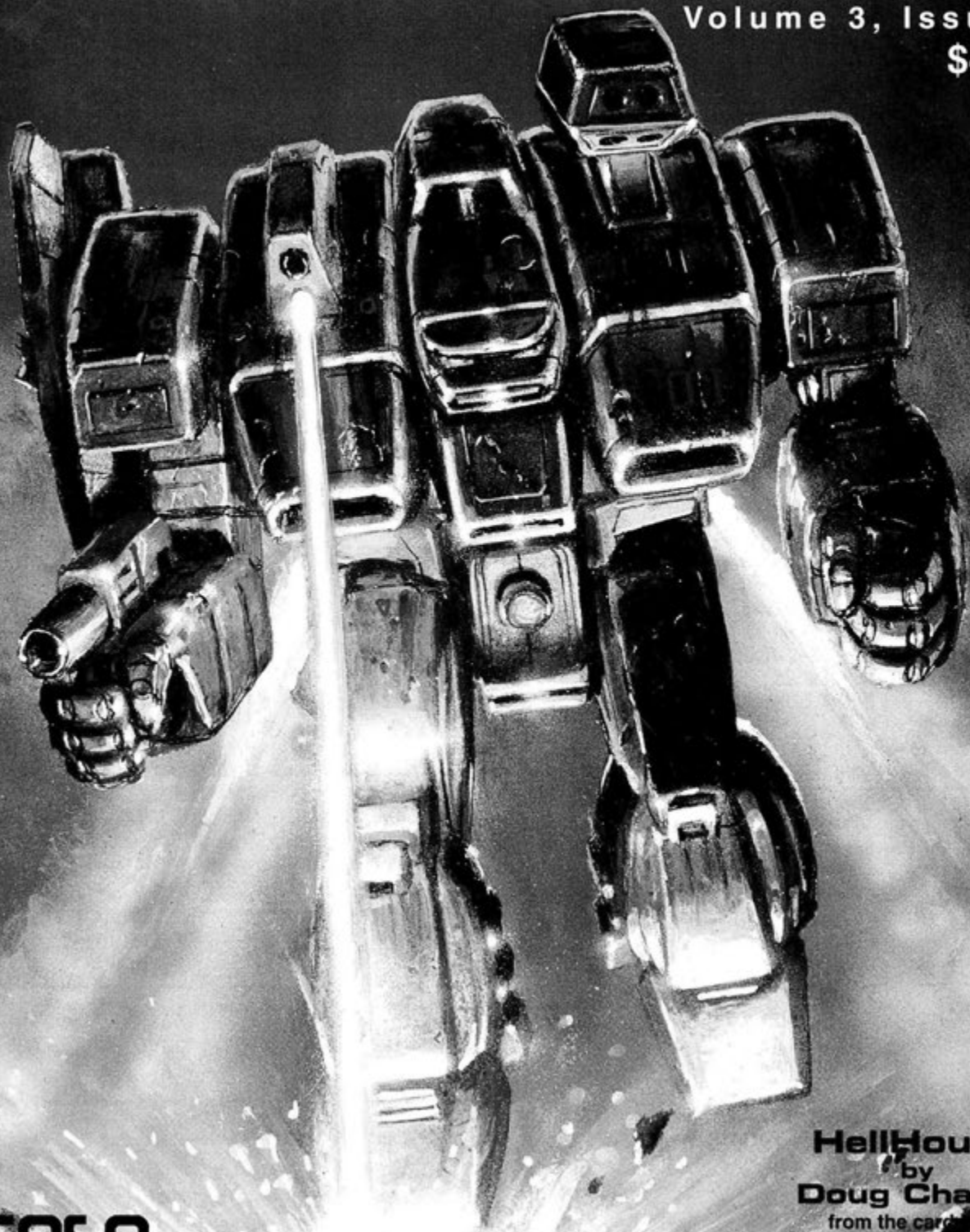


MECHFORCE[®] QUARTERLY

Volume 3, Issue 1

\$4.00



FASA
CORPORATION

HellHound
by
Doug Chaffee
from the card game
expansion set
Mercenaries
from Wizards of the Coast



FROM THE WAR ROOM

By Beryl Turner

“Atten-shun! Commander on deck!” At ease. Thank you. I am Precentor Epsilon, Beryl Turner. I have been commissioned to take command of this operation. I promise you a brave and glorious.....
.....Nyaaaah!

Ignore that last part. I'm Beryl Turner, MechWarrior, gamer in general, and all-around-nice guy. I'm the new guy in charge of MechForce Operations HQ, and convention support.

I've been asked to introduce myself. So, I'm sitting here, searching for ideas on how to write this, while looking at the toys on my desk. Everyone here, has them either on or around their work area. Ain't it cool? Well, I find myself looking at my beginnings and I'm still shocked that I've wound up here.

I've been gaming in general for, a little less than twenty years. I started with a fighter named, Kavar-Darkhand-T'on. He retired at thirty-ninth level. CCGs, RPGs, board games, LARPs, hey, I try to play almost everything. So, like most gamers, I'm either broke or near poverty often.

I started playing BattleTech with the second edition. The thing that got my attention was **“Technical Readout 3050: The Return of Kerensky.”** After getting that, I couldn't wait till our next game. The guys thought that I was running a “regular” mech. Isn't victory sweet? I stomped a mudhole in all of them. Still, I'm a strategic player only. I know only a limited amount about the fiction and the universe. “But, I'm drinking milk and doing my homework. Soon, I'll be stronger and smarter.”

Well, besides my gaming, I organize conventions in the Chicagoland area. I've been into the Chicago fandom scene for about seven years. In particular, I'm gaming coordinator for Capricon in February, and Duckcon in June (Shameless plug, I know but, a guy can try) and I work with many others.

This leads up to how I arrived in this position. The weekend before Capricon 17, I was going over my gaming schedule. Brandi, my wife, was looking through the newspaper. I turned to look at her to ask her about a time block for an event. She had a shocked expression on her face. Before I could ask her what the problem was, my inquiry was stopped by her saying, “Babe, you have gotta send in a resume in for this one!!!!” I looked and I agreed. Two hours later, the resume had been faxed in.

Monday morning, after a late-night planning session (till five-thirty am), I was wakened by Brent my other roommate, screaming, “Beryl! It's FASA! Wake up man! Wake up!”

Sure enough, I was being called in for an interview. I didn't expect a response that soon. I only sent it in Saturday night.

After making arrangements to interview on Wednesday, I then realized that it was the same day I was to start setup for the con (the con starts on Thursday, and I'm also head of operations.....whew!) at the hotel.

Well, despite Murphy's Law working against me, I managed to get to the twelve-thirty interview. I then was put through “the FASA-forced interactive fitness-program”.....climbing to the the top of a five-floor building with irregular-height stairs. So, imagine coming through the door, wheezing and sputtering, after all that exertion, and finding out that the president of the company is interviewing you herself.

Ain't it cool?

It was a simple interview. Jill and Tara (president and sales manager, respectively) tried their best to make me comfortable.

They failed.

I had a heart in my throat, butterflies in my stomach, lead in my feet and rocks in my head. After that, I was taken on a tour of the place. The first thing you notice about the FASA office is the artwork on the walls. That's after the four-and-a-half-foot black **Rifleman** standing guard at the door. If you're a gamer, it will overwhelm you.

Still, after meeting all the people working here, I found that they were just that.

People.

One pants leg at a time, all winded after the stairs, frozen-lunch eating, “Simpsons” watching, game playing, people.

Well, the con went well, and so did the interview as you can see. As for MechForce North America, Nothing's changed. Not even me. More than two months ago, I was just like you. Well, not quite. But the bodies are well hidden, the authorities are paid off, and the witnesses have been dealt with.

Just the same, this is your club, I just do all the paperwork. It's up to you all to continue to make it the organization you want it to be. This magazine is yours, too. So, keep the submissions coming. Especially, the fiction and scenarios.

On a final note, all you who wish to give my predecessor, Stacy Rieckermann, a proper farewell, she will be at GENCON Game Fair this year at the FASA booth. Stacy said that she couldn't miss this one.

Well, that's all for now. **So, what are you waiting for people? Let's make it happen!!!**

“Room! Atten-shun! Dis-missed!”

Beryl J. Turner III

Precentor Epsilon

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MECH FROM ABOVE

Conventions and Submissions

It's convention season, and that means lots of opportunities to play BattleTech and MechWarrior. Lots of conventions are posted on the back page of this magazine, and many more can be found by looking around on the internet.

But listings aren't good enough. We want convention reports. Whether you're a convention organizer or a participant, we'd like to hear about your experiences. Tell us about that great battle that took hours and hours and resulted in mass destruction and glory. Or, how about BattleTech-related activities, such as painting contests. Send us a few pictures--if they are sharp and in focus. We'll print the best ones.

Many major BattleTech events are planned at DragonCon in Georgia, Origins in Ohio, and the GEN CON® Game Fair in Milwaukee. But there are small conventions right in your neighborhoods with fantastic events. Even local hobby shops sponsor BattleTech days that we'd like to report.

If you're a convention organizer, consider writing an article about what it takes to put together a convention event, what 'mechs do you select, what terrain do you use. If you're a player, write about your first convention experience and let others learn from your mistakes and triumphs.

That brings me to another point.....

Submissions My file drawer is getting low on a couple of topics, so I thought I'd nudge you a bit. We have no MechWarrior articles in the file, yet we have letters from the members requesting MechWarrior material. It would be nice to run one piece an issue. There's one in this magazine--the last MechWarrior article that was in the drawer.

How about:

- *MechWarrior villains with juicy backgrounds, motivations, and lots of plots.
- *Mini-adventures that can be slipped into an evening's playing time.
- *Organizations that would love to hire (or do in) a group of player characters.

Painting. We've run a few articles in the past two years about modifying 'mechs and tips on painting them.

But we're missing things like:

- *How to sculpt your own miniatures.
- *How to make your own terrain and buildings.
- *Where you can find out-of-stock miniatures?
- *Tips on winning painting contests.

Fiction. Okay, we get quite a few fiction submissions. If you want to write fiction, make your submission stand out from the pack. Give us the MechWarrior stats for one or more of the characters. Add the scenario statistics to play out a combat that

takes place. Or if your story is on a world or moon not already detailed in BattleTech publications, give us some information on the place so game masters can use it.

Club News. We were receiving quite a good batch of notices from clubs. But they've trickled off to pretty much nothing right now. Show us your club spirit, and tell us what's going on. We're offering you the perfect place to brag about your organization. Make use of these pages!

Improving the Game. We're always looking for articles about how to best use different types of 'mechs under various combat circumstances. Here's some more ideas:

- *Using terrain to your advantage and your opponent's disadvantage.
- *Urban fighting, the do's, the don'ts and how-tos.
- *Combat without 'mechs. Just infantry, fighters, etc...
- *Modifying 'mechs and conducting salvage operations.
- *One-on-one battles. What does it take to survive?

* A multitude of 'mechs. When two people are playing a game with dozens of "mechs, what does it take to keep everything straight and running smoothly?

Scenarios. Keep these to about 900 words, and make sure you include the maps to be used, the 'mechs and forces participating, and the objective of the fight. No objective, no accepted scenario. Improve your chances to get something published by throwing in a curve. Start with damaged "mechs and make them have to conduct repairs. Maybe they have to fight underwater or on other challenging terrains. Spice things up and give us a three-way-battle, not just the two-way contests we've been printing.

Submission Etiquette Put your name on everything. On the envelope. On your submission. On any disks that you send along. Your address is helpful, too. I'll state again--I will not put unlabeled disks into my computer. I learned that lesson the hard way by trying out an unlabeled disk addressed to MechForce (check out Widow's Web for more info). Unlabeled disks go into the black hole inside my filing cabinet, never to see the light of day. If you want a response, include a self-addressed-stamped-envelope. Ye old editor is cheap and doesn't want to pop for postage (it adds up, believe me). If you have an e-mail address, list that on your submission, and I'll get back to you that way. I'm experimenting with a couple of authors by taking articles via e-mail. When everything is running a little more smoothly, I'll open it up to everyone.

Send submissions to: MechForce Quarterly, PO box 779, New Munster, WI 53152.

Take Care,

Jean

Staying Alive by Mark Brand

A Smart Merc's Guide to the Essentials

Yeah, I know what all you greenies and young hotshots are thinking--ol' Ecclesiastes here is off his rocker. You look at the vintage **MAD-3R** in the 'mech bay and say, "God, what a dinosaur that piece of junk is."

Well, let me tell you something. That old dinosaur has hunted and destroyed better MechWarriors than you. Just because I'm pushing 50, all you youngsters think I'm losing my touch. Well, you'd be wrong. Years ago, I didn't care much about causes and such. I just wanted to make a name for myself. That **Marauder** out in the shop there was the only survivor of an entire company I once fought in. Me and Cap'n Hicks were the only ones left after we charged an enemy line and were forced back.

"Riggs," he says. "Form up with me, we're goin' in again."

I looked down at my panel. The Cap's 'mech was a big **Atlas**, but he had taken the brunt of the initial assault. He was havin' all sorts of 'lectrical problems and such. On top of that, we were cut off from any nearby friendlies.

"Negative, sir," I says back. "I read five big 'un's out there. They'll crush us."

"That's an order, Riggs. Get back in there."

"Sorry, sir."

A light on my panel says I'm being locked onto. And then I realize it's the Cap! I took one step towards him and swung from the hip. My **Marauder's** full weight was behind that punch, and his cockpit crumpled like cardboard. A month later I was able to get a ride off-planet and away from the authorities long enough to find work as a bounty hunter.

Me and Sammy (my **Marauder**) went from one end a' the Inner Sphere to the other. I think my kill total is up to 65. I'm not **borin'** you am I? In fact if you feel like sittin' for a spell, I'll put my two cents in. First, and probably most important, always keep your head in a fight. Greenies are bound to be a little more jittery than average.

Use that to your advantage. Nothing scares a rookie like a 'mech that looks like it's piloted by somebody way out of his league. Rookies are bound to make mistakes and are normally easy kills. But you get some snot-nosed punk who thinks he's the best thing since sliced bread, now those are the ones you gotta look out for. They're the ones who come in hot as demons and try to smoke you quick. Careless pilots are easy pickings.

Use your head. If I had followed the Cap's order and gone back into that fight, I'd have died young. Following orders at all times may get you medals and honor, but it can also get you killed. Personally, I'd rather be a living deserter than a dead martyr.

Be aggressive. If you're in a stand-up fight, give the other guy all you've got. That extra PPC shot or salvo of missiles may be worth the extra heat. Don't be afraid of taking damage, either. That's what they make armor for. If the other guy gets off a shot, don't let it scare you. If you retreat to get a better shot at him, that gives him a chance to run. So, take the shot and put the other guy out of business.

Make smart defensive choices. All 'mechs have a major weak point, their heads. For example, wading out into the water may be a good way to cool off in battle, it may even make you harder to hit. But if you are hit, the chances of a solid head strike against you are drastically increased. The same goes for hiding behind a building or other structures. You can walk away from a destroyed engine or gyro, but head hits are the quickest way to kill a MechWarrior. Instead, you might try firing out of --or through light woods. You'll be harder to hit and you won't have the risk of a fatal head shot.

Make sure you've got the right 'mech for your mission. I think heavies are the best. Assault 'mechs are fine and dandy, but I have taken down **Atlases** and **Marauder IIs** with Sammy. It's not extremely difficult if you play it smart. Light 'mechs are fine for some people. Medium 'mechs are worthless. They're too light to pack any truly heavy firepower, and too heavy to have a really good speed advantage.

Modify your machines. Did you honestly think I pilot a true **MAD-3R**? I've replaced all the parts on that thing so many times, I'm not sure you could call it a true **Marauder** any more. The gun on top used to be an older model autocannon. Now it's a gauss rifle with CASE. I've also upgraded the engine, the lasers, and added a pair of anti-missile systems. No machine can be as good as one you've altered to fit you.



HOW THE MIGHTY FALL

by David Bredis

Elementals Take the Fight to the Street

Since the Truce of Tukayyid in 3052, we of Clan Ghost Bear have bided our time, waiting patiently for the truce to expire or be abrogated. For the most part I, Elemental Star Commander Tibus DeVillar, and my Cluster have remained on garrison duty on Krenice, the base for our renewed push toward Terra. In the six years since Tukayyid, my Cluster, the 1st Bear Guards, has launched only a handful of raids against House Kurita, who have likewise staged few assaults against our possessions. In September of 3057, however, the status quo was drastically changed.

In the early morning of the 12th, we detected three Invader class JumpShips entering the Krenice system at a "pirate point" approximately 36 hours from landfall. Our WarShips were too far away to intercept the incoming DropShips, so we prepared for their arrival.

Despite the best efforts of our OmniFighters, the Kurita DropShips reached orbit and dropped their 'mechs. The majority of their forces landed within a few kilometers of the city of Kobben, where we had established a large supply depot for the next phase of the liberation. Thankfully, our fighters were able to prevent Kurita from launching strikes on the facility, and only their BattleMechs posed a threat to the base.

The 310th assault Trinary, commanded by Star Captain Carl Hambash, and to which I and my point of Elementals were assigned, was ordered to the commercial district of Kobben, deemed the most likely route for Kurita forces to take. The rest of the Cluster was sent out to engage the enemy before they entered the city.

Usually, my Star rode on the OmniMechs of Bravo Assault Star, with my point riding Star Commander Bekker's *Executioner*. However, in an urban environment, Elementals have much greater mobility than OmniMechs, and we were on foot, scouting ahead of the rest of the trinary, prepared to engage any Kurita 'mechs that were able to get past the rest of the Cluster.

As my Point walked down one of the main boulevards, past small shops, offices, and apartments, we received word that several Kurita 'mechs were inbound toward our position. Star Captain Hambash deployed our OmniMechs several blocks behind our position, along the main route toward the depot. The other four points in my Star fanned out to cover the various streets in the area. One of the problems with fighting in Kobben was the design of the city. Urban combat is all but unheard of among the Clans, but has been commonplace in the Inner Sphere. As a result the street layout in Kobben was designed to hamper an enemy's movement into the city. Many of the streets were dead ends, or laid out in a haphazard, curving pattern that made almost all combat take place at short range.

We would have difficulty detecting enemy forces until they were nearly on top of us.

One such problem area lay ahead of us as we moved down the street. The road turned sharply to the right. Then, a few dozen meters later, turned again, reducing lines of sight to less than a hundred meters. One of our OmniFighters had reported seeing Kurita 'mechs advancing down this road from the south, so this seemed the perfect spot to wait for their arrival. The idea of waiting in ambush may seem repugnant to most Clan warriors, but we Elementals find nothing wrong with the idea, especially when facing Inner Sphere opponents who have no qualms about doing the same to us. We can ill afford to attack enemy 'mechs directly, for even our heavy armor does not make us invulnerable. I believe it was a Wolf Clan Elemental who said "A little treachery and a lot of guts will take you a long way in this business." Truer words could not have been spoken, even if it was from a Wolf.

I ordered the point to disperse, and we each took shelter in the various businesses arrayed along the street. The store I had chosen, was on the street corner, and if a 'mech was coming, I would see it first. A restaurant was across the street and had tinted windows which acted like mirrors. However, they were currently next to useless because the street lights were still on in this part of the city, and the glare was obscuring any possible image.

A faint vibration soon became apparent, slowly growing closer. From the cadence and intensity, it was probably a heavy BattleMech moving carefully through the winding streets. I could not be certain without actually seeing it. For that, I would have to leave my shelter and go out into the open.

Slowly walking out the front door, I dropped to the ground and crawled toward the corner. A parked hovercar was sitting just at the corner and provided cover. As I crawled behind it, I scanned the area beyond, taping everything. I quickly crawled back into the store and reviewed the tape, transmitting it to the other members of my point.

The tape showed that we indeed had company. Barely visible, approximately 600 meters down the road, was what appeared to be a *Mad Dog*. I was briefly confused. Were we truly facing Kurita forces or, had the Smoke Jaguars totally lost their mind and attacked in the guise of Inner Sphere raiders? I froze the tape and zoomed in on the torso. Suddenly, I realized I was looking at an *Avatar*, an Inner Sphere conversion of the *Mad Dog*. It was of an unusual design, but the Kurita Dragon emblem was clearly visible, as was the red paint scheme of their Sword of Light regiments. From the gray Kurita Dragon emblem on the leg, I could see that it was from the Second Sword of Light. We had faced them before during the Trial of Possession for Alshain.

HOW THE MIGHTY FALL

We prevailed in the end, but they nearly destroyed Alpha Galaxy in the process. This was no simple raid, their presence made that much certain.

I called up our latest intelligence estimates on the design and transmitted them to the rest of my Point. My battle computer surmised that this was probably the Alpha configuration, optimized for urban combat, carrying a large autocannon, one large laser, short range missiles, and jump jets. It would be a worthy opponent indeed.

The 'mech was advancing cautiously down the street, apparently on the watch for the unexpected. It was at this point that Elementals Dawn and Ricardo announced that they had developed a plan to distract the enemy 'mech while we launched our attack. They were reluctant to disclose the nature of their idea, simply saying in unison "trust me." The five of us in the point had survived Tukayyid and several Kurita and Smoke Jaguar raids, and we had come to trust each other almost without question. Still there was something in their voices that disturbed me, but I had no time for such concerns. Now visible in the restaurant window was the reflection of the 'mech, only a couple hundred meters away.

I ordered my point to stand by to attack, and was informed that our diversion was ready. I told them to implement their plan immediately, as the shimmering reflection in the vibrating windows now showed only the 'mech's legs as it slowed to turn the corner.

I looked over to where Dawn and Ricardo had taken shelter, in a store called "Sven's Toy Emporium." the door to the place opened up, and a couple dozen meter-high pink rabbits, each furiously banging away on a drum, came marching out of the store into the street. The 'mech was even more surprised!

It fired its entire weapons array at the tiny machines. Burning fragments of pink fur went flying through the air as the rabbits exploded.

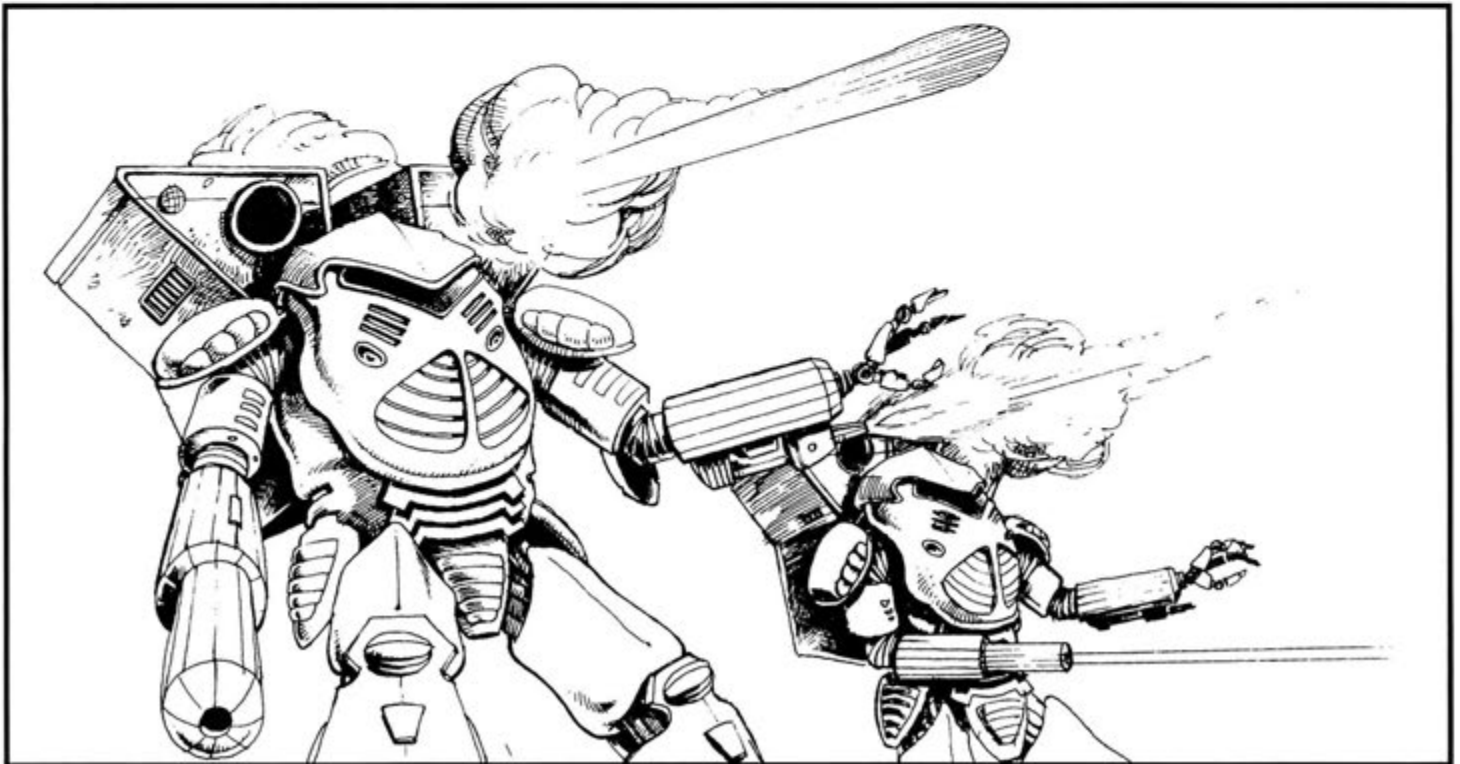
I quickly gathered my wits and gave the fire order. From three separate locations, missiles and lasers shot up at the enemy 'mech. At such close range, it was impossible to miss, and the legs and lower torso of the 'mech were soon obscured in smoke. Armor fragments flew in all directions, shattering most of the windows around us, but bouncing off our armor.

Still shaken from our ambush, the 'mech fired its cannon into the upper story of the building I was hiding in. The store's ceiling fell in, and I was briefly entangled in display racks and clothing. I ordered a close assault, and the five of us jumped out from our shelters and attacked.

Using my jump jets, I launched myself up and landed on the 'mech's left shoulder. Reed and Kris went for the already-damaged legs, while Ricardo and Dawn joined me on the torso. Dawn attacked the main sensors, while Ricardo disabled one of the SRM launchers in the chest with a laser burst into a missile tube which caused a chain reaction. The blast knocked Ricardo to the street, but he was not seriously injured.

The pilot must have finally realized his predicament, because suddenly I was slammed into the hull as the 'mech launched itself into the air on its jump jets. Reed and Kris were thrown off, but only fell a few meters. Dawn and I hung on for dear life as the 'mech jumped over buildings to an adjacent street. As soon as it landed, I quickly crossed over to the head and began what I hoped would be my final attack.

'Mechs have certain vulnerabilities that we Elementals can exploit. One of these is the cockpit access hatch. While designed to absorb damage from weapons fire, it is vulnerable



to a direct attack. Ripping off the control panel with my claw, I fired my laser into the mechanism, shorting out the lock.

I quickly opened the hatch and looked in. My gaze was quickly met by the eyes of the MechWarrior, her eyes wide in shock and terror. She tried to reach for her sidearm, but I used my claw to knock it away. A sharp hit on the neurohelmet knocked her unconscious. Most Elementals in my position would have killed the MechWarrior, but that is not the Ghost Bear way. We all consider it our duty to capture enemy warriors whenever possible. Besides, I felt some amount of pity for this warrior after the nature of our ambush.

I reached over with my claw and ripped out the bundle of cables leading from her neurohelmet. A couple of well-placed blasts from my secondary laser into the control panel would prevent her from operating the weapons manually if she regained consciousness.

The 'mech immediately began to stumble, as it lost the pilot's sense of balance. Dawn and I jumped clear just as it crashed into a used hovercar dealership and fell on top of the showroom. A quick check showed the pilot still alive and out cold, so I noted the position so we could recover her and the 'mech after the battle--for the whole affair was far from over.

Reed shouted out, "Enemy 'mech inbound, 600 meters and closing fast." The two of us quickly jumped up to the roof of the toy store, which gave us a clear view down the street. The sight was not promising. Lumbering toward us was what appeared to be some sort of half-and-half **Summoner** and **Gargoyle**. Our computer quickly identified it as a **Sunder**, another Kurita OmniMech. I mumbled a curse against the Smoke Jaguars. Their gross incompetence on Wolcott and Luthien had provided dozens of OmniMechs for Kurita to study, and now copy.

Reed, Kris and Ricardo were still on the street below our position and took cover back in the same shops we had launched our first ambush from. Dawn and I took cover behind a large air-conditioning unit on the roof. The **Sunder** continued forward slowly, then stopped about a hundred meters from our positions. He stood there for nearly a full minute, and I was beginning to think that he would depart when, for lack of a better description, "all hell broke loose."

The **Sunder** opened fire with its cannon and lasers, all aimed at the restaurant to our immediate left. The building seemed to disintegrate under the furious assault, and what was left collapsed onto itself. The 'mech shifted its aim toward the toy store and fired. Reed and Kris escaped out the back while Dawn and I jumped clear and landed in the street below. I ordered the Point to move west toward an intersection. We would make our stand there.

As we formed up at the intersection, I suddenly noticed on my HUD that Ricardo's icon was flashing red. He was down. Looking up the street at the burning remains of the restaurant and the toy store, I caught a glimpse of his armor, partially buried under the rubble. Any thoughts of trying to rescue him were dashed as the **Sunder** resumed its advance.

The **Sunder** reached the intersection within a few seconds, and we launched our attack. Kris and I came at it from the left, while Reed and Dawn hit it on the right. Firing our remaining missile volley, we then dropped our missile packs and jumped onto the 'mech. I landed on the left shoulder and immediately went to work on the joint. Ripping the actuator maintenance hatch off, I shoved my laser in and fired a series of bursts. A gout of flame shot out of the hatch, and I could feel the left arm go limp as the actuator was destroyed. Moving up along the shoulder toward the cockpit, stopped briefly to see where the other members of the Point were. Kris was working his way across the torso, destroying a laser and one of the SRM racks. Dawn was on the right arm, firing into one of the hatches on the lower arm. I looked down and saw Reed hanging onto the right leg, working on the knee joint. Suddenly, the **Sunder** slammed the leg into a building, knocking Reed to the ground. As he struggled to get up, the 'mech brought its leg back and launched a vicious kick.

The maneuver reminded me of a punt in football, an old-time sport very popular with Elementals. The kick sent Reed flying through the air. He slammed into a building across the street, going right through the brick wall. An explosion soon followed, probably due to his primary power packs being damaged. I did not need the black flashing icon on my HUD to tell me that he was dead.

The Kurita MechWarrior took that moment to turn on his external speakers and taunt us.

"Who's next, ya filthy toads? That was fun. Maybe the next time, I'll kick ya right over the building."

His mocking tone filled me with fury. I lunged toward the cockpit in a blind rage. Reaching the viewport, I could see that Kurita freebirth through the glass making some sort of gesture with his hand. I made my own gesture by shoving my laser against the glass and firing it on continuous blast. Dawn and Kris must have been taking out their anger against the **Sunder** as well. The 'mech lurched drunkenly as its gyro disintegrated under their combined fire.

Within a few seconds, the cockpit glass was melted through by the laser. I ripped it out with my claw, and leapt at the pilot. He drew his pistol and fired at me, but without effect. Reaching out, I gripped his throat and closed the three metal fingers around it. The body jerked briefly, then was still. I almost missed the warning from Dawn to jump clear. They had hit the autocannon ammo bins and the ammo was beginning to cook-off.

I backed out of the cockpit, onto the torso and fired my jump jets, aiming for a rooftop to the southeast. Suddenly, I felt something jerk me around, and I began to tumble out of control. I do not remember what happened next, but after reviewing Kris' and Dawn's Battleroms, I can reconstruct the following events.

I spun wildly through the air, limbs flailing uselessly, until I crashed through a window in the building I was jumping toward. I apparently landed on a bed, after passing through at least two interior walls and crushing several pieces of furniture.

HOW THE MIGHTY FALL

The next memory I have is of lying on my back with Kris and Dawn, both outside of their armor, staring down at me. I tried to get up, but I could not make even the slightest movement without incredible pain--even after my suit injected enough "Hero Juice" into me to kill our clan's namesake.

The two of them carefully removed my now-useless armor, then I heard laughter. Dawn held up a piece of silky cloth, but was laughing so hard, she could not speak for a few moments. Once she composed herself, she told me what it was, since both my eyes were totally out of focus. I, Star Commander Tibus DelVillar of Clan Ghost Bear, a Bloodnamed Warrior of the Clans, had nearly been killed by a woman's undergarment.

When the first 'mech brought much of the clothing store down on top of me, the undergarment must have become entangled in my armor. When I jumped clear of the Sunder, it had caught on the hull and sent me on my wild ride into the apartment. Dawn then had the gall to say "I wonder how it will affect your codex when they know you are a cross dresser?" I swear on the memories of the founders of our Clan, that had I not been suffering from multiple fractures and internal injuries, including a spine broken in three places, I would have strangled her then and there.

Star Commander Bekker arrived a few minutes later, and her Executioner was used to remove me from the building and lower me to the street. Resting against a building across the street, the burning remains of the Sunder were hardly recogniz-

able. Ricardo was pulled from the rubble down the street, and Reed's remains were collected so that his ashes could be mixed into the iron wombs that held the next generation of Ghost Bears.

The Second Sword of Light's raid on Krenice was repulsed. Only one 'mech, a Marauder, has made it to the depots in Kobben, and Star Captain Hambash's Iron Cheetah destroyed it in short order before it could cause much harm.

Ricardo and I were stabilized and transferred to one of our WarShips, which had better medical facilities. From there we were sent back to the homeworlds for the extensive medical treatment we needed. My right leg had to be replaced with a cybernetic limb, while regenerative treatments, slowly repaired the tremendous damage to my nervous system. Even now, nearly a year later, I have yet to make a full recovery. The prognosis is good, though, and the physicians say I should be able to return to duty by the end of the end of the year. Ricardo was not as lucky. Most of his lower torso and both legs were replaced with cybernetics and myomers. He serves as a training officer, terrorizing sibkos and turning them into warriors.

Less than a decade remains before the truce expires--if the Jade Falcons and Smoke Jaguars even wait for that to occur. Based on what I saw that night on Krenice, the Inner Sphere will be ready. While I still believe that we will prevail, I fear that we will have precious little left to celebrate our victory with.



Ghost Bears in the City

By David Bredis

Krenice, City of Kobben

Situation Briefing

Since the Truce of Tukayyid in 3052, the Draconis Combine has directed the majority of its operations against the Smoke Jaguars and Nova Cats, who pose a greater threat to the Combine than the Ghost Bears. However, the Ghost Bears were rapidly becoming the premiere Clan in the Inner Sphere, as infighting and rivalries continued to hamper the rebuilding efforts of the other Clans. The DCMS decided it was time to remind the Bears of what they would face, should they decide to renew the invasion.

In September of 3058, the 2nd Sword of Light launched a raid on one of the Ghost Bears' primary bases on Krenice. The city of Kobben held several large supply depots essential for any renewed invasion. It also held one of the most elite clusters in the Clan, the 1st Bear Guards.

Dropping into the outskirts of Kobben, the Sword Regiment was quickly engaged by the Guards. During the fierce fighting, several small groups of 'mechs broke through the Clan lines and moved into the city toward the depots. The 310th Assault Trinary was holding the major roads in the city and moved to stop these "leakers" before they could reach their objectives.

The trinary spread out in an effort to confront the Kurita 'mechs, with Charlie Elemental Star taking point while the OmniMechs were held back in reserve. They were the first to engage the invaders, and in some cases, the OmniMechs found that their assistance was not necessarily needed. The winding streets of Kobben provided ideal ground for the Ghost Bear Elementals to wreak havoc with the Sword of Light's plans.

Game Set-Up

Use BattleTroops maps 2, 3, and 4. Place 2 and 3 so that map 3 is to the right with their short edges touching. Place map 4 so that its long long edge touches map 3. All buildings on maps 2 and 3 are 4 levels high. Ignore interior walls on bottom floors. All walls facing the east/west street down maps 2 and 3 are considered to be windows. All buildings have a CF of 40.

Defender

The Defender is Clan Ghost Bear's 1st Bear Guards, 310th Assault Trinary, Charlie Elemental Star, Alpha Point.

Alpha Point (five Elementals)

Point Leader: **Elemental Star Commander Tibus DelVillar**

Leadership Skill Rating:4 /Experience Level: Elite

A BattleTroops Scenario

Equipment: All Elementals have a small laser as their primary weapon and laser rifles as their secondary weapon. All have full SRM loads.

Deployment

All Elementals start in hidden locations on the first floors of the buildings on map 3.

Attacker

The Attacker is House Kurita's 2nd Sword of Light, 2nd Battalion, Kashiwahara's Company, Elements of Alpha Lance.

Sho-ko Ellen Fuchida (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) AV1-DA *Avatar*

Distribute 3D6 damage in 5 point groups

Tai-i Hediki Kashiwahara (Piloting:3, Gunnery:2) SD1-O *Sunder*

Distribute 2D6 damage in 5 point groups

Deployment

The *Avatar* enters the east end of the map on turn one. The *Sunder* enters from the same area on turn eight.

Special Rules

The Defender wins the initiative automatically when facing the *Avatar*. Reroll initiative at the beginning of turn 10 when the *Sunder* arrives.

Victory Conditions

The Attacker wins decisively by exiting both 'mechs off of the west end of map 2 by the end of turn 12. He achieves a marginal victory if one 'mech exits. The victory is reduced one level if a 'mech exiting has been severely damaged. One gyro hit, two engine hits or two or more areas with internal structure damage, two or more pilot hits, sensor damage, or actuator damage reducing speed by one half or more counts as severe damage. If no 'mechs exit the map, it is a total defeat.

The Defender wins decisively if both 'mechs are destroyed. If only one exits, it is a marginal victory. If both 'mechs exit map 2 to the west, it is a defeat. The status of the Elementals at the end of the scenario has no bearing on the victory conditions.

COMPUTERS

THE ULTIMATE WEAPON?

by Mike Nelson

The day the Clans started toward Terra, the Inner Sphere was changed irrevocably. They brought with them new weapons, tactics, and a vastly different culture. At first, Inner Sphere forces folded before the Clan juggernaut, unable to withstand the awesome firepower and fierce determination of the invaders. However, Inner Sphere engineers quickly developed new and innovative weapons to battle this unknown threat. Tacticians worked around the clock, reviewing battles and inventing new tactics.

Time changes all things they say, and it was no different with the Clan invasion. A few fragmentary victories were won at a tremendous cost to all involved. Many lessons were learned the hard way, with blood and sweat. The victories at Twycross and Luthien, proved that Kerensky's hordes were not unstoppable.

Take Advantage of the Advantages

Clan units have a distinct advantage in range and deliverable firepower in almost all aspects of battlefield technology. The reduced weight and size of the Clan weapons allow them to carry more weapons per ton than their Inner Sphere counterparts. At the same time, the increased ranges of the Clan weapons permit them to strike at their enemies long before Inner Sphere forces can hit back. This inequity creates an area from zero to 420 meters (14 hexes) that is lethal. It is in this "Kill Zone" that the enemy has the greatest advantage.

So what does all this mean? How do we fight the Clans? Many strategies have been developed to combat this dilemma. I will present three options for your consideration.

The least desirable option is retreat. If you retreat, you save your 'mechs to fight another day, but you fail to achieve your objective. In a long term campaign, this may not be a bad idea. In a short battle, this will surely sound your death knell.

The second option is to attempt--stress attempt--to engage the Clans at long range. The problem, however, is that your long range is a lot shorter than their long range. So, to get in closer, we have to take the fight to them. And to do that, we drop right back into...you guessed it, The Kill Zone!

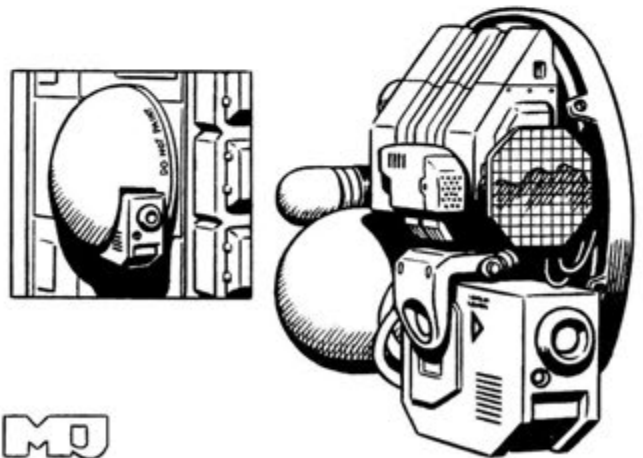
The third and final option is **Attack!** Unfortunately, this means waltzing into the enemy's Kill Zone. This may work if you are in difficult terrain, such as mountains or woods. But if you are out in the open, or the enemy has the approaches covered with converging fire zones, it can be deadly.

I have found that the best approach is a combination of all three, with a little electronics thrown into the mix for fun. One of the weapons possessed by the Inner Sphere that is not used to its fullest potential is the C³ computer system. An acronym for Command, Control, and Communication, the C³ computer is perhaps the most misunderstood and under-used weapon in the Inner Sphere. It has been derided as a waste of space, an anchor, a useless piece of equipment. Just look at the standard 'mech designs produced by the Great Houses. Until recently, there were only two, maybe three 'mechs that came factory-equipped with C³.

Ranger Company

Before we go any farther, I want to set up some conventions so we are thinking along the same lines. I will refer to a company that is outfitted with C³ as a "Ranger Company," a name I used when I first set up a company with C³ installed. When I use the term C³, I am referring to either the C³ Master or C³ Slave, depending on the context. Lastly, I will use the terms spot, spotter, spotting or a derivative thereof to indicate the unit carrying the C³ Slave that is in close proximity to the enemy.

Part of the problem with the C³ system's lack of use is that its function are not fully understood. The function of C³ is simple. It links the different members of a lance or company and allows them to share targeting data. The firing unit must be within the effective range of a weapon and have a valid line of sight to the target. It may then use the range data of the spotting unit provided that unit also has a valid line of sight.



The smallest unit that can utilize a C³ computer is the Inner Sphere lance. The lance C³ complement consists of one Master and three Slave units. Two additional lances may be linked to the original one, provided one of the units carries two master computers. This links a company together.

The units that are needed to make up a Ranger Company should be chosen carefully. Speed, armor, maneuverability, and firepower must be considered when selecting units. In a perfect world, they should all be armed to the teeth, encased in an armor cocoon, and able to run like the wind. Leaping tall buildings at a single bound would be nice. Wait a minute! They do that already.

One train of thought on the makeup of a Ranger Company would be to use a large, slow, heavily-armored 'mech as a spotter, backed up by other large, slow, and heavily armored 'mechs. The idea being that they can withstand the pounding and kill the enemy. Theoretically, this would work if (that word **if** always shows up at the wrong time) the Clan follows its own rules of engagement and only shoots at one unit. Let's see what happens if we follow this theory out to the conclusion. Mmmm....large, slow 'mechs usually mean, nice, easy targets. Nice easy targets usually mean large, slow, dead 'mechs.

Another idea I have seen tossed about is a combined arms unit, made up of VTOL's, Armor, 'mechs, and in some cases, (shudder) Infantry. this might work out, but a lot of factors would have to be just right. From what I have seen though, VTOLs and armor do not last long on a battlefield with a bunch of Clan 'mechs running around---not to mention the (shudder) Infantry.

Mix and Match the 'Mechs

On the other hand, a company made up of several different types of 'mechs designed to work as a cohesive unit might be able to function together and kill some Clanners. First you would need some 'mechs that carry the requisite firepower. Second, you would need a couple of Scout 'mechs that could move at substantial speed, pack some serious armor, and get in close. Finally, throw in some 'mechs that could provide close-in support and you might just have a winning combination. With that thought in mind, bring on the Ranger Company.

The Weapon Units are the work horses of the Ranger Company. These fall into the Assault and Heavy 'mech categories. They are going to pack the lion's share of the long range weaponry and firepower of the company. Prime candidates for these slots are the company and lance commanders. their importance as carriers of the C³ Master computer dictates their positions are toward the rear of the formation. Half of the Ranger Company should be made up of weapon units. These 'mechs are vital to the survival and integrity of your mission!

Let's talk about the specifications of the Weapon Units. these Weapon Units need to have a minimum speed of 65kph (4/6/4) if they are going to be on the offensive. If they are fighting a static defense, the speed can drop to a minimum of 54kph (3/5/3). Weapon Units, as well as the rest of the Ranger Company, must be jump capable.

Weapons are next on the list. Let's go back to the concept of the Clan's Kill Zone. The Ranger Company needs to be able to deliver the majority of its firepower from outside that range. So what weapons do the Inner Sphere possess that can fire effectively from outside 420 meters? Starting with the beam weapons, we have the ER Large Laser, ER PPC, and PPC. Follow that up with the AC2, AC5, Gauss Rifle, LB10-X, and Ultra AC5 to fill out the ballistic weapons and the Long Range Missiles.

You are probably wondering what happened to the Large Laser and the AC10? Well both weapons fit the bill as long-range weapons, but by only 30 meters. Thirty meters (one hex) might seem like a lot of space, but when you have a Clan 'mech which has every sensor in the book shooting at you, 30 meters isn't enough.

Notice also, that there are no pulse lasers on the list. A Large Pulse Laser is going to get you smack dab in the middle of the Kill Zone before you can fire a shot. It is not a good ideal!

Now that we have established the need for the long-range punch, we need to think about how we are going to get up close and personal with the Clan. Speed and Armor are the keys. Firepower will help if its available, but you do not want your spotter exchanging shots with the enemy any more than necessary. Some purists go so far as to suggest a Recon Unit with no weapons--just speed and armor (see Scout SCT-45, MFQ#3). At the very least, you want something that can run fast and take a couple of hard hits. The final piece of the puzzle is jump capability. As I stated earlier, jump capability is a necessity for any member of the Ranger Company, especially the Recon Unit.

Along with speed and armor, you need electronics. The Recon Unit is not going to do anyone any good if it is blind. If you are going to install C³, you might as well go for the whole shot and install TAG, ECM, and a probe while you are at it. This 'mech is going into harms way, so be sure to get the most out of it.

Screen units need to operate between the Weapon units and Recon Units, screening the former from direct confrontation with the Clan. The Weapon Units can carry a few close defense weapons, but it is the Screen Units that need to shoulder the responsibility for the close-in fighting. They should be able to participate in the long range attack but change roles and engage the enemy if he gets close. Each Screen Unit should carry at least one weapon capable of hitting the Clan from outside the Kill Zone. That weapon must be also useful for close in fighting. Long Range Missiles and Gauss Rifles are out of the picture due to minimum range and size.

Diamonds are a 'Mech's Best Friend

Formations are as much a part of the Ranger Company as any of the 'mech characteristics we have discussed so far. There are several different formations that have been tried, some with more success than others. My personal favorite is the diamond. This really is a simple setup which can be used with either a single lance or company.

The lance commander, which is usually a Weapons Unit, is positioned at the base of the diamond. The two side points are taken up by either Weapons or Screen Units, depending on the need. The Recon Unit places itself at the tip of the diamond, which is usually going to be quite a distance from the rest of the lance. When a lance is set up in this fashion, it can shift from side to side depending on enemy forces that are encountered. The Weapon Units stay in the rear, while the Recon Units are out in front hunting for targets. This leaves the Screen Units to patrol the area between the two.

The company formation expands on the lance formation. The company commander is positioned at the base of the diamond with a lance set up on each of the side points. The three lancemates of the company commander are positioned at the tip of the diamond. Once again, the Weapon Units are back in the fire support roles, the Recon Units are forward spotting targets, and the Screen Units are patrolling between the Recon and Weapon Units. Just like the lance formation, the company can shift to either side at will, depending on the available targets.

There are two trains of thought here on spotting targets. The first has you shooting at multiple targets whenever they are available. You might have three different Recon Units spotting three different targets at the same time. This might work out, but it has a tendency to divide your firepower, and it is doubtful that you will score a kill.

The second tactic is to have one Recon Unit spot. The whole company then fires on one target at a time, delivering a killing blow that no 'mech is likely to survive.

Once again, the preferred method is a combination of the two, depending on the situation. Turning the firepower of a whole company on a single 'mech might be a little bit of overkill, especially if it is a light or medium 'mech. In this case, it might be advantageous to fire at two or three targets simultaneously. If your primary target is an assault 'mech, it might be a good idea to go ahead and have everyone shoot at the single target.


There are a lot of variables to deal with when working with the Ranger Company. I refrained from suggesting specific 'mechs, weapon loads, and tactics for that reason. The actual makeup of your company is up to you. Some will opt to go heavy on Weapon Units, while others will go with multiple Screen Units. Some, myself included, will field the unarmed Recon Unit. Others might consider this close to heresy. What it boils down to is personal preference and fighting style. Used wisely, the Ranger Company can be an effective weapon against the Clan.



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Guerilla Run

Mechwarriors Rise to the Challenge in the Chaos March

by
Nadin
Brzezinski

This MechWarrior adventure is designed for a group of four to six players with at least two MechWarriors among them and a Scout.

Event One; Contract Negotiations

The player characters are in Outreach looking for a quick contract with a good return. They are approached by an agent who tries to sell them on a resupply run to the planet of Epsilon Indi. It seems that in recent months, the Epsilon Freedom Brigade has gained the upper hand in the fight against Duke Benson Abraham's forces. The contract promises the characters full salvage rights and above average pay. They are to contact the Epsilon Freedom Brigade and resupply them with everything--from foodstuffs to medical supplies to weapons.

The man who approached them speaks with a Davion accent. He wants the troops to act as security while the cargo is unloaded from his own DropShip. The payment for this escort duty is 200,000 C-Bills, and with good negotiations, this can go up to 230,000. The Representative, who will give them a false name, will pay no more than 75,000 C-Bills up front. His negotiating skill is two.

GM's Background

The man is David Haas, a former Davion agent who defected to the Maskirovka trying to get the unit resupplied. In the past few months, things have gone from bad to worse for the Capellan forces. He will try to hire more than just this unit, and he is not above abandoning the characters on Epsilon Indi, which will force them to join the rebellion or face a long term in jail.

Research

If the characters decide to check on the story, they must make appropriate Streetwise or Protocol rolls. Inquiries yield the following results. Check the character's MOS.

- 0: Their contact is a legitimate trader trying to help some poor souls.
- 1-2: Their contract is a little shady, but so are most small-time contract negotiators.
- 3+ The player characters are warned to watch out. The man is a Capellan Government agent and will sweeten the deal to get the characters interested.

Inquiries about the situation on Epsilon Indi will require Streetwise rolls.

- 0: The situation is rather confused right now. It's a good place to make some quick cash.
- 1-2: The Duke has made some gains in the recent past.
- 3+: Look, friend, if I were you, I would stay away from that Hell Hole. Radiation up the spikes and a civil war that the Davions will have under control soon enough.

Complications

Their contact might try to force them to take the job. He is rather desperate and will do anything, including kidnapping the PCs to force them to do his bidding.

The Deal: Working for Liao

After two months of undisturbed space travel, the PCs jump into a pirate point in the Epsilon Indi system. This shaves three days from the normal in-system transit. Aerospace Fighters will challenge the DropShip, but good piloting and gunners will save the day.

After three days of high G in-system travel, they land at the planet and are contacted by the Epsilon Freedom Brigade, which begins unloading supplies. However, before they are finished, the Dropship warns of an approaching force. If the characters decide to defend the forces unloading the ship, they will have to face a company of light and medium 'mechs, two infantry transports, and two platoons of infantry. Use any four BattleTech maps with the following modifications; all forests are sand dunes and water is nonexistent. Rules for desert warfare should apply--all 'mechs will generate an extra four points of heat per turn.

Davion Side

After landing, the party will be informed of the approaching forces. The characters will make a mockery of fighting the Davion forces--until they can join them and then fire upon the resistance. If they are successful in disabling the DropShip, they can claim it as war booty.

End Game

Working for Liao: If the mission succeeds, they will be paid handsomely. If the mission fails, their contact will attempt to abandon the PCs on planet, forcing them to join the rebels.

Working for Davion: If the mission is successful, they will be rewarded by FedCom forces and offered a contract on planet.

No more than three AP per character, plus any rewards for good role-playing, should be awarded.

Loose Ends

Either the Maskirovka or the MIIO will want revenge on the PCs. If their contact is captured alive, they will learn that the man is a traitor to House Davion. The man will be executed, with the family wanting revenge on the PCs.

PERIPHERY RUMBLE

by Nathan Johnson

Trouble on the Border

In early 3059, Clan Steel Viper, tired of continuous setbacks in its efforts to become IIClan, implemented a plan to speed up its preparations for the renewed invasion of Terra. Foremost for the Clan, was securing its periphery border, which had become infested with small bands of marauding pirates. Looking to keep its best units in reserve, Clan Steel Viper assigned freebirths, who had the potential, to seek out and destroy the troublesome pirates.

On the uninhabited planet of Lincoln, a Clan unit has discovered two heavy lances of pirates. The pirates, members of the Thundering Plague, are retreating and attempting to board their nearby DropShip. Unknown to the retreating lances, however, the Steel Viper troops predicted their line of retreat and have prepared an ambush site along the route.

Game Set Up

Map one is from the BattleTech boxed set. Map two is from BattleTech Map Set Two; Scattered Woods. Place both maps with the numbers running the same direction, creating a long, rectangular field, rather than a square field (Map two will be on top).

Defender

The defenders are lances from the Thundering Plague, who are trying to get to their DropShip.

Thundering Plague Alpha

Captain Mitchell Sterns (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) AS7-K *Atlas*
Sergeant "Guava" Jones (Piloting:4, Gunnery:4) GHR-5J *Grasshopper*
MechWarrior Johann Trevor (Piloting:5, Gunnery:4) RFL-5M *Rifleman*
MechWarrior Drew Johnson (Piloting:5, Gunnery:4) BLR-3M *Battlemaster*

Thundering Plague Beta

Lieutenant William Sohner (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) VTR-9K *Victor*
Sergeant Elizabeth Freeman (Piloting:5, Gunnery:4) JM6-DD *JagerMech*
MechWarrior Ivan Rochenko (Piloting:5, Gunnery:4) QKD-5K *Quickdraw*
MechWarrior Juanita DeMarco (Piloting:5, Gunnery:3) GOL-3M *Goliath*

Deployment

The defenders' first lance is placed 10 to 15 hexes from the top of map one. The second lance is placed 7 to 10 hexes from the top, and at least 5 hexes from the first lance.

Attacker

The attackers are members of the Viper's Fangs, an independent unit of Clan Steel Viper.

Viper's Fangs

Star Commander Syth (Piloting:3, Gunnery:2) *Viper*
MechWarrior Cain (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) *Marauder IIC*
MechWarrior Drevin (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) *Marauder IIC*
MechWarrior Cavek (Piloting:4, Gunnery:3) *Peregrine**
MechWarrior Rico (Piloting: 4, Gunnery:3) *Peregrine**
(*Ambushing Units)

Deployment

Clan units should be placed no more than 3 hexes from the top of map one. Ambushing units are 2 hexes from the bottom of map one and are considered hidden initially (see pg. 89 of the *BattleTech Compendium: The Rules of Warfare* for rules concerning hidden units).

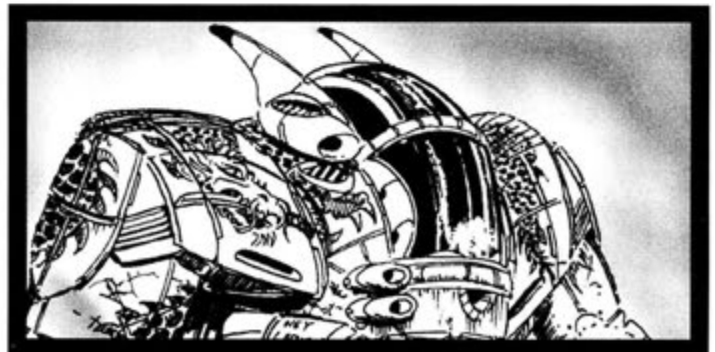
Victory Conditions

After all pirate units have retreated off the bottom of map two or are destroyed, total the number of pirate 'mechs that successfully withdrew and add one point for each Clan 'mech destroyed.

8: Pirate Decisive
6-7: Pirate Marginal
5-4: Draw
3-2: Clan Marginal
1-0: Clan Decisive

Special Rules

Any 'mech forced off the map is considered destroyed and is used in figuring the scenario winner. Since the pirates are regarded as dezgra, Steel Viper units are not bound by Clan law.



MechForce North America Special Preview

BATTLETECH[®] FIELD MANUAL

MERCENARIES[™]

INTRODUCTION

Following the publication of the *Draconis Combine Field Manual*, General Maeve Wolf proposed that Wolf's Dragoons compile and publish a similar volume devoted to mercenary units of the Inner Sphere. Such a volume, General Wolf argued, would help acquaint potential employers with the mercenary industry and available units, and help foster competition among mercenary units—thus encouraging professional conduct and the adoption of professional standards among all mercenary commands. Commander Jamie Wolf, however, voiced his concern that such a publication might be interpreted by the Combine as a Dragoon attempt to belittle what was—in his words—an aggressive and insightful move on the part of Theodore Kurita. In the end, the Dragoon council tabled the general's proposal until Wolfnet operatives confirmed the existence of the *Free Worlds League Field Manual*. Almost immediately, Jamie Wolf ordered Wolfnet to begin compiling Field Manual: Mercenaries.

As outlined by General Wolf, *Field Manual: Mercenaries* is intended to serve two main purposes. First, the manual will acquaint potential employers with the mercenary commands of the Inner Sphere and the mercenary industry in general. Second, the manual will promote uniform standards of professionalism among mercenary units. To achieve these objectives, the Field Manual is divided into the following sections: Professional Soldiering, Outreach, Employment and Contracts, Assets and Organization, and Mercenary Unit Briefs.

Professional Soldiering offers a profile of the mercenary soldier throughout history and a discussion of the challenges facing a mercenary command in the thirty-first century. Outreach provides a detailed description of the world of Outreach, the mercenary center of the Inner Sphere. The section includes detailed entries on the Warrior's World, including the capital city of Harlech and the Hiring Hall. Employment and Contracts describes the various mission types and the workings of typical contracts, summarizes the current job market for mercs in the Inner Sphere and Periphery, and briefly describes the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission. The next section, Assets and Organization, describes the organization and

use of the various types of forces available to modern mercenary commands, such as BattleMechs, aerospace, armor, infantry and support. Typical mercenary rank structures and a few well-known decorations are described in this section as well.

Finally, the Mercenary Unit Briefs section is a sampling of the actual Unit Briefs Database maintained on Outreach. The database contains entries on more than forty different mercenary units. Every entry describes the unit's history, command structure, available forces and organization, common tactics, specializations, composition, quality and loyalty ratings.

While researching the histories and battlefield tactics of certain units for use in this manual, Wolfnet worked at its limits. Only now, looking over the final form of what we have created, do we fully realize the potential benefit this manual offers all who approach it with wisdom and a receptive attitude.

We only hope it will be used in such a spirit.

—Major Michi Noketsuna, Wolfnet

1 October 3059

Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission

In response to a loss of employer confidence following the ComStar schism and the abortive Operation Scorpion, the ComStar Mercenary Review Board was dissolved in 3052. In its place, the Dragoons organized the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission, a body dedicated to promoting uniform standards of conduct among mercenary units and their employers. To this end, the commission oversees hiring practices on Outreach, adjudicates disputes between mercenaries and employees, and serves as an escrow company for contract fees.

The commission is composed of representatives of the major political entities in the Inner Sphere and officers from several elite mercenary commands. ComStar also retains a permanent seat on the commission, and its representative serves as chairman for all commission meetings. Five seats are held by representatives of the Great Houses. The St. Ives Compact and Free Rasalhague Republic also hold seats on the commission, as do the Dragoons. The Eridani Light Horse and McCarron's Armored Cavalry both recently lost their mercenary status, and

MECHFORCE Special Preview

their commission seats have been offered to the well-respected Northwind Highlanders and the Blue Star Irregulars. The Highlanders have accepted; the Irregulars are reportedly still pondering the offer. Seats have also recently been offered to three Periphery states and the Word of Blake. The Magistracy of Canopus has already accepted; the Word of Blake has refused until the ComStar member is denied the right to serve as chairperson. No motion has yet been made in that regard.

Through ComStar-bonded accounts, the commission acts as an escrow company for contract payments. Employers deposit full contract payments in trust with the commission, which then authorizes the contracted mercenary command to draw against the balance. The remainder is usually held until completion of contract, at which time the commission deducts a five-percent handling fee on the full contract. This system ensures that employers are protected from default by mercenary commands and guarantees that mercenary commands receive their final payments.

Creating A MERCENARY Unit

The following system enables a player or group of players to create a mercenary command from scratch. The system lets players determine all the components of a unit, including its 'mech complement, secondary air and ground assets, technical and support staff, and any special skills possessed by its pilots.

This unit-generation system is designed to simulate the "organic" process of mercenary-unit creation depicted in numerous BattleTