right arm should do twelve points of damage instead of ten.

If players agree, the Achilles may be allowed to rotate its head, much like the Gauss rifle turret on the new Goliaths. Head rotation would allow the medium laser in the head to fire into the left and right arcs, or, if the torso is also rotated, into the rear arc. A 'head twist' would be performed in the reactionary phase of combat, just like a torso twist.

ACH-09S Achilles

Mass: 100 tons

Chassis: Earthwerks COL

Engine: Nissan 200

Cruising Speed: 21.6kph

Maximum Speed: 32.4 kph

Jump Jets: none

Jump Capacity: none

Armor: Chobham-Fasces Composite Heavy Armor with CASE

Weapons and Ammo:

3 Mydron Model A Gauss Rifles

2 Sutell VI Medium Lasers

1 Sutell VII Tandem Mount Twin Laser

3 Mydron 12.6 mm Machine Guns

1 Mydron M-186 Antimissile System

Manufacturer: Earthwerks Limited

Primary Factory : Rourke (Earthwerks)

Communications System: Neil 6000

Targeting/Tracking System: Octagon Tartrac System B

ACH-09S Achilles

Tonnage: 100 tons		Tons
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Internal Structure:	10.0 tons	10.0
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Engine:	Nissan 200	8.5
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Walk:	2	
-------	---	--

Run:	3	
------	---	--

Jump:	0	
-------	---	--

Total Heat Sinks:	10	0.0
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Gyro:		2.0
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Cockpit:		3.0
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Armor Factor:	304	19.0
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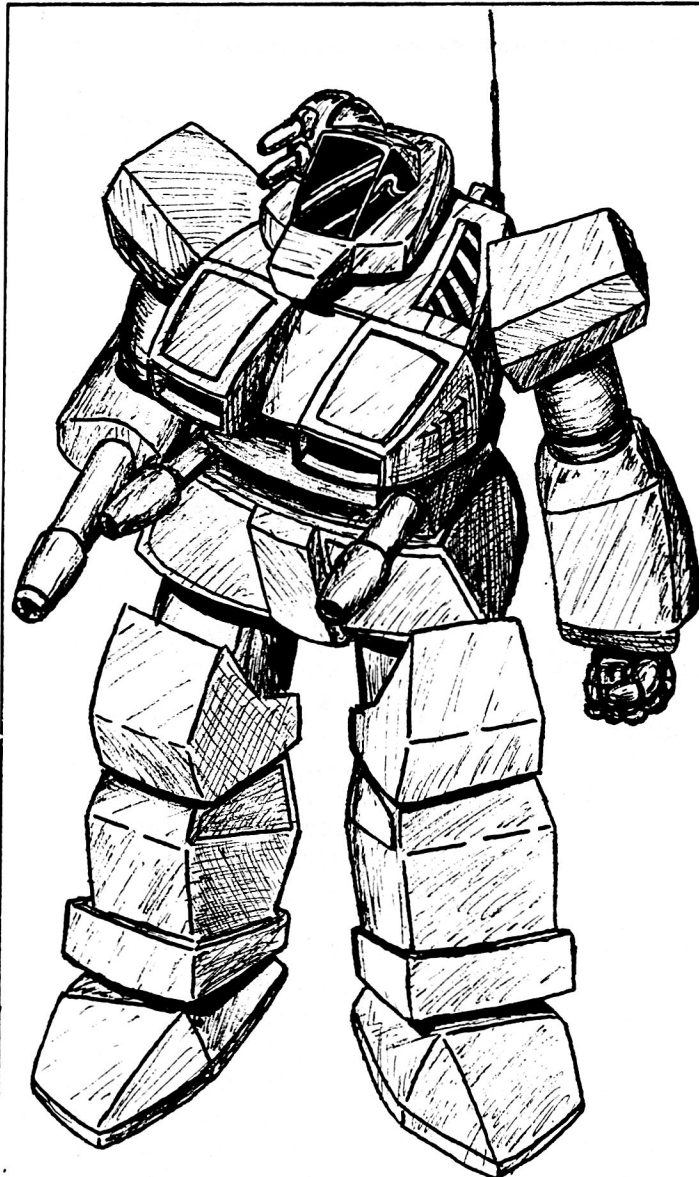
Head	9	3
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C Torso	47/14	31
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L/R Torso	32/10	21
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L/R Arm	34	17
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L/R Leg	41	21
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PS

Weaponry:	Loc	Crits	Tons
Gauss Rifle	RT	7	15.0
Gauss Rifle	RA	7	15.0
Ammo (Gauss) 24	RT	3	3.0
Gauss Rifle	LT	7	15.0
Ammo (Gauss) 16	CT	2	2.0
Medium Laser	H	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RT(R)	1	1.0
Machine Gun	LA	1	0.5
Machine Gun	LA	1	0.5
Machine Gun	LT	1	0.5
Ammo (MG) 100	LT	1	0.5
Anti-Missile System	LT	1	0.5
Ammo (AMS) 12	LT	1	1.0

Maligned, But Much Modified: The UrbanMech

After the first wave of the Clans invasions, modifications of existing BattleMechs – particularly those which had shown themselves to be useful during the invasions – began to flood BattleTechnology's offices. Keep them coming, please!

An interesting coincidence was the arrival on the same day of a paper on UrbanMech modifications from TekTeam's Margaret Spain and the Fire Hawks' combat report on their SuburbanMech. One of the considerations in fighting Clans 'Mechs is attempting to fight at closer ranges, to nullify their long-range advantage. Therefore, it's time to take a hard look at the potential of all our specialized 'Mechs. It's of particular interest that these modifications utilize existing technology: no putting your order into the Excel factory and getting put on a waiting list!

Sometimes it is interesting to see a variety of modification designs for one 'Mech; here we have a chance to add an actual trial under fire. As MechWarriors know – to their cost – a 'Mech may look great on the design printout, it may look shiny and deadly marching out of the factory; but the only real way it can be evaluated is in battle. How it performs while some poor slob is in the cockpit trying to do damage while keeping his or her happy rear end from acquiring same is what really counts!

During the final days of the Star League, UrbanMechs defended major centers throughout the Inner Sphere. Large numbers of UrbanMechs remained operational despite heavy losses during the fighting. While largely effective when fighting in the limited role of inner city defense, UrbanMechs operate at a severe disadvantage outside of that role, due to the 'Mech's extremely slow speed and limited ammunition load. Because of these limitations, many MechWarriors modify their UrbanMechs to try to overcome the 'Mech's shortcomings.

Most modified UrbanMechs follow one of two paths, both of which involve the removal of the heavy autocannon. The first and most common type of modification attempts to

increase the speed of the UrbanMech. Normally this involves the replacement of the UrbanMech's normal Leenex 60 fusion engine with the GM 120, which is normally used by the extremely common Wasp or Stinger BattleMechs. The UrbanMech's gyros are then upgraded to accommodate the additional power output. Additional jump jets are also fitted to further enhance the modified UrbanMech's mobility. Armament changes involve the fitting of either a PPC or a large laser in the 'Mech's right arm. In addition, many MechWarriors also fit a number of machine guns to deal with the increasing numbers of anti-'Mech-trained infantry.

A smaller number of MechWarriors accept the slow speed of the UrbanMech, but decided to greatly enhance the short and medium range firepower of the UrbanMech. The engine and gyro are retained, but the autocannon is replaced with a variety of weapons such as large and medium lasers, short range and long range missiles, and machine guns. The modified UrbanMech has a much longer battlefield endurance, and has potentially three times the damage potential at short range.

As recovered Star League technology begins to be incorporated in current production 'Mechs, many MechWarriors simply cannot find or afford the 'new' equipment. Modification of existing UrbanMechs with the older Inner Sphere technology in ways that still enhance their capability is a cost effective means of improving this much-maligned BattleMech. The next time that a MechWarrior rounds the corner and encounters an UrbanMech, he or she may be in for a big surprise — like a PPC blast or a half-dozen incoming SRM rounds!

Notable MechWarriors

Sergeant George Means

Sgt Means' modified UrbanMech has been utilized extensively in defensive action on Shiba along the Andurien-Liao border. He has replaced the heavy autocannon and small laser with a large laser and a pair of 4-tube short-range

missile launchers. Since the modification of his 'Mech, Sgt Means has been involved in five major engagements, and has scored four assists and three solo kills — including the destruction of a Warhammer. During that fight, Sgt Means jumped out of the concealment of a burned-out building directly behind the Warhammer. Salvoing all of his weapons, Sgt Means was able to penetrate the thin rear armor of the Warhammer and detonate its entire missile load.

