BattleTechnology

The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

William H. Keith Jr. 1987

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About the Cover:

This month's cover captures a moment of raw terror—Captain Addison's *Thunderbolt* under 'Mech-to-'Mech attack by a Davion *Marauder* at the Battle of Hill 091, on Scheat V, in August of this year. Captain Addison's own story is featured in this issue. See page 26, "A Dagger's Death."

Contents

OPENING SHOTS

We want YOU for BattleTechnology.

This, the second issue of BattleTechnology, is as good a place as any to begin explaining the layout of this magazine. Perceptive readers will immediately realize that certain departments introduced in the last issue—Hiring Hall and Sidearms, for instance—appear again in this issue, while others—BattleTac and Repair Bay are two—do not.

Why?

No, we did not receive a flood of mail from disgruntled readers insisting that we drop some columns and add others. Nor are we operating entirely at random. Difficult as it may be to tell after only two issues of this magazine, we *are* proceeding according to a precise and carefully laid-out campaign plan. (Any of you who believe that, I've got this slightly used BattleMech for sale I want to talk to you about.)

On the theory that what was good for Caesar is good for us, all of BattleTechnology is divided into three parts: Departments, Articles, and the BattleTech Simulator. This time around, it's the care and feeding of the departments I'd like to talk about.

The departments are designed to cover a wide range of topics of interest to as many of BattleTechnology's readers as possible. To cover as much territory as we can, some departments can be broken down into sub-departments. The following list gives our departments (in bold, capital type), sub-departments (in bold italic), and a short description of the material which appears in each.

HIRING HALL—Describes and rates potential mercenary employers
WORLDBOOK—Gives planetary stats, descriptions and histories
MECHTAC
  BattleTac—Analysis of historical or recent battles at a company level or higher
  BattleTips—Combat tactics, from individual 'Mechs up to company level
BATTLEGEAR
  Sidearms—Personal weapons carried by MechWarriors, mercs, and infantry
  Combat Arms—Heavy weapons and BattleMech weapons systems
  Full Kit—Combat equipment, uniforms, and personal gear *other* than weapons
BATTLEMECHANICS
  Technical Readout—Stats and histories of BattleMechs, Aerospace fighters, and vehicles
  Repair Bay—Field maintenance and repair tips
  Combat Salvage—Conversions, updates, and special 'Mech variants
  BattleColors—Painting and camouflage schemes
MORE THAN WARRIORS—Poems, songs, and special artwork revealing Man and 'Mechs.

Obviously, we can't have every department featured in every issue, but we will attempt to maintain a balance of subject material with the idea of including something for everybody. In this issue, for instance, we elected to drop WorldBook, but we have an expanded Hiring Hall. We dropped BattleTac this time, but we're introducing BattleTips. Which department columns appear from issue to issue will depend on how much room we have in a given issue, what material is sent to us... and on what you who read BattleTechnology prefer to see.

Which brings us to the point of this editorial.

BattleTechnology is actively seeking writers, and all of the columns listed above are open to anyone who wants to take a shot at them. (And yes, so are the feature articles and the BattleTech Simulator material... but those will be the subjects of future editorials. I have to have *something* to write about next issue, after all!)

But even if you'd rather *play* BattleTech than write about it, you can still write us a letter and tell us what you like and don't like. Space and response permitting, we'll print some of the best ones... and we'll do our best to listen to them all.

As I said in the last issue, this is *your* story.

But we need your help to write it.

William H. Keith Jr.

- 3027 -

Hassid Ricol: The Red Duke

Right: Duke Hassid Ricol's personal JumpShip *Huntress* seen here at the Rodigo Nadir JumpPoint

**Duke Hassid Ricol
Rating Code: B/C/T**

OVERVIEW

Duke Hassid Ricol

House Kurita is not usually thought of as a desirable employer for mercenaries. Given the suspicious nature of the Draconis Combine, the government is generally unwilling to rely on untrustworthy outsiders—Wolf's Dragoons is a notable exception—and Kurita's reputation for treachery in its dealings with mercenaries is enough to make any mercenary commander think twice before signing a contract with them. There are individuals, however, within the Draconis Combine who occasionally augment their personal forces by hiring mercenaries—and usually treat them fairly. Duke Hassid Ricol is such an individual.

Properly speaking, Ricol is an Archduke, one of the handful of high-ranking nobles who govern a number of worlds within the Combine's borders. The de facto lord of 14 worlds within the Rasalhague Military District along the outlying borders with the Lyran Commonwealth, from Kufstein's World to the twilight barrens of The Edge, he maintains his capital and ducal court at Alexis on Rodigo, barely 20 parsecs from the Lyran border, and less than 50 parsecs from the Bandit King worlds of Hendrik of Oberon. Ricol is, however, one of the more active of Kurita's nobles. His personal JumpShip *Huntress* serves to carry him throughout his own domain, and sometimes even farther afield for reasons of political or military necessity.

The Ricols of Rodigo

The Ricols of Rodigo are an old and established family, one dating back at least to the time when the region was first settled late in the 23rd Century. In 2785 General Henri Ricol became the first Duke of Rodigo, and for more than two centuries after that, the Ricol domain was restricted to the world of Rodigo. It has only been with the past 30 years that 13 worlds formerly belonging to Steiner—some of the Tamar Pact worlds—and ceded to House Kurita in three separate campaigns, have been placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Duchy of Rodigo.

The Red Duke

Hassid Ricol became the ruling Duke of Rodigo, 12th of his line, in 3011, at the age of 34. Hassid is a complex and seemingly self-contradictory personality. In public he is a flamboyant and highly visible figure, known for his love of extended hunts in Rodigo's vast ducal game preserves. He revived the descriptive honorific of "the Red Duke," first adopted by Stefani Ricol, the 3rd Duke of Rodigo, because of the predominant color of the family crest, and delights in wearing impressive, military-cut, gold-trimmed, brilliant red uniforms replete with medals and ostentatious decorations. This image is difficult to reconcile with the more private picture of the man which has emerged in recent years—a brilliant politician and a superb military tactician, one who spins elaborate and elegant traps for his enemies, both military and political.

The outward flamboyance, it seems, is a mask shielding a keen mind and a ruthless and calculating ambition. It should be noted in passing that at least five plots against Hassid Ricol's life within the past eight years have all failed. Rumors abound that during this same period, several of Ricol's more prominent enemies among the Kurita court structure have vanished or met with unfortunate—and convenient—accidents,
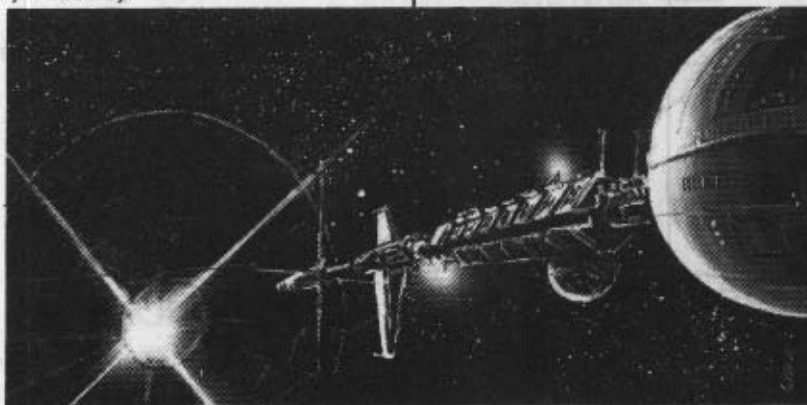
but there is not the slightest shred of evidence to support these whisperings.

It should be mentioned that a large part of Ricol's image is his skillful use of spies and informers. His personal intelligence-gathering network has a reputation for thoroughness and efficiency unrivaled by any private secret service.

Duke Ricol is known for using mercenaries more freely and with greater confidence than other House Kurita lords. Perhaps best known is his use of bandit hirelings during the Trell campaign of 3024.

Bandit Mercs on Trell I

Trell I—"Trellwan" as the locals call it,—is a backwater world of Steiner's Trellshire district. In 3024, Steiner mercenaries were protecting the planet from bandit raids by Hendrik of Oberon. Ricol's forces, posing as Oberonian bandits, landed and forced the Steiner mercs to withdraw. He then attacked the local defenses, setting the stage for his later "rescue" of the Trellwanese by his own forces. In a single stroke, and at very little cost, Ricol conquered a Steiner world by convincing its population that he had come as that world's saviour!

That the plan failed in the end was not due to any failure in Ricol's planning, but to unforeseen setbacks in its execution. Part of the local planetary militia—possibly aided by survivors of the original Steiner mercenary garrison and by defectors among the Oberonian mercenaries—turned against Ricol's forces and put up a stubborn and totally unexpected resistance. Ricol failed to dislodge a stand by local forces at the Battle of Thunder Rift, and the jump freighter used to ferry in the Oberonian mercenaries was captured by rebel militia. The delay caused by the battle was enough to allow word of the invasion to be carried to Antares aboard the freighter, and Ricol wisely withdrew before he could be confronted by superior forces.

Verthandi

Since the episode on Trell I, Duke Ricol has received a second serious political setback. Reactionary forces on Verthandi—one of the seven Tamar Pact worlds ceded to House Kurita by House Steiner in 3015 —were able, with the aid of off-world mercenaries, to win an impressive victory over Ricol's local forces. By the time Duke Ricol could arrive with reinforcements, a House Steiner fleet had arrived as well, with formal recognition for the rebel government and an offer of military aid.

Faced with possibly losing Verthandi outright, Ricol instead engaged in negotiations which ultimately granted Verthandi a semi-autonomous status within the Combine, with trade and recognition treaties granted by both the Commonwealth and the Combine. Since Verthandi lies well inside the Combine's current border with Steiner, the future of the world's independence is in some doubt, and Ricol has publicly stated that a "formal and final settlement of the matter" is only a matter of time.

In other words, the Red Duke is not finished with Verthandi yet.

Future Plans

The double setbacks at Trell I and Verthandi seriously jeopardized Duke Ricol's political standing in Luthien, where failure is neither appreciated nor rewarded. Besides making plans for the eventual return to Verthandi, Ricol has kept his future plans a closely-guarded secret. There are hints—vague and unsubstantial at best—that a new project of extreme importance and extreme secrecy has engaged his attention at some considerable distance away from his domain along the Lyran border. What this new project might be is anyone's guess. Its importance is hinted at by reports that Ricol has been paying well for information about events in Liao and Marik space.

It is possible that this project, whatever it is, will require the Red Duke to again seek the services of professional mercenaries.

MERCENARY TICKETS

At the present time, Duke Hassid Ricol is actively seeking mercenaries for both short- and long-term contracts within his own domain along the Lyran frontier. The fiasco on Verthandi has led to serious consequences on the other worlds which formerly belonged to the Tamar Pact.

Verthandi's near-independence has raised hopes among the resistance forces on all of the old Pact worlds. New Caledonia, with its tough and stubborn inhabitants fiercely set in the mold of their Celtic background, has been reported in open rebellion, and there has been widespread fighting against Kurita garrisons on Basiliano and Dahlgren as well. With House Kurita line forces tied down by recent Davion maneuvers and raids along the Proserpina front (see: Black Luthien on page 16 of this issue), Ricol's personal troops are hard-pressed to keep local and scattered acts of defiance from exploding into all-out rebellion all along the Kurita frontier.

Reliable reports have already been received that at least one mercenary regiment has been hired and stationed on Auric II (Harvest), and that several mercenary companies are scheduled to be deployed within coming weeks to Basiliano and others of the former Tamar Pact worlds now controlled by the Draconis Combine.

There are also reports from several of BattleTechnology's correspondents that Duke Ricol is searching for individuals who can provide him with intelligence about events now unfolding elsewhere in the Inner Sphere. Freelance intelligence agents, bounty hunters, and private observers have been approached by several Ricol agents

with offers of money for information. The nature of the desired information has not yet been disclosed.

TICKET DETAILS

Duke Ricol does not maintain mercenary forces under his command as a rule, but hires them for short-term contracts when he has a special need for their services. The current crisis generated by the Verthandian rebellion has created such a special need. The following list of possible missions has been suggested by BattleTechnology's Military Analysis Staff as probable mercenary tickets in Ricol's service.

MISSIONS

COMBAT CAMPAIGN*
   Assaults on rebel military forces
     (Offensive Campaign)
   Invasion of rebel worlds (Planetary
     Assault)
   Operations against Steiner invasion
     forces and raids
     (Offensive/Defensive Campaigns,
     Recon/Objective Raids)
   Guerrilla Warfare
TERRITORIAL CAMPAIGN
   Riot duty and crowd control
   Siege campaigns against rebel cities
STATIC DEFENSE
   Garrison and security duty on frontier
     worlds
   Training cadre missions with local pro-
     Kurita militias

* Note that, as of the press date of this issue of BattleTechnology, House Steiner has not mounted any actual operations within Kurita space since the show of force at Verthandi in 3025. The possibility of a major raid or all-out invasion of Ricol's domain remains a constant possibility, however, especially in light of recent unrest on several of the former Tamar pact worlds. Mercenary forces may be hired against this possibility, especially if Ricol's intelligence indicates that a major Steiner campaign is planned for the near future.

INTELLIGENCE+
   One-man/small group intelligence
     operations
   Planetary observation
   Company-level intelligence raids

Duke Ricol is aggressively expanding his intelligence operations in regions as far removed from Rodigo as Atreus and Sian. Although no details are available, his interest is rumored to extend from individual freelance intelligence agents willing to

observe and report on events on various worlds in Steiner, Marik, and Liao space, to mercenary companies willing to undertake tip-and-run raids against the Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League in order to take prisoners and secure items of military intelligence. Interested mercenaries, individuals and unit commanders, are advised to contact the Ducal Offices in Alexis, Rodigo.

LENGTH OF SERVICE
6 to 12 months

Length of service depends on the nature of the mission. Most merc combat tickets are relatively short-term, ranging from 6 to 12 months. Missions assigned to non-'Mech intelligence-gathering operations are typically longer, lasting from 1 to 2 years or more, depending on the need for agents to develop their covers.

REMUNERATION (per man per week,
   unless otherwise designated)
Infantry, Armor (per squad):
   Elite: Cb 7,000—10,000
   Veteran: Cb 3,500—5,000
   Regular: Cb 1,750—2,500
   Green: Cb 1,000—2,000

Artillery (per 7-man squad):
   Veteran-Elite: Cb 8,000—12,000
   Regular: Cb 2,000—5,000
   Green: Cb 1,000—1,500

MechWarriors, AeroSpace Pilots:
   Elite: Cb 1,500—2,500
   Veteran: Cb 1,000—1,500
   Regular: Cb 600—1,000
   Green: Cb 300—500

Support (Tech):
   Elite: 1,500—2,500
   Veteran: 800—1,000
   Regular: Cb 500—600
   Green: Cb 100—250

DropShip (per crew per week):
   Elite: Cb 12,000—14,000
   Veteran: Cb 8,000—10,000
   Regular: Cb 5,000—6,000
   Green: Cb 3,000—4,000

JumpShip (per crew per week):
   Elite: Cb 15,000—18,000
   Veteran: Cb 10,000—12,000
   Regular: Cb 6,000—8,000
   Green: Cb 3,000—4,000

GUARANTEES
ComStar intermediary: The agreed-upon sum (generally equal to one quarter to one

third of the entire sum for the mercenary unit for six months, less ComStar's 5% fee, is placed in escrow at the ComStar offices in Alexis, Rodigo, or at any other bank of the mercenary unit's choice within House Kurita territory. Contractual noncompliance is grounds for release of funds to the aggrieved party, after adjudication by a neutral ComStar precentor. Standard contract clauses may stipulate that both House Kurita and Duke Ricol will be held blameless if "operational necessities force the party of the first part (Duke Ricol) to employ deliberate misdirection for tactical or strategic purposes, resulting in possible loss or casualties among the party of the second part (the mercenaries)." In other words, discovery that the mercenary unit was not fully informed (or was lied to) about its part in an operation is never grounds for a charge of contractual noncompliance against Duke Ricol or House Kurita.

Though not usual in standard contracts with House Kurita or Kurita commanders, there are rumors that Duke Ricol may be willing to offer land grants to veteran and elite BattleMech forces who successfully complete active combat campaigns in forthcoming operations against the Lyran Commonwealth or rebel forces. One common rumor—neither confirmed nor denied at press time—is that mercenary BattleMech companies may be offered individual domains on New Caledonia or Basiliano, where they will be expected to keep the rebellious locals in line.

COMMAND RIGHTS

Individual commanders of veteran and elite units are generally granted a high degree of independence in mercenary and combined forces operations. Regular and Green units will generally be assigned to the operational command of a local House Kurita leader. Unit commanders may be subject to orders from Kurita field commanders at regimental level or higher, or to Duke Ricol himself, or to his staff officers, depending on circumstances and the importance of the mission. On most missions involving non-Kurita mercenary personnel, one or more Liaison Officers will be assigned to the unit to insure compliance with operational orders and political reliability of the unit.

TRANSPORT

The mercenary unit is generally expected to arrange for its own transport to Rodigo. Transport from Rodigo to the unit's final destination is usually provided by Duke Ricol's own transports. In special circumstances, Duke Ricol may arrange for trans-
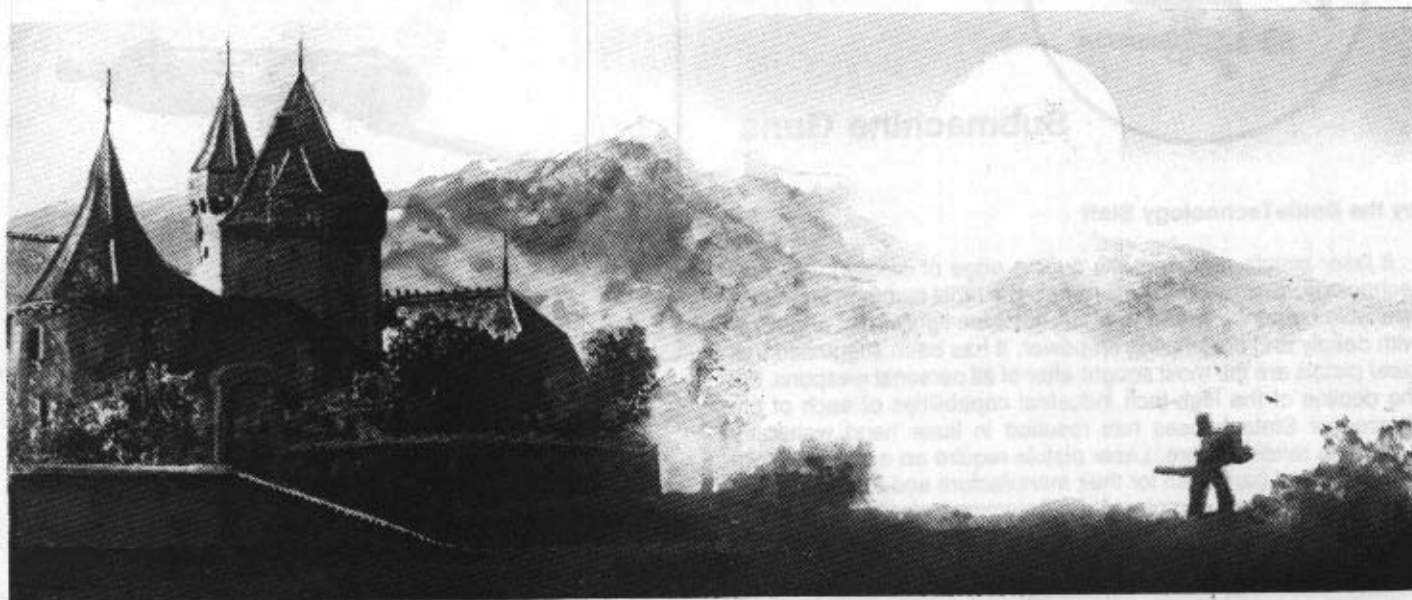
Castle in the Clouds: the Ricol Estate on Rodigo

port for a unit at his own expense, or aboard his own transports.

ASSESSMENT

Speaking in general terms, Duke Ricol is presently in need of mercenary forces of all types and is offering salaries considerably above the usual pay scales, especially for elite and veteran units. Further, Kurita forces have a tradition of victory—especially against House Steiner—which suggests that forthcoming operations against House Steiner within and near Duke Ricol's domains are likely to be successful and profitable. The opportunity for individual companies to receive land grants—at the cost of pacifying their own landholds—is one which would appeal to any landless mercenary unit.

BattleTechnology's assessment, then, gives Duke Ricol quite high need and pay ratings. Mercenaries contemplating service with Duke Ricol are cautioned, however, that the Duke has a past history of using mercenary forces without concern for their survival.

Indeed, there are persistent rumors that the mercenaries deployed in the Trellwan operation (actually militia MechWarriors "purchased" in a secret arrangement from one of Hendrik's staff officers) were destined to be liquidated by Ricol's own Battle-Mech forces as "proof" of Kurita's friendly

intentions towards the native Trellwanese. The Oberonians themselves were apparently informed that they would be "captured" in a staged battle, then later and secretly given their choice of return to Hendrik's domains or employment with Ricol's personal forces.

There is now no way of proving Ricol's actual intent on Trell I one way or the other. However, the possibility that Ricol actually planned the deliberate extermination of mercenary forces he himself had hired has forced BattleTechnology's evaluation staff to give the Conditions code for service under Duke Ricol a low rating.

A second unfavorable factor in rating the Conditions for mercenary service under Duke Ricol is the probability that mercenary units will be assigned garrison or anti-guerrilla duty on worlds where the majority of the population will be actively hostile to the occupying force. All of the Tamar Pact worlds within Kurita domains are habitable without the need for special suits or equipment, and all possess cities where numerous recreational facilities and services may be enjoyed by off-duty personnel. The Conditions code rating is lowered, however, by the likelihood that the mercenaries will be targets of an armed and hostile populace.

These two factors together have yielded a relatively low Conditions rating code of "T". BattleTechnology's recommendation is

that mercenary commanders approach any negotiations with Duke Ricol or his staff cautiously, making every attempt to determine the unit's deployment, mission, and responsibilities before committing to service. If possible, a clause should be inserted allowing noncompliance penalties to be applied against the employer in the event of deliberate and provable sacrifice of mercenary troops in combat. Further, the unit commander should accept the possibility that R&R opportunities, while present, may result in casualties, as well as added friction between the occupation forces and the local population.

High pay and opportunity for victory and recognition, however, probably outweigh the risks.

BattleTechnology
Mercenary Employer Assessment

Duke Hassid Ricol
CODE: B/C/T
ASSESSMENT: Marginally Favorable
   Good Pay, good opportunity;
   considerable risk
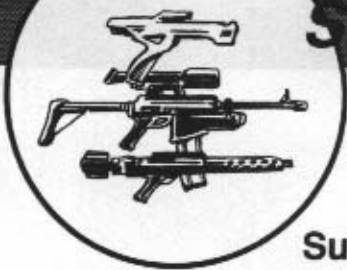
Submachine Guns

by the BattleTechnology Staff

If laser pistols represent the cutting edge of modern weapons technology, submachine guns remain the most common of readily-available personal sidearms which combine lightweight portability with deadly and hard-hitting firepower. It has been suggested that laser pistols are the most sought-after of all personal weapons, but the decline of the high-tech industrial capabilities of each of the Successor State houses has resulted in laser hand weaponry becoming relatively rare. Laser pistols require an extensive high-tech industrial base both for their manufacture and for their repair, and their reliance on complex internal electronics for power feed and focus control results in malfunctions and outright breakdowns which require high-tech servicing facilities for repair.

Submachine guns, on the other hand, have been around since the early 20th century. They operate on well-understood and purely mechanical principles and can be manufactured, repaired, or rebuilt at any facility stocking simple and relatively common tools and parts. Their ammunition, too, in any of several standard calibers, is widely-available. Many soldiers save their spent brass and reload their own rounds, and most Techs possess the molds and benchtop presses necessary for reloading by hand when in the field.

The continued popularity of submachine guns can probably be explained by their ability to deliver a high volume of fire, and by the fact that they are so much *fun* to shoot full-auto. Liabilities common to all SMGs, however, are their high rate of ammo usage and their high rate of recoil-induced muzzle climb. Trained warriors and elite special forces personnel are taught to use single-shot or burst fire only with these weapons, to avoid these handicaps.

Our listing of several common submachine guns is drawn from the New Avalon Edition of the Galactic Consumer's Report, Volume 27, number 5, for determinations of reliability and for testing reports. BattleTechnology cannot assume responsibility for the technical accuracy of these reports, or for the safety of the weapons described in this column.

Bereiter Model 14
M14

Bereiter M14

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Bereiter Arms
Operation: Blowback, full- or semi-auto fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 2 kg
  Weight (30-round magazine): .8 kg
  Weight (50-round magazine): 1 kg
Length (w/o stock): 40 cm
  (w/stock): 65 cm
Caliber: 7 mm
Type of Fire: Single shot, 4-round burst, or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 1200 rpm
Magazine: 30- or 50-round Magstar straight, pistol grip insert
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
  (with/without stock, full-auto):
    Short: 15/20 m.
    Medium: 30/50 m.
    Long: 50/100 m.
  (with stock, single shot or burst):
    Short: 40 m.
    Medium: 100 m.
    Long: 150 m.
Weapon Reliability: 92%
Base Cost: Cb 90
Reload Cost (30-round magazine): Cb 6
  (50-round magazine): Cb 10

Notes: Bereiter Arms' M14 submachine gun was designed as an extremely light-weight and easily-concealable SMG with a very high rate of fire. As such, it is popular with MechWarriors as a personal on-board weapon; with security forces, intelligence agents, and bodyguards who want to carry an easily-concealed SMG; and with anti-terrorist, marine, or commando squads who need a lightweight weapon for room-clearing in urban or shipboard assaults.

The M14's chief disadvantage, strangely enough, is its high rate of fire. At 1200 rounds per minute, a 50-round magazine will be emptied in two and a half seconds of full-auto fire, a 30-round magazine in a second and a half. While the manufacturer's claims suggest that the small (7 mm) round reduces recoil to the point where it is easily controlled even in one-handed operation, test reports indicate that the muzzle climb under full-auto fire is almost unmanageable, even with a two-handed grip and using the clip-on stock extension. The high rate of fire is also responsible for this weapon's most common malfunction—feed jam caused by failure to extract or eject a spent shell casing.

These problems, common to all SMGs, are extreme in the M14 when "buzzsawed" at 1200 rpm. Trained personnel conserve ammo and accuracy by using single-shot or burst fire only.

Imperator 2894A1

Rugan SMG

Imperator Submachine Gun

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Imperator Weapons Systems
Operation: Blowback, full- or semi-auto fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 3 kg
   Weight (50-round magazine): 1 kg
Length (w/o stock): 70 cm
   (w/stock): 80 cm
Caliber: 9 mm
Type of Fire: Single shot, 4-round burst, or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 700 rpm
Magazine: 50-round staggered box magazine
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
  (with/without stock, full-auto):
   Short: 20/25 m.
   Medium: 40/50 m.
   Long: 60/100 m.
  (with stock, single shot or burst):
   Short: 60 m.
   Medium: 120 m.
   Long: 200 m.
Weapon Reliability: 99%
Base Cost: Cb 100
Reload Cost (50-round magazine): Cb 10

Notes: The Imperator SMG has a long history of rugged and reliable service with numerous military, special ops, and security forces throughout the Inner Sphere. Its length, weight, and relatively low rate of fire give it great accuracy and range for an SMG.

At 4 kg fully loaded, the Imperator is heavy for an SMG. Part of this weight is the result of the built-in sound suppressor. With the escape of gas from the muzzle eliminated, and the bullet's speed reduced to subsonic velocities, the Imperator is one of the most quiet of modern SMGs. Though not completely silenced, the report is softened to a light "chuffing" sound inaudible to normal hearing at ranges greater than about 80 meters. The crack—the bullet's sonic boom—caused by supersonic rounds is also eliminated, as well as the gun's muzzle flash at night, making it difficult or impossible for an enemy to determine the direction from which fire is coming at ranges over about 40 meters.

The low velocity of the round reduces the amount of damage done to the target as well as the round's ability to penetrate armor, but the Imperator remains popular with various military arms, particularly with special operations groups who can make expert use of its silenced lethality.

Rugan Submachine Gun

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Various, under license to Rugan Industries
Operation: Blowback, full-auto or burst fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 2.5 kg
   Weight (50-round magazine): 1.5 kg
Length: 65 cm
Caliber: 12 mm caseless
Type of Fire: 3-round burst or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 1000 rpm
Magazine: 80-round box magazine
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
  (burst/full-auto):
   Short: 25/30 m.
   Medium: 40/50 m.
   Long: 60/100 m.
Weapon Reliability: Varies with manufacturer; 85—99%
Base Cost: Cb 70
Reload Cost (80-round magazine): Cb 20

Notes: The Rugan SMG is a commonly-encountered SMG on worlds of the periphery, and on backwater planets more or less isolated from the well-travelled commerce lanes of the Inner Sphere. It fires large (12 mm), slow (250 mps) rounds which cause considerable damage when they hit.

Rugans are simple and rugged weapons which are easily manufactured and maintained. Many are built by local industrial facilities under license to Rugan Enterprises of New Earth. Many more are manufactured from pirated blueprints and die patterns without the technicality of license fees or royalties. For this reason, Rugan SMGs (or identical copies) are manufactured on tens of planets across the Human Sphere, on worlds as diverse as Stewart (House Marik), Exeter (House Davion), Trell I (House Steiner periphery), Unity (House Kurita), and Butte Hold (independent).

An important feature of the Rugan is its use of caseless rounds. Each bullet is imbedded in a block of solid propellant which is detonated electrically. This reduces the weight of the magazine considerably, as well as allowing more rounds to be fitted into a standard-sized magazine. Since the propellant is completely stable (it can be fired only by its electrically-fired detonator), the weapon is not prone to "cook offs" when the weapon overheats. The lack of an ejection port reduces problems due to dirt or jams caused by spent casings.

Because of the diverse origins of many Rugan SMGs, reliability may vary from weapon to weapon. Those manufactured under license (or at least with faithful adherence to the original blueprint specifications) are reliable under the most adverse of conditions and

are virtually impossible to jam. Some weapons, however, are cheaply made and are prone to jamming or overheating.

A weak point in the weapon is the difficulty in obtaining caseless 12 mm ammo. It is readily available through Rugan-licensed manufacturers, though it is more expensive than standard cartridge SMG rounds. Molds and kits are available which allow techs to cast rounds from readily-available industrial chemicals. Rounds which are not obtained through regular, licensed Rugan facilities, however, may be of substandard quality. These may burn incompletely and foul the weapons firing chamber, causing feed jams, misfires, and a reduction of the weapon's punch.

Sound suppressors are available which partially silence the Rugan's report, at the cost of a slight reduction in damage to the target.

Rorynex Industries 3-mm sliver SMG Model XXI (RM-3/XXI)

Rorynex Submachine Gun

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Rorynex Industries
Operation: Blowback, full-auto or burst fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 2.1 kg
　Weight (100-round cassette): .9 kg
Length: 60 cm
Caliber: 3 mm caseless slivers
Type of Fire: 4-round burst or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 1000 rpm
Magazine: 100-round cassette
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
　(full-auto/burst):
　　Short: 15/20 m.
　　Medium: 30/40 m.
　　Long: 50/80 m.
Weapon Reliability: 98%
Base Cost: Cb 80
Reload Cost (100-round cassette): Cb 20

Notes: Rorynex Industry's SMG fires 3-mm caseless explosive slivers identical to those fired by TK assault rifles and other, similar weapons. Sliver SMGs and assault rifles are designed as close-ranged weapons, since they are not rifled, and accuracy drops off sharply at ranges of more than 100 meters.

Each sliver contains milligram quantities of a binary explosive armed by the shock of firing and detonated by the shock of impact. The resulting explosion is tiny, but sufficient to shred flesh or, in sufficient numbers, to chew through concrete walls or the most stubborn personal armor. Each sliver is embedded in a propellant block smaller than those employed by TK ARs, allowing more rounds to be carried in a single ammo cassette, but with a range which is considerably reduced.

The RM-3/XXI or "three twenty-one" is designed as a lightweight and inexpensive SMG for planetary militias and line infantry as well as for special ops forces, MechWarriors, security forces, and the other regular users of SMGs. It is a solid, dependable weapon with a very low malfunction rate. The ammunition is difficult to manufacture, however, and is not readily available on worlds far from regular commerce routes or armaments manufacturing centers. The base cost of Cb 20 for a cassette of 3 mm explosive slivers is usual for worlds on which explosive slivers are manufactured. Their price elsewhere can range five to ten times higher—if they are available at all.

The three twenty-one's unusual appearance is, of course, the result of having the feed device and sliver cassette mounted above and behind the weapon rather than attached underneath the weapon, as with traditional SMG magazines. Despite the appearance, test reports rate the weapon highly, since the low-caliber, low-mass rounds produce little recoil. It can be fired easily with one hand, though a forward, snap-down pistol grip provides added support and control.

Model 2920
KK-SPW

TK MP

Kogyo-Khorsakov Special Purpose Weapon, M-920

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Kogyo Industries
Operation: Blowback, full- or semi-auto fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 2 kg
   Weight (30-round magazine): .8 kg
   Weight (50-round magazine): 1 kg
   Weight (80-round magazine): 1.2 kg
Length: 65 cm
Caliber: 9 mm
Type of Fire: Single shot, selective burst, or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 800 rpm
Magazine: 30-, 50-, or 80-round staggered box magazine
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
   Full auto/single shot or burst:
   Short: 20/25 m.
   Medium: 40/50 m.
   Long: 70/100 m.
Weapon Reliability: 98%
Base Cost: Cb 80
Reload Cost:
   (30-round magazine): Cb 6
   (50-round magazine): Cb 10
   (80-round magazine): Cb 16

Notes: The KK-SPW has achieved considerable notoriety throughout the Inner Sphere as the lean, dangerous-looking combat weapon favored by Kurita BattleMech, special ops, and security forces. Featuring fully selective fire, the weapon can be set to deliver single shots or bursts of 2, 3, 4, or more rounds, as well as full-auto fire.

Silenced versions are available, or the barrel of the unsilenced model can be removed and replaced by a highly-efficient suppressor which makes the weapon virtually inaudible at ranges greater than 30 meters. One silenced model, the KK 920s-K, features a built-in, retractable snaplock bayonet. Though considered by most arms experts to be largely ornamental, the SMG's bayonet has added to the weapon's aura of deadly menace, and enhances the psychological advantage of the soldier wielding it. The KK 920s-K is favored by several Kurita elite units, including Kurita's personal Guard.

The weapon's sole disadvantage is its clumsiness when used with the 80-round magazine, which is so long that it is impossible to fire from the prone position and awkward to handle in tight corners. Many Draco veterans choose instead to tape two 30-round magazines side-by-side, top-to-bottom, to allow surer and more rapid reloading.

The design of the KK 920 makes it a rugged, dependable, and highly lethal weapon.

Thorvald & Koch Submachine Gun

Weapon type: Submachine gun
Manufacturer: Thorvald & Koch
Operation: Blowback, full- or semi-auto fire
Weight (w/o magazine): 2.5 kg
   Weight (30-round magazine): .8 kg
   Weight (50-round magazine): 1 kg
Length: 45 cm
Caliber: 9 mm
Type of Fire: Single shot, selective burst, or full-auto
Rate of Fire: 950 rpm
Magazine: 30- or 50-round staggered box magazine
Reload Time: 10 seconds
Effective Ranges
   Full auto/single shot or burst:
   Short: 25/35 m.
   Medium: 50/70 m.
   Long: 80/120 m.
Weapon Reliability: 98%
Base Cost: Cb 120
Reload Cost:
   (30-round magazine): Cb 6
   (50-round magazine): Cb 10

Notes: The TK MP is generally acknowledged to be one of the finest submachine guns in current service. It is not as common as some other designs, being produced in relatively limited numbers only at the T&K plants on Tharkad, New Avalon, and Skye. It was originally conceived as a 3-mm sliver gun, a scaled-down version of the famous TK assault rifle, but the decision was made during the early design stages to produce instead a weapon which could use the far more readily-available 9-mm ammunition used by pistols and many SMGs. Its relatively low muzzle velocity (less than 300 mps) is compensated for by the large, hollow-point or explosive rounds.

The TK-MPS is a silenced version with a built-in suppressor which lowers the weapon's sound to the point where it is virtually inaudible at ranges of more than 50 meters.

The TK MP is shorter than other SMG designs of similar weight and caliber. This is due to the bullpup configuration (barrel-trigger-magazine rather than barrel-magazine-trigger) which allows the magazine and feed mechanisms to be built into the weapon's stock. This makes it ideal for MechWarriors as an on-board personal sidearm, and for special-ops, anti-terrorist, and other special forces who need a compact weapon which delivers heavy firepower.

Though more expensive than many submachine gun designs, the TK MP is favored by several elite and commando forces of both House Steiner and House Davion. Small numbers of these weapons have also found their way into Kurita and Liao hands, and are occasionally encountered in the hands of Draco and Confederation forces. Many individual weapons a century or more old continue in active service to this day, and they are highly prized for this reason by mercenary as well as regular house troops.

BattleTips

The David Ambush

**The David Ambush—
Many light 'Mechs
can take on one heavy
in street-to-street combat!**

[Editorial Note: Penobscot is the principal city on a world of deep forests and rugged mountains on the Marik-Steiner frontier. Named, it is believed, for an early colonial pioneer leader, the world itself is listed as Penobscot on most star charts, though the official designation is Tremaine IV. The city of Penobscot is a modern complex of steel and ferrocrete structures sprawling from Penobscot Bay to the vast forests of the White Mountains.

Late in September, 3022 (TC) a battalion of Marik raiders dropped on the outskirts of Penobscot City for reasons which are still not entirely clear. It is believed that factional conflict within the House Marik government had led Colonel Marcus Galliani to stage the raid in an effort to gain leverage against opponents on the Marik staff.

Penobscot was garrisoned by a small force of veteran mercenaries, Varrick's Vandals, under the command of Colonel Charles Varrick. The Vandals, under contract to House Steiner, put up a valiant resistance despite the overwhelming odds in both numbers and 'Mech tonnage against them. The following BattleTips entry was submitted by Lieutenant David Fletcher, former recon lance commander of Varrick's Vandals.]

Despite their numbers, we were in a good position. We'd fallen back into the central part of the city where we could take advantage of the cover offered by the taller structures. The Marik raiders didn't know for sure where we were, and they'd been forced to disperse in an effort to locate us and root us out.

My lance consisted of my own Panther, Brad Finnegan's UrbanMech, Paula Mason's Wasp, and Fred Jurgens' Stinger. Fred's machine had already taken savage damage in an uneven passing encounter with a Marik Atlas. His 'Mech's left arm was hanging by a thread, and gaping craters showed in his front torso armor. All of the rest of us had taken hits, but we were determined to make a stand here, in the heart of the city, where the enemy's numbers and tonnage were at least partly balanced by the shelter of the surrounding buildings.

Droman Avenue was one of the main thoroughfares in the city, a broad, straight avenue running east towards the domed hemisphere of the capitol, hemmed in by sturdy steel and ferrocrete structures averaging three and four stories in height. Many of the buildings were already showing damage from the Marik bombardment and air strikes, and rubble was spilling out across the street, but most were still standing and would provide excellent cover. We were certain that the enemy would use Droman Avenue as a direct pathway into the city's heart, and the battle-damaged buildings gave me an idea which might let us get a strike or two in before the enemy was able to concentrate enough to kick us out of the city.

But the Marik forces would be on us soon. I gave my orders.

Jurgens piloted his 'Mech into a narrow alley which entered Droman Avenue from the south. Paula positioned her Wasp in an alley opening opposite Jurgens' hiding place on the north side of the street.

Finnegan and I chose hiding places sixty meters up Droman Avenue to the west, he inside a battle-damaged building on the north side of the street, myself inside the shattered front of an office building opposite

him to the south. We entered our hiding places from the opposite sides of the buildings, partly to hide the fact of our entrance from observers on Droman Avenue, partly to provide ourselves with escape routes should we need them.

Then came the waiting.

We didn't have long to wait.

Hidden away as we were behind massive facades of metal and ferrocrete, we couldn't use our 'Mech sensors. The first hint I had that the enemy was coming was the small avalanche of plaster and stone fragments rattling on my *Panther's* head and shoulder as something large and close jarred the pavement outside with ponderous, slow-motion footsteps. The rain of debris came harder and faster with each step.

It wasn't long before my external mikes could pick up the lumbering *thud-slam-thud* of 'Mech footsteps approaching up the street from the west. The structure I was hidden in—already damaged by my unauthorized entrance—trembled, dancing with each footfall and threatening to bury my *Panther* once and for all in a cave-in of rubble. This approaching monster was *big*.

It wasn't until a towering black mountain swept past the north windows of the building that I realized just what it was we were facing. There was no mistaking that silhouette, that massively armored, death's head skull, those jutting weapons.

Atlas!

The AS7-D *Atlas* is one of the deadliest, most feared Battle-Mechs ever fielded. It masses 100 tons. Where my *Panther* carries a Telos four-shot SRM launcher and a particle cannon, one of these monsters mounts weapons equivalent to a whole lance of lighter machines: four medium lasers; a massive, high-speed, 120 mm autocannon; a 20-rack launcher for long range missiles; and a six rack for its powerful SRMs.

I broke out in a cold sweat. This was the machine which had almost casually straddled Jurgen's *Stinger* with a fusillade of autocannon and LRM fire less than twenty minutes before, and come within an ace of putting Jurgens down in a single exchange of fire. The results of Jurgens' return fire were visible on the Marik 'Mech's leg and torso armor: scorch marks from the *Stinger's* medium laser which had marred the paint and done little more. I had heard stories of *Atlases* in combat, how their arms were so strong they could pick up lesser 'Mechs with one hand and throw them down, how it had been suggested once that one *Atlas* could take on a battalion of *Stingers*, take everything they could dish out, and eliminate the smaller 'Mechs one by one with the ease of a man polishing off a plate of hors d'oeuvres.

We *couldn't* stand against such a monster!

The problem was, our trap was already laid. Paula and Fred were a few meters up the street, and the *Atlas* was certain to see them when it reached the alley openings where they waited. If they fled now, perhaps they would have a chance…
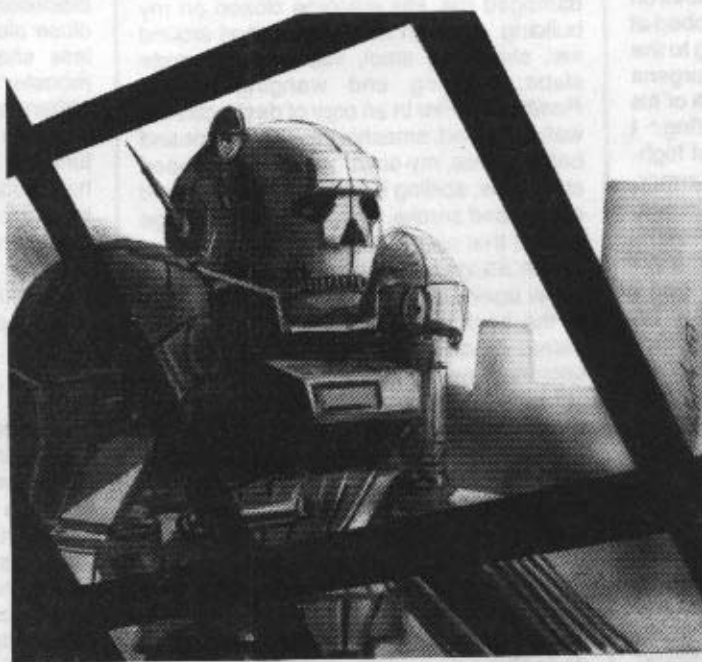
But no, I knew those two too well. Even if they knew what horror was lumbering down the street towards their hiding places, they would not flee and leave Finnegan or myself to face the monster by ourselves.

Nor could we remain in hiding and let the *Atlas* dismember our friends.

I knew Finnegan would be waiting for me to make my move. As the shadow of that armored mountain swept past outside, I took a deep breath, struggling for calm. I would need all my wits about me for this one.

Grasping my *Panther's* controls, I forced my 'Mech forward, into the north wall of the building. Glass and girders showered outward as I stepped through the collapsing face of the building and onto the street. Like a metal cliff, the back of the *Atlas* rose in front of me, a bare 30 meters to the east.

An explosion of debris from across the street marked the appearance of Finnegan's *UrbanMech*. Had he been waiting for my appearance, or had he decided to take on the *Atlas* by himself? I never did learn the answer to that one, but I knew that Finnegan and Paula were very, very close. If I'd elected to pull out, I have no doubt that Finnegan would have chosen to stay and slug it out with the monster, rather than let Paula face it alone.

We'd caught the *Atlas* by surprise, certainly. I stabbed my SRM firing button, sending my four SRMs screaming into my target. One missed, but the other three smashed in rapid-fire succession squarely into the monster's back. My PPC spat blue lightning, catching the *Atlas* as it began a ponderous turn and striking white fire along the rear portion of its left side. Armor fragments showered onto the street in molten globs.

Finnegan's little 40 mm autocannon was barking close beside me, adding that weapon's firepower to the smoking damage already wreaked to the *Atlas'* back. His *UrbanMech's* only other weapon was a Harmon light laser. He scored a hit with it on the enemy's massive right forearm as the *Atlas* completed its turn, but the damage amounted to a scratch which the heavier 'Mech didn't even notice.

Before the *Atlas* had completed its turn, both my *Panther* and Finnegan's *UrbanMech* had ducked back into our half-ruined shelters. We were lucky in one respect: the *Atlas* mounts a pair of rear-facing medium lasers but it didn't fire them, not then. All I could think was that its pilot planned to take us apart by hand.

But it would have to catch us first.

Laser fire speared into my building, showering my *Panther* with ruined chunks of building but doing no serious harm. Through the smoke and cascading plaster dust, I could make out a pair of lithe shapes appearing in the street behind the towering *Atlas*. Paula and Jurgens had repeated our maneuver, stepping into the street just behind the *Atlas*, where they could pour concentrated fire at close range into the rear of the massive target.

Both of Paula's SRMs hit, flailing armor from the *Atlas'* right leg. Those shots were wasted, I was sure; the *Atlas* carries damn
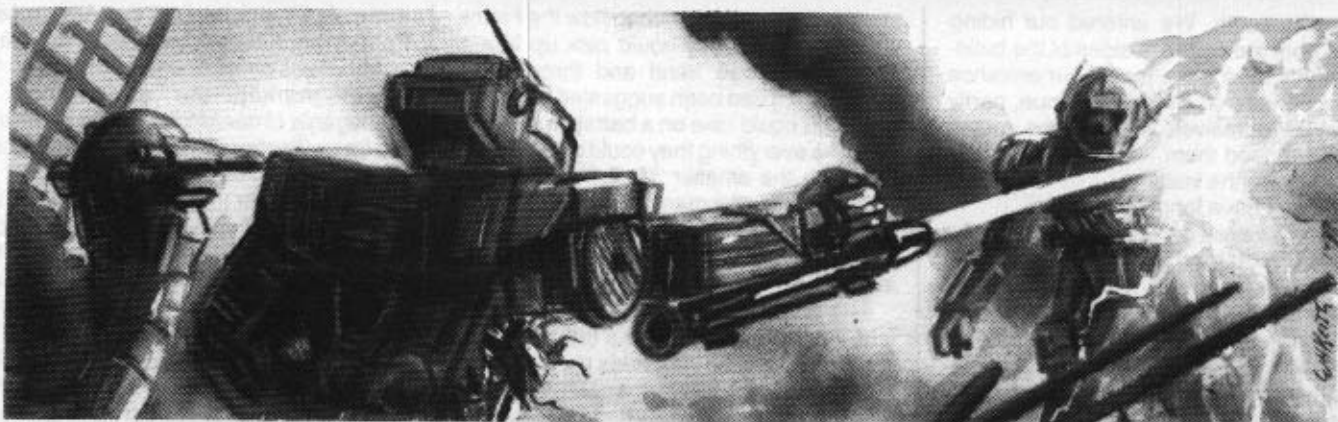
near as much armor on one leg as it does on its front torso. Her medium laser stabbed at her target's left torso, though, adding to the damage caused by my PPC burst. Jurgens waded in with laser fire and with both of his arm-mounted machine guns blazing. I could hear the spangs and shrieks of high-velocity bullets sparking off the *Atlas'* armor.

The *Atlas* fired its rear-mounted lasers, dividing its fire between Paula and Jurgens. Paula's *Wasp* took damage to its left leg, I was certain, but if anything hit Jurgen's *Stinger*, I couldn't see it. Both light 'Mechs ducked back into the mouths of their alleys. The *Atlas* paused as if considering, then made a ponderous, slow-motion turn and started back towards our comrades.

I smashed through into the street again. White light flared across my *Panther's* center torso. The *Atlas* must have been expecting such a move, because both of his rear lasers caught me full in my 'Mech's chest.

But my PPC had discharged a second bolt into the *Atlas'* back before my vision cleared, and four more SRMs streaked across the narrow gap. A hit! And another! The damage added to the *Atlas'* back by the *Stinger* and *Wasp* had been grievous indeed. I could see bundles of wiring and charred support struts through smoking craters in the *Atlas'* back. As I watched, Finnegan's *UrbanMech* blasted away at our target with his autocannon, multiple explosions flashing across the enemy 'Mech's left side and leg, chopping at already shattered armor.

We ducked back into our holes as the *Atlas* turned once more. I ran a quick check on my 'Mech's systems. That twin hit had savaged the armor in my center and right torso. A few more like that, and this uneven David-and-Goliath contest would end—brutally.

The *Atlas* pilot must have known that he'd

damaged me. His machine closed on my building. Autocannon fire smashed around me, shredding steel, vaporing ferrocrete slabs, banging and wanging at my *Panther's* armor in an orgy of destruction. A wall collapsed, smashing me to the side and back. Worse, my cover was partly stripped away now, spilling into the street in a cloud of dust and smoke. The *Atlas* loomed huge behind that wispy veil.

The *Stinger* and the *Wasp* stepped from cover again. More missiles struck the *Atlas* in the back and sides, and the *Stinger's* paired machine guns chattered away in unison, chewing into the huge machine's internal structure revealed through the rents in its armor.

The *Atlas* took a step forward, ignoring the twin nuisances to its rear save for another twinned burst from its rear-mounted lasers. The autocannon mounted in its side swung its gaping maw towards me.

I sent my *Panther* scrambling back into the ruin of the building, welcoming the avalanche of wreckage which came thundering in as more of the structure collapsed. The *Atlas'* autocannon fire sought me out, probing through darkness and ruin, as SRM and laser fire stabbed and probed.

I emerged on the street south of and parallel to Droman Avenue, my 'Mech dented and battered but carrying no serious additional damage. The sharp barks and cracks of explosions from the far side of the building told me that the street battle there was continuing.

I turned, braced myself, then fired my *Panther's* jumpjets. Bursts of fusion-heated flame sent me soaring over my former shelter in a soaring bound. I came down squarely behind the *Atlas* just as it bore down on Jurgen's crippled *Stinger*.

His *Stinger's* left arm was lying on the street, shredded wiring and actuator circuitry hanging out the severed end like fire-

blackened spaghetti. Paula's *Wasp* stood close alongside, her laser washing harmless shafts of light across the 100-ton monster's impenetrable chest armor. The *UrbanMech* was at the *Atlas'* rear, its autocannon smashing through internal structure in a fine spray of exploding shells and half-molten fragments. I took the shock of landing by flexing low on my 'Mech's knees, and opened fire with my PPC as I recovered from the drop.

Lightning flashed and sparked in the damaged *Atlas'* exposed wiring and circuitry. A bolt of electricity played between the hole in the *Atlas'* back and the street, jumping and flickering as megawatts of charge overload sparked through the air to ground in thunder and ozone across the pavement. Another spread of SRMs rocketed into the *Atlas'* leg and right torso.

That hurt the bastard! The *Atlas* staggered as though gravely wounded, then lurched heavily into the facade of a building on the south side of the street. Its autocannon continued to fire as it fell, the trail of 120 mm shell explosions smashing across the *Stinger's* torso, then arrowing off down the street in a crashing drumroll of raw sound. For a long moment, it looked like the *Atlas* would go all the way down, but its pilot recovered, and the heavy machine turned to face me once more.

"Lance...*jump!*" I cried into the command circuit, and all four 'Mechs triggered their jumpjets, bounding back out of the sweep of the damaged *Atlas'* wrath. Jurgens' landing on the south side of the row of buildings was heavy and clumsy. "Jurgens! I ordered. Withdraw!"

"I'm okay, Lieutenant!" Jurgens replied. "I can handle it!"

I didn't have time to answer him. At that moment, the wall of buildings behind us dissolved in crashing, tumbling debris. An *Atlas* is too heavy to mount jumpjets. This

Atlas had solved the problem of the barrier of buildings not by going over them, but by coming through!

Laser fire flashed from the heavier 'Mech, and missiles scribed hot, white contrails from the *Atlas'* left torso. The Marik pilot was splitting his fire again. Three missiles struck me in my *Panther's* legs. The others exploded harmlessly somewhere behind me. A laser smashed into my machine's center torso, adding to the damage already there. My HUD was flashing red, shrieking warning of damage to my internals, of the loss of two heat sinks, of imminent power shutdown. That was all I needed now, for my *Panther* to shut itself off and leave me helpless in the face of that monster's raw, crushing strength!

I held my fire to keep from adding to my 'Mech's heat problems, and fought a short, nightmare battle overriding the *Panther's* cutoff circuits. Jurgens took more damage that staggered his 'Mech, even as he fired hopelessly and uselessly into the *Atlas'* front torso.

Two BattleMech forms landed close behind the Atlas on hissing jumpjets. The stubby little *UrbanMech* opened fire with its autocannon, but the range was so close that the rounds went flashing past the *Atlas'* shoulder and off down the street behind us. Its laser scored damage, though, and I saw chunks of machinery spilling onto the pavement. Paula's *Wasp* let fly with her SRMs and laser from nearly point blank range. The *Atlas* seemed to sag, then stagger to one left. Smoke was billowing from the ravaged, armorless sections of its back and left torso.

I fired my jumpjets and soared to one side, risking another heat shutdown in order to get clear of the *Atlas'* front arc of fire. As I set down eighty meters away, I saw that the *Atlas* pilot had regained control of his machine and lashed out at the closest of his tormentors—Finnegan's *UrbanMech*.

The stubby little 30-ton 'Mech had one terrible disadvantage. It was slow, slower even than the *Atlas* which was bearing down on it. Perhaps he tried to fire his jumpjets to escape, and failed. All I know is that the *Atlas* loomed above his little machine, towering, unstoppable, its massive fists descending like falling mountains...

For the first time in this wild fight, I was far enough away that I had a clear track-and-lock with my PPC. Coldly and deliberately, I drew a bead with my right forearm weapon on the *Atlas'* already damaged back. Battle damage must have opened some of the seams in my sealed cockpit, for the discharge of the weapon brought the sharp tang of ozone to my nostrils. A volcano gout of flame and smoke boiled from the stricken giant. Its torso seemed to bend back around the wound. It took a step forward, paused, then toppled forward like the fall of some monstrous tree. A rising pall of smoke and dust blocked my view...

The battle—that part of it, at least—was over. Four light 'Mechs had taken on an *Atlas*, and won. Our sensors warned us of approaching Marik BattleMechs, more heavies summoned, no doubt, by the doomed *Atlas* in the last moments before we'd managed to cut it down. Our cost was high: all of our 'Mechs carried heavy battle damage—my *Panther's* torso armor had been breached in four places, and I noticed that Paula's *Wasp* was dragging its right leg. Fred Jurgens escaped with his life, though his *Stinger* was badly hurt, its gyros damaged, its left arm gone.

And we'd lost Finnegan. The *Atlas* had smashed the little *UrbanMech's* head and upper torso with a savage, brutal force which had driven Finnegan's machine into the pavement. I don't know if he was still alive when my killing shot struck the *Atlas* and toppled it forward onto its victim.

God...I don't ever want to know. If he was still alive, he must have been still struggling to get free of his cockpit when 100 tons of carballoy steel and suddenly lifeless machinery had thundered down on his trapped *UrbanMech*.

And I was his killer.

We left him there in the wreckage. There was no time to recover his body...and neither Fred nor I wanted Paula to see what was left.

You all know how the rest of it goes. The *Vandals* were forced back out of the city eventually, but not before we'd accounted for fourteen enemy 'Mechs, including, of course, an *Atlas* piloted by none other than Colonel Marcus Galliani. The Colonel's death left his command in some disarray, adding to suspicions that Galliani had been improvising his mysterious plans for Penobscot as he went along. There was a savage, drawn-out campaign, an endless round of hit-and-run raids, which burned through the forests along the flanks of the White Mountains throughout the rest of that fall. The Marik forces kept trying to trap and pin us, but they were never able to catch us. For our parts, we were running low on ammunition and could strike only when we were certain of winning an overwhelming, if temporary, advantage. Those times were not frequent.

By late November, word came that a Steiner relief force had jumped in-system. The Marik forces fell over themselves in indecent haste to board their DropShips and depart Penobscot for elsewhere. The invasion collapsed as quickly as it had begun, and we found ourselves the proud possessors of a remarkable and totally unexpected victory.

Victory.

I only needed to remember the expression on Paula's face that afternoon, after we climbed out of our 'Mechs back at our camp back in the deep woods, for any taste of victory to be transformed to ashes in my mouth.

Victory...but a victory bought at such cost that I resigned my commission soon after the Marik DropShips shrieked their way into Penobscot's atmosphere and beyond, into space. I would continue to fight, but not as a lance commander, and never again with Varrick's Vandals. There was no way I could continue serving with my old unit, not after that encounter with Galliani's *Atlas*.

Because the look on Paula Mason's face which had so seared my soul had been aimed at me.

"Murderer," she said.

The bond which had tied our lance together, which had made it possible for us to maneuver in such a perfect dance of death against the Marik *Atlas*, had been shattered forever.

A BattleTechnology Exclusive Feature Article:

Black Luthien

by Roger van Nuys

Black Luthien—a world of sprawling, black cities; a wilderness of black ferrocrete and manufactories and industrial centers encroaching upon black swamps under an atmosphere black and turgid with the foul belchings of Luthien's industry...

This has been the image of the capital world of the Draconis Combine held for centuries by the citizens of every one of the other Successor States... but just how truthful an image is it? BattleTechnology asked Roger van Nuys of our Draconis Combine branch editorial offices on Luthien to give us a report.

Not many people outside of the Draconis Combine realize the extent of the terraforming miracle which has transformed the face of the world known as Luthien. Only four centuries ago, Luthien was a world of little more than equatorial deserts, shallow seas and foul-smelling polar swamps. Fourth planet of a huge, G0-type subgiant star, Luthien was virtually uninhabitable at the equators, and the poles sweltered in a steamy, sauna bath climate that made the world only marginally habitable. Its population was less than three million—farmers, mostly, raising rubber, bamboo, and Jukwood. On the Sendai Coast, fishing fleets harvested the xenocrustacean known as Tushani, the "Tushan Lobster" served as a delicacy by expensive restaurants and catering services across the Inner Sphere.

It was Lord Sanethia Kurita's decision to move the capital of the Draconis Combine from New Samarkand to Luthien in 2617 which was responsible for the transformation of Luthien into the imperial splendor which we of the Combine know today.

The factories are there—there can be little doubt about that. An estimated 70% of Luthien's land area and large parts of the shallow, coastal sea regions are now covered by the industrial facilities and manufacturing centers which make Luthien one of the leading industrial worlds of the Inner Sphere. It is true, too, that certain problems—pollution of air and water, the conditions of life in the officially-designated "housing utopias" surrounding the cities, the threatened extinction of all native Luthien lifeforms—have caused and concern among Draco administrators and officials.

Tashiro Smith, an Associate Co-Ordinator of the Luthien Ministry of Information, addressed the problem with characteristic directness. "Lies!" Smith said during a recent interview. "The picture that non-Draconians have of life here on Luthien is a fabric of lies, exaggerations, and half truths! If they want to see Luthien, to know Luthien and its people, they should visit Imperial City for themselves, and not rely on the words of anti-Kurita propagandists and Davion rumor-mongers!"

Imperial City! Perhaps the most astonishing and magnificent city in the Inner Sphere today is that monument to human energy and creativity, Imperial City, a monument which truly is the modern heart of the Draconis Combine. Growing in the midst of what once was swampland, Imperial City today is a showcase of magnificent edifices of teak and marble, of cut quartz and ediobony and granite, arrayed among the parks of imported sequoia, birch, and traverswood trees, reflected in the limpid beauty of the Daimyo Canal. It is in the midst of this tranquil magnificence that the teakwood beauty of the Imperial Palace rises above the still, blue waters surrounding its island garden.

To know Imperial City is to know the slandering maliciousness of the Combine's enemies.

It is difficult to imagine why the enemies of House Kurita should refuse to acknowledge the engineering and artistic brilliance of Luthien's capital. When asked his opinion, Tashiro Smith merely smiled and suggested that jealousy might have something to do with it.

Black Luthien: Planet-wide factories and pollutant-spewing industrial facilities are what most foreigners think of when they think of Luthien. As is so often the case, this is an anti-Draco distortion of the truth.

The Imperial City: High art and beauty mark the Imperial Palace on the Daimyo Canal in the heart of Luthien's capital.

"You have to realize that we Draconians endure a constant state of siege," he went on to say. "A case in point: these so-called wargames which Hanse Davion is engaging in along our frontier—sheer, blatant, militaristic provocation, and nothing more! This Operation Galahad of his... first in 3026, then last year, and now this year as well... endless maneuvers and threatenings and saber rattlings! He presses upon us, testing, always testing! He launches sneak raids on our outposts and settlements, ambushes our garrisons, loots our industrial worlds... and claims that it is we who threaten him! Against such a tapestry of lies and violence, it is small wonder that our enemies can find nothing good to say about us... even about the beauty of our capital!"

It is important for non-Draconians to remember the Draconian's own view of themselves—a stubborn, courageous, and independent people, engaged in a life-or-death struggle against powerful, implacable, and encircling foes. If they seem suspicious of outsiders, it is because their neighbors are anything but friendly.

Perhaps never in the history of Man's grand exodus to the stars has there been as spectacular a victory of Man over nature as the triumph of Imperial City. It took five years to drain the swamps on which the city now stands, and the construction itself was accomplished almost entirely by hand, with every building, monument, and garden an individualized and unique work of art. The city's building ignited the explosion of interest in old Japanese customs, traditions, art, and architecture which was spread across the Combine by the edicts of Kokugaku—"the National Learning." Much of what the

Combine is today—much of what the Draconian people are today—had as foundation the creation of Imperial City where before there had been only fetid decay.

True, it is a pity that the Tushani xenocrustaceans have become extinct, an inevitable by-product of the explosive growth of industry upon the world. But if acids pollute the waters, if the skies are darkened by the outpourings of Luthien's industrial might, who can say that Man is poorer for the loss of a few lower forms of life, when he is so obviously richer for the gleaming gem which is Imperial City, and the heartfelt dedication of the valiant Draconian people!

[Editors' note: BattleTechnology readers from Successor States other than the Draconis Combine should be aware that articles in this publication originating within the borders of the Combine are subject to rigorous screening by the Ministry of Information, and by an Arts and Ethics Purity Council, which review all written material before publication.

While BattleTechnology remains independent of the politics which sunder the various Successor States, it is inevitable that certain elements of House politics will still appear in articles appearing from time to time in this magazine . Opinions and views expressed in these articles do not necessarily represent the views of BattleTechnology's editorial staff, or of the magazine's publishers.]

The Nekekami

Spirit Cats of the Draconis Combine

by Tomio Ochiba

The waning inner moon of Lyons casts deep shadows in the courtyard of the 4th Skye Rangers' headquarters. A sentry pauses as he walks his rounds, taking a moment to stamp his feet and flail his arms across his chest in a futile attempt to restore the circulation which the bitter cold has all but stopped completely. Muttering under his breath about being posted at a God-forsaken garrison on a God-forsaken world on the God-forsaken Kurita border, he retrieves his TK-70 assault rifle from where he rested it against the wall, and resumes his sentry-go. As the sentry turns a corner, a shadow detaches itself from the deep gloom not a meter away from where the guard had rested his weapon.

The shadow slips across the courtyard, moving silently as a ghost, hardly slowing its pace as it encounters one of the outer walls of the fortress. Swiftly and surely as a cat, it climbs up and over the wall, drops to the ground on the other side, and vanishes into the night.

There is no alarm that night. It is not until late the following afternoon, in fact, that the Officer of the Watch makes an alarming discovery. In one of the fortress headquarters' Secure Rooms—vault-like chambers carved from solid rock and triple-guarded by

check points and sentry stations—he finds, resting next to the lock controls for the headquarters vault, the only trace which will be found of the fortress's midnight visitor: a small piece of black paper intricately folded into the shape of a crouching cat.

That cat—an example of the ancient Japanese art form known as origami—is proof that the Lyons garrison outpost has been penetrated tracelessly. At first, the cat is only a puzzle. Later, when a top Steiner intelligence operative learns of the find, the situation takes on a more ominous and sinister aspect. The origami cat is a calling card, of sorts; the fortress' visitor was *Nekekami*.

The garrison defense is thrown into an uproar by the revelation. The lists and catalogs of secret information stored within the Lyons fortress vault is checked and double-checked. Nothing is missing. Was the vault penetrated? The origami cat was found outside the vault; perhaps the person who left it behind was unable to break in?

But if the shadowy visitor was Nekekami, almost anything is possible. Anything! How to be sure?

The Lyons garrison command intelligence department is still going over their lists of the vault's contents when the Kurita raiders materialize at the Lyons nadir JumpPoint. *Union*-class DropShips make

high-G runs, avoiding AeroSpace defenses by timing their attack so that the Lyons orbital defense station and its squadron of Steiner *Stingrays* are on the far side of the planet. Ground forces move to their defensive positions, to find Kurita DropShips descending on a dry lake bed less than ten kilometers from an important machine tool plant at Cantaba, on Lyons' southern continent.

Crack Kurita companies fan out in formations obviously drilled in the importance of decisive moves and precise timing. The industrial facility is taken after the briefest of firefights with civilian security forces on duty around the plant—the nearest Steiner 'Mechs and armored forces are guarding a supply depot fifty kilometers distant—and Kurita 'Mechs and DropShip crews begin loading their booty. By the time the local garrison has mustered for a counterstrike, the raiders have boarded ship and boosted for deep space. Steiner *Stingrays* move to intercept; they are intercepted in turn by swift Kurita *Shilones* and *Slayers*.

The raiders escape. The final tally is grim: one *Shilone* and two *Stingrays* destroyed, 22 civilian security personnel and Techs dead, wounded, or missing, and some hundreds of millions of Cbs worth of carballoy steel, precision tools and machine dies, military spare parts, and microelectronics looted from the Steiner industrial plant.

The incident described above may sound unlikely, but it actually happened. Although the Steiner high command moved quickly to squash rumors that the Nekekami had struck—that origami cat didn't necessarily *prove* that whoever had left it was Nekekami, after all—the success of the Kurita raid on Lyons early in 3026 can only be explained by the assumption that someone penetrated the fortress vault undetected, examined the secret files stored there, and photographed or memorized enough to allow the Draconis Combine raiders to pinpoint the vulnerability of the Cantaba Plant, and the weaknesses in the Steiner garrison defenses.

The Lyons raid has all the earmarks of a successful Nekekami operation.

House Kurita has acquired something of a bad reputation when it comes to House relations with mercenaries, but there are always exceptions. The Nekekami are one such, a caste consisting of several family clans of professional spies and assassins which has been occasionally employed by House Kurita and by numerous individuals within the Combine's High Command, often with startling success. They are rarely hired directly by the Luthien government, of

course, for political reasons which should be obvious, but they have been employed by numerous high-ranking nobles, officers, and agencies within the Combine. It is rumored that they have been used at times by the ISF, though this is impossible to confirm. It is their history of success which makes them less mercenaries employed by House Kurita and more yet another of the weapons at the Combine's disposal in its never-ending struggle against the barbarian hordes pressing in upon its borders.

Nekekami: the Spirit Cats

The stories told of Nekekami agents and assassins are legion—so much so that it has become virtually impossible to separate fact from fiction. They are, in fact, a small clan, and difficult to locate, but the stories spread about their exploits can create the impression that they are everywhere. Stories are told of Spirit Cats who made themselves invisible, who walked through walls, who lowered their heartbeat and respiration to feign death or reduce their bodies' need for oxygen in tight, sealed spaces. Information about the Nekekami themselves is plentiful—but most is suspect, the product of exaggeration and fear, of guesswork and sensationalism, and at least partly a result of the disinformation activities of the Nekekami themselves.

Indeed, little is known for certain about this secret warrior clan, whose name is Old Japanese, meaning *Spirit Cats*. Certainly, the Nekekami don't speak of their activities to outsiders at all, and most of what is known about them has been garnered from interviews with various House and planetary

are, in fact, two groups or "castes" within the Nekekami—the warriors themselves, and the non-warrior families who produce them. Only a few of the children of these families are chosen for training as Nekekami warriors. For those who are chosen—boys and girls—training begins around the age of 10.

Training

Training methods follow the pattern of another secret warrior society with which the Nekekami is often compared—the Ninja of feudal Japan, on ancient Terra. A strenuous regimen of calisthenics and flexibility exercises is employed to strengthen the novice's body, while a series of puzzles and riddles serve to train the young warrior's mind to operate in logical patterns. Early in his training, the Nekekami apprentice receives his first instruction in weapons and weaponscraft, learning to shoot air-guns, and fight with light-weight wooden swords and knives. In these first few years, he also receives the rudiments of unarmed combat—karate, ju-jitsu, quick-kill, and other ancient martial arts chosen for their value in both physical and mental conditioning.

As the Nekekami trainee gets a little older, he begins learning techniques of stealthy movement, climbing, and concealment. He is also taught the basics of human anatomy and psychology. Around age 15, he begins training with projectile and energy weapons, as well as the melee weapons which he will use throughout his career. Instruction in the use of poisons and explosives comes later, as does training in sophisticated electronic espionage equipment. Some Nekekami are cross-trained in

If a Nekekami draws steel, his mission has failed...

security personnel, intelligence operatives, and some of the very few living eye-witnesses of Nekekami operations. It is known that at least one member of a Nekekami clan *did* talk, providing a rare glimpse into the clan's training, codes, and background.

Unfortunately, that lone informant died—apparently of natural causes—in his prison cell within hours of his final interview.

For the most part, individual Nekekami are born into one of several closely related clans, families whose names and identities are secret, though it is rumored that all are influential, with numerous family members holding places of influence and power both in Kurita space and within the territory of other of the Successor State Houses. There

the skills of regular MechWarriors and Techs.

Throughout their years of training, the Nekekami are taught not only the skills of sabotage, espionage, and assassination, but an entire philosophy, a way of life and thought unique throughout the Inner Sphere, even among other secret warrior societies. Where some clans teach only the quick completion of the task at hand, by whatever means necessary, and others teach little beyond the techniques of assassination, the Nekekami teach their trainees to perform their missions with a minimum of bloodshed. "If a Nekekami draws steel, his mission has failed," teaches one proverb attributed to the Nekekami. Indeed, the

Nekekami stress that the secret warrior's mission, whatever it is, should be thought of as a work of art, carried out with skill, precision, subtlety, and elegance.

The origami cat left at the scene of a recent penetration of a security area within a garrison fortified compound is a case in point. It was first thought that the paper cat—an obvious reference to the warrior Spirit Cats and similar to items found at the sites of several Nekekami operations—could not *possibly* be the work of true Nekekami since they would not have advertised the fact that the garrison's security vault had been penetrated. A careful check of the secret documents stored in the vault indicated that none had been taken, and metal sensors built into the frame of the vault door would have registered anything—weapons, recorders, or cameras—carried in or out.

As security checks within the garrison command proceeded, however, rumors that the garrison's security had been breached circulated among the troops. They became nervous. There were several incidents of men firing at shadows or their own comrades, and one 'Mech company commander ordered his Techs to begin careful maintenance checks of the unit's 'Mechs, looking for signs of sabotage.

In other words, the mere presence of the origami cat sowed doubt and confusion which actually served to further confound the planetary defenses, weakening them at a critical moment. In retrospect, it is obvious that the spy managed to learn the dispositions and make-up of most of the garrison's defense forces as well—he must have memorized them since a camera would have triggered an alarm—and that information told the Kurita raiders where to strike. What is not known is which element of the operation helped the raiders more—the intelligence on the garrison defenses, or the confusion caused by a folded paper cat.

A Nekekami master would regard the Lyons operation as a masterpiece of art.

The story is told of one Nekekami, hired to assassinate the leader of a terrorist cell on Marlowe's Rift, who used a longbow to eliminate his target. This is not all that remarkable, until one examines the path of the arrow. To hit the terrorist leader, the Nekekami was required to shoot through a narrow gap in a crumbling stone wall which surrounded the terrorist camp, through the tangled branches of a bluethorn briar bush, and through a small closed window. The arrow struck the terrorist leader through his left eye and penetrated his brain, killing him instantly.

The House Kurita general who hired the Nekekami—the officer's identity is being withheld at his request—was surprised to have half of the agreed-upon fee for the kill returned to him after the mission. The assassin claimed that his accomplishment had been flawed: he had been aiming for the bridge of the target's nose.

Weapons

Though trained in the use of modern weapons, Nekekami almost never use them, preferring instead bare hands or a selection from a huge arsenal of traditional, ancient martial arts weapons. The longbow is a favorite, it seems, and all warriors receive training in the use of sword, knife, crossbow, and various throwing blades.

The sword used by the Nekekami is a straight-bladed, single-edged weapon with a chisel-shaped point, a slightly curved handguard, and a two-handed grip. The fittings are usually made of some dark-colored metal, most often blued steel. At times, the blade is also darkened. Overall, the sword is about 85 cm long and weighs about 2.5 kilograms. The sword is very seldom used in the field, having its primary use in each warrior's training and conditioning, but a few Spirit Cats seem to take pride in accomplishing their missions without resorting to any modern weapons—and the sword is often a part of the arsenal they carry with them into battle.

Favored weapons are longbow and crossbow, a wide variety of particularly nasty throwing knives, ordinary knives ranging from easily-concealed stilettos to heavy blades which are in effect short swords, and martial arts weapons such as nunchaku, shuriken, and the kama. Special missions may call for special weapons such as blowguns, throwing darts, or weapons hand-crafted from innocuous and easily-obtainable materials such as string, writing pens, needles, and ID cards.

Less frequently used, but used with skill when the mission demands it, are more modern weapons such as tranq guns, stunners, and specially designed and balanced snipers rifles. Only rarely, if ever, will a Nekekami use such—to him—inelegant and inappropriate weapons as a laser, missile launcher, or flamer.

Poisons are used when the situation calls for them, and the pharmacopia of substances in this part of the Nekekami's arsenal is extensive. Chemical poisons like ferro-cyanide, mineral poisons such as strychnine, and animal poisons such as the venom of the Eniffian Gremlin Viper have all found their way into the food, drink, or bloodstreams of various enemies of the Combine targeted by the Nekekami. In one case, a House Davion emissary suspected of being a spy died at a banquet, apparently by choking on a piece of food. Only pure
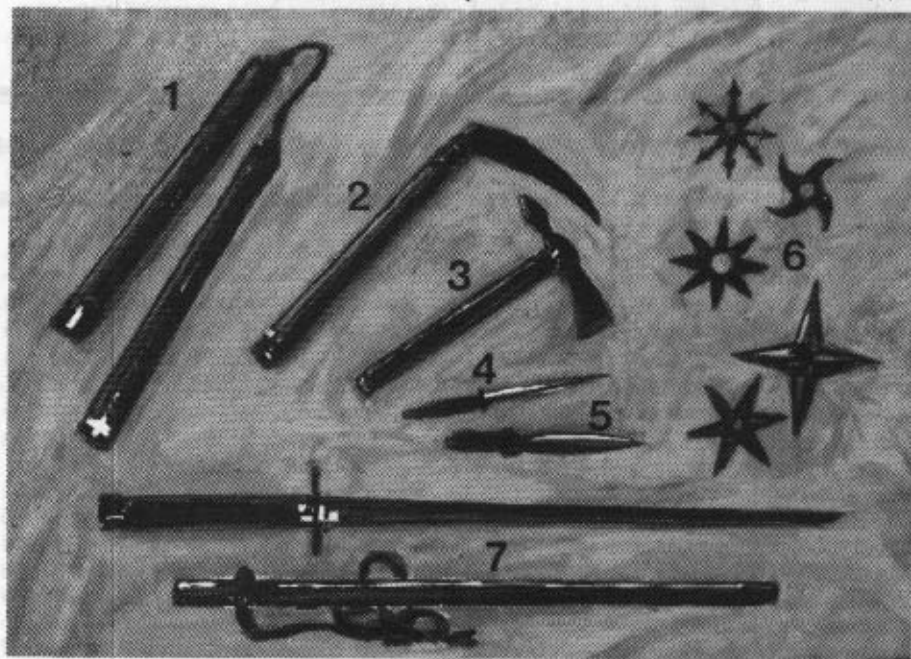
Some Traditional Nekekami Weapons:

1. Nunchucks
2. Kama
3. Black Dragon Ax
4. Stiletto
5. Throwing Knife
6. Various shuriken
7. Ninja-to

chance—the ship's doctor aboard the Davion DropShip who performed the autopsy had had xenobotanological training—revealed that the "diplomat's" salad had contained chalal leaves, which have high concentrations of naturally-occurring belladonna.

One poison used occasionally is called "the Dragon's Tears" by the Nekekami. The exact composition is unknown to outsiders. All that is known is that a few drops, administered over the course of a few days, will slowly, inexorably, and irreversibly drive the victim insane.

Lysergic acid diethylamide and sodium meta-choline may also be used from time to time, in place of poisons. Lysergic acid is a powerful hallucinogen which can temporarily mentally unbalance its victim, while sodium meta-choline is a psycho-active drug which induces a state of severe paranoia followed by profound depression. This psychotic state lasts for several days before passing, leaving the victim with no ill effects, and no recollection of the time he spent while under the influence of the drug.

Such drugs are employed with great selectivity and for specific purposes. The star witness in the trial of a free merchant accused of running arms and money from a Kurita-governed world to an anti-Davion terrorist group on Errai demonstrated in rather sensationalist fashion his sudden and unexpected paranoia while in the witness stand... and days later took his own life in a fit of suicidal depression. The case was thrown out and the merchant cleared, thanks, it is now believed, to the intervention of a Nekekami agent. How the assassin was able to reach the closely-guarded state witness with psycho-active pharmaceuticals is still a complete mystery.

House Kurita, incidentally, was never implicated in the incident in any way. It is believed that the Nekekami assassin was employed by an unknown factor in the merchant's trading company seeking to clear his employer's name.

Besides being administered through food or drink, poisons and drugs—particularly fast-acting agents such as ferro-cyanide and sodium meta-choline—can be coated on tranq gun pellets, needler slivers, the tips of blowgun darts, and the points of throwing stars. Countless toxins exist which can be concentrated enough to make certain that any hit from the blade they coat will be fatal. Throwing stars—the shuriken made famous by the ancient Ninja of Earth—are made deadly by coating them with fast-acting blood or nerve poisons and are used for silently neutralizing sentries, guards, and pursuers.

INTELLIGENCE AGENTS

As spies, the Nekekami are among the best in the Inner Sphere. While they do not have the resources or manpower of larger, better-known organizations such as the ISF or even the private intelligence networks of various generals and nobles, their training, daring, physical and mental conditioning, and devotion to the mission at hand have made them invaluable as special covert agents on countless intel ops throughout the various Successor State Houses. Though they prefer not to rely on electronic devices, the Nekekami apparently have access to a wide array of tools allowing surreptitious entry and surveillance. One particularly ingenious device is only a little larger than a pocket recorder. It is attached to an electronic lock by whatever type of "key" is appropriate—touchpad, cardkey, palmprint reader—and used to transmit a very rapid series of electronic impulses through the lock in a process similar to trying random numbers on a combination lock, but very, very quickly. Usually, the device will hit upon the proper impulse sequence within a minute or two.

Should the electronic key fail—or should the Nekekami be faced by an old-fashioned mechanical lock—he can always employ more direct and primitive devices to open the door, including lockpicks, drills, and plastic explosives.

C-96 plastic explosive is a favorite of the Spirit Cats. An amount pre-molded into a package of about the same size and shape as a shot glass is placed over the lock mechanism of the door and detonated. The explosion destroys the lock and very little else. If the need for stealth precludes the use of explosives, the Nekekami will drill a small hole in the lock and pour a powerful acid directly into the locking mechanism. In a few moments, the acid will eat away the wards of the lock, making it easy to force back the bolt and open the door.

Of course, the more sophisticated the lock, the more sophisticated the method which must be employed to open it. The story is told of a Nekekami sent to obtain documents held in a safe in the headquarters of a mercenary 'Mech unit. When the operative was unable to open the palm-reader locked safe, he located the quarters occupied by the installation commander, drugged the man into unconsciousness, and made prints of the man's palms on a special pressure-sensitive paper he was carrying. The next day, the prints were found inside the safe which they were used to open, and the documents were gone.

Walls offer little hindrance to the Nekekami, who have a great many gadgets

which help them overcome nearly any obstacle. Metal bands with strong claws set into them are strapped over the Nekekami's hands, with the claws projecting out from the palm. A similar set of clawed bands are attached to their boots. These claws are set into small cracks in the wall, or dug into a vertical wooden or ice surface, and allow the Nekekami hand and footholds which allow him to quickly complete seemingly impossible climbs. If the wall is too smooth or hard for claws, a padded grappling hook and climbing rope can be used. These may be thrown by hand or, if the wall is too high, fired from a 20mm launcher. One type of grappling hook, used for scaling very high obstacles, is designed to be fired from a 40mm mortar-like launcher. Some extremely rare versions are rocket propelled, and are fired from a launcher similar to a man-portable SRM launcher. One form of rocket-propelled grappling device is designed to bury its head in wood or other soft material, providing a ready-made anchor for the climbing rope trailing behind it.

For crossing rivers, lakes, and other such water obstacles, a Spirit Cat might use a flotation device which resembles a MechWarrior's coolant vest, filled with air instead of coolant fluid. Larger or swifter bodies of water require the use of an inflatable one-man boat. The most common type of this sort of craft is similar to an inflatable, foam-filled camp chair. The folded boat and its inflator are not much larger than a couple of aerosol cans. When the Nekekami encounters a water obstacle, he inflates the boat by means of a pressurized can of liquid plastic foam. This foam hardens after a few moments, and the Nekekami can then cross the water using his hands as paddles. If the situation requires it, the Nekekami is not averse to using such mechanical contrivances as rebreathers and diving gear.

Other methods of approach may be employed as well. A series of pulleys attached to a harness and set on a taut wire or rope suspended between two buildings—or to a grappling hook line or power cable or the guy wire for an antenna—can allow the Nekekami to pull himself hand-over-hand across a gulf or up the side of a tower. They may also use HALO (High Altitude Low Opening) and HAHO (High Altitude High Opening) parachute drops, jump packs, or even a catapult driven by compressed air. The level of stealth required by the situation will dictate the methods and the equipment which may be used.

Once entry has been effected, the Nekekami have still more gadgets with which to carry out an intelligence task. All of the high-tech devices employed by intelligence units throughout the Inner Sphere are available: laser and maser microphones, miniature transmitters and recorders, miniaturized cameras—all have, no doubt, played a part in various Spirit Cat intelligence operations. It should be born in mind, however, that the Nekekami prefer to carry out their missions with a minimum of equipment. This represents not so much an aversion to technology as an unwillingness to rely on machines in what they believe should be a *human* art form. In the Nekekami philosophy, the human body and mind are supremely adaptable to any situation, and far more flexible and useful than any mere tool. The raider at Lyons, remember, *memorized* the contents of several dozen files, apparently with only the briefest of readings. He bore on his body no metal at all—belt buckles, knives, or the inner workings of a camera or recorder—which would trigger the sensors in the doorway of the vault.

SABOTAGE

Sabotage is another specialty of the Nekekami, their targets anything from power grids to DropShips. In one incident, before a Kurita raid against the Davion-held world of Conroe, a team of Nekekami slipped through a garrison perimeter and disabled the leg actuators in several of the defenders' BattleMechs. The loss of several heavy 'Mechs in the next day's action resulted in heavy losses for the Davion outpost.
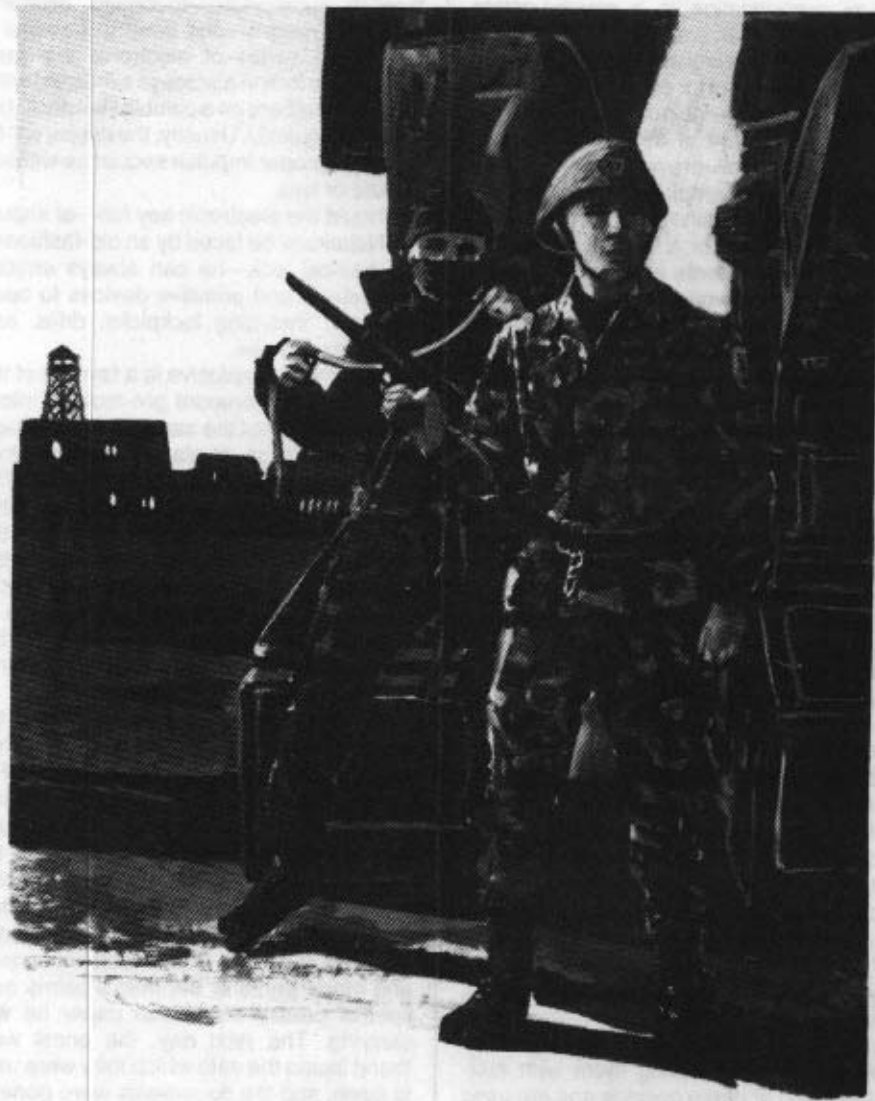
Sabotage equipment includes a variety of explosives and incendiaries. One incendiary device consists of a plastic tube containing two separate packets of chemicals which ignite when mixed together, causing an intense flame. The chemical packets are separated by a thin glass divider which breaks when the tube is flexed, allowing the chemicals to mix. A different mixture of chemicals results in a small explosion which can be used as a distraction in combat. If a delay is desired, the glass divider is replaced by a plastic which can be slowly dissolved by acids, with the timing determined precisely by the thickness of the plastic and the strength of the acids.

Nekekami skill in sabotage has become legendary. Once during the routine maintenance of an atmospheric passenger aircraft used by the planetary government of the Federated Suns world of Talcott, maintenance techs made a startling discovery. Attached to the after end of the number 8 fuel tank, located in the tail of the aircraft, was a 6-kilo charge of C-96 plastic explosive. The charge was molded to look like part of the fuel tank, bowl-shaped over the end of the fuel tank to act as a shaped charge. The detonator consisted of a small radio receiver set to a very narrow band of VHF and set to deliver a current upon transmission of a coded pulse at the set frequency. The receiver was powered by a pair of rechargeable batteries hooked to a recharger module, which in turn was hooked up to the power leads for the tail navigation lights. Judging from the inaccessibility of that portion of the fuel tank, the Davion bomb disposal squad concluded that the charge had been placed there at least two years earlier, when the plane was being built. All that was required to set the charge off was a coded signal on the proper frequency.

If the fuel tank had been full at the time the signal was received, the aircraft would have been completely destroyed. Even with the tank empty, detonation of the fuel vapors remaining in the tank would have blown the tail off the plane. The only thing which led to the discovery of the bomb was the fact that the tail lights had developed a short circuit and the Techs were tracing the wires during a routine maintenance inspection.

It is suspected that their target was the Council President of Talcott, and that his assassination had been planned to coincide with his arrival at the opening of a new planetary defense fortress on Talcott which had been set for March of 3024. The detonation of the aircraft carrying the president as it made its take-off over Talcott's capitol—or during its approach to the defense base runway—would have been an impressive warning against Davion militarism and military build-ups in the Talcott region. Only the fact that the base still had not been opened by September of 3025—and the fact that routine maintenance and inspection was scheduled for that month, saved the president's life. The fiendishly clever nature of the bomb—designed in such a way that it could be detonated at any time of the assassins' choosing should the original target date be changed—had all the hallmarks of a Nekekami operation.

ESCAPE

When the Nekekami has completed his mission, it still remains for him to escape. At times this may mean nothing more than reversing his route into the objective. More often, the Nekekami must employ various, often elaborate, methods to evade his pursuers. Again, climbing ropes, jump packs, and other gear, often cached in secure hiding places by the agent or by confederates before the beginning of the mission, can be used. In order to discourage pursuit, a Nekekami might scatter a number of caltrop mines along his trail. These small anti-personnel mines are each about the size of a large coin. If stepped on, these mines will not kill but will certainly blow the foot off of anyone unfortunate enough to step on them.

Often, if the Nekekami knows pursuit is likely, he will set up booby traps along his escape route. These traps might consist of nothing more than a wire set across his route to trip his pursuers, slowing them for a critical few seconds. If a stronger deterrent is needed, a few caltrop mines might be placed beyond the wire in such a way that someone tripping over the wire would land on the mines. The fleeing Nekekami would know the position of these traps, of course, while his pursuers would not.

Another ploy is to set off a series of remote-controlled (or confederate-fired) explosions on the opposite side of the installation or base from the Nekekami's escape route. These explosions, sometimes coupled with anti-personnel splinter mines set to discharge their clouds of flechettes at the installation in simulation of an attack, can create tremendous confusion in a base or encampment, especially when the intruder alarm has just been sounded.

The Nekekami are trained to *think*, employing their opponent's own psychological weaknesses against them. A rock thrown above a sentry's head to clatter at his back can distract the sentry's attention for the split second necessary for the Spirit Cat to

make his way across open ground. One Nekekami released a large, vicious dog in the barracks compound of an Outworld Alliance diplomat's estate. While the household guards were trying to catch the dog, the Nekekami agent penetrated the base and stole the transcripts of a particularly important and secret conference between that diplomat and a Davion agent.

CAPTURE AND DEATH

Perhaps nothing reveals the Nekekami philosophy more starkly than their attitudes towards capture and death—the two are frequently one and the same. Among the Spirit Cats, failure is understood to be a possible—even probable—end to any mission. All too often, failure means death.

A proverb common among the Nekekami families states, "He who takes the name Spirit Cat has in truth already taken the name of ghost." Once a Spirit Cat undergoes the final ceremonies elevating him to the place of a warrior, he becomes dead to his family. He is forbidden by long custom to ever see them again. For their part, his family builds a small shrine to the warrior's name in their home, revering him as the honored dead.

For Nekekami, the greatest disgrace is to be captured alive. With all of the modern means of extracting information from a prisoner—*any* prisoner—it is a foregone conclusion that eventually that prisoner can be made to talk. Most Nekekami will commit suicide as soon as it is apparent that they are about to be captured. Small amounts of fast-acting nerve poisons sewn into the sleeves or collars of their garments are a common way of achieving quick, painless, and honorable death. The very few Nekekami ever captured and subjected to interrogation were those so badly wounded they were unable to take their own lives. Of these, some appeared to *will* themselves into death once they realized they had been taken prisoner, apparently by using their incredible control of their own bodies to stop their own hearts.

Of course, in any mission involving a team of Nekekami where one is captured, the remaining Spirit Cats will go to almost any lengths to rescue their comrade before he can be made to talk. If the rescue fails, they will silence him forever as a last service to a beloved and honored brother.

**Nekekami Warrior
in traditional garb.**

COST

The Nekekami are, first and foremost, mercenaries—warriors who hire out their services to others who can afford them. It is no secret that Nekekami prices are high—it is rumored that a single penetration-burglary by a lone Nekekami may cost the employer as much as Cb 200,000—but the individuals who hire them are well aware of the value they receive for their money. Nekekami are never found engaged in typical merc ops—serving as bounty hunters, as base security or body guards, or in the role of military reconnaissance, for example—and their missions usually involve important military or government targets, such as those detailed in this article.

It should be stressed here that past Nekekami operations have *never* officially been connected with the Draconis Combine, or with the highest levels of the Luthien government. At the same time, the Nekekami have never been known to hire out their services to agents or individuals beyond the boundaries of the Draconis Combine. While none of the Draco officers or noblemen who admitted having used Nekekami on various missions wished to be publicly identified, it is safe to say that the Nekekami are themselves an invaluable resource to the Combine's continuing struggle against her enemies, a resource often tapped by high-ranking officials and soldiers loyal to House Kurita.

The exact amounts charged by Nekekami agents for various missions is unknown, but it is estimated that hundreds of millions of ComStar Bills enter the organization's coffers each year. Also unknown are exactly how this money is used, though it is believed that most goes to buying equipment and weapons, to caring for Nekekami families, and to providing operating capital for the *public* aspects of the caste's businesses and financial operations.

Another cost, one rarely mentioned, is the danger Nekekami pose to their own employers. Protected by barriers of silence and fear, so secretive in their movements and activities that it is nearly impossible to find them to hire them in the first place, there have been incidents—murders, disappearances, unexplained deaths—which *can* be explained as Nekekami mercenaries avenging themselves on would-be employers who either tried to double-cross their hirelings, or who accidentally learned too much. In many cases—particularly in the unexplained deaths of several high-ranking Kurita officers—the deaths could be explained as assassinations by jealous staff members, warlords, or factions, but in each

the hallmarks of a Nekekami strike, of Nekekami "art," were present, in several instances right down to the finding of a black, origami cat at the scene of the murder. During his research into the history of the Nekekami, this reporter time and time again was told that asking too many questions about the clans was unhealthy, that people who knew too much or talked too much might meet with an unfortunate accident. Strangely, far from discouraging business with these enigmatic and dangerous mercenaries, the stories of their vengeance seem only to increase their fascination in the popular mind.

Are they patriotic heros or untrustworthy mercenaries? The answer seems to depend on who hires them, and why. First and foremost, it must be said, the Nekekami serve their own causes and obey their own rules. But for those who have hired them in the past, those who have treated them fairly and respected their desire to remain unknown and unseen, the Nekekami have proved to be loyal and terrifyingly effective covert soldiers-for-hire.

With the growing tension and escalating combat and cross-border raids between the Draconis Combine and her bellicose neighbors, it is certain that the Nekekami, the Spirit Cats, will be called upon again to take action against the Combine's enemies. Again, these valiant and mysterious men and women will hold fast to their philosophy, their way of life—source of their strength and of their prowess—the way of the Nekekami, the Spirit Cats.

Tomio Ochiba is a professor of history at the University of Luthien, specializing in the history of the Succession Wars and the role of the Draconis Combine in them. His unfinished book, *The Nekekami: Spirit Warriors of the Draconis Combine*, is drawn from hundreds of interviews with intelligence officers, army personnel, and the handful of known Nekekami who have been captured alive and successfully interrogated.

"I am convinced that the citizens of the Draconis Combine would take great heart in their struggle against the warlike powers which surround us," Professor Ochiba said recently at a press interview on Luthien, "if only they knew more about this shadowy organization which has lived and worked within their midst for so long. That's why I'm writing this book."

This BattleTechnology article is an excerpt of that manuscript, which Professor Ochiba expects to send to press late this year.

It is with deep regret that the BattleTechnology staff announces the death of Professor Tomio Ochiba late last month as this issue of BattleTechnology went to press. Professor Ochiba was well known and highly respected by the staff and reporters at BattleTechnology's regional branch office on Luthien, and a frequent source for background and corroboratory material on House Kurita and the Draconis Combine. *The Nekekami* was Professor Ochiba's first full article to be published by this magazine. He showed great promise, and his sudden and unexpected passing is noted with sorrow.

Professor Ochiba was pronounced dead of heart failure by natural causes in his home on Luthien. He was 39.
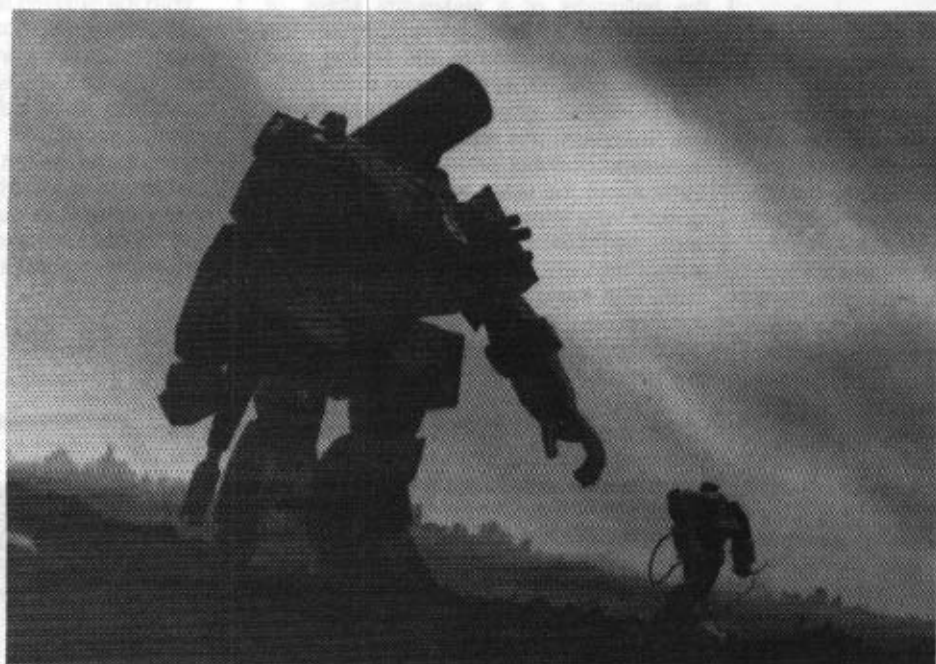
Captain Addison's *Thunderbolt* in command of the Daggers of Death, Company B

A Dagger's Death

by Captain A. Addison

BattleTechnology's readers will remember Scheat V from our last issue, where Captain Sinclair MacCray described his experiences in a combat drop on that world in 3026 [see: Drop Into Hell in Issue 0101].

This year, in late August, Davion forces staged yet another raid on that embattled and inhospitable Kurita border world. In this issue, part of this latest struggle for Scheat V is revealed through the eyes of one of the planet's Kuritan defenders.

Fire stabbed and slashed through smoke and churning clouds of dust. Another missile volley smashed into terrain already tortured by the rain of high explosive death. "Hold the line!" Captain Rodgers' cry was urgent and shrill on our tactical comlines. "Dagger Bs, rally! Rally!"

We'd been separated from the Captain by a sudden rush by the Davion bastards as we were trying to fall back to our DropShip. The raid on Galtor III had gone wrong from the very start. Iannamico had died under the

caress of a PPC beam early on. Shroyer was down. We wouldn't find out until after it was all over that that last laser blast at close range had penetrated his *Thunderbolt's* cockpit screens and all but burned his eyes out of their sockets. We'd held as long as we could, but fresh Davion forces and our own losses brought our line to the breaking point. Lieutenant Falk had given the order for his lance to start pulling back... and then the whole line was folding.

A pair of Davion *Archers* had opened up on the Captain. Falk reported seeing the Captain's *Dragon* go down, its legs shattered by a dozen solid missile hits, but he kept his lance moving towards the DropShips. With Davion forces surging around our flank, there wasn't a great deal more that he could do. Our Intel people decided later the Davions must have figured the Captain's 'Mech was our Company leader and marked him down, throwing a wall of BattleMechs into the wedge they'd driven between Rodgers' *Dragon* and the rest of us.

So why did I take the initiative and lead the counterattack? God, I've wondered that often enough myself. Our attack could have failed... it *should* have failed, but maybe it succeeded simply because the Davions thought they had us on the run and weren't looking for anything as foolhardy as an all-out attack. I gathered what was left of my own Recon Lance, yelled over the taccom for everyone else in range to join me, and charged.

The Davion thrust wavered, then melted back. The field was thick with smoke, and it could be they thought we were the vanguard of a regiment or two of reinforcements. We pushed through to the Captain's last reported position, wondering if we were in time.

Almost... almost we weren't. We lumbered into that battle-torn meadow and surprised a Davion *Marauder* hammering away at Captain Rodgers' downed *Dragon* with one massively armored, ponderous forearm.

That Davion MechWarrior took one look at the Kurita cavalry thundering down on him and turned from his prey.

Cummings' *Centurion* had moved into the lead. I'd watched, helpless, as the *Marauder* leveled both forearms and triggered a double volley of PPC and laser fire which savaged the *Centurion's* torso and head. I opened up with my *Panther's* PPC. There was a wild firefight, my half dozen 'Mechs exchanging rapid-fire shots with the hulking *Marauder*, and then the *Marauder* had turned and fled and we were left in possession of that war-torn meadow. The Davion thrust was halted long enough for us to dig Rodgers out of his shattered *Dragon*.

Or most of him. We had to leave his legs behind in the wreckage. The word from the ship's Doc going out was that even brand new legs weren't going to heal what had happened to the Captain's mind.

There hadn't been enough left of Cummings to retrieve from the splintered and fire-ravaged *Centurion*.

It was maybe a week later that the word came down from on high. I was being promoted to take the Captain's place... and the Daggers were heading for Hell—Scheat V for the uninitiated.

Which explains how I came to be in command of Company B.

Except it doesn't, not really. You see, Lieutenant Morgan Falk was next in line for the company's lead spot, not me.

The Daggers of Death is a short regiment—two twelve-'Mech companies under the command of Colonel Joab Keen. The

Lt. Morgan Falk, Fire Lance Leader, Company B, Daggers of Death mercenary regiment

Colonel runs Company A, "Dagger A," and, until he put in his down payment on a farm, Captain Rodgers ran Company B. Lieutenant Falk was Lance Leader for Dagger B's Fire Lance, while I ran the Recon Lance.

Now the way seniority works in most 'Mech Companies, a new lieutenant gets his first taste of operational command in the Recon Lance, then gets promoted from there to Fire Lance. After spending some time in the Fire Lance, he's ready to move up to the Command Lance, where he gets to run both his own lance and the entire company.

That was the theory, at any rate, but it rarely works out that way. *No* military unit can depend entirely on combat losses to dictate promotions; there's no quicker way I know to erode a team's morale. Besides, not everyone who can boss a lance of four 'Mechs has what it takes to run the whole company.

I figured that's why Colonel Keen decided to bypass Falk and give the company to me. It wasn't that there was anything *wrong* with Falk's performance. He was a good Fire Lance leader, and a good MechWarrior... but it had been his order to his lance to fall back which had led to the general retreat on Galtor III. Maybe the fact that *I* ordered the counterattack instead of him had something to do with it.

Maybe. Of course, if my impromptu charge had gotten itself mangled, Falk would have been the hero, and I, if I'd lived, could have been shot for errant stupidity. Did success make me right, and Morgan wrong? Not likely! God, I wonder how many command decisions throughout history have been shaped by luck, pure and simple?

Right or wrong, I was the B Company boss before we set down on Scheat V.

The fifth planet of Beta Pegasi is better known to the people who've been there as Hell. Its sun is a huge, bloated old red giant with the habit of throwing cosmic tantrums just when the astronomer-types think they've got him figured out. The planet is hot... and gets lots hotter when Scheat goes active. I've seen Hell's shallow, south polar seas steam in that searing heat, and war or no war, operations pretty well shut down when that happens. Believe me, BattleMechs do *not* go abroad when the temperature is 80° C. in the shade!

Scheat V had been a BattleMech playground before. The Federated Suns dropped in just last year as a part of their so-called Operation: Galahad "war games," and were soundly trounced and sent packing. For reasons known best to Hanse Davion's command staff, his Galahad '27 included a repeat of last year's performance.

Why did they try it again? Hey, don't ask me. When we heard that a Davion strike force had materialized out of JumpSpace and was accelerating towards Hell, I was a brand-new Captain, fresh-promoted to the suddenly-vacant command slot of my company, scrambling to get replacements

and spares for my company's 'Mechs. Believe me, when you're pulling together a combat-weary 'Mech team, you don't have the time or the energy to analyze the addled motives of Federated Suns politicians!

It took all I had to get the Dagger-Bs thinking like soldiers again. We'd been beaten on Galtor III, no two ways about it. Morale was nonexistent, our esprit de corps a joke. Six of the regiment's 24 MechWarriors were dead or out of action, and not one of our 'Mechs didn't have holed armor, disabled weapons, or other battle damage that needed to be righted before we went into action again. And old "Jolly Rodgers" had always manifested sheer magic when it came to getting parts and spares out of the Draco regulars.

All of us were numb after the Captain got taken out, but maybe that was what affected us the worst.

You see, the Daggers are a mercenary team. Yes, the stories you hear about mercs working for House Kurita are true, mostly. There haven't been many merc units which have prospered working for the Dracs—just Wolf's Dragoons, and maybe a couple of others I can think of. The Daggers were recruited from Kurita worlds, so we haven't had to face the normal and understandable Kurita suspicion of outsiders... but we've still had to face the reluctance of Kurita military commanders to employ mercenary units alongside their regular line regiments... or to equip and supply them. As a result, the Daggers had been short of supplies and short of replacements and very short of funds for the better part of a year even before we were mustered in for the raid on Galtor III.

Now, here we were on Scheat V, our 'Mechs falling to pieces, one company four men short and the other down by two... and the one guy who'd always been able to sweet-talk some Draco supply officer or other into coming through with what we needed was gone. We had no replacements, either. The Colonel bumped me up to Shroyer's *Thunderbolt*...because we needed the heavy 'Mech's firepower, and Rodrigo traded his *Stinger* for my *Panther* because we needed the 35-tonner's hard-
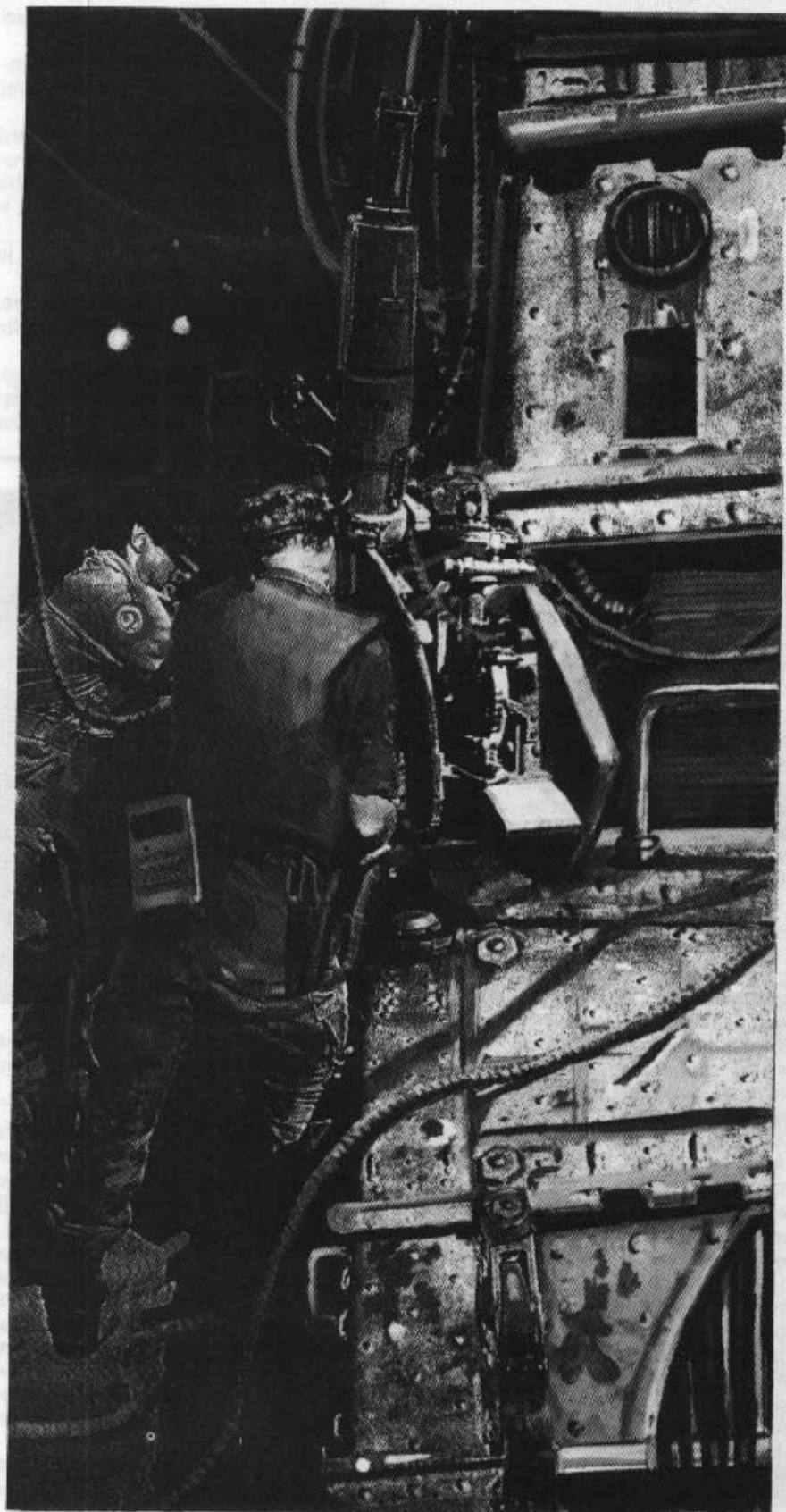
Right: "Not one of our 'Mechs didn't have holed armor, disabled weapons, or other battle damage that needed to be righted before we went into action again."

hitting PPC, but that left us with a spare *Stinger* and no one to drive it. The local Kurita command showed its usual speed, zeal, and efficiency when a merc unit asked for replacements and spares. We were short of everything when we grounded on Scheat V, and without Captain Rodgers to badger the regulars for parts, it didn't look like we were going to be combat-ready any time soon.

And it was right about then that we got word that the Davions were in-bound, a minor armada piling on the Gs from Scheat's nadir JumpPoint.

Combat-ready? Hell, I would have been delighted to have been able to field a full company of green kids fresh from a military academy, so long as they were eager to go and were piloting intact 'Mechs. After Galtor III, we were neither eager nor intact.

My number one headache was Morgan Falk. I called him into my office two days after we'd had word that the Davion fleet was in-bound. We didn't now where on Hell he was going to strike, but prudence dictated we plan for the worst. The Daggers had been assigned to cover Kallair. Kallair is one of the so-called "Seven Cities of Hell," and it has both a major spaceport and a fair-sized industrial facility on the shore of the Polar Sea, so it was a fair bet that we were squatting on one of the raiders' prime targets.

"Lieutenant..." I said, keeping my voice carefully neutral. "You've got an attitude problem... and that means I have a problem. I don't like problems... so that's why you're going to talk to me about it."

Was the expression in his eye something dark and sullen... or was there something else bothering him? Hell, how was I supposed to know. I'd been with the Daggers less than a year, and I'd never been able to get close to the man. He'd always struck me as the brooding, tragic sort... the kind of MechWarrior who always seems to die young. Maybe that's why I'd never gone out of my way to get to know him, that nagging thought in the back of your mind that if he becomes your friend he's going to wind up dead.

But I didn't know what was gnawing at him.

"Your training runs have been abominable," I continued. "Your best score on the target range was 42 percent... and your simulator runs have been even worse. Hell, watching you in the field today, it was a wonder you didn't trip your *Griffin* flat on its face!"

"I regret that the Captain is displeased with my performance." He spoke with a flat, expressionless monotone. Was it sarcasm

I heard in his parade ground, third person formality? And if it was, how was I to deal with it?

"Displeased doesn't quite cover it, Lieutenant." I stood up from behind my desk and came around to stand at his side. "At ease, Lieutenant... *at ease, dammit!*"

He relaxed, marginally, but he wouldn't look me in the eye. An intriguing bit of data, that. When he'd been at attention, his gaze had been riveted to the wall somewhere behind my left shoulder. Now his gaze wandered the floor, my desk top... anywhere but my eyes.

"You don't like me, do you?" I was taking a chance, I knew, because if I handled this wrong I would look pretty foolish.

And no commander can afford to look foolish in front of the men.

His jaw worked for a moment, and then, at last, his eyes met mine. "It's not that..."

"Then what? Do you think you should have been given command of this company, instead of me? Is that it?"

"Captain... I..." he stopped, flustered. "Captain, can I speak frankly?"

"I wish you would, Lieutenant. That's what I've been trying to get you to do!"

His jaw worked again, without result. Then the words burst forth in a rush. *"It's just that I can't take orders from a woman!"*

That stopped me, stopped me cold. How do you answer something like that?

My first thought was to throw him out of the office bodily. But I stepped back, took a breath or two, and managed to swallow the anger. "And what does *that* have to do with anything?"

"I... can't really explain," he said. "It's just not right, somehow..."

"I think you had better come up with something more concrete than that," I said after a moment's consideration. "Colonel Keen has placed me in command of the Dagger-Bs. Right or wrong, that's what we have to live with... that's what you have to live with, or you can buy your way out of the regiment right now! Dismissed!"

I watched him go with some misgivings. Had I handled it right? It wasn't that I wanted to turn my back on the problem... but I needed time to think about this.

But time was not something we had a great deal of.

I pushed Falk out of my mind for the rest of that watch, and for the next. All of us were dropping with exhaustion as we worked shift after eight-hour shift to patch and ready our 'Mechs, with only quick naps and cold sandwiches snatched when we could to keep us going.

But the problem would not go away. How could I take a Company into combat with my Fire Lance Leader unwilling to take orders from me? By the time I'd traced the fifth circuit fault in Chu's *Orion's* right arm servos and given up for lost my own *Thunderbolt's* dead heavy laser charge couplings, I'd made up my mind that Falk was a petty-minded bastard who could never be trusted... not in combat, and not in *my* Company. The Daggers would have to let Falk go.

But when I managed to grab Colonel Keen long enough to tell him, he practically exploded.

"Good *God*, Lieutenant!" he yelled. "Our strength is down by 24 percent, and you want to kick Falk out? What the *hell's* the matter with you?"

"I'd made up my mind that Falk was a petty-minded bastard who could never be trusted..."

In twelve years of military service, first as a MechWarrior, later as a Lance Leader, and now as Company Commander, I had never run into an attitude like Morgan Falk's. I searched for the emotions I could sense working behind the young lieutenant's eyes. What did I expect to find there... bitterness? Some deep-seated misogyny, a rabid hatred of women?

But all I could detect was dark confusion, and a resentment which might have been directed at the situation he now found himself in more than at me.

Put that way, I had to wonder that myself... but the long hours had brought me to the point that I scarcely cared any more.

"The man won't take orders from me," I said. "We could shuffle him into A Company... but there're going to be hurt feelings, and unit morale is bad enough already."

"You let me worry about unit morale, Captain," Keen said. He rubbed at his eyes, where black circles showed that he had been working as long and hard as the rest of us... or more so. Colonel Keen was 43

years old, but his hair and beard were already shot with gray. At that moment, the exhaustion in his eyes and the strain in his face made him look 60 at least. I was only then realizing what a burden command responsibility can be.

"Look," the Colonel explained. "Even if Falk were a line MechWarrior, I'd have to say no. We need every man we can field. And Falk is an experienced Lance Leader... a good one. I can't afford to lose a man like that!"

"Then why didn't you put *him* in the Company's lead slot?"

He gave me a hard look. "Captain, do you think I booted you over his head because I didn't trust him? Hell, no! He's the best Lance Leader I've got! He had your Fire Lance fine-tuned like a concert violin. When Lisa Cummings bought it on Galtor III, it hurt him... hurt him bad. I offered to pull him from the Fire Lance but he said no, that he didn't want to run from his troubles. I concurred."

My eyes widened. Had there been a romantic relationship between Falk and Lisa Cummings? And when she had died in that charge that I had ordered...

What I had seen in his eyes *had* been hate, but not hatred of women... hatred of *me!*

"Colonel, I don't think we can risk having Falk in my Company..."

Keen exploded. "You can settle your differences with Falk any damn way you please, Captain, but he *stays* with the Regiment! We can't spare him... and I'll not wreck morale more than it's already wrecked just to spare your feelings!"

And that, indisputably, was that.

The Davion raiders came in hot and tight. We heard later that our Aerospace fighters vectored out to meet the incoming Drop-Ships and hit a wall of Federated Suns fighters. While the fighters tangled, the DropShips pushed on, hitting Scheat V's thin atmosphere in flat, shrieking trajectories that carried them around the curve of the planet and out of the line of our fighters' attacks.

They dropped 'Mechs at high altitude, but it turned out later that those were diversions. The real attacks came when the DropShips set down at our major spaceports. Davion fighters strafed our ground defense fortresses and bunkers, and free-dropped 'Mechs closed in from sides and rear. Then the main Davion forces were on the ground and forming up. The Daggers had been alerted as soon as it was certain that at least two *Union*-class DropShips were vectoring across the Polar Sea towards Kallair. We scrambled two minutes ahead of their ETA, racing across cratered

tarmac from our underground ready room to the armored bunker where our 'Mechs were being prepped for combat.

I strapped myself into the cockpit of the old and battered *Thunderbolt* which had become my command vehicle upon my promotion. It had been Shroyer's 'Mech before he was blinded. The heavy, right arm laser was still out, and that would be a major handicap in the battle to come, I knew.

I snapped the HUD screen down on my neurohelmet and opened the *'Bolt's* command channel. "Daggers of Death, Company B," I said with a calmness I did not feel. "Muster call! Recon Lance!"

"Recon Lance, Sergeant Fellini!" A voice came back. Fellini had been one of my MechWarriors when the Recon Lance had been mine. He'd been given his chance at command with my promotion. He was steady and experienced. If he did okay today, I planned to recommend him for a field commission. "*Phoenix Hawk* and *Panther*, check!" His lance was painfully short with Iannamico dead and me promoted.

"Fire Lance!"

"Falk here." His voice was dead, devoid of expression. "*Griffin, Dervish,* and *Orion,* check."

I checked my displays, noting that both Takai's *Crusader* and Lander's *Rifleman* in my Command Lance were acknowledging ready. We would miss Rodgers' *Dragon* in the lance today.

I wondered if Falk was thinking about missing Cummings' *Centurion*... or just about missing Lisa Cummings?

I opened a command channel to the Colonel. "Company B mustered, ready to go," I reported.

"Right." There was a click and a hiss as
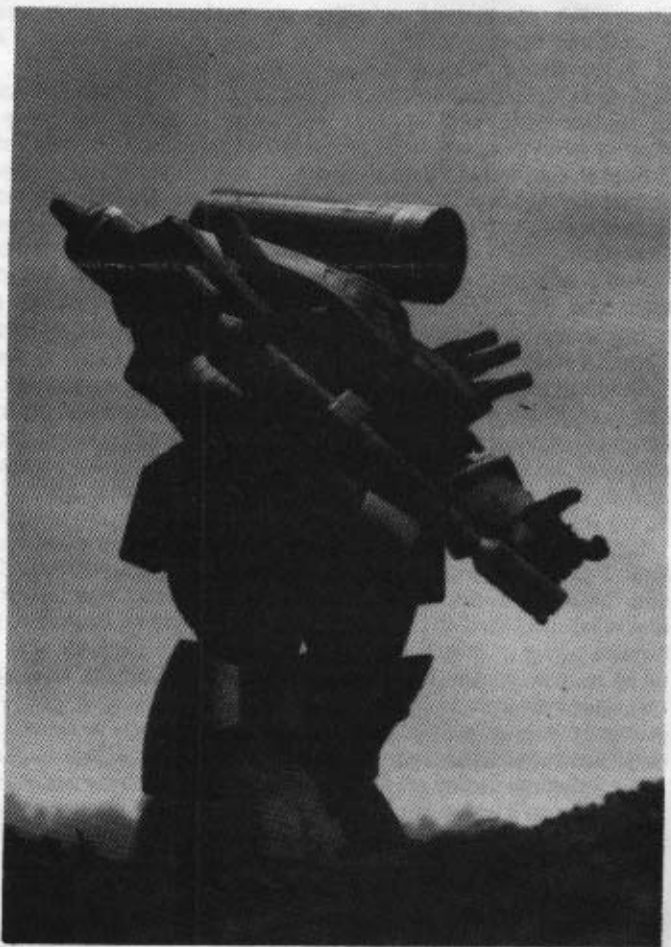
Keen shifted to the general frequency. His words would carry to every pilot in the regiment. "Attention to orders! Kallair Command reports two enemy reinforced companies down on the field at the spaceport. They are deploying towards the munition factories northeast of the port." I could hear Keen's sigh. "Our orders are to deploy along Hill Oh-Nine-One and hold until relieved. That is all."

That is all. A reinforced company usually meant a company carrying an extra lance— usually heavy assault 'Mechs. Two reinforced companies meant—what? Thirty 'Mechs or more... and we were expected to line our eighteen battered 'Mechs up along a ridge and hold until relieved.

Or until we were overrun.

Hill 091 was not that much of a hill— obvious enough when you realize that the "091" designation was a measurement of elevation above sea level in meters. It was nothing but a low, rocky spur straggling down from the mountains towards the sea, with no cover and little to make it a place worth dying for. There was a dense line of

tangled forest behind the ridge, but it would be hard for 'Mechs to move through that mess, much less spot or hit targets.

The battle would be for the high ground of the hill itself.

We almost didn't make it in time

The regiment crested the slope just as the lead Davion 'Mechs hit the other side. One moment we were jolting up the backside of the ridge at a run, and then our targeting displays were lit like an advertising display, and it seemed that there were Davion 'Mechs everywhere.

"Daggers, general combat!" Keen yelled over the tac frequency.

"Give it to 'em, Dagger-Bs!" I echoed him, and triggered a salvo of long-range missiles at a Davion *Warhammer* that had blundered into my sights.

The clash at the top of the hill was as savage as it was brief. We had no time to get into position, no time for anything but snap decisions, hasty targeting, and rapid-volley fire. I was missing the heavy firepower of my *Thunderbolt's* main laser already. The three medium lasers mounted in my machine's left torso scored again and again, but the hits weren't stopping them, weren't even slowing them. Missiles arced through smoke and dust-clouded sky, smashing and flashing among the invaders. I saw a Davion *Trebuchet* go down, followed by a firestorm-battered *Wasp*, but a massive Davion *Victor* took hit after flaring LRM hit from my *Thunderbolt* and Colonel Keen's *Archer*, and the monster only staggered, paused, then pressed onward, shrugging off the multiple hits as though they were nothing more than minor annoyances. Return fire caught the Daggers as they spread across the top of the ridge, silhouetted against the hot and merciless sky. Chu's *Orion* took a PPC bolt square in the torso, the lightning bolt discharge from the hull fusing sand to glass by his 'Mech's feet, the blast leaving a gaping, smoke-belching crater just below the *Orion's* cockpit. Rodrigo's *Panther* was smashed back and down by autocannon fire from a *Rifleman*. I felt something like a sharp, physical pain as I watched my old *Panther* go down, flame and smoke and green coolant boiling from a pair of holes in its left side.

We were losing.

I held my *Thunderbolt* in a half crouch on the front slope of the ridge, pumping missiles and laser fire into the advancing enemy. Something slammed into my 'Bolt's torso, and chunks of armor shrieked away. I held my position until my last SRMs were expended, then concentrated on firing at the closest Davion 'Mechs with my lasers.

The temperature indicators on my control panel were well into the red. This intense a firefight could not last long. Even without the monstrous heat build-up from my useless main laser, my *Thunderbolt's* weaponry was generating far more heat than the old 'Mech's cooling system could handle. The onboard computer flashed warning in letters of green light across a corner of my helmet display:

WARNING - HEAT CRITICAL!

Thunderbolts have always had a problem with heat build-up in combat—the one flaw in an otherwise magnificent combat machine. Inside the cockpit, the air was stifling, so hot and foul I could scarcely breathe. My sweat-drenched undershirt and briefs clung to my body like a second skin, and yet again I wished that I could afford a coolant vest. My old *Panther* had gotten plenty hot on occasion, but nothing like this.

I wondered which would give out first... me or my 'Mech.

Something struck my *Thunderbolt* a ringing blow to its right side, spinning the 65-ton 'Mech aside like a toy. I righted the machine and scanned, then shifted around to face what my proxindicator showed as the closest target.

A *Marauder* stood sixty yards away, its heavy-armed PPCs leveled at me. Inside I went cold. Was it the same *Marauder* that had taken out the Captain on Galtor III? It was possible... if unlikely. The color pattern looked the same, and I never had been able to identify any unit patches or numbers during the confused fight over the Captain's downed *Dragon*.

My short range missile rack was flat empty, and the range too short for my two remaining LRMs. I triggered my lasers, stabbing at the enemy *Marauder* with a triple beam of light. In answer, the bigger

'Mech fired another PPC bolt, followed by two quick snapshots from his lasers. Each of those ponderous forearms packed both a PPC and a medium laser, leaving me decidedly outgunned.

Hit! Charge indicators blanked out trying to read voltages that went beyond their scales. Lightning played across my 'Mech's hull as severed wiring and myomer cables spilled from my 'Bolt's torso. Warning lights flashed across my console, telling of coolant fluid loss, of partial power loss in my left leg, of a fire in my empty LRM storage locker, of a machine gun smashed. Smoke was seeping up into the cockpit now, carrying with it the reek of burning rubber and plastic.

"Fall back, Daggers!" I could hear the Colonel's voice through my helmet speakers, chopped by static but still understandable. There was an edge to his voice which suggested desperation... or despair. "Fall back and regroup!"

"They're getting around behind us!" Another voice warned. It sounded like Fellini, but I couldn't tell.

"Repeat, all Daggers, fall back! General retreat!"

The Daggers were pulling back off the hill.

But in that moment, the power feed to my 'Mech's left leg failed, and the *Thunderbolt* went down to one knee with a jarring crash that jerked me forward against my seat restraints.

I fought to regain control of my 'Mech. The problem must be a severed power cable in the tangle of wreckage that was the *'Bolt's* right torso. If I could bypass it...

But the *Marauder* was not going to give me the chance. It was on me in six striding steps. The inside of my cockpit went dark as the harsh light spilling in through the cockpit was chopped off by the shadow of the monster over me.

I struggled with the bypass. There! Power restored! I twisted the *'Bolt* and staggered to both feet. Before I could come fully upright, a shrieking blast of sound enfolded me like an ocean wave, leaving my ears ringing through a blank deafness. My 'Mech was on its knees again. The *Marauder* had swung one armored forearm around and down in a hammer blow which had crumpled my LRM launcher like tinfoil, and driven my *Thunderbolt* back to its hands and knees.

Dust rose, a vast yellow cloud sliced through by moving shafts of shadow as the *Marauder* moved into position for a second swing. I was on my feet again. The *Marauder* was to my rear, out of my line of sight, but I saw the movement in the shadows racing through the dust.

I twisted hard, throwing my 'Mech's right arm up as a shield. The heavy laser was useless anyway, and it might absorb some of the blow. That blow, when it came, smashed the laser and the arm it was attached to and hurled the *Thunderbolt* to the side.

The blow kicked me forward against the straps, cutting my body. Then the *'Bolt* landed flat on its back, and I was driven back into my pilot's seat so hard the wind was knocked from my lungs. I lay there for a long, long moment's agony, gasping for air and blinking against the glare of light falling through my cockpit window.

Through a red haze of pain, I could see the *Marauder* above me, raising one dented forearm for the kill...

Something hit the Davion *Marauder* low, across its back-angled legs. There was a

crash of colliding metal and the *Marauder* went down, arms and legs flailing.

I could hear the continued roar of colliding titans through the battered hull of my *Thunderbolt.* Somehow I managed to recover my breath... somehow I managed to bring my 'Mech back to its feet, despite the shattered uselessness of its dangling right arm.

Falk's *Griffin* had rushed the *Marauder.* He had thrown the *Griffin's* body in a flying block against the bigger 'Mech's legs to bring it down. Now the two struggled in 'Mech-to-'Mech fury in the dust thirty meters away.

It was an uneven contest. The *Marauder* masses 75 tons and outweighs a *Griffin* by 20 tons. The *Griffin's* only weapons are an LRM launcher—useless at point blank range—and a PPC carried like a rifle in its right hand. Neither weapon is effective close up, and the only advantage the lighter 'Mech had at all was the fact that it had hands and the *Marauder* did not.

Falk was employing his 'Mech's left hand now, using armored fingers to rip and tear at the *Marauder's* leg joints. The *Marauder* brought one arm up and smashed it down across the *Griffin's* back. The LRM launcher mounted on the *Griffin's* right shoulder crumpled under the blow and fell away, leaving a ragged scar in the *Griffin's* shoulder trailing wires. The *Marauder* raised its arm again.

I stumbled forward, trying to land a blow of my own. The *Marauder's* swing connected with my already damaged right arm and sent me stumbling back. For some reason, the *Marauder* returned his attention

to me and fired twin laser bolts from the ground. One missed, but the second scored hard in the tangled ruin of my 'Mech's right arm. My *Thunderbolt* lurched to the left as a massive weight fell from the right; my right arm and the ruin of its heavy laser lay smoking on the ground.

But Falk was on his feet now, firing his PPC at nearly point-blank range.

It's hard to hit from that close with a PPC, but the target wasn't moving. White fire seared across the *Marauder's* back and side. Its autocannon drooped at a crazy angle from the shattered mount on the heavy 'Mech's back. Then Falk's *Griffin* collided with the *Marauder* once again.

My 'Mech was threatening shutdown. I slapped the manual override and prayed the *'Bolt* would hold together just a little while longer. Gambling, I triggered another triple blast from my medium lasers.

The *Marauder* seemed to shrug off the blast and swung to face me once more. I knew my *'Bolt* would not survive another direct hit from that massive weaponry, knew that I was looking down four heat-blackened barrels of death.

An explosion blotted away my vision. When I could see again through streaming eyes, I saw that another close-ranged PPC bolt had savaged the *Marauder's* arm. In that last moment, the *Marauder* had swung away from me and opened fire with its other arm on Falk's *Griffin.*

That final salvo was too much for his tortured machine. One high, heavy, armored shoulder shield blackened and warped under a ravening laser burst, and
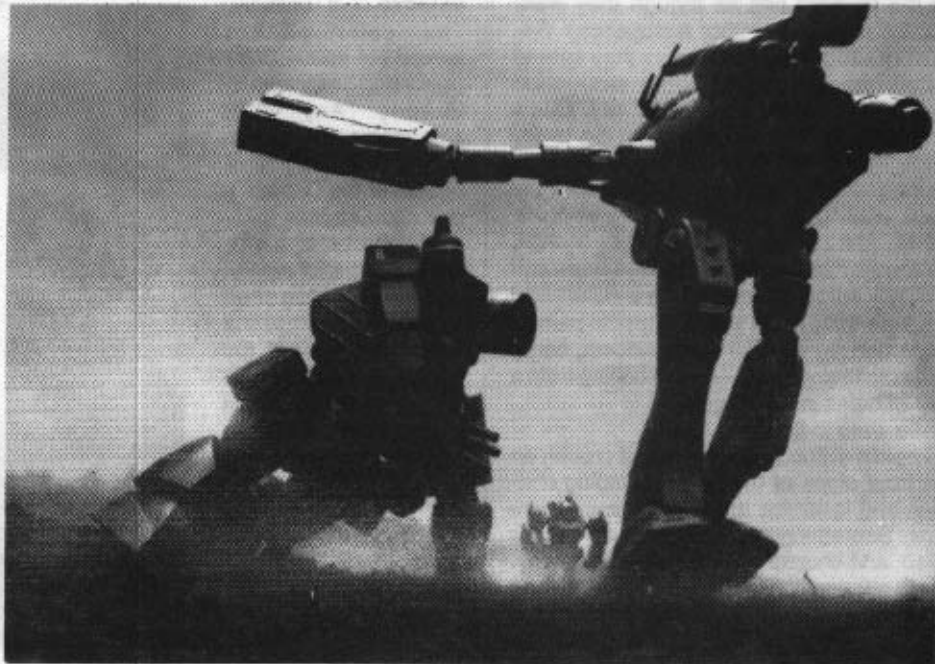
Right: Desperate 'Mech-to-'Mech combat, Hill 091, Scheat V

then the entire right arm shattered as megajoules of concentrated energy burned through into the smoking ruin of the *Griffin's* right torso. I could see fires raging inside the *Griffin* now through rents in the 'Mech's armor, could see other parts glowing with a dull red heat as internal fires consumed the *Griffin* from within.

I thumbed open a taccom frequency. "Morgan! Eject! Punch out!" His 'Mech was going to blow.

The *Griffin* took three stumbling steps towards the *Marauder*, its remaining arm closing on the *Marauder's* leg in a deathgrip. "Morgan!"

Morgan Falk's *Griffin* must have had a number of LRMs remaining in his missile storage compartment. The warheads detonated with a blast that ripped both 'Mechs apart, and consumed the ruin with a boiling, seething ball of flame which rose into the sky like some hellish, blossoming flower.

They say we won.

I'm not entirely sure what the Davion raiders were trying to prove. I know that the Davion 'Mechs storming Hill 091 broke and ran when their commander's *Marauder* disintegrated in flame and hurtling fragments. I know Colonel Keen led the charge which swept the last of the raiders off the hill and saved the Kallair munitions factory.

Falk was dead, of course. He had been the real hero, the one who'd made the lone 'Mech charge against the Davion commander's *Marauder* and saved the day... not to mention the life of his Company Commander.

I spent some time afterwards going through Morgan Falk's personnel files, and made a discovery. After his comment about not wanting to take orders from a woman, I'd had him pegged as an arrogant bastard with some sort of twisty inner hatred of women. When I learned that he'd been close to Lisa Cummings, I figured he must just hate me.

I was wrong on both counts.

It's not often spoken of, but the Successor States are not a single, uniform human culture. What's more, the Draconis Combine is not the single, monolithic culture Draco politicians like to insist it is, standing strong and firm against the lesser human cultures which are assailing it. Think a moment! The Draconis Combine encompasses over five hundred inhabited worlds, worlds as different as Luthien and Thule, or Wheel and Asgard. While the overall culture is patterned on the ancient Japanese of old Terra, the people who populate those half thousand worlds are as diverse and varied as the peoples of Earth, with ways and customs and philosophies that have been shaped and reshaped by centuries of adaptation and struggles to survive in environments ranging from the icy lee of Thule's mountain glaciers to the fever-ridden swamps of Dehgolan. If the range of human cultures has diminished somewhat through space travel and interstellar communication relays, it has resulted in some surprises as well, where an isolated people has clung to old ways and old traditions which other people might find odd.

Morgan Falk was from Unity, a world not far from Pesht or from Luthien itself. Unity was settled early in the Terran exodus by fundamentalist religious dissenters who had almost vanished by the 31st century, but who had left their mark on the culture of Unity in countless ways.

To the Unities' way of thinking, women were to be carefully sheltered and protected. That notion may have had less to do with the dissenters' religious ideas than with the fact that men outnumbered women 10 to 1 in the early planetary colony. The result was that women stayed in the home. The thought that they should risk their lives exploring a hostile world—or in front-line combat—was completely unthinkable, and that fact became part of the background of every person born and raised on Unity.

Did that notion make Morgan Falk less of a soldier? It certainly brought a new element of struggle into his life. It must have been hard for him to overcome his personal feelings when he left his world and saw women undergoing aerospace raids on border worlds, women serving as MechWarriors, women carrying rifles in front-line combat infantry units.

Quite likely, he didn't know why he felt the way he did that day I questioned him in my office. He just knew that there was something terribly, tragically wrong about a woman leading a BattleMech company.

As Captain Rodgers had only recently proven, the position of Company Commander is a hazardous one... far more hazardous than serving as a line trooper or an ordinary MechWarrior. Once the enemy knows you're giving the orders, they come gunning for you.

We take the full equality of the sexes for granted today. A woman has the same right to fight—and die—for her world or cause or people as a man. But Morgan Falk opened my eyes to a new idea... the idea that a woman, *because* she is a woman, is someone to be protected, to be kept out of harm's way, to be cherished and sheltered.

Someone to die for, if need be, to protect them.

I can imagine dying for a comrade, for a friend... for a lover...

But to die for a man, simply because he is a man?

It is a strange thought, one which convinces me that the most alien creature in this Galaxy we've yet encountered is ourselves.

And yet, the idea is an old one, I know. Ancient cultures accepted the idea of chivalry towards women as a matter of course.

Useless. Baffling. And totally alien to the way most of us think today.

And yet, sometimes I wonder how much of our humanity we've lost in century upon bloody, grinding century of war.

I wonder. Would a citizen of Earth a thousand years past even recognize us as human?

Captain Alaya Addison continues to serve as B Company Commander for the Daggers of Death mercenary regiment. She was born in Warrior's Way on Chichibu. After serving an apprenticeship and one tour of duty with the Chichibu militia, she was able to win an appointment to an officer's training center on Benjamin. After two more tours with the Benjamin Regulars, she resigned her commission and signed on with the Daggers of Death (Col. Joab Keen, commanding) in 3026.

Captain Addison has won numerous citations and official commendations during her short term with the Daggers. During this past month, in addition to commanding the Dagger B's, she has become active in training recruits with an eye towards establishing a third company with the Daggers.

She is 29.

BattleColors

GREEN WOODLAND CAMO #1

Editor's Note: BattleMechs are designed to fight in a wide range of environments. Since their introduction in combat, these remarkable war machines have served and fought in every conceivable type of surroundings: fetid swamps and jungles, rugged mountains and upland plateaus, harsh deserts and eroded badlands, glaciers and planetary ice caps, cities, forests, the strangely-shaped and -colored landscapes of alien worlds, and even on the surfaces of airless moons.

As any warrior can tell you, camouflage pays a vital role in any unit's combat preparedness. While it may be impossible to conceal a Battle-Mech from an enemy—the thing is 10 meters tall, after all, and devilishly hard to hide—the intelligent use of camouflage can break up a 'Mech's outline, can distract or confuse the enemy, and may even provide a MechWarrior with that all-important extra half-second of reaction time in which to maneuver or fire.

Some MechWarriors deliberately use paint schemes which could be described as the very antithesis of camouflage—Kerensky's black Warhammer and Cherenkoff's red Atlas are examples—with the idea that since it is impossible to hide a 'Mech, a highly visible and easily recognizable color scheme might frighten enemy 'Mech pilots and convince them that continued resistance is useless.

This is the first of a continuing series of essays on the use of paint in BattleMech warfare. Each essay will examine a different camouflage or paint scheme, describe the environments in which it can best be put to use, discuss possible tactical and psychological aspects of certain color or camo schemes as used by MechWarriors past and present, and attempt to evaluate each scheme's effectiveness in combat. It is hoped that MechWarriors among the readers of BattleTechnology will find useful ideas for painting their own 'Mechs. Even those readers who get no closer to a BattleMech than a tactical simulator gaming table may find useful guides here for coloring their holographic projections or models.

Right: Green Woodland Camo #1: grays, greens, and browns in overlapping, irregular shapes break up the 'Mech's outline and create the impression of sunlight and forest vegetation.

GREEN WOODLAND CAMO #1

It is likely that the first camouflage ever used in organized warfare was a variant of woodland green—a broken pattern of greens and browns designed to blend in with the leaves and underbrush of a forested background. The pattern described here as Green Woodland Camo #1 is fairly typical of a number of such color schemes. Properly used, it can be highly effective in densely forested or jungle areas.

WORLDS AND ENVIRONMENTS

All standard terrestrial worlds exhibit the same variety and diversity of environmental regions as Man's homeworld. All have the equivalent of forests and jungles, dense masses of vegetation which are vital to the world's oxygen-CO_2 cycle. The basic green chlorophyll molecule or one of several score chlorophyll analogues has evolved time and again on hundreds of planets across the Inner Sphere. Though details such as the shape of the leaf or of the entire tree will vary tremendously from world to world, the environment of the deep woods or jungle—dimly lit, heavily colored in greens and blue greens and yellows—is repeated again and again on countless planets.

Some particular planetary forest environments are described below.
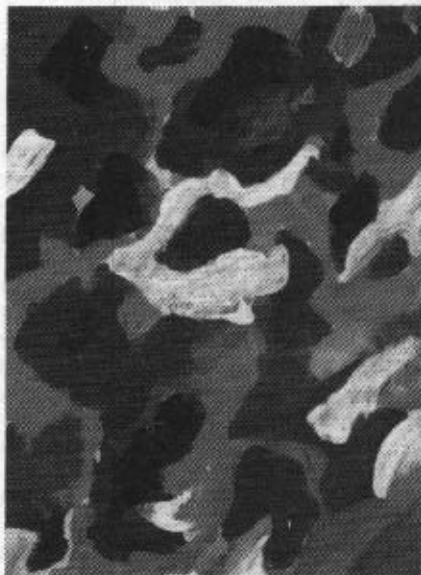
VERTHANDI

Verthandi—Norn II—is a sub-Terran world located in the Duchy of Rodigo [see: The Red Duke on page 4 of this issue] in the Draco Combine's Rasalhague Military District. Formerly a member of the Tamar Pact, it now lies in Kurita space less than ten parsecs from the border with the Lyran Commonwealth.

It is believed that an asteroid impact millennia ago resulted in the vast north polar valley now known as the Silvan Depression. Marked by numerous small, shallow, and interconnected seas, the Silvan Depression is heavily forested. In some places, water and forest mingle to form virtually impenetrable swamps.

The lowland forest is encircled by the Rimwall, the heavily eroded remnants of the ancient impact crater. Beyond the Rimwall lies a grassy veldt stretching for hundreds of kilometers, and blending gradually into desert. Most of the planet is desert, in fact, and Verthandi is officially classified as a desert planet. The majority of the population, however, lives in the Silvan Forest along the landlocked seas, and on the surrounding grassy plateau beyond the Rimwall.

The world is remarkable for having recently carried out a successful popular rising against its Kurita masters. The planetary leaders are currently poised in a delicate political balance between the Commonwealth and the Combine, and it is uncertain how long their new-won freedom will last.

Verthandi has evolved a chlorophyll analogue which colors the local vegetation in blues and blue-greens. The forests are dim-lit and gloomy places—the more so because the polar region is cloud-covered perhaps 90% of the time. Green Woodland Camo #1, or a variant using dark blue or blue green instead of olive, would serve well anywhere within Verthandi's Silvan Lowlands.

TALL TREES

Tall Trees is an aptly-named forest world in Liao space close to the Confederation's border with House Marik. Second world of a G8 sun, and lacking enough of an axial tilt to create seasonal variations, most of Tall Trees' land area is covered by deep woods which stretch from sea to sea and nearly from pole to pole. The planet, possessing a surface gravity of only .78 G, is notable for the unusual native trees known as Xenosequoias. Some specimens of these forest giants have been measured to over a kilometer in height, with diameters of over 60 meters.

The high-level forest canopy in areas populated by Xenosequoias blocks out most of the sunlight before it reaches the ground, and surface vegetation is sparse or nonexistent. Light levels are low enough, however, that camouflage schemes such as Woodland Green Camo #1 are reasonably effective. Most other forest areas on Tall Trees pass enough sunlight for a rich diversity of surface vegetation to flourish, and a Woodland Camo scheme becomes highly effective, even at relatively close range.

DEHGOLAN

Dehgolan—Canaris III—in Kurita space ten parsecs from the Lyran Commonwealth border, is that rarity among planetary subtypes, a true
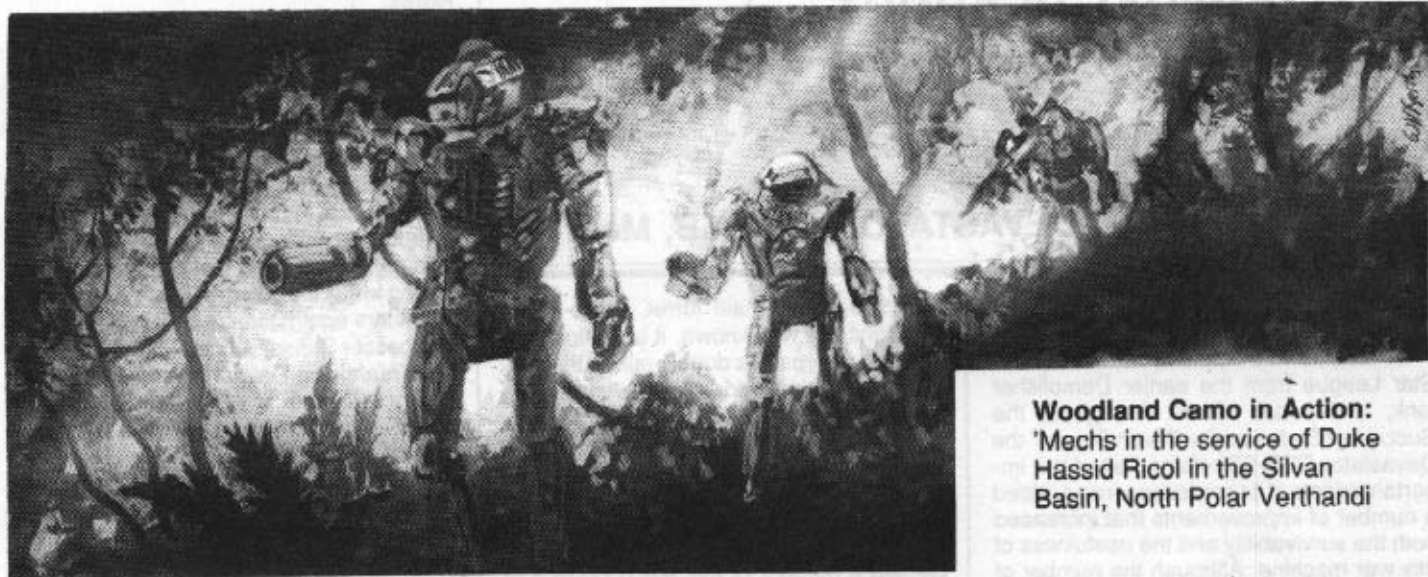
Woodland Camo in Action: 'Mechs in the service of Duke Hassid Ricol in the Silvan Basin, North Polar Verthandi

jungle planet. Its surface area is evenly divided between low-lying land masses and shallow, stagnant seas. It has no axial tilt to produce seasonal variation and it possesses a dense, fetid atmosphere which evenly distributes the heat it receives from Canaris. Under these conditions, most of Dehgolan's land area, excepting the desert uplands along the equator and the forests and open plains at the poles, is covered in dense, impenetrable jungle.

Dehgolan's cities, clustered along the shores of various of the world's seas, rely heavily on fishing and water-born transport. The interior is a place which few people care to visit. There are countless tales of life forms—large, vicious, and very, very hungry—which inhabit the Deep Jungle.

People *have* investigated the interior, however, and those who have returned have done so using BattleMechs. Dehgolan is a prime example of the lengths to which natural selection can go to produce life forms efficient at survival. Whatever the truth behind the tales of truly enormous jungle creatures, much of the planet's native life is vicious with a bloodthirsty single-mindedness difficult for offworlder humans to comprehend. BattleMechs, at least, give humans an even chance when they venture into the Dehgolan interior.

Its location on the Steiner-Kurita border has resulted in numerous cross-border raids which culminated in 'Mech battles on Dehgolan. In 3015 a battalion-sized Steiner raider force landed on Dehgolan, seized the two principal starports, and drove the defending Kurita militia into the swamps. A Combine relief force, including two battalions of Johiro's Regiment of Night Stalkers, made a combat drop and engaged the Steiner forces along the fringes of the great Avatangu Forest.

Both forces suffered in excess of 60% casualties, before the Steiner raiders regrouped and withdrew off world. Many of the deaths are attrib-

uted to damaged 'Mechs stumbling into bottomless swamps, or running afoul of life forms strong enough to attempt to open a BattleMech.

Woodland Green Camo #1 is most effective within the jungle regions of Dehgolan. It should be pointed out that camouflage does not seem to be particular effective in attempts to hide from native life forms.

KESAI IV

Kesai IV, on the Kurita-Davion border a scant 15 light years from the Kurita world of Delacruz, is classified as a desert planet, but it does possess scattered forests and woodlands in temperate regions along the coastlands of the world's small seas. Hundreds of campaigns have been fought on Kesai IV since the beginning of the Age of War. The planet possesses extensive reserves of heavy metals and petroleum, and numerous factories and industrial plants deemed vital to Davion's war effort have been constructed here. Countless raids and invasions have reduced most of Kesai IV's cities to rubble, burned over tens of thousands of square kilometers of farmland and forest, and reduced the world's population to a tiny handful living underground.

Most 'Mechs serving on Kesai IV are given desert camouflage patterns, since campaigns on the planet tend to be far-ranging, highly mobile hit-and-run affairs. Several sharp battles have been fought within the woodlands which surround Kesai IV's spaceport at Shalmirat, however, and at least one company of Battle-Mechs operated by the planet's standing militia garrison has been painted in patterns closely approximating Green Woodland Camo #1.

The local variant of chlorophyll gives Kesai vegetation a distinct yellow cast, and effective camouflage schemes should use more yellow and yellow-green than green in their color mix.

THE WOODLAND PATTERN

A Green Woodland Camo pattern is achieved by painting the 'Mech first with a blue-gray or green-gray base coat. Small, intricate, and random masses of color are laid down using chrome green, blue green, or olive drab. Intermittent areas of brown, amber, or red brown contrast with the green areas, and help to break up the form of the 'Mech when viewed from a distance. The pattern can be built up layer upon layer, with multiple shapes of contrasting tones and colors overlapping one another, until shapes run together in an imitation of sun-dappled foliage.

A popular variant of Woodland Camo #1 breaks up the tight pattern of green blotches with large, oval or irregularly-shaped areas of grey-blue, yellow, or light green. This pattern mimics the effect of shafts of sunlight filtering through the forest canopy, and further serves to interrupt a BattleMech's distinctive outline.

Green Camo is, of course, effective only against wooded backgrounds and is most effective only when the 'Mech remains stationary. No amount of camouflage will conceal a 'Mech if it is silhouetted against the sky on a barren ridge crest, or if it betrays its presence by moving quickly.

The effect of a woodland camouflage paint scheme can be heightened by tying large and random masses of local vegetation, leaves, clumps of grasses, vines, and even whole shrubs to strategic parts of the 'Mech, always with the object of breaking up the 'Mech's distinctive outline when it is viewed from a distance. Sometimes, when the 'Mech cannot be totally hidden, it is possible to use camouflage to so disguise the shapes of the 'Mechs that enemy observers are unable to report specific 'Mech classes, allowing the exact composition and tonnage of a 'Mech force to remain unknown.

TECHNICAL READOUT

DEVASTATOR, DVE-5B, Mark III

Overview:

Developed in the later years of the old Star League from the earlier Demolisher tank, and better known throughout the Successor States as the "Mech Slayer," the Devastator DVE-5B retained all of the important assets of its predecessor and added a number of improvements that increased both the survivability and the usefulness of this war machine. Although the number of these vehicles still in operation is greatly reduced from the more than 500 built during the Star League days, Devastators can still be found in the arsenals of many of the Successor States and some of the more wealthy planetary military forces.

Capabilities:

Resembling its predecessor to a large degree, the Devastator differs from the earlier machine mainly in its engine plant and in its array of weaponry. The most significant change was the replacement of the old Demolisher's inefficient internal combustion engine with a newer type Magna 240 Fusion power plant. The changeover eliminated the need for expensive power amplifiers in the system as well as reducing the load put on the vehicle's inherent heat sinks.

The Devastator's main armament stayed the same as the Demolisher's: twin M.E. ('Mech Eater) Type 20 autocannon

mounted in the main turret. Since these weapons are well known, it is sufficient to say that they pack a double punch that any sensible MechWarrior will tell you is terrible to behold.

Because of the increase in the power grid, the Devastator is also able to mount a number of weapons that simply could not be accommodated on the Demolisher. The lack of such weapons in the older tank caused a number of the 'Mech Slayers to become disabled through attacks by lighter 'Mechs coming in from behind or even by other armored vehicles and heavy weapons support troops. The Devastator mounts two Radon V Small Lasers in cupolas on the port and starboard forward hull as well as a Radon VI Medium Laser mounted on the forepeak. These energy weapons can be targeted independently by the Dynatec 1280 Tracking System installed for this purpose. In addition to lasers, the Devastator mounts a Torch XXVI Flamer unit on an auto-tracking tripod located on the top-rear of the immense turret, and a Javoc Short Range Missile 4-pack mounted on the after turret housing. These two weapons are primarily used for anti-armor/infantry fire, but they are equally effective against 'Mech targets within their ranges.

The armor of the Devastator was little changed from the Demolisher design, so much so that their protection is almost identical.

Notes:

Devastators are used in a variety of roles, the most important of which is planetary defense. Most Successor States have placed one or two of their remaining Devastators/Demolishers on key planets within their sphere of influence. The garrison that includes one of these monsters has little to fear from anything less than a company of raiding 'Mechs since few commanders are willing to risk the potential firepower of these monsters against lance-sized units. Some Successor States, such as House Liao, use their remaining Devastators as "Guards of Honor." During any pageant or military parade on Sian, four of these immense vehicles always lead the way, making even more of an impression than most 'Mechs.

Devastators are also effective in attacking across open country. Restricted maneuvering areas should be avoided at all costs, however, with these vehicles. Caught in rough terrain or within a city-fight, they have proven themselves to be easy prey to any sizable assault force.

It is worth noting that the reputation of these "Mech Slayers" has increased to such proportions over the centuries that currently it is more their reputation than their actual combat value that keeps them within the active forces of the Successor States. Sadly, this situation will not last as fewer and fewer operational Devastators and Demolishers are found in the field.

Despite the uncontested fact that the Devastator is a considerable improvement over the still fairly efficient design of the Demolisher tank, both these behemoths appear to be headed for extinction from the battlefields of the Succession Wars. Though they are quite impressive as they rumble toward opposing 'Mech forces, their usefulness is far outweighed by the incredible logistical effort necessary to keep them operational. Spare parts for either of these vehicles are nearly impossible to come by within the borders of the Successor States. Replacement parts are usually scavenged from cannibalized sister-vehicles or fabricated from similar spares which never quite fit. It is an unfortunate fact that centuries of continual warfare have simply reduced all of the Successor States' repair and replacement capabilities. This situation is not apt to change in the foreseeable future. And because of that, Devastator and Demolisher tanks will eventually follow the path of another behemoth into extinction: that of Terra's ancient dinosaurs.
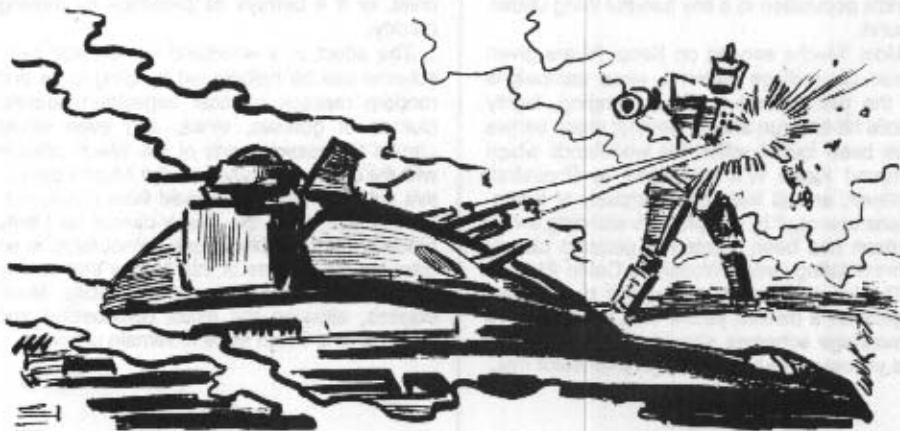
Mass: 80 tons
Movement Type: Tracked
Power Plant: Magna 240 Fusion
Cruising Speed: 35.42 kph
Flank Speed: 52.3 kph
Armor: Dinochrome 2000
Armament:
2 M.E. ('MechEater) Autocannon 20
1 Radon VI Medium Laser
2 Radon V Small Lasers
1 Torch XXVI Flamer
1 Javoc Short Range Missile Four-Pack
Manufacturer: Halstead Industries
Communications System: Omicron B
Targeting and Tracking System: Dynatec 1280

		Tons
Movement Type:	Tracked	
Tonnage:		80
Cruise Speed:	3	
Flank Speed:	5	
Engine:		17
Rating:	240	
Type:	Fusion	
Controls:		4
Lift Equipment:		0
Power Amplifier:		0
Heat Sinks:	10	
Internal Structure:		8
Turret:		3
Armor:		10

Loc.	Points
Front	40
Lt./Rt. Side	30/30
Back	20
Turret	40

Weapons and Ammo:	
Auto Cannon 20	14
Auto Cannon 20	14
Ammo 10	2
Ammo 10	2
SRM 4	2
Ammo 25	1
Med. Laser	1
Sm. Laser	.5
Sm. Laser	.5
Flamer	1

NOTE: All weapons have all-round firing ability except the three lasers which can only fire to the front and sides of the vehicle.
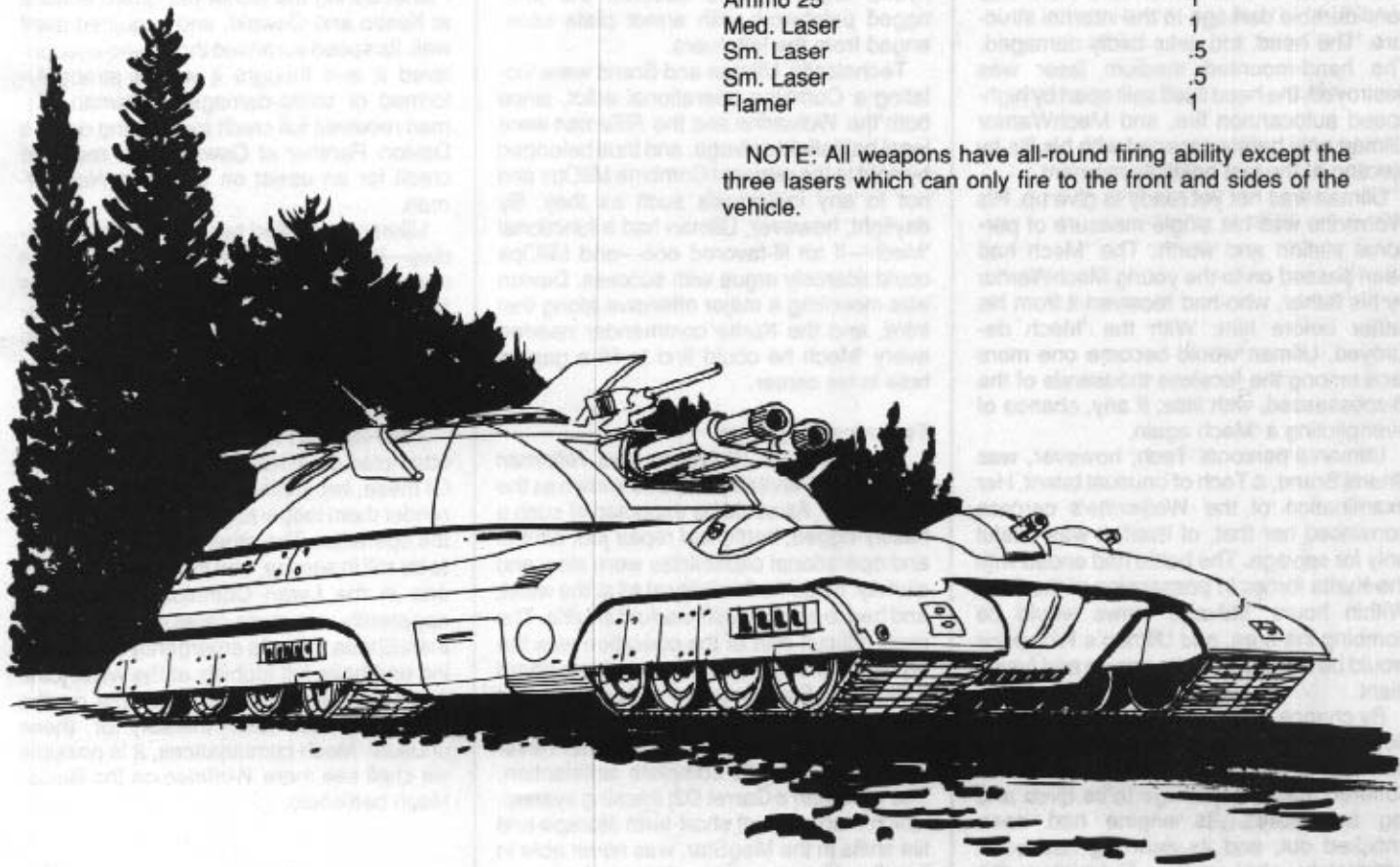
Combat Salvage

WVR/RFL HYBRID: The Wolfman

WVR/RFL HYBRID: The Wolfman

History: The First Wolfman

During the Second Battle of Ryersson, on Bergman's Planet in 2986, one of the combatants was MechWarrior Valdis Ullman, of House Kurita's Vegan Legion. Ullman's 55-ton *Wolverine* got into a running fight with a Davion *Marauder* and came out second best. The *Wolverine's* left arm was completely shot away, and the right arm was left hanging by charred bundles of wiring and myomer. The front center and left torsos both lost all of their armor, and there was considerable damage to the internal structure. The head, too, was badly damaged. The head-mounted medium laser was destroyed, the head itself split apart by high-speed autocannon fire, and MechWarrior Ullman only barely escaped with his life by ejecting at the last possible moment.

Ullman was not yet ready to give up. His *Wolverine* was his single measure of personal station and worth. The 'Mech had been passed on to the young MechWarrior by his father, who had received it from his father before him. With the 'Mech destroyed, Ullman would become one more face among the faceless thousands of the Dispossessed, with little, if any, chance of ever piloting a 'Mech again.

Ullman's personal Tech, however, was Sharis Brand, a Tech of unusual talent. Her examination of the *Wolverine's* carcass convinced her that, of itself, it was useful only for salvage. The battle had ended with the Kurita forces in possession of the field. Within hours, salvage crews would be combing the area, and Ullman's *Wolverine* would be torn apart for its engine and fusion plant.

By chance, a Davion *Rifleman* had been destroyed only a hundred meters distant from Ullman's machine. The *Rifleman* had suffered massive damage to its torso and leg assemblies. Its engine had been knocked out, and its right leg had been completely shot away. Examining the wreckage, Sharis Brand formed a remarkable plan.

Together, the two of them waved down a Kurita *BattleMaster* patrolling the area, and, with the promise of four bottles of scotch, enlisted its two pilots' aid. The wreckage of the Rifleman was dragged across to the *Wolverine*, and Sharis began work.

With the *BattleMaster's* help, the ruined engine core and reactor of the *Rifleman* were removed, and the two body halves positioned together. With help from a small army of astechs recruited from the nearest Kurita base, Sharis made the necessary connections, welded the two halves of the hybrid together, and secured the jury-rigged patchwork with armor plate scavenged from the left-overs.

Technically, Ullman and Brand were violating a Combine operational edict, since both the *Wolverine* and the *Rifleman* were legal battlefield salvage, and thus belonged by right to the regional Combine MilOps and not to any individuals such as they. By daylight, however, Ullman had a functional 'Mech—if an ill-favored one—and MilOps could scarcely argue with success. Davion was mounting a major offensive along that front, and the Kurita commander needed every 'Mech he could find to fill a gaping hole in his center.

Technical Aspects:

The hybrid of *Wolverine* and *Rifleman* quickly and inevitably became known as the "*Wolfman*." As could be expected of such a hastily-rigged, battlefield repair job, control and operational capabilities were slow and clumsy. It had no flexibility at all at the waist, and had to turn in a stiff-backed shuffle. The most difficult part of the operation was the reprogramming of the *Rifleman's* on-board Kallon MagStar computer to handle weight distribution and shift in the *Wolverine* leg assemblies. This particular job was never handled to Brand's complete satisfaction. The *Rifleman's* Garret D2j tracking system, which made use of short-term storage and file shifts in the MagStar, was never able to handle airborne targets, though slow-moving ground targets presented no problem. The engine also always had heat build-up problems after the repair job, and contributed one extra heat point during each ten seconds of operation.

Sharis was forced to abandon the *Rifleman's* heavy lasers to save weight. Because she needed extra support inside the torso, she remounted the *Rifleman's* medium lasers in the arm brackets where the heavy lasers had been. The result looked strangely unbalanced, but the control circuitry worked, and Ullman had no problem controlling the aim, once he got the hang of maneuvering the hybrid without turning at the waist.

And, of course, the *Wolverine's* jumpjets had to be sacrificed.

By way of compensation, the hybrid 'Mech was lighter than the original *Rifleman*, and faster than the original *Wolverine*. If it lacked the heavy laser weaponry of the *Rifleman*, it did, at least, still mount its predecessor's famous and deadly Imperator-A autocannons.

Battle History

Ullman's *Wolfman* fought on Bergman's Planet during the Kurita rearguard actions at Kestlo and Oswald, and acquitted itself well. Its speed surprised those who encountered it and thought it was a strangely-formed or battle-damaged *Rifleman*. Ullman received full credit for bringing down a Davion *Panther* at Oswald, and received credit for an assist on a Davion *Hatchetman*.

Ullman was killed two years later, at Gridley—ironically not in 'Mech combat but during a fight over a woman in a bar. His *Wolfman* was reassigned to a Vegan Legion training cadre and was last reported serving with a planetary militia on Labrea.

Variants:

The *Rifleman-Wolverine* hybrid has been attempted on at least four other occasions. Of these, two malfunctioned so badly as to render them inoperable within a few days of the operation. The other two are presumed to be still in service, one in Marik space, and one in the Lyran Commonwealth. Both, apparently, are more carefully crafted jobs than Sharis Brand's emergency restructuring and have full mobility at the waist joint. As more data becomes available on the usefulness (or lack thereof) of these unusual 'Mech combinations, it is possible we shall see more *Wolfmen* on the Battle-Mech battlefield.

Mass: 55 tons
Chassis: Hybrid: Kallon Type IV-Crucis A
Power Plant: Core Tek 275
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Maximum Speed: 86.4 kph
Jump Capacity: None
Armor: Various
Weapons:
  2 Magna Mark II Medium Lasers
  2 Imperator-A Autocannons
Manufacturer: None—Battlefield improvisation
Communications System: Garret T-11-A
Targeting and Tracking System: Garret D2j

Type: WVR/RFL Wolfman			Tons
Tonnage:	55 tons		55
Internal Structure:			5.5
Engine:	275 Core Tek		15.5
Walking MPs:	5		
Running MPs:	8		
Jumping MPs:	0		
Heat Sinks:	11		1
Gyro:			3
Cockpit:			3
Armor Factor:	112		7
	Internal	Armor	
	Structure	Value	
Head:	3	5	
Center Torso:	18	19/4	
Rt./Lt. Torso:	13	15/2	
Rt./Lt. Arm:	9	12	
Rt./Lt. Leg	13	12	

Weapons and Ammo:			
Type	Loc.	Critical	
AC/5	RA	4	8
AC/5	LA	4	8
Ammo (AC) 20	CT	1	1
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Medium Laser	LA	1	1

BATTLETECH SIMULATOR

OPTIONAL RULES VARIANT 0102-A:

RANGED COMBAT: MAXIMUM RANGE

FASA's MechWarrior provides rules for combat with ranged personal weapons. Each different weapon has a range limitation, in 5-meter hexes, for short, medium, and long range. At short range, there is no To-Hit modifier for range. At medium range there is a modifier of +2, and at long range the modifier becomes +4.

With this system, the maximum possible range for a slug-thrower pistol is 40 meters (8 hexes), while the maximum long range for a rifle is 150 meters (30 hexes). The longest range listed on the Personal Weapons Table is the gyrojet rifle: 320 meters (72 hexes).

It has been noted that these ranges are somewhat shorter than the generally accepted effective ranges for the various weapon types listed in MechWarrior.

The following table lists a few historical weapons, and their generally-accepted effective and maximum ranges. "Effective range" is usually defined as the range within which a trained shooter has an average chance of hitting a man-sized target. "Maximum range" is the range at which the shooter has any chance at all of hitting his target. Two well-known 18th Century smoothbore muskets are included for comparison.

Weapon	Period	Effective Range	Maximum Range
M-16 (assault rifle)	Late 20th Century	400 m.	600 m.
M700 (sniper's rifle)	Late 20th Century	1000 m.	1800 m.
Gyrojet (early rocket rifle)	Mid-20th Century	300 m.	700 m.
M1911A1 (pistol)	20th Century	50 m.	110 m.
Brown Bess (smoothbore musket)	Late 18th Century	80 m.	160 m.
Kentucky "Long Rifle" (smoothbore musket)	Late 18th Century	100 m.	200 m.

It should be noted that "Maximum Range" does *not* represent the maximum possible distance the bullet travels when fired. Unless it hits something along the way, the bullet from an M-16 will travel well over 2500 meters when fired, while the large, slow round from a U.S. Colt M1911A1 will travel over 1400 meters. The ranges listed above are approximations based on the likelihood of the shooter hitting what he is aiming at.

Although the overall level of technology among the Successor States has fallen since the days of the Star League, it is generally accepted that weapons technology during the 31st Century is still at or above the levels common in the late-20th/early-21st Centuries on Earth. Indeed, many of the weapons still in use during the 31st Century are relics of the Star League of three centuries and more ago, and represent the peak of human weapons technology.

Obviously, then, the ranges listed on the MechWarrior Personal Weapons Table do not give the maximum ranges possible for the various weapons. (If they did, a 31st Century combat rifle could be replaced by an 18th Century smoothbore musket!) What the MechWarrior tables *do* list are ranges typical for most combat. Even with the high-tech, long-ranged laser weaponry of the Star League era, infantry rarely attempted to engage man-sized targets at ranges greater than a few hundred meters.

There are situations, however, when it becomes important to engage targets at greater-than-usual combat ranges. Snipers, for example, using telescopic or laser sights, routinely attempt to pick off their targets at ranges of 500 meters or more, and they have been known to use high-powered, long-ranged weapons (such as the mid-20th Century .50 caliber machine gun) to hit targets as much as 2 kilometers away.

With this in mind, the following optional rules may be used to allow long-range combat.

MECHWARRIOR:
Optional Rules Variant 0102-A

Extreme Range

Extreme Range is a fourth range classification beyond Long Range. Extreme range is based on a given weapon's Long Range, and depends on the weapon's type, as given below.

Weapon Type	Extreme Range Multiplier
Bows	
Long Bow/Heavy Crossbow	x4
Short Bow/Light Crossbow	x2
Pistols	
Pistol/Auto Pistol	x2
Laser Pistols	x2
Tranq Gun	x2
Sonic Stunner	x1
Rifles	
Rifle	x5
Laser Rifle	x4
Submachine Gun	x3
Shotgun/Pump Shotgun	x2
Gyrojet Rifle	x2
Flamer	x1

Extreme Range for SRM Launchers and other heavy weapons will be discussed in a separate rules variant article in the next issue of BattleTechnology.

Thus, extreme range for a typical pistol is 2 x 8 = 16 hexes, or 80 meters, while extreme range for a typical rifle is 5 x 30 = 150 hexes, or 750 meters.

The weapons presented in BattleTechnology's Sidearms column (beginning with this issue) list Short, Medium, Long, and Extreme ranges in meters for each weapon. The range in hexes for MechWarrior combat can be determined by dividing the range figure by 5.

Hitting at Extreme Range

The To-Hit Modifier for any fire at Extreme Range is +8. All other Ranged Attack Modifiers are applied as usual. Thus, a character (DEX 7, Rifle 3) firing a rifle at 600 meters, taking 2 combat rounds to aim, would have a To-Hit Target of 5 + 8 - 2 = 11. He would hit his target with a roll of 11 or more.

The same character firing a submachine gun at a range of 120 meters, taking careful aim for one round and firing a 10-shot burst would have a To-Hit target of 5 + 8 -1 -2 = 10. He would hit his target on a roll of 10 or more.

Certain sighting aids such as telescopic or laser sights may allow additional modifications of from -3 to -5 to the To-Hit Target. These are discussed below, under **Notes to the Ranged Attack Modifiers Table.**

Maximum Range

Bullets and laser beams always travel farther even than the Extreme Range listed for any given weapon. It is possible (if unlikely!) to hit a target at a distance greater than Extreme Range. At the referee's discretion, characters may be allowed to fire at targets which are at ranges greater than the weapon's Extreme Range.

This new range category, called Maximum Range, is determined for any weapon by multiplying that weapon's Extreme Range by 1.5. Thus, maximum range for a pistol (Extreme Range = 16 hexes, or 80 meters) is 16 x 1.5 = 24 hexes, or 120 meters. Maximum range for a typical rifle (Extreme Range = 150 hexes, or 750 meters) is 150 x 1.5 = 225 hexes, or 1125 meters.

The Ranged Combat Modifier for weapons fired at Maximum Range is +12. Note that, unless the firing character is *very* good, his final To-Hit Target will nearly always be higher than 12, making most combat at Maximum Range impossible. However, characters with good marksmanship skill and the proper equipment can achieve hits even at Maximum range. Such characters could serve as snipers, trying to hit enemy officers, MechWarriors, or assassination targets from a kilometer or more away.

For example, a character (DEX 7, Level 3 Rifle) is using a rifle with a sniperscope (-4 To-Hit Modifier) against a stationary target (-1) at a range of 1000 meters. He has a clear line of sight, and is taking 3 rounds to aim (-3). The sniper's To-Hit Target would be 5 + 12 -4 -1 -3 = 9. He will hit his target on a roll of 9 or higher.

Referees are invited to adapt or ignore the use of Maximum Range in their own campaigns, as they see fit. One simple application is to disallow all attempts to hit targets at greater than Extreme Range *except* those specifically designated as sniping attempts. This saves the referee from having to calculate a To-Hit number for every wild attempt to hit distant targets by chance but allows the realism of using a sniper in certain, special cases.

Notes to the Ranged Attack Modifiers Table

The Ranged Combat Attack Modifiers Table on page 77 of the MechWarrior rulebook lists the various factors which modify a character's base To-Hit Target. The following notes to that table should be applied when the referee allows fire at targets at greater than Long Range. Most of these notes will apply at *any* range.

- Attacker Fire Modifier for firing through woods is applied for *each* wooded 5-meter hex. Thus, firing through 5 meters (1 hex) of Light Woods gives an Attack Modifier of +1, while firing through 20 meters (4 hexes) of Light Woods would give an Attack Modifier of +4.

    This becomes particularly important when the referee determines the distance to a target within Extreme or Maximum Range. The referee must estimate the number of meters of Light Woods/ Rubble or Heavy Woods terrain between the firing character and the target, then divide by 5 to give the number of partly-blocking hexes in the character's line of fire.

- A firing character receives benefit for taking careful aim for only a single combat round (-1) when aiming a submachine gun or other weapon firing full-auto (one or more 10-round bursts aimed at a target area). Characters firing a short (2-, 3- or 4- rounds) burst from a submachine gun or other weapon capable of automatic fire may aim for up to 3 rounds before firing, with the usual Careful Aim modifier of up to -3.

- An additional Attack Modifier may be applied for any of a number of long range sighting aids, including telescopic sights, laser sights, IR detectors, and similar vision enhancement viewers or scopes. Such sights have various effects in determining ranged combat modifiers. IR and starlight-type scopes will partially. or completely negate the modifiers caused by darkness. Telescopic or laser sights will allow a modifier of -3 to -5, depending on the device used. Rules Variant 0102-B in this issue of BattleTechnology lists a number of scopes and vision enhancement devices, together with their Modifiers for use in determining To-Hit Targets.

Note that, while scopes can be mounted on weapons capable of full automatic fire, they are effective *only* when the character uses them with single shots or short (3- or 4-round) bursts.

- The strength of laser fire falls off with range due to attenuation of the beam. At Extreme Range, a laser pistol will cause 2D6 damage points, while a laser rifle will cause 3D6 damage points. At Maximum Range, a laser pistol will cause 1D6 damage points, while a laser rifle will cause 2D6 damage points.

- The damage caused by shotgun blasts also falls off with distance. Shotguns fired at Extreme Range cause 2D + 2 points of damage. Shotguns fired at Maximum Range cause 1D + 2 points of damage.

- Sonic stunners and flamers are special weapons with extremely limited ranges. Both stunners and flamers have Extreme Range multipliers of x1. In other words, they have no extreme range effects. Both sonic stunners and flamers *do* have Maximum Ranges equal to 1.5 x their respective Long Range values.

    A character at a sonic stunner's Maximum Range will avoid the effects of that weapon on a Saving Roll of 2D6 + 2. At maximum range a flamer will do 1D6 - 1 points of damage. A successful flamer attack will also ignite the target area at Maximum Range, causing a fire which will cause 1D6 damage to any character passing through that hex for the next three combat rounds.

Applying Extreme/Maximum Range

Rules Variant 0102-A is completely optional. It is recommended that referees use it sparingly, if only to reduce the number of combat calculations they must make during a typical MechWarrior gaming or simulator session! In the vast majority of cases, infantry combat will take place at distances equivalent to Long Range or less. This variant will increase the realism of infantry combat situations, however, by allowing characters to use their weapons at realistic ranges.

The use of Extreme and Maximum Ranges is especially useful in situations where the characters are attempting to use sniper fire against a particular target. From a kilometer or more away, bounty hunters may attempt to assassinate their target with a rifle outfitted with a telescopic sight, or an infantry sniper team could attempt to take out an enemy base commander at the start of an attack.

These rules allow MechWarrior situations to be easily folded into either BattleTech or BattleForce situations. One hex in BattleTech combat equals 30 meters, while one hex in BattleForce is 180 meters. Range calculations in either BattleTech or BattleForce should be rounded down to the nearest number of hexes. Thus, a typical rifle (Extreme Range of 750 meters and a Maximum Range of 1125 meters) would have an Extreme Range of 25 hexes and a Maximum Range of 37 hexes in BattleTech. In BattleForce, the same rifle would have an Extreme range of 4 hexes, and a Maximum Range of 6 hexes.

Obviously, the rules for MechWarrior would be incorporated into BattleTech or BattleForce only under very special circumstances.

It is not practical to keep track of the movements of all potential targets within the new, extended radius of fire created by this rules variant. Where necessary (the characters are attempting to ambush a particular enemy unit commander, for example, and must first sneak up on his encampment) the referee can designate a hex where the target is located on a BattleTech or BattleForce scale mapboard, and allow the characters (and the target) to maneuver using the normal rules for MechWarrior movement until the characters decide they want to try a shot. At that point, the referee can determine range by counting hexes. Five BattleForce hexes, for example, is 5 x 180 = 900 meters—beyond Extreme Range but within Maximum Range for a typical rifle.

Usually, the referee can simply determine a given range arbitrarily: "Okay, you see your target walking with his bodyguard across the spaceport field. The range is about 600 meters..."

Note: The referee should bear in mind that even with this variant rule, most combat will still take place within the ranges given in the basic game rules. Characters will have a chance of hitting targets at Extreme or maximum range only if they are *very* good, *very* lucky, or carry very special equipment.

Other Weapons

Other weapons will be introduced from time to time, both in various game modules and BattleTech products from FASA, and in BattleTechnology Magazine. Weapons to be discussed in future issues and/or products include mortars, heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, cone rifles, needlers, and other infantry weapons, ranging from personal sidearms to semi-portable or mounted heavy infantry weapons. BattleTechnology will endeavor to provide full range information for all new weapons, linking it to the combat system extension provided by Rules Variant 0102-A.

In addition, Issue 0103 of BattleTechnology will deal with weapons mounted by the kings of the battlefield—the BattleMechs themselves. These optional variant rules will also be linked to 0102-A.

MechWarrior Weapons Update

Rules Variant 0102-A provides an optional set of rules for extending the ranges of various weapons in MechWarrior game simulations. Differences between various weapons—even weapons of the same class, such as submachine guns—can result in differences in both ranges and in damage from weapon to weapon.

The following table lists the submachine guns described in this issue's Sidearms column. For each weapon, range limitations and damage points are given. Ranges are listed in meters. To convert to MechWarrior hexes, divide by 5. Damage points are given in numbers of 6-sided dice, with modifiers. For example, 2D + 3 means roll 2D6 and add 3 to the result.

Bereiter M14
Without/with stock, full-auto:
- Short: 15/20 m.
- Medium: 30/40 m.
- Long: 50/60 m.
- Extreme: 100/120 m.
- Maximum: 150/180 m.

With stock, single shot or burst:
- Short: 25 m.
- Medium: 50 m.
- Long: 80 m.
- Extreme: 160 m.
- Maximum: 240 m.

Damage:
- To 60 meters: 3D
- 61 to 120 meters: 3D - 2
- Over 120 meters: 2D

Imperator SMG
Without/with stock, full-auto:
- Short: 20/25 m.
- Medium: 40/50 m.
- Long: 60/70 m.
- Extreme: 120/140 m.
- Maximum: 180/ 210 m.

With stock, single shot or short burst:
- Short: 50 m.
- Medium: 100 m.
- Long: 150 m.
- Extreme: 300 m.
- Maximum: 450 m.

Damage:
- To 140 meters: 2D
- Over 140 meters: 2D - 2

Rugan SMG
Full auto/ Burst:
- Short: 25/30 m.
- Medium: 40/50 m.
- Long: 60/100 m.
- Extreme: 120/200 m.
- Maximum: 180/300 m.

Damage:
- To 100 meters: 4D
- 101 to 200 meters: 3D + 2
- Over 200 meters: 2D

Rorynex SMG
Full-auto/burst:
- Short: 15/20 m.
- Medium: 30/40 m.
- Long: 35/45 m.
- Extreme: 70/90 m.
- Maximum: 105/135 m.

Damage:
- All ranges: 3D + 3*

* The explosive round causes severe damage at all ranges regardless of the round's velocity.

KK-SPW
Full auto/single shot or burst:
- Short: 20/25 m.
- Medium: 40/50 m.
- Long: 60/80 m.
- Extreme: 120/160 m.
- Maximum: 180/240 m.

Damage:
- To 70 meters: 3D
- 71 to 140 meters: 3D - 2
- Over 140 meters: 2D

TK MP
Full auto/single shot or burst:
- Short: 25/35 m.
- Medium: 40/50 m.
- Long: 60/80 m.
- Extreme: 120/160 m.
- Maximum: 180/240 m.

Damage:
- To 70 meters: 3D
- 71 to 140 meters: 3D - 3
- Over 140 meters: 2D

Damage (special explosive bullets):
- All ranges: 4D

NIGHTSHADOW

A MechWarrior Scenario

SIMULATOR INFORMATION

The feature article entitled "The Nekekami" [see: page 18] describes a caste of paid spies/assassins sometimes employed by House Kurita or its agents in covert operations against other Successor State Houses.

Those MechWarriors and trainees who use FASA's MechWarrior role-playing game rules to expand their BattleTech campaigns—or simply to flesh out individual BattleTech scenarios—may find themselves facing one or more of these near-legendary warriors of the night. The information presented in the following simulator piece may be used by MechWarrior referees as an adventure in its own right, as part of a larger, on-going campaign, or as a source of ideas for other scenarios of the referee's own design.

Because of their unusual skills and abilities, it is recommended that MechWarrior referees not allow their player characters to be Nekekami themselves, but use the Nekekami as NPC opponents in certain situations. Note that the Nekekami are not numerous, and random encounters with this group will be extremely rare. An exception to this is possible, however, if one or more of a group of player characters somehow anger or expose a Nekekami clan during the course of a scenario. They could thereafter find themselves regular and frequent targets of Nekekami assassins.

MechWarrior stats and background information of a typical Nekekami warrior are included in this scenario; these may used as a guide in the creation of other Nekekami characters.

NOTE: The material in this scenario is for the MechWarrior referee's use only! The referee should arrange the presentation of this scenario in such a way that the characters do not know in advance that they are facing a Nekekami. This may mean obtaining the players' promises that they will not read the following material until after the adventure has been completed—or it may require the referee to change the names, places, and situations presented here in order to maintain the element of surprise.

NightShadow

A MechWarrior Scenario

BACKGROUND

Kelvin Horst is a well-known and extremely wealthy merchant, head of Horst Metals Enterprises, a trading and industrial manufacturing company with offices on numerous worlds in the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, and the Federated Suns. For the purposes of this scenario, it is assumed that Horst has his headquarters and offices on the Steiner world of Port Moseby, close to the border with the Draconis Combine. The referee may change this to almost any other world on which the player characters find themselves, however, in order to adapt this scenario to a current, on-going MechWarrior campaign.

Horstwald is Horst's palatial country estate in the hills north of Port Moseby Starport. Built within and incorporating the ruins of an abandoned, five-centuries-old garrison fortress, Horstwald serves today as a private fortress protecting Horst and his family from the numerous enemies the merchant has acquired during his years as a ruthless and aggressive interstellar trader.

The characters are approached by Sendic Henning, a young, expensively-dressed man representing Kelvin Horst. At least one of the characters will have heard of Horst; the man has a widespread reputation, both as an extremely wealthy and powerful merchant, and as a ruthless businessman. While no one has ever proved that Horst has worked on the far side of the complex tangle of planetary and House laws, it is rumored that he makes as much from his illicit smuggling operations (chiefly across the Steiner and Davion borders into the Combine) as from all his other business interests put together.

Research by the characters will reveal that the once powerful Horst family is all but gone now. A Kurita raid twenty years ago resulted in the deaths of many of them, and the rest died in an epidemic which was widely suspected of having been released by the Kurita raiders. The Horst family is now entirely represented by Kelvin Horst, who has the reputation of being a cynical, embittered old man.

Horst is in need of mercenaries with military experience and skill with weapons. The agent explains that Horst has recently received an unexpected and extremely valuable delivery which is awaiting transhipment aboard a Horst-owned interstellar freighter due into port tomorrow at noon. News of the delivery has reached certain of Horst's competitors, men who will stop at nothing to steal the delivery if they can reach it. Horst wants to hire the characters to guard the delivery until it can be put safely aboard the Horst Metals freighter DropShip and sent offworld.

The Mission

The characters will meet Horst, a white-haired, scowling, fiery-eyed man of 70 years, if they accept the mission. Terms can be negotiated. Horst will be willing to pay up to Cb 3,000 per man for 20 hours of sentry duty. They will be expected to take up positions (they may plot their own strategy based on maps provided by Horst) around the Horstwald compound and stand guard until midday tomorrow. At that time, a convoy of light armored hovercraft should arrive from the spaceport, and mercenary troops in Horst's employ from the DropShip will take charge of the package.

The characters will not be allowed to see the package. Their backgrounds have been quickly but efficiently checked by Horst's organization, and he is willing to trust them to the extent that he will provide them with maps to the grounds so that they can plan their defense, but he will not allow them to see the package itself.

Horst's estate includes a sizeable force of servants and bodyguards—NPCs who will be helping to protect Horst's delivery. They are armed with rifles and pistols. Assuming that the characters have fairly extensive military experience, they will be put in charge of the entire defensive force, under the overall command of Sendic Henning who, it turns out, is Horst's senior executive assistant.

Equipment

The characters are expected to provide their own weapons, but, if necessary, Horst will provide a small selection of rifles, submachine guns, shotguns, pistols, laser pistols, and gyrojet rifles for the characters' use. There is an alarm system in place at Horstwald, and the characters will be shown how to work it.

Personal radios, allowing the characters to communicate with one another anywhere on the estate grounds, are available. Special gear such as night-vision devices or sensors are not available, however, unless the characters are able to provide their own.

Under special circumstances, the characters may be allowed to employ their own BattleMechs, if these are available, but only on the grounds outside the fortress walls.

Horst himself will not be enthusiastic about the idea of using BattleMechs on sentry-go and will insist that he is expecting an attack not by a BattleMech army, but by a handful of men acting in a commando role. The characters may wish to employ them, however, because of their sensors and IR-vision devices.

The NPCs

The men and women who are already guarding Horstwald are servants, Horst Metals employees, and family retainers. There are 20 of them, all together, each armed with a pistol (slug thrower) and/or a rifle. A set of guidelines for creating these characters is provided in the section of this scenario entitled CHARACTER STATS.

Horst will also mention that he has three dogs, trained to respond only to their handlers (three of the regular NPCs) and used to patrol the Horstwald grounds at night.

The Delivery

The cargo Horst wants protected is a package wrapped in paper, approximately the size and shape of a small book. It is now in the vault of Horst's personal estate. The vault is dug into bedrock and accessed through a half-meter-thick steel door. The electronic locking mechanism will open only to Horst's palmprint.

Horst will be unwilling to explain what the package is, why it is important, or who the forces are who want to steal it. It will be evident in conversation with the man, however, that he is convinced that *someone* is going to *try*.

MAPS

The layout of Horstwald and the surrounding area is shown on the two maps included with this scenario. Map 1, showing the Horstwald grounds, is useful for planning and setting up the defense of the estate. Map 2 shows the wing of the Horstwald home where Horst has his offices, his personal quarters, and the vault.

MAP 1: THE ESTATE GROUNDS

Map 1 opposite shows the layout of the Horstwald Estate grounds. The letters and numbers on the map are coded to the following:

A-G: These letters identify the six segments of the estate's alarm system. The estate walls are topped by photosensors which will sound an alarm when an invisible beam of light is broken. The letter G identifies the gate alarms, which sound if the locked gate is touched or opened.

Each section of the perimeter is also overlooked by remote television cameras.

Both the cameras and the security alarms are keyed to the House Security room in the main building.

1. Main Building: This is Horstwald, the mansion originally built by the Horst family over two centuries ago. Kelvin Horst is the family's only surviving member now. Except for those occasions when he throws lavish and somewhat notorious parties for visiting business associates, the main house is kept locked up. The characters will not be allowed to enter the building which, Horst insists, is sealed and fully protected by its own set of alarms.

2. West Wing: This structure is an obviously recent addition to the Horstwald manse. The passageway leading to the main house is kept locked and sealed. Horst himself—a man of relatively spartan tastes—prefers to stay in his quarters in this annex when he is on Port Moseby, close by his offices and files. The vault is located here, and this is the structure which Horst is hiring the characters to protect.

3. Servants Quarters: Horstwald once supported a huge number of family retainers, servants, and employees. These and their families lived in a small village located on the far side of Horst Lake. Their numbers have been reduced now to the 20 men and women serving as Horst's bodyguards and personal servants. They live in the Servants Quarters, each of which is a modest but comfortable cottage of five or six rooms,

HORSTWALD ESTATE GROUNDS

Scale: Meters
20   100   200

KEY
- Fully-lit Areas
- Light Woods
- Water

large enough for a small family. Most are now closed, locked, and empty.

4. Garage: This building serves as garage for the entire estate. Inside are two commercial hovercraft and an expensive Zentra-4000 ground car. The statistics for the Speeder and the Typical Air Car listed in the MechWarrior rule book can be used for these vehicles.

Also in the garage are numerous tools, parts, and Tech devices for maintaining and repairing the vehicles.

5. Gatehouse and Gate: This is the only gate onto the estate property. The gatehouse is a one-room structure for use by the estate's security personnel. It is connected by a private phone line with the House Security room. TV monitors provide views from cameras mounted on either side of the gate—views which are repeated at House Security. An intercom system allows the guards to question visitors who approach the gate, and the cameras allow them to check IDs without coming out to the gate. A push of a button will unlock and open the gate for expected visitors.

There are usually two guards on duty here at all times.

6. Estate Wall: The wall surrounding the estate is three meters tall and topped by the alarm system described above. It is nearly a meter thick, and set too deeply to allow anyone to tunnel underneath. Imbedded sensors set off alarms for the appropriate area in the House Security room if the wall is breached in any way at any point.

L: Lake Horst: This man-made lake is part of the estate's landscaping. It is approximately 3 meters (Level 1) deep.

P: Patio Pool: A patio area and swimming pool behind the main house, used by Horst in entertaining his associates. The pool is 3 meters deep at its deepest.

W: Woods: The woods of Horstwald. They are considered to be light woods for all combat and sighting purposes.

LIGHTING: Spotlights are set up along the house walls, designed to illuminate the grounds within 20 meters of the house. Fully lighted areas are shown on the map. There are still areas in shadows, however, where trees, shrubs, or odd angles to the building's walls create blind zones of deep shadow at night.
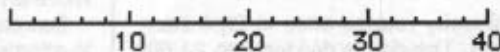
The main gate and all of the inner wall is fully lit by lights set into the ground inside the wall.

Ground Floor   **Upper Floor**   **Basement**
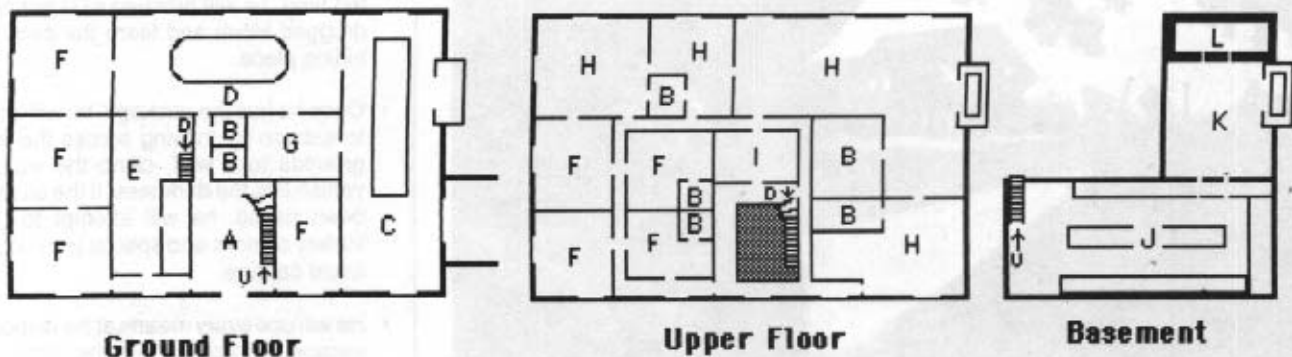
Scale : Meters

HORSTWALD: WEST WING

MAP 2: THE WEST WING

Map 2 above shows the west wing of the Horst mansion, with views of the basement, first floor, and second floor. The letters are keyed to the following:

First Floor:

A. Entry Hall: An open foyer with marble floors and a broad, sweeping staircase leading to the second floor. Plants, tapestries, and paintings line the walls, and a line of coat closets is located beneath the stairs. Horst believes in calculated ostentation with which to impress his guests.

B. Bathroom

C. Conference Room: A room with a large table for use in business conferences at the estate.

D. Dining Room: A formal dining room for meals, used only when Horst entertains business guests.

E. Kitchen and Storage Pantry

F. Offices: An office suite used by Horst's secretary and personal assistant when he is on planet. Each room has a desk, chairs, and computer terminals.

G. Den: An old-fashioned library/den for relaxation, including sofas and stuffed chairs, shelves of books, a microfilm reader, holovision, and computer terminals.

Second Floor:

B. Bathroom

F. Offices: An office suite used by Horst and his personal secretary for business when he is on Port Moseby. Each room contains a desk, chairs, and communications and computer equipment.

H. Bedrooms: A suite of bedrooms. The largest is used by Horst himself when he is on-planet and will be occupied by him on the night of this scenario. Its walls are lined with bookshelves (with countless antique books—a hobby of Horst's) and objets d'art.

The fireplace is a fake. Pressing a decorative knob on the mantlepiece causes the brick facing to swing open, revealing a hidden service elevator. The elevator leads to the Outer Vault in the basement.

I. House Security Room: A small room next to the second floor offices consisting of an L-shaped desk and 12 television monitors. The monitors show continual and constantly changing views of various parts of the estate grounds and buildings. Alarms linked to the perimeter alarm system and to grounds guards (such as the Gate House and the various guards roving the grounds) sound here. A radio keeps the man here in touch with security personnel anywhere on the estate. Other radio equipment allows Horst to keep in touch with employees and officials elsewhere on the planet, including

the local militia. An old and trusted Horst retainer is always at this position, watching the grounds.

Basement:

J. Wine Cellar: Racks holding bottles of very fine, old wines are stored here at the bottom of the steps from the pantry. One specific bottle is a dummy. Twisting it opens the back wall to give access to the house vault.

K. Outer Vault: The outer vault is an empty room giving access to the vault itself. There are two ways in—from the wine cellar through a rotating wall operated by twisting a dummy wine bottle, and through an elevator from Horst's bedroom suite.

L. Inner Vault: This is the vault proper, a small room sealed behind a .5-meter-thick door. It can be opened only by Horst's palmprint against a glass screen set in the wall next to the door. Some hundreds of thousands of C-Bill notes are stored here, as well as voluminous files containing hardcopy and computer files of Horst's business transactions over the past 20 years. Horst uses this vault to store especially valuable documents, as well as items such as the mysterious "delivery" which the characters must guard.

- If he manages to open the vault, he will not find what he wants inside. (see: Horst's Back-up Plan, below.) If permitted time, he will proceed to question the drugged Horst and learn the package's hiding place.

- Once he has the package, he will attempt to escape by moving across the estate grounds to a wall, climb the wall, and vanish into the darkness. If the alarm has been raised, he will attempt to use a variety of tricks and special techniques to avoid capture.

- He will use every means at his disposal to escape, with or without the package. If cornered, with no hope of escape, he will take his own life. He can only be captured if he can be knocked unconscious (in hand-to-hand combat or as a result of a wound), or wrestled to the ground, overpowered by superior numbers, and held or tied immobile. (He has a suicide pill sewn into the material of his tunic's shoulder which he will attempt to bite down on when he is captured. The pill will be discovered only after an *extremely* thorough search of the tunic.)

HORST'S BACK-UP PLAN

Horst is a clever man, a man who has survived and prospered by staying one step ahead of his competitors and enemies. He will provide the characters with full details of the west wing's layout, of its security systems, and even of the secret elevator between his bedroom and the vault, but he will keep one piece of information in reserve. The package is not being kept in the obvious place—the vault.

Instead, he has used an old but still clever ploy, and hid the package inside a large book which has had its pages glued together and a hiding space hollowed out of the inside. Placed on a shelf in his bedroom, it looks identical to other old books in the room, and only he knows where it is. His hope is that any attack on the estate will be directed against the vault, with the idea that once an attacker makes it to the vault, the alarm will have been raised.

He is not counting on a Nekekami intruder, however, and is assuming that anyone trying to enter the vault would try to bypass the vault's lock or blow open the door. He does not expect the intruder to come after him to get his palmprints—and will be asleep when the break-in occurs.

TIME

Port Moseby rotates once in 22.4 standard hours. The day is divided into 24 60-minute periods called "hours", with each minute slightly shorter than a standard minute. The local clock, then, uses 24-hour time (military time) with local noon at 1200 hours, and midnight at 2400 hours. The characters will arrive at the estate and take up their duties at approximately 1500 hours (mid-afternoon) on the day they are hired. The convoy from a grounded DropShip which will pick up Horst's package is expected to arrive at 1300 hours (early afternoon) the following day.

THE PLAN

The characters will have free reign in placing themselves and the NPC sentries. Normally, the estate guards are allocated as follows:

2 guards in the gate house
1 guard on roving patrol about the West Wing building
1 guard in the House Security Room
3 guards on separate roving perimeter patrols, each with a dog

Horst will be willing to have the characters rearrange this set-up in the interests of confusing any potential thieves who have already learned the usual sentry arrangement. Because of the importance of the "delivery," all of Horst's employees are expected to stay awake (or at least be subject to call on short notice) all night. The characters may arrange schedules to suit themselves, however.

The players should inform the referee of their plans, and any special arrangements they work out, such as special signals, regular radio checks, or passwords.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Basically, this scenario allows the players to attempt to defend Horst's vault, while the referee "controls" a lone Nekekami agent who will attempt to infiltrate the estate. The referee should not, of course, indicate that anything unusual is going on during the course of the scenario—nor should the location of the Nekekami agent be indicated by means of a counter or other marker on the map. The referee should mentally keep track of the infiltrator's position, however, observing his location on the map and noting when he comes close (within a few meters) to a player character or NPC guard. The section of this scenario entitled THE INTRUDER: STEP BY STEP will help the referee time and organize the Nekekami's movements and activities.

The Nekekami should be operated according to the following guidelines:

- He will not kill any character unless the killing is absolutely necessary. He will not, however, hesitate to kill if he must, and when he must, he will kill quickly, silently, and efficiently.

- He will move towards the house following the guidelines given below, watching for his opportunity to slip past or neutralize individual sentries. He knows that he needs Horst's palmprint to open the vault, and he knows about the secret elevator from Horst's bedroom to the vault. When he reaches the West Wing of the house, he will seek to enter Horst's bedroom, drug Horst, force the man to reveal the presence and numbers of guards in the Outer vault area, then take his prisoner to the vault on the secret elevator. He will be prepared to eliminate a large number of guards in the vault area with a hand grenade, stun grenade or gas.

THE INTRUDER: STEP BY STEP

The referee may use this section to time and pace the Nekekami intruder's movements and actions.

- He will approach the wall at a point of the referee's choosing, but well away from the main gate. At a time determined by the referee, all power to the estate will fail. The power failure will last for perhaps five seconds, during which time the estate's emergency back-up generators will switch on. The power loss will cause all of the perimeter alarms to sound in the House Security room, and there will be a momentary loss of picture on all TV monitors. The power loss will—naturally—cause considerable confusion among Horst's personal staff and may alert the characters that something is happening. A call by radio to city authorities at Port Moseby (the capital city, eighty kilometers away) will reveal that a power relay has failed—an apparent accident. Crews are working to trace and repair the fault now.

During the few seconds that power is out, the Nekekami agent will climb the wall, using a grappling hook. He will not leave the rope on the wall but will hide it in nearby shrubs for use on his escape. This will take him less than one minute.

- The intruder will approach the west wing of the main house. How long this takes will depend on the numbers and locations of sentries on the grounds. Where possible, he will hide unseen in the shadows until sentries pass. If he is approached (within ten meters) by one of the dogs, he will eliminate both dog and sentry, either by breaking their necks with his hands or using a poison-tipped throwing blade or shuriken. On a 2D6 roll of 6 or less, the dog will bark or yelp briefly before being silenced. On a separate roll of 5 or less, a sentry attacked by the Nekekami will be able to yell, shoot, or raise a similar alarm before being overpowered.

- The intruder will hide the bodies of any sentries or dogs he eliminates if the situation permits. He will drag them to the cover of nearby bushes, where only a careful search will reveal them. The operation will take 3 minutes for each body. He will not attempt to hide the bodies if other guards are approaching.

- The intruder will use climbing claws to scale the west wing of the house to the second floor on the north wall. He will use his knife and an electronic lock breaker to open Horst's bedroom window without sounding an alarm. This operation will take ten minutes (nine minutes to trace and expose the window's circuits, and one to operate the codebreaker device). During this time, he will be visible against the second-story of the house but will be noticed only if the characters are purposefully looking at the house, searching for signs of a break-in. (Their natural tendency—and especially the tendency of the NPCs—will be to look *out*, into the surrounding dark.)

- Inside Horst's bedroom, he will overpower and drug Horst. The process will take ten minutes. If characters approach the room, he will leave Horst in bed—he will appear to be asleep—and hide.

- Once he has drugged Horst, he will question him about personnel stationed in the vault, and the operation of the secret elevator. This will take an additional ten minutes.

- Horst and the intruder will descend in the secret elevator to the vault. This will take less than one minute. Guards stationed in the outer vault area will hear the elevator coming, but unless they have worked out specific arrangements with Horst ahead of time (i.e., Horst promises during planning *not* to use the elevator without prior warning) they will not suspect anything unusual.

- Sentries in the outer vault area will be attacked with grenades, stun grenades, or a paralyzing gas (see: Special Weapons, below.) Which weapon is used will depend on the situation, and on the referee's choice.

- The Nekekami will force Horst's palm against the palmreader lock and open the vault. It will take 5 minutes for him to satisfy himself that the package he is seeking is not there. If reinforcements arrive, the Nekekami will hear them as they enter the wine cellar. He may hide himself and Horst inside the safe (there is a safety circuit inside, which the Nekekami will discover, which will allow him to open the safe from inside. Alternatively, he may return to Horst's room, taking Horst with him.

- Once in Horst's room, the Nekekami will question the drugged merchant further and learn where the package is really hidden—inside a hollowed-out book on a bookshelf in Horst's bedroom. The Nekekami will then kill Horst and escape, with the package, out the window through which he entered.

- The intruder's escape route will depend on the level of activity on the estate grounds. He may wait (possibly hiding up a tree, under some bushes, or breathing through a tube while lying in the lake close by the shore) until the search has died down. If he is spotted at any time, he may bolt straight for the wall, or he may attempt to shake his pursuers by running into the woods.

Another possibility would be for him to make his way to the garage and steal the car or hovercraft. (Both types of vehicles use a starter switch and do not require anything like an ignition key. Both are electronically locked, however, and opening one will require two minutes and the lockbreaker device.) Still another possibility would be for him to attack an NPC guard, take his uniform, and mingle with the defenders until he could make good his escape.

GENERAL NOTES ON CONTROLLING THE INTRUDER

The Nekekami intruder is *very* good at what he does—but not superhuman. The referee should strive to create a sense of mystery about the intruder and his actions, however. A sentry and his dog are found dead, and another sentry a few meters away heard and saw nothing. Another sentry thinks he sees something moving in the shadows, but when he reaches the spot finds nothing. A character surprises a man dressed in black inside the house. There is a flash of light, and by the time the character's eyes clear, the intruder has vanished, seemingly into thin air. The intruder seems to possess a sixth sense in discovering alarms, tripwires, or traps, and to be able to anticipate guards' movements.

The referee should not have the Nekekami perform impossible feats, however, and should be able to explain each of the man's actions logically. The point of this scenario is to surprise the characters with an intruder who seems to possess extraordinary skills. If they have planned their own movements well, however, or set a clever trap, or react logically and without panic to reports of sentries found dead or alarm systems neutralized, they should be able to stop the intruder before he escapes with the package.

SPOTTING THE INTRUDER

The Nekekami's ability to move undetected (stealth) is a skill based on his dexterity. Each time there is a chance he might be spotted by a sentry or other character, the referee should roll against his Base Saving Roll target—which is quite low (4). The referee can heighten tension and mystery of the situation, however, by informing the players that the sentry thought he saw something—but when he checked, there was nothing.

TRAPS

The Nekekami may, at the referee's discretion, plant traps as he crosses the estate grounds. It will take him two minutes to set each trap. The referee should secretly record where these traps are, and what they consist of.

The nature of the traps is left to the referee's discretion. They could be as relatively harmless as a wire stretched between two trees at ankle height in order to trip a careless pursuer—or could involve caltrop mines, antipersonnel mines, or implanted explosives. Any character other than the Nekekami entering a booby trapped area must make a basic Saving Throw of 6 or higher to avoid triggering the trap.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The Nekekami is wearing a black nightsuit which affords him 15 points of armor protection. In addition, he is carrying the following:

One short dagger
Three throwing knives tipped with a
    fast-acting nerve poison
One silenced automatic pistol with
    three magazines
Climbing claws
Twenty meters of climbing rope with a
    light grapnel
One electronic lockbreaker
Ten caltrop mines
Three lengths of fine, strong tripwire for
    making booby traps
A glass vial containing trisodium
    phenylpentathyamine
Two gas grenades
Three flashbombs

The nerve poison on the throwing knives kills its victim instantly if it strikes him in the head or torso, and within seconds if it hits an arm or a leg.

Caltrop mines are described in the text of *The Nekekami* in this issue. They cause 2D6 points of damage to one leg when stepped on. If the character falls on one (make a saving roll of 8+ to avoid), it will do 2D6 + 3 points of damage to his torso.

The drug—known as T-PPT—when inhaled, induces a near trance-like state which leaves the victim highly suggestible. Like a near relative, sodium pentathol, T-PPT acts as a kind of truth serum. The victim answers all questions put to him, though his answers may be foggy and somewhat incoherent, requiring patience to make sense of them. The effects last for about two hours.

The gas grenades emit a cloud of anesthetic gas which causes those who breathe it to fall unconscious. Effects last about three hours.

Flashbombs are egg-sized capsules which explode with a searing, blinding light when crumpled. They will dazzle any character looking at them for one combat round, giving the user time to attack or escape.

RESOLVING THE SCENARIO

There are several factors which might be resolved in one of two ways. How these factors are resolved will determine whether the mission in Horst's employ was a success or a failure. These factors are listed below:

THE THEFT OF THE PACKAGE: Stealing the package is the Nekekami's primary mission. If he is able to steal it and escape over the wall, the characters' mission must be considered a failure.

If the characters are able to prevent the theft, or to recover the package by killing or capturing the intruder, they will have succeeded in their mission. If Horst is alive, they will be well rewarded for their success. If he was killed, the characters might not be paid... but they *will* have the package, which might lead to further adventures. (see: The Identity of the Package, below.)

HORST'S SURVIVAL: The Nekekami's secondary objective was to murder Horst, after using him to get to the package. The intruder's employers want Horst dead. Since the characters' primary concern is the safety of the package, they cannot be said to have failed if their employer is killed. However, with their employer dead, they will be forced to go to the officers managing Horst's company, Horst Metals Enterprises, in order to be paid. Even if their agreement with Horst is in writing, company officials will be unwilling to honor it since there was no time to have corporate lawyers go over the contract and approve it. The characters could press their claim through the planetary courts, but it will take years to resolve and cost a great deal of money in lawyers' fees and court costs to accomplish.

If Horst dies, the characters will not get paid—at least, not soon.

THE INTRUDER'S DEATH/CAPTURE: The intruder is a Nekekami, a man who will kill himself if his capture becomes inevitable. He will use every trick at his disposal to escape—but if escape is impossible, he will commit suicide. If the characters are able to capture the man despite this, they will have achieved a major coup for the intelligence services of the Lyran Commonwealth. Horst (or one of Horst's officials, if Horst is dead) will recognize the man as Nekekami and call in a high-ranking House Steiner intelligence agent. (Port Moseby is an obvious center for Steiner intelligence activities.)

The intruder's death or capture will impress this agent. If the Nekekami is killed (*not* forced to commit suicide, but killed in combat), each character involved in the operation will gain an additional 10 Experience Points. If the Nekekami is *captured*, each character will gain 50 additional Experience Points.

In addition, the intelligence officer will become a valuable contact for the character group, one who may call upon them at some future time when he is in need of a band of mercenaries as skilled—or lucky—as they.

THE IDENTITY OF THE PACKAGE

Horst is more than a smuggler. He hates the Draconis Combine with a passion that any who know this ruthless, cynical man would find surprising indeed. Driven by the need to avenge the deaths of two sons, a brother, a sister, and their families (all victims of a Kurita raid, or the epidemic which struck in the raid's aftermath) he has used his mercantile contacts to establish an extensive espionage ring within the Draco Combine. The ISF has become aware of Horst's activities but for some time has been unable to catch him in a crime flagrant enough to justify his elimination.

They have finally found all the justification they need. On Port Moseby, one of Horst's local contacts received a small black book from a House Kurita traitor. Both traitor and contact were murdered by ISF agents on the planet, but not before the book was mailed to Horst himself. Horst has examined the book and learned that it is a list of ISF senior intelligence agents currently operating in Davion territory along the border with the Draconis Combine, together with identifiers, code words, and call signs. With the information in that book, the Federated Suns' intelligence services could win a major victory in their long and losing struggle against the notorious ISF.

If Horst survives and the package is saved, Horst will never reveal its contents to the characters. After all, they have no "need to know". The package will be placed aboard a Horst Metals Enterprises ship and transported to New Avalon. If, however, Horst dies, it is possible that the characters will find themselves in possession of the book. They will not know what it is—it contains only column upon column of names and numbers in what are obviously some sort of a code—but they will know it is important.

Sooner or later—especially if they begin making inquiries to try to find out what the book is—ISF agents on port Moseby will learn (or guess) that they have it now, and the characters will find themselves squarely in the center of a major Kurita intelligence operation, one aimed at *them*. In fact, it is entirely possible that the ISF will hire more Nekekami to get the book back—at any price.

A FINAL TWIST

At the referee's discretion, a final twist may be added to this scenario. Sendic Henning, Horst's right-hand man, is in fact a Kurita agent, and is the man responsible for summoning the Nekekami to Horstwald. As an inside man, he could arrange to move sentries at critical times, unlock doors or windows, or even disable and drug Horst before the Nekekami arrives.

If the referee chooses this option, he could completely cripple any plans the player characters have made. In the interest of fair and balanced play, it is suggested that the referee allow the player characters to catch Henning doing something suspicious (such as unlocking a window which is supposed to be kept locked, or breaking a glass capsule under Horst's nose?) in order to alert them to the danger.

CHARACTER STATS

Typical Nekekami Warrior

Name: Hanzo Lee
Age: 28
Rank: Nekekami Warrior
Affiliation: House Kurita
Home Planet: Camlann
Body: 9
Dex: 10
Learning: 11
Charisma: 9
PIB: +3
HTK: 100

Skills:	Target:	Modified Target Roll
Athletics 3	7	4
Acrobatics 3	7	4
Climbing 3	7	4
Running 3	7	4
Bow/Blade 5	7	2
Brawling 4	8	4
Mechanical 2	7	5
Pistol 3	7	4
Rifle 3	7	4
Rogue 4	7	3
Hide in Cover 4	7	3
Listen/Eavesdrop 3	7	4
Stealth 3	7	4
Security Systems 2	7	5
Disguise 3	7	4

Equipment:
Dagger/sword
3 poison-tipped throwing knives
Silenced pistol with 3 magazines
Climbing claws
20 meters rope and grapnel
Electronic lock breaker
Ten caltrop mines
Three lengths of fine, strong tripwire for making booby traps
A glass vial containing trisodium phenylpentathyamine
Two gas grenades
Three flashbombs
Uniform: 15 points body armor

Biography: Hanzo Lee is an experienced Nekekami agent in the employ of House Kurita. Coming from one of the old clans within the Nekekami caste he prefers the use of more traditional weapons over the modern ones. Like many of his clan he takes great pride in accomplishing his mission without shedding blood, but in no wise averse to killing if necessary.

Hanzo will often use his skills with disguises to impersonate a maintenance worker, junior officer, technician, or any of a number of people in order to penetrate an installation. His lack of forgery skills, however, make it necessary for him to obtain the proper passes or ID documents from another source.

NPCs

The following guidelines can be applied toward the creation of the NPCs in Horst's employ. Not all NPCs will have all of the skills listed below, but all of the skills listed below will be represented. It should not be necessary to work out all of Horst's employees in detail, but each NPC can be worked up as needed in encounters with the intruder.

Attributes:
Total of 4 attributes = 18 + 2D6
Skills:
Athletic 1
Climbing 1
Running 1
Swimming 1 or Acrobatics 1
Brawling 1
Diplomacy 2 or Streetwise 2
Driver 2
Land Management 2
Technician 1 or Mechanical 1
Pistol 1
Rifle 1
Medical/First Aid 1
Rogue 1
Stealth 1
Security Systems 2

Equipment: Horst's employees wear ordinary street clothing, and carry slug-thrower rifles and/or pistols. Personal communicators are available to keep roving patrols in touch with the House Security room. Other equipment (flashlights, knives, spare magazines) are available as needed, at the referee's discretion.

HIDE AND SEEK

Street to Street

The fight's almost over. You can tell by the way the defenders broke and ran before our attack. Our Intel told us there was nothing at all on Tremaine IV except a handful of mercs under contract to House Steiner, pulling garrison duty, and it looks like they're right, for a change. Varrick's Vandals, they call themselves.

Well, the Vandals are getting themselves vandalized, this time.

As soon as we grounded, the locals pulled a fast fade, falling back into the city of Penobscot. I've loosed my boys and girls to track 'em down. No use holding a tight offensive formation when there's no solid line to hit. There's still some shooting going on. I popped a Varrick *Stinger* a little while ago as I started into town. Don't think I killed him, but he's hurtin' bad. Mark me down for an assist if one of you gets him, will you, boys?

Penobscot shows some damage... stray shots from earlier today, mostly... and some damage from a fighter strafing run a little bit ago. Lots of places for the Varricks to hide. I'm alone, now... the rest of my lance is circling to the east to try to bag any stay-behinds I flush. Should be okay. Hell... what idiot in his right mind would take on an *Atlas*?

Say... what? What was that?

Red Seven... Red Seven... I have contact. In the city, co-ords fiver niner alpha.

Estimate two light 'Mechs, hiding behind the buildings... range ninety meters.

Weapons are armed. I'm on them...

Transcript from an on-board
combat recorder recovered from
Colonel Marcus Galliani's AS7-D Atlas,
Tremaine IV, September 27, 3022
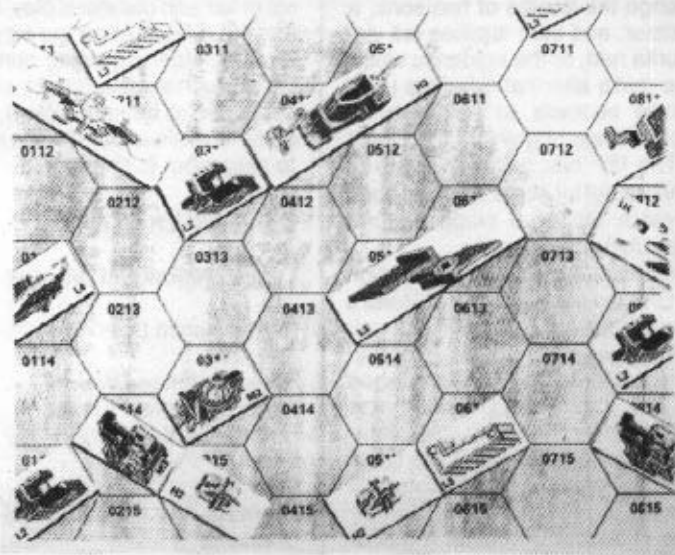
GAME SET-UP

Hide and Seek can be played using the CityTech game map and building markers. The section of the mapboard shown above represents one part of Droman Avenue (hexes 0114 through 0711). More of the city can be set up, but the central part of the city should be arranged as shown.

The Defenders are four light 'Mechs, the Recon Lance from Company A, Varrick's Vandals.

Lieutenant David Fletcher's *Panther*
  Piloting 4
  Gunnery 3
Brad Finnegan's *UrbanMech*
  Piloting 4
  Gunnery 3
Paula Mason's *Wasp*
  Piloting 4
  Gunnery 3
Fred Jurgen's *Stinger*
  Piloting 3
  Gunnery 3

Jurgen's *Stinger* has taken damage already. It has taken 3 armor points and 2 internal hit points of damage in its left arm, and 4 points of armor damage to its front center torso.

The Attacker is the lone, 100-ton 'Mech belonging to the commander of the Marik invasion forces, Colonel Marcus Galliani:

Col. Marcus Galliani's *Atlas*
  Piloting 3
  Gunnery 2

No 'Mechs are placed on the board initially. Galliani's *Atlas* will enter the map on turn 1 at hex 0114. The defenders should choose their hiding places but should not place their BattleMechs on the board.

A Game of Hide-and-Seek

Classic MechWarrior combat pits 'Mech against 'Mech in a contest which is, surprisingly often, quite even. Light 'Mechs know better than to go up against heavies, and for their parts, heavy and assault 'Mechs usually have better things to do than hunting down the light 'Mechs of an enemy's recon lance. It is generally accepted, however, that if a heavy 'Mech manages to catch a light, the engagement will be over very quickly indeed.

But there are always exceptions.

In a Marik raid against the Steiner world of Tremaine IV (Penobscot) in 3022, a situation arose which pitted four light 'Mechs from a Recon lance against a lone, 100-ton *Atlas* from a Marik raiding party.

The initial goal of the House Marik raiders had been to secure their DropShip perimeter and scatter the defending forces—tasks which had been accomplished within a few minutes of unbuttoning the ships and disembarking the troops. There had been scattered resistance, but the local defenders, an understrength regiment of mercenaries known as Varrick's Vandals, had proven no match for the heavy and assault 'Mechs Colonel Galliani had deployed. Galliani was personally leading the mop-up of Penobscot, pursuing the scattered mercenaries and hunting them down, one by one.

Lieutenant David Fletcher, Lance Commander of Company A's Recon Lance, was not frightened by the heavier 'Mech's deadly reputation. He knew that the *Atlas* was handicapped inside a city, with limited visibility and limited movement.

It was precisely these limitations which Fletcher chose to exploit in a daring maneuver which was soon to become known as the David Ambush.

DEPLOYMENT

The Defender has four 'Mechs hidden among the buildings shown on the map above. The defending players may choose which hexes their 'Mechs will occupy and note them secretly. (If a referee is used, the hex positions may be told to the referee instead).

It may be assumed that all 'Mechs which have entered buildings did so without damage. Each building on the map has suffered 2D6 points of damage already, and additional damage should be applied to any building which is entered by a 'Mech.

One or more of the Defenders' 'Mechs may, if desired, remain in the open. They are placed on the mapboard at the beginning of combat *only* if they are on Droman Avenue, which is the only part of the map along which Galliani has a clear line of sight.

SPECIAL RULES

The game begins as the *Atlas* moves to hex 0114 and proceeds along Droman Avenue. The *Atlas* must remain on Droman Avenue and may expend no more than 3 movement points per turn (a walk for an *Atlas*). The *Atlas* may not leave Droman Avenue or increase its speed until it is attacked. It may stop at any time, may change its facing, and may move at a slower pace than 3 hexes per turn.

The Defenders may attack or choose to remain in hiding. If the *Atlas* reaches 0810 (the upper right-hand hex on the map above) without being attacked at all, however, the Attacker wins.

The Defending 'Mechs are placed on the map only when they attack, or when the *Atlas* reaches a hex from which it has a clear line of sight to a Defender's 'Mech.

The first time it is fired upon, and if all of the Defending 'Mechs are not yet on the board, the *Atlas* *must* turn to face its attacker if fired on from the rear. If it is fired on by two or more 'Mechs, it may face the 'Mech of the Attacker's choice. This restriction lasts only for the first turn the *Atlas* is attacked, and simulates Colonel Galliani's surprise at being attacked from the rear. On subsequent turns, the Attacker may move as he chooses.

This scenario should be played using advanced BattleTech rules, and all rules for cities and buildings presented in CityTech.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Attacker wins if he can destroy at least two of the attacking 'Mechs without being destroyed himself. The Defender wins if the Atlas can be destroyed. Any other result is a draw.

OPTIONAL VARIATION

If the players desire, the situation can be made more fluid by allowing the *Atlas* to enter anywhere in the map area, and not limiting the Attacker's movement to Droman Avenue prior to the battle. The *Atlas* may move wherever the Attacker desires. The Defender should take this factor into account and plan their initial placement knowing that the *Atlas* will not necessarily walk down Droman Avenue, but could take another route instead.

To Save the Dragon

Retreat on Galtor III

The raid on Galtor III was your basic, class-A, monumental screw-up... but then, hey, that wouldn't be the first time someone had screwed up on that God-forsaken world, right? We'd been dropped too far from our assigned targets for us to do any good, the maps we'd been given didn't correspond to any terrain features we could find anywhere on the whole damn planet, and the "light covering forces" they'd said we'd find guarding the place turned out to be a couple of regiments of crack Davion 'Mechs.

Still, we gave it our best. We sent out recon parties and managed to locate an industrial park maybe ten klicks from where we'd touched down. We'd brushed aside the opposition and cleared the way for our cargo vehicles to move in and load up.

It was on the way back that Davion reinforcements started hitting us hard. All of a sudden our column was dissolving, and enemy 'Mechs were everywhere. Someone yelled over the taccom that the Captain was in trouble.

That was when we realized we'd be lucky if we ever saw our DropShips again...

from
Recollections of a Renegade Samurai
by Tom Takai
New Avalon Press, 3027

North

West

East

South
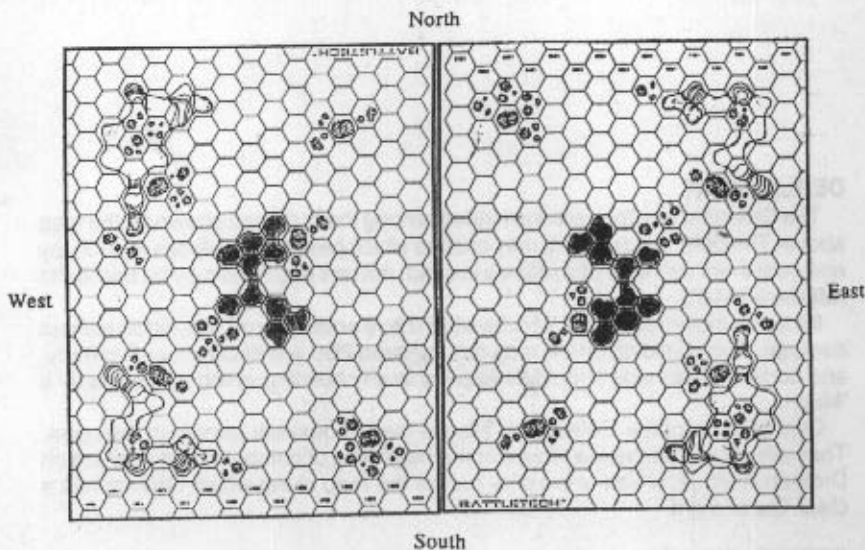
GAME SET-UP

Lay out the BattleTech map sheets as shown.

Defender

The Defender is one element of the Kurita mercenary company Daggers of Death. The Defender's forces include the following:

Command Lance
Capt. George Rodgers; Veteran *Dragon*
Tom Takai; Veteran *Crusader*

Fire Lance
Lisa Cummings; Veteran *Centurion*
Willy Yavin; Regular *Dervish*

Recon Lance
Lt. Alaya Addison; Veteran *Panther*
Sgt. Nick Fellini; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Francis Rodrigo; Regular *Stinger*

Rodgers' *Dragon* has already taken 10 points of armor damage to its right leg and 7 points of armor damage to its center torso.

The Defender sets up with Rodgers' *Dragon* on the east map, anywhere within ten hexes of the east edge of the map. Any three of the remaining six Kurita 'Mechs may be set up as desired on the west map. The last three Kurita 'Mechs may enter the combat area from the west edge of the west map at the beginning of Turn 3.

Attacker

The Attacker consists of elements of the Galtor Defense Legion, a reinforced planetary militia.

Galtor Defense Legion, Company A, 2nd Battalion

Command Lance
Capt. Harrison Sims; Veteran *Marauder*
Dennis White; Regular *Archer*

Fire Lance
Lt. Kelly Vane; Regular *Centurion*
Jorad Trelawny; Regular *Enforcer*
Pietro Gallini; Regular *Archer*
Fredrick Cavendish; Regular *Blackjack*

Recon Lance
Lt. Janet Gregg; Regular *Valkyrie*
Kevin O'Shay; Green *Cicada*
Bela Gomez; Green *Wasp*

The Attackers set up any five of their 'Mechs anywhere on the east map *after* Rodgers' damaged *Dragon* has been positioned by the Defender. No more than one Davion 'Mech can be closer to the *Dragon* than 3 hexes. The remaining four 'Mechs may enter the combat area from the east edge of the map on Combat Round 2 or after.

VICTORY

The Defender must attempt to rescue Captain Rodgers while inflicting as much damage on the Davion forces as possible. The Attacker must destroy as many Kurita 'Mechs as possible.

Victory for the Kurita forces can be rated according to the following table:

SPECTACULAR VICTORY: Captain Rodgers rescued, plus five or more Davion 'Mechs destroyed.

DECISIVE VICTORY: Captain Rodgers rescued, plus two to four Davion 'Mechs destroyed.

TACTICAL VICTORY: Captain Rodgers rescued, regardless of losses.

Victory for the Davion forces can be determined using the following table:

SPECTACULAR VICTORY: Five or more Kurita 'Mechs destroyed, with no more than two Davion 'Mechs lost.

DECISIVE VICTORY: Five or more Kurita 'Mechs destroyed, with no more than four Davion 'Mechs destroyed.

VICTORY: More Kurita 'Mechs destroyed than Davion 'Mechs.

TACTICAL VICTORY: Kurita 'Mechs destroyed or driven off the board before turn 15.

Note that it is possible for both sides to claim at least a tactical victory.

LOCATION: Five kilometers west of the Calliope Machine Works, Beacher's Crossroads, Galtor III

Galtor III had been the site of a major debacle earlier in the previous year, when an attempt to bait Kurita forces into a trap had turned into a trap for both sides and had transformed the planet into a BattleMech graveyard. The career of at least one Kurita general had already been ruined on that world, and no one was anxious for a repeat engagement.

But the Kurita high command had decided that they had to know more about Hanse Davion's intentions in the sector. His Galahad: 27 training maneuvers had caused considerable concern within the Kurita border defense command, and it was thought that a snap raid against the Federated Suns garrison in the Galtor system would reveal Davion's intentions.

Faulty intelligence and poor co-ordination ruined the raiders' chances of success. Galtor III was garrisoned by local militia reinforced by regular Davion line 'Mech units. The Galtor Defense Legion was a combination militia/'Mech training unit organized under the command of Davion regulars.

Early Kurita successes on the planet were lost when Davion reinforcements arrived. The raiders secured little in the way of intelligence, though the Calliope Machine Works plant near one of the main landing zones was looted of light machine parts and equipment valued at several hundred thousand Cbs.

During the withdrawal towards the Draco Combine DropShips in the final stages of the raid, Captain Rodgers, the Commander of Company B, Daggers of Death mercenary regiment, took damage to his 'Mech and fell behind the main column. A sudden rush by Davion forces shadowing the retreating Kurita column cut the company commander's *Dragon* off from the rest of his unit.

Lieutenant Alaya Addison, Recon Lance Leader, used her own initiative in organizing and leading a hastily-assembled strike force to rescue Captain George Rodgers before he could be overwhelmed. Her sudden strike, at a cost of one *Centurion* destroyed, plus the loss of Rodgers' own *Dragon*, rescued the injured Captain Rodgers, and delayed the Davion thrust towards the Kurita landing zone.

For her part in the operation, Addison received an official commendation from Colonel Joab Keen, commanding officer of the Daggers of Death, plus promotion to Captain and a chance at company-level command. Unfortunately, George Rodgers never fully recovered from his injuries. He received a medical retirement from the Daggers, and Alaya Addison took his place. Officially, both the Galtor III raid and the sharp action at Beacher's Crossroads were described as victories.

Flush with victory, the Daggers were withdrawn to the "secure" world of Scheat V to regroup and rest.

DAGGER'S EDGE

The Battle for Hill 091

At approximately 1510 hours local, I was convinced that we could no longer hold the position assigned us. Davion forces had forced their way onto Hill 091 and had managed to slip numerous BattleMechs around both flanks as well. The Daggers of Death mercenary regiment was in immediate danger of being cut off and annihilated.

We had lost two 'Mechs already, an *Orion* and a *Panther*, both seriously damaged and out of the fight. The rest began an orderly withdrawal down the reverse slope of the hill, while continuing to maintain heavy and accurate fire against overwhelming numbers.

Several minutes later, I realized that the Company Commander of B Company had not acknowledged orders, nor had she mustered with her unit. A quick check showed that Captain Alaya Addison was locked in hand-to-hand combat, her *Thunderbolt* against an enemy *Marauder*.

It was evident that her 'Mech had already been badly damaged and that she was in desperate trouble.

It was at that point that Lieutenant Morgan Falk disobeyed orders and went over to the attack.

Excerpt from official Board of Inquiry,
Transcript of testimony given
by Colonel Joab Keen,
Daggers of Death mercenary regiment,
Benjamin District Military Court,
October, 3027
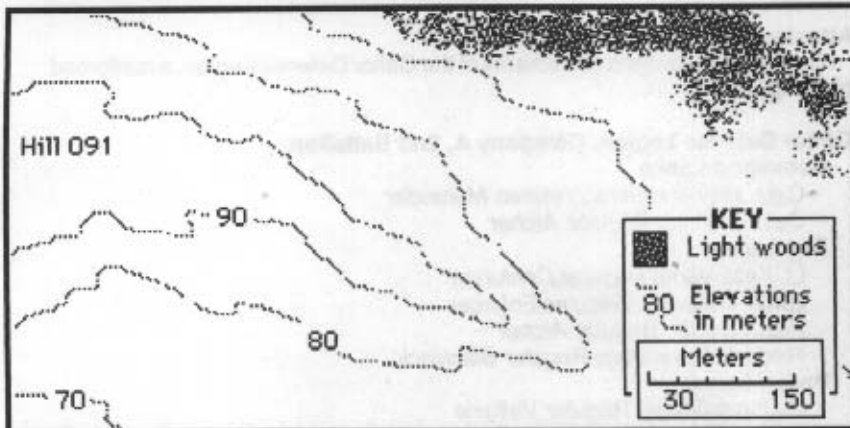
GAME SET-UP

Dagger's Edge is a simulation of 'Mech-to-'Mech combat which occurred on the terrain shown on the map above. Players and referees with access to transparent hex grid sheets can recreate the contour lines and terrain shown above for an accurate recreation of the battle of Hill 091.

Players may, if they prefer, use blank hexsheets for this simulation, or two standard BattleTech mapsheets and ignore the terrain features printed on them. Terrain played little part in the Battle of Hill 091.

Defender

The defending force consists of two BattleMechs of Company B, Daggers of Death mercenary regiment, in the service of House Kurita.

Captain Alaya Addison: Veteran *Thunderbolt*
Skills:
Piloting: 3
Gunnery: 3
Captain Addison's 'Mech already has the following damage:
Rt. Front torso: -5 armor points
Ct. Torso: -3 armor points
Lt. Arm: -2 armor points
Rt. Arm heavy laser: inoperative

Lieutenant Morgan Falk: Veteran *Griffin*
Skills:
Piloting: 3
Gunnery: 2
The *Griffin* has lost 5 armor points from its Center Torso.

Captain Addison begins the scenario on any hex of the player's choice near the center of the map. Lieutenant Falk may enter the East edge of the map on the first turn on which the player rolls a 5 or a 6 on 1D6.

Attacker

Major Wendell Jones: Veteran *Marauder*
Skills:
Piloting: 3
Gunnery: 3
Jones' *Marauder* builds up 2 extra heat points every time its right arm laser or PPC are fired.

Major Jones sets up on any hex within three hexes of Captain Addison's *Thunderbolt*. Major Jones has the initiative for the first combat round.

PLAY

The Davion *Marauder* is attempting to destroy the Kurita *Thunderbolt* which remains on the crest of Hill 091, then proceed down the east slope of the ridge in pursuit of retreating Kurita forces. Captain Addison may attempt to escape, or she may try to destroy the *Marauder* in order to buy time for her own forces. Lieutenant Falk's *Griffin* will arrive at some point after combat begins. His arrival, if in time, could tip the battle in the Kurita force's favor.

SPECIAL RULES

This scenario should be played using all advanced BattleTech rules. In addition, special provision is made for the damage caused by the explosion of Falk's *Griffin*, as described in A Dagger's Death [see page 26].

Falk's *Griffin* carries two tons of LRM missiles stored in its right torso ammo compartment. These will explode with 120 points of damage (10 x 12) in the event of an ammo explosion or ammo critical hit.

If Falk suffers an ammunition explosion while he is engaged in a physical attack with the *Marauder*, his 'Mech will suffer damage to its internal structure, as described in the regular BattleTech rules. In addition, the *Marauder* will suffer damage points equal to half of the damage points left after all of the *Griffin's* internal hit boxes have been filled in.

For example, if there are 30 internal hit locations remaining on the *Griffin* in the turn when its ammo explodes, the Marauder will suffer 45 points of damage (120 - 30)/2. This damage is divided into groups of 5 and applied randomly.

It is assumed that this damage is transferred while the two 'Mechs are grappling with one another and in extremely close proximity. In situations where an exploding 'Mech is only adjacent to to another 'Mech, the remaining damage points are divided by 6, and that number of damage points is applied (in groups of five) to *each* 'Mech in an adjacent hex.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Davion player wins according to the following schedule:

SPECTACULAR VICTORY: *Thunderbolt* and *Griffin* destroyed, *Marauder* exits east edge of map on Turn 10 or before.

DECISIVE VICTORY: *Thunderbolt* and *Griffin* destroyed or forced off the map on Turn 11 to 20.

MARGINAL VICTORY: *Thunderbolt* or *Griffin* destroyed. *Marauder* still on map on Turn 20.

DEFEAT: *Marauder* destroyed, or so badly damaged it cannot move.

The Kurita force wins according to the following schedule:

SPECTACULAR VICTORY: *Marauder* destroyed. *Thunderbolt* and *Griffin* still operational.

EXPENSIVE VICTORY: *Marauder* destroyed. *Thunderbolt* or *Griffin* destroyed. One survivor still operational.

TACTICAL VICTORY*: *Thunderbolt* and *Griffin* withdraw off east edge of map.

MARGINAL TACTICAL VICTORY*: *Thunderbolt* or *Griffin* withdraws off east edge of map. Remaining 'Mech destroyed.

DEFEAT: Both 'Mechs destroyed. *Marauder* still operational.

Note that it is possible for both sides to claim victory in this engagement (e.g., Davion Marginal Victory and Kurita Marginal Tactical Victory).

* A tactical victory suggests that at least one of the Kurita 'Mechs was able to disengage from the *Marauder* and join the retreating Kurita forces farther to the east. Historically, a Kurita defeat was transformed into victory by the stubborn stand on Hill 091 by two Kurita 'Mechs, and by the destruction of the Davion force leader's *Marauder*. In game terms, a tactical victory on Hill 091 means that the Kurita forces still retreat and lose the battle.

LOCATION: Halfway between the spaceport and the munitions factory, Kallair, South Polar Scheat V

Victory or defeat—the course of a major battle—can be decided by an insignificant turn of fate. The Battle of Hill 091 on Scheat V during a Davion raid against the munitions plants and industrial facilities in the planet's south polar region hinged on such a turning.

Lieutenant Morgan Falk, Fire Lance Leader of Co. B, Daggers of Death, noticed that his company commander was in trouble. Disregarding orders to retreat, he selflessly charged an enemy *Marauder* which outweighed his own 'Mech by 20 tons. In the desperate 'Mech-to-'Mech struggle which followed, Falk's *Griffin* was mortally damaged, but he managed to inflict severe damage on the *Marauder*, and prevent it from destroying his Captain's *Thunderbolt* and killing Captain Alaya Addison. His last act was to closely engage the *Marauder* at the moment when he realized that his own 'Mech was about to be destroyed by an ammunition explosion. The blast destroyed both his *Griffin* and the Davion *Marauder*.

The delay purchased by Falk's action allowed the Kurita line to reform and advance. It is probable that the advance was spurred on by Falk's example. The Davion forces, for their part, assumed that the counterattack was part of a general Kurita advance, and retreated.

The mercenary Daggers of Death had already been roughly handled and were at approximately 75% of their full strength. Worse, their morale was low, and it is quite possible that a second defeat such as that inflicted on them on Galtor III would have ruined them as an effective fighting unit.

One man's action on Hill 091 turned defeat to victory and prevented a Davion thrust against the munitions stockpiles only five kilometers behind the battle lines.

It is likely, too, that that one man's sacrifice saved the combat integrity of his regiment.

More Than Warriors

More Than Warriors continues to examine the human spirit which separates Man from the machines which seem to dominate his life and death on the battlefields of the 31st Century.

The Draco Combine has its cultural roots in the traditions and spirit of ancient Japan, on Terra, and it is to be expected that Draco art forms be Japanese in flavor. Two of the pieces in this issue's More Than Warriors reflect that heritage. The first is a poem rising from the essence of bushido—the way of the warrior. The second is a haiku, a traditional Japanese verse form.

The song DropShip Thunder, however, while indisputably of Draconian origins, proves that the Draco Combine is not a monolithic culture, but one which encompasses the traditions and philosophies and ways of thought of the dozens of ancient cultures which settled the Draconis star systems throughout history. Typical of the martial ballads sung by warriors everywhere throughout the Succession States, it has spread to the warriors of those other states who, after all, differ from their Draco counterparts only in political orientation.

The final two verses may be recent additions, and reflect the common soldier's pessimism in a war which has lasted for centuries and shows no sign of ending.

Untitled Poem

From Iga's mountains
Came my ancestors
Samurai
Warriors
Followers of Bushido
Now, I too am a warrior
A follower of Bushido
Samurai
Here, far from Iga
I carry my family's honor
Among the stars
Here, where battle is not
The glory of flashing katana
Or the thunder of horses' hooves
But fear and heat
And the cramped cockpit
Of a battlemech
Here where men
Seldom see their foes
Honor dwells in but a few
Duty is my honor
And to die in the service of my lord
Is my duty
For I am a warrior
A follower of Bushido
Samurai

DropShip Thunder

Our DropShips peal out thunder, shrieking down through cloven skies
As a planet's grim de-fenders gather in a host to die
Then open hatch! Forward men! Enemy in sight!
They're closing now, the battle's joined. All 'Mechs prepare to fight!

Our heavy 'Mechs deliver volleyed stroke on burning stroke
As the company advances through the battle fog and smoke.
Now open fire! Target lock! Deploy the Recon Lance!
Then it's blasting guns and stabbing beams as BattleMechs advance!

The enemy line is broken by our BattleMechs' last push,
And we hunt down fleeing foemen as they scatter through the bush.
We beat them, boys! Weapons up! Now cheer the Colonel, then
It's time to loot, to salvage parts, and tend our wounded men.

One day we'll win our landholds. We'll go raiding never more.
That will mean an end to plunder. It will be an end to war.
We'll raise our cups, set the feast, with women, wine and song
To celebrate survival, home where warriors belong!

Until the DropShips thunder, dropping down through cloven skies,
While we gather with our people, gather with them all to die.
Then open fire! Hold the line! Though hopeless, we will try
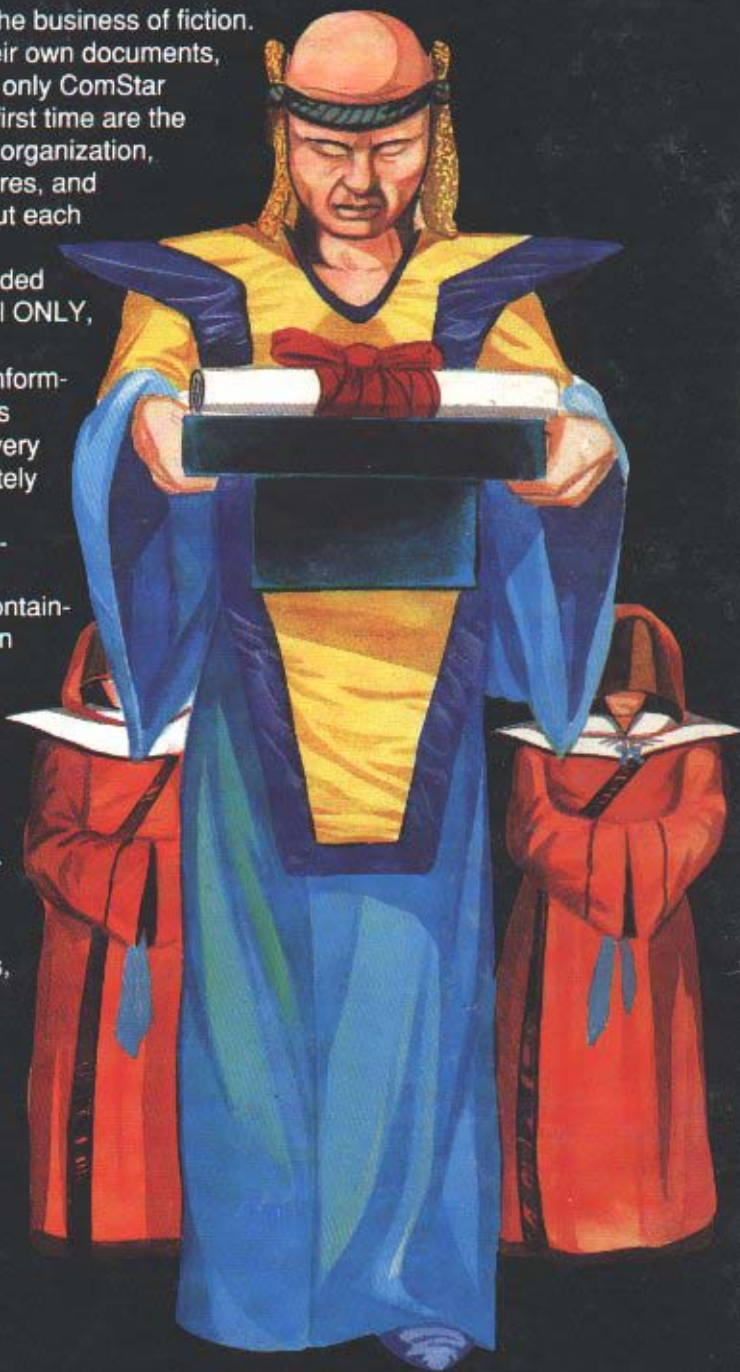To defend our homes and families. As warriors we will die!
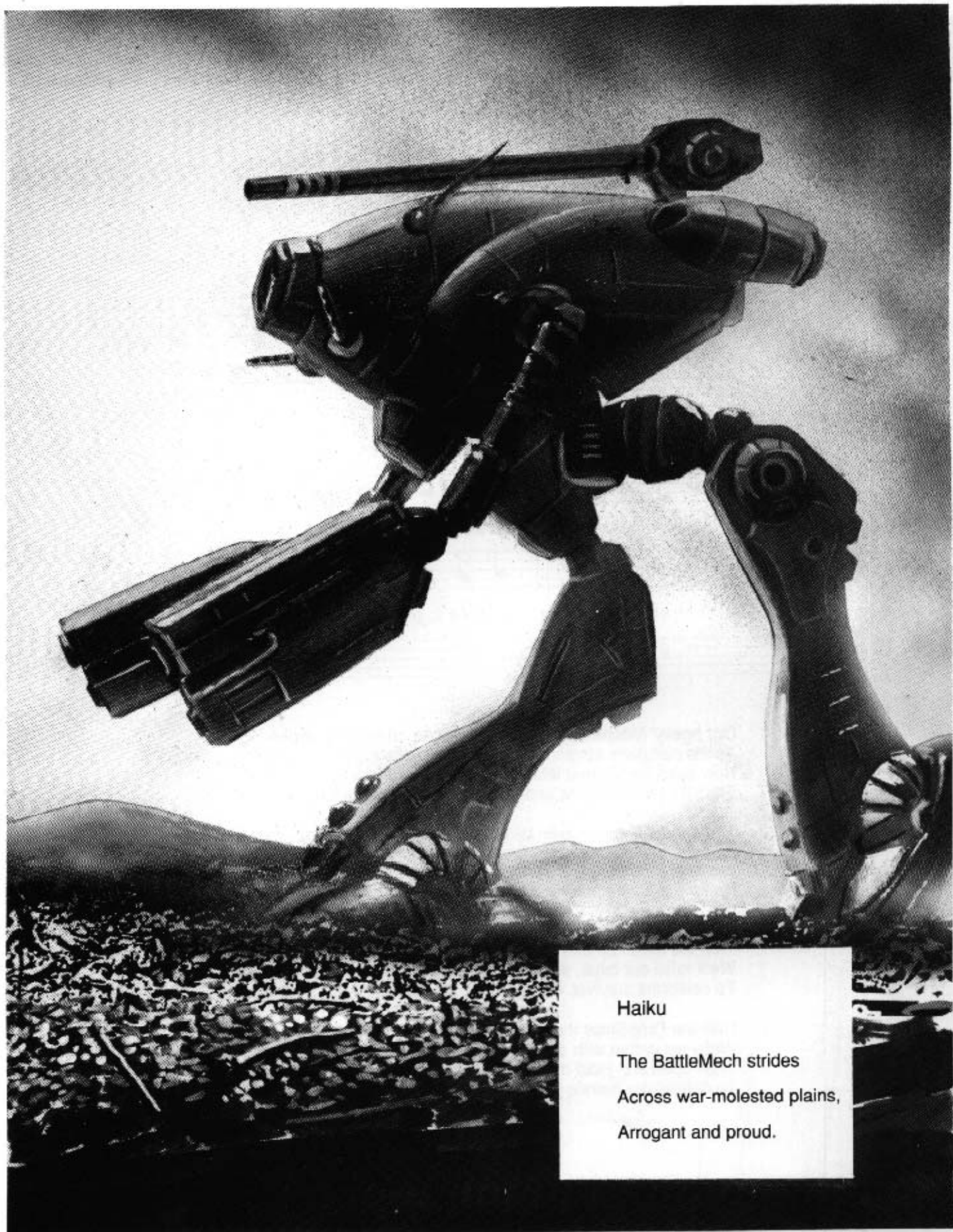
Haiku

The BattleMech strides
Across war-molested plains,
Arrogant and proud.

THE FACTS
ABOUT THE SUCCESSOR STATES

ComStar is not in the business of fiction. They want facts. And in their own documents, they deal with the facts as only ComStar knows them. Here for the first time are the compiled histories, military organization, personalities, social structures, and thousands of FACTS about each of the five Successor houses. Originally intended for ComStar personnel ONLY, these works show the incredible amount of information that ComStar has managed to get on every House (but, unfortunately not how they got the information). From in-depth unit listings to personality profiles containing knowledge Known only to a few, these books are amazing in their depth. The first of the these books covers **House Steiner**, and is already available. The next will cover **House Kurita** and be available soon. In the following months, Houses **Liao**, **Marik**, and **Davion** will be issued.

Colonel Steven Zaks, commander of the 12th Donegal Guards, is shown wearing the typical senior officer field uniform. Campaign bars adorn the front of flack jacket. Colonel Zaks' blue sash shows that he is graduated from the prestigious Nagelring Academy on Tharkad. As so few officers carry a riding crop, it indicates that this colonel is either young, vain, or both - a potentially disastrous combination.

Pictured above are adepts of the Order of the Five Pillars. This semi-religious monastic order is devoted to preserving and enforcing, the Combine's religion, ideology, and social codes which are contained in the work called the Dictum Honorium. The Order, also known as the Pillar of Ivory also controls the very important ivory trade in Kurita space. This power block is used to fund the inquisitorial mission of the Order.

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