MechWarrior Charles Luce

MechWarrior Luce and his modified UrbanMech, the *Full of Surprises*, have been protecting the urban areas of Radstadt in Rasalhague space since the end of the Ronin Wars. Because of his experiences in the Ronin Wars, MechWarrior Luce elected to have the speed of his UrbanMech increased and its weapons modified to make the 'Mech more survivable. While *Full of Surprises* is still relatively slow for a light 'Mech, its extra speed allowed the 'Mech to gain several hours for the evacuation of downtown Radstadt City while inflicting substantial damage on advancing Clan OmniMechs during their invasion of Radstadt.

Lieutenant Rachel Winslow

Lt Winslow has been working primarily as a technician for the mercenary technician unit TekTeam since 3019. After personally experiencing the shortcomings of the UrbanMech in combat, she designed a modification package for TekTeam's UrbanMech that greatly enhanced the firepower and combat endurance of the 'Mech. This involved the removal of the autocannon-10 and the addition of a PPC, six machine guns, one half-ton of machine gun ammunition, and two extra heat sinks, as well as an additional half-ton of armor. After the completion of a year-long retrofit of TekTeam's UrbanMech, the 'Mech was involved in a number of recovery and defensive operations that proved the validity of the modifications. The modified UrbanMech was equally capable against infantry and other BattleMechs. By using the tactic of 'flipping arms' this modified UrbanMech was able to bring to bear practically the same level of firepower toward its rear as it could fire forward.

Design #1

UrbanMech (Mod): 30 Tons
 Chassis: Republic-R (Modified)
 Power Plant: 120 GM
 Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph
 Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph
 Jump Jets: Chilton 360
 Jump Capacity: 120 m
 Armor: Durallex Medium
 Armament:
 1 Magna Mk III Heavy Laser
 2 Holly Short Range Missile Packs
 Manufacturer: Orguss Industries (Mod)
 Communications System: Dalban Interact
 Targeting/Tracking System: Dalban Urban

Type: UM-R60 UrbanMech (Mod)		Tons
Tonnage:	30 Tons	30
Internal Structure:		3.0
Engine:	120 GM	4.0
Walking MP's:	4	
Running MP's:	6	
Jumping MP's:	4	
Heat Sinks:	10	0.0
Gyro:		2.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	96	6.0
	Internal Structure	Armor Factor
Head	3	9
Center Torso	10	11/8
Rt/Lt Torso	7	8/4
Rt/Lt Arm	5	10
Rt/Lt Leg	7	12

Weapons and Ammo:	Loc	Crit	Tons
Large Laser	RA	2	5.0
SRM-4	RT	1	2.0
SRM-4	LT	1	2.0
Ammo (SRM) 25	RT	1	1.0
Jump Jets	RT	2	1.0
Jump Jets	LT	2	1.0

Design #2

UrbanMech (Mod): 30 Tons
 Chassis: Republic-R (Modified)
 Power Plant: Leenex 60
 Cruising Speed: 21.6 kph
 Maximum Speed: 32.4 kph
 Jump Jets: Pitban 6000
 Jump Capacity: 60 m
 Armor: Durallex Medium
 Armament:
 1 Fusigon Particle Projection Cannon
 1 Harmon Light Laser
 6 LFN Linblad Machine Guns
 Manufacturer: Orguss Industries (Mod)
 Communications System: Dalban Interact
 Targeting/Tracking System: Dalban Urban

Type: UM-R60 UrbanMech (Mod)	Tons
Tonnage: 30 Tons	30
Internal Structure:	3.0
Engine: Leenex 60	1.5
Walking MP's: 2	
Running MP's: 3	
Jumping MP's: 2	
Heat Sinks: 13	3.0
Gyro:	1.0
Cockpit:	3.0
Armor Factor: 104	6.5
Internal Armor	
Structure	Factor
Head 3	9
Center Torso 10	11/8
Rt/Lt Torso 7	9/5
Rt/Lt Arm 5	10
Rt/Lt Leg 7	14

Weapons and Ammo:	Loc	Crit	Tons
PPC	RA	3	7.0
Small Laser	LA	1	0.5
Machine Gun (2)	RA	2	1.0
Ammo (MG) 100	RT	1	0.5
Machine Gun (2)	LA	1	1.0
Machine Gun	RT	1	0.5
Machine Gun	LT	1	0.5
Jump Jets	CT	2	1.0

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TECHNICAL READOUT: UM-R90 SuburbanMech

Overview

The UM-R90 SuburbanMech is a joint effort between Phoenix Heavy Industries (PHI) of Ashkum and Hammerstorm Electronics of Antietam, two manufacturing concerns located in the Federated Commonwealth. Their intent was to upgrade the capabilities of the moderately-successful UrbanMech without compromising its role as a cost effective city-fighting 'Mech.

The design team responsible for the SuburbanMech refused to consider the incorporation of recovered Star League technology in the 'Mech's design. The high cost of such components would have made the resulting 'Mech too expensive for less-developed worlds, which are its primary market. Even with enhanced capabilities, the SuburbanMech remains a defensive weapon, more suited to city fighting than to assault or reconnaissance missions.

Capabilities

The external appearance of the SuburbanMech is virtually identical to its predecessor, the UrbanMech, and the armor configuration is the same. Internally, however, the two 'Mechs are radically different. The SuburbanMech replaces the heavy Imperator autocannon and its ammunition with a Hammerstorm PPC. Two torso-mounted medium lasers cover targets at close range, and the small laser in the left arm is retained for point defense. Two additional heat sinks help to offset the increased heat load.

Enough weight and space is made available by the weapons modifications to install a DAV 90 engine. The new engine increases the 'Mech's speed by 50 percent while retaining the UrbanMech's unique light weight gyro system. Jump capability is also increased by 50 percent, to 90 meters.

Battle History

In 3047, the first production models of the SuburbanMech were undergoing final testing at PHI's facilities when an unidentified raiding force attacked the factory complex. The

majority of PHI's corporate mercenary unit, the Fire Hawks, was on an offplanet mission; two MechWarriors from Mallory's Headhunters were present to observe the trials, however. They had brought their 'Mechs with them; one lance of Fire Hawk heavy 'Mechs, two Headhunters' 'Mechs, and four SuburbanMechs were left to defend the factory against 18 assorted raider 'Mechs.

In the close quarters of the factory, the SuburbanMechs proved their worth, disposing of eight light and medium 'Mechs in just under five minutes. The Fire Hawks and Headhunters destroyed six more raiders, and the other four surrendered when their DropShips abandoned them.

One week later, an explosion was recorded at a pirate jump point in the Ashkum system, as the raiders' JumpShip apparently failed in an attempt to quick-charge its jump drive.

Notable 'Mechs and MechWarriors

Senior Cadet James Lanier

Normally a member of the Fire Hawks' Command Lance, Cadet Lanier was working on the SuburbanMech development project while a replacement was being obtained for his recently-destroyed Thunderbolt. Lanier accounted for a Stinger, a Spider, and a Phoenix Hawk during the battle on Ashkum. While he was impressed with the SuburbanMech, he still looks forward to resuming regular duty with the Fire Hawks (Note: Cadet rank in the Fire Hawks is equivalent to the more common MechWarrior rank in other units).

Lance Sergeant Mark Goff

A specialist in city fighting from Mallory's Headhunters, Goff is credited with killing a Blackjack and a Crusader in the Ashkum battle. Goff used the increased mobility of the SuburbanMech to good advantage when he dropped the Crusader by jumping behind it and firing into its back. Goff, who was evaluating the SuburbanMech for use by the Headhunters, has recommended the purchase of two lances of the design for home defense.

SuburbanMech

SuburbanMech: 30 Tons
 Chassis: Phoenix UM-R Special
 Power Plant: DAV 90
 Cruising Speed: 32.4 kph
 Maximum Speed: 54.0 kph
 Jump Jets: Phoenix J55
 Jump Capacity: 90 m
 Armor: Phoenix Cuirass
 Armament:
 1 Hammerstorm HEC Firestorm Particle Projection Cannon
 2 Hammerstorm Mjolnir-5 Medium Lasers
 1 Hammerstorm Mjolnir-3 Light Laser
 Manufacturer: Phoenix Heavy Industries
 Communications System: Hammerstorm Hugin Mk VIII
 Targeting/Tracking System: Hammerstorm Munin Mk VI

Type:	UM-R690 SuburbanMech	Tons
Tonnage:	30 Tons	30
Internal Structure:		3.0
Engine:	90 DAV	3.0
Walking MP's:	3	
Running MP's:	5	
Jumping MP's:	3	
Heat Sinks:	13	3.0
Gyro:		1.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	96	6.0

	Internal Armor Structure	Factor
Head	3	9
Center Torso	10	11/8
Rt/Lt Torso	7	8/4
Rt/Lt Arm	5	10
Rt/Lt Leg	7	12

Weapons and Ammo:	Loc	Crit	Tons
PPC	RA	3	7.0
Medium Laser	LT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LT	1	1.0
Small Laser	LA	1	0.5
Jump Jets	CT	1	0.5
Jump Jets	LT	1	0.5
Jump Jets	RT	1	0.5

New For BattleTech!

From the FASA Corporation:

Jade Falcon Sourcebook: The history, culture, and military organization of the Jade Falcon Clan and complete unit rosters for the Clans invasions. A must-have. \$15.00

McCarron's Armored Cavalry: The toughest of the tough merc regiments: Unit history, TO&Es, and a campaign-length scenario. \$8.00

BattleTech Record Sheets 3055: The hit sheets for the 3055 Tech Readout 'Mechs. \$8.00

October Release:

BattleTech: Third Edition The new basic boxed set brings the BattleTech rules in line with the Compendium in a classy way. The major innovation is the training scenarios, which lead a beginner enjoyably into full play. It comes with fourteen nicely-made plastic BattleMechs, so the complete to-play rating on this version of the game is excellent. You know that friend you've been trying to get to play BattleTech with you? This is a great way to get 'em started. \$25.00

ComStar Sourcebook Yes, at last! History of ComStar and its splinter faction, the Word of Blake. New BattleMechs. ComStar Archetypes for MechWarrior. We've been waiting for this one! \$15.00

Late Fall:

Medium OmniMech Tech Prints Detailed cut-away views of the inner workings of the Fenris, Ryoken, Black Hawk, and Dragonfly. Poster sized & full color. \$15.00

Null Set This new adventure for MechWarrior traps your band of mercenaries in a plot against ComStar. \$9.00

From Ral Partha:

August-September:

Heavy OmniMech Boxed Set. These OmniMech sets are a bargain! You get to put your own alternate configuration on the OmniMechs; the set supplies you with several different choices for each 'Mech. \$20.00

Cheetah, Stingray, & Chippewa aerospace fighters.

Mauler, Hatamoto-Chi, Wolf Trap, and RVN-3C version of the **Raven**

October:

Black Knight, Wyvern, Coolant Truck

From ROC books:

Reissue of the first Grey Death Legion novel! **Decision at Thunder Rift** by William H Keith, Jr. Several of you have written to BattleTechnology asking for it — now it's back in print. \$4.50

September-October:

Reissue of the second book in the series. **Mercenary's Star**, by William H Keith, Jr. Prices go up to \$4.99. Third one is coming around Christmas time. And there *will* be a new Grey Death novel next year.

From the Pacific Rim Publishing Company:

BattleTechnology, The Lost Issues: 90 pages of material on the 3039 War, the Fourth Succession War, Marik Civil War, 'Mechs from scrap! the Controversial *BattleMechs: the best came first*. Special insert: The first issue of BattleTechnology from 1986. \$12.95

BattleTechnology #18: October You have it in your hands. \$5.00

BattleTechnology #19: December The Defense of Luthien. How to sock it to the Clans. Slaughter and surprises. New 'Mechs, new vehicles; the history of a weapons maker. \$5.00

BattleTechnology, the Early Years: 90 pages of material dating from 3000 to the end of the 3039 War. New rules on DropShips! Jump Space Gone Wrong for MechWarrior. The Lyran-Dieron Slugathon of the '39 Conflict. How the Black Pearl was reborn. The Gold Rush — is it worth taking on ComStar? Ghost of the 25th — Trelloc Prime has a long memory! SPECIAL INSERT: A Day in the Life of the Inner Sphere: Art-and photo Essay on what was going on all over on October 21, 3013. ALL NEW MATERIAL. \$13.95

Reader surveys say that you want more 'Mechs and all the tech detail, information about merc companies and hiring halls, and background on the Inner Sphere we can print. The thing you want from us most is more regular publication. Watch us. And watch for announcements of new products for our favorite game!

Items for review or information about new products for inclusion in this column may be sent to:

BattleTechnology c/o Ayer 944 Fletcher Ln, #9, Hayward, CA 94544.

The Old Boar Dies

December 12: Epitaph from the Tharkhad Herald, Tharkad, Federated Commonwealth

The wild boar is a fast and vicious fighter. It is territorial, tenacious, and protective of its family. It is not known for intelligence or flexibility.

In likening Duke Selvin Kelswa III to the boar on his family crest, political opponents on the Commonwealth Council usually meant to imply that he had a one-track mind, and was unable to change his course once decided upon. Some even suggested the rhinoceros as a more fitting crest. Few stopped to consider the forces that made Duke Selvin what he was.

The Tamar Pact suffered greatly at the end of the Thirtieth Century. Tamar's recharging stations were crippled by Kuritan attacks; Sevren was laid waste. Kuritan forces had taken a dozen worlds of the Tamar Pact; including Harvest, New Caledonia, Kirchbach, Weingarten, and Skokie. Looking at Duke Selvin in his belligerent old age, no trace was visible of the warmhearted youth of seventeen who made a secret journey to Harvest to spearhead a rebellion among the enslaved population. His friends were killed during a rough DropShip landing; Kelswa was marooned on the planet for a year, scratching for a living; traveling former battlefields which were now refugee labor camps, mourning the burned crops in BattleMech-trampled fields, watching labor squads of his former citizens clear debris-choked waterways. This experience of the grim hopelessness of life on a recently conquered world deeply affected him. He blamed the atrocities on the victor, House Kurita, rather than on the situation. He realized that the beaten-down populace of Harvest hadn't the energy to revolt; any liberation would have to come from outside. When he returned to the Tamar Pact he formed the Harvest Memorial Movement, dedicated to regaining every world lost to House Kurita. They figured losses clear back to the First Succession War.

Many of these worlds had belonged to the first Republic of Rasalhague, centuries ago. It was Duke Kelswa's tragedy that he could not accept that the loyalty of these worlds might be to a free Rasalhague rather than to the Tamar Pact. At the end of the Fourth Succession War, his troops occupied many of these planets in a coup, breaking Katrina Steiner's treaty with the Tyr. Duke Kelswa himself became a repressive conqueror to these unwilling worlds, with the best of motives. Over the Duke's loud objections, the Free Republic of Rasalhague was formed in 3035; including the disputed worlds. Seeing this coming, he married his daughter Morasha to Ryan Steiner, Duke of Porrima, the ruler of the Isle of Skye section of the Blackjack Operations Area, thus firming an alliance along all of the Commonwealth's Rasalhague-Draconis border. Their power block has formed a thorn in Hanse Davion's side for the past seventeen years.

As the worlds of the Tamar Pact have been swallowed by the Clans, Duke Kelswa has stormed at the Federated Commonwealth government, demanding troops to protect his worlds — troops already overcommitted on too many worlds. The Duke poured his personal fortune into the defenses of Tamar, and its capitol, Tamar City. He refused to coordinate defense planning with the 26th Lyran Guards which were his planet's garrison.

Duke Kelswa had an instinct for defensive tactics. It is unfortunate that he felt himself to be "a natural MechWarrior who needed no further training."

Morasha Kelswa Steiner was visiting her father in November of 3051 when the Wolf Clan Jumped in-system to attack the planet of Tamar. The 26th Lyrans answered the Clan challenge as a separate unit, setting their line between the Wolves' Drop Zones and Tamar City. After two battles, the 26th Lyrans were beaten back to the walls of the city. The Duke refused them entry to the city, so they fought one more gallant battle to protect the city gates. When the remnants of the unit were offered safe passage off-planet, they offered transport to the Duke and his family. He insisted that Morasha evacuate to safety on Kobe. Then it got really bad.

Khan Natasha Kerensky's forces took the city block by bloody block. The defenders resorted to traps and tricks, then to desperate *kamikaze* tactics. Light 'Mechs were loaded with explosives, then self-destructed by resolute pilots in the midst of a group of Clans OmniMechs. Some of these suicide pilots were fourteen- and fifteen-year-old junior cadets from the Tamar College of War.

At the last, the old Duke seemed to be everywhere in his battered Atlas, rallying defenders and leading charges. "If guts alone could have done it, the Old Man would have saved the planet," said one observer. Leading the remnants of his guard and most of the College of War's senior class, that Atlas pushed the 328th Assault Cluster of the Wolves back out past the city's walls. In the inevitable counterattack, the Duke went down, all weapons firing. The following day, the Tamar system surrendered.

Honor the old boar. He died as he lived, defending his thicket, surrounded by the enemies he had slain.

MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS!
MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS!
MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS! MORE MECHS!



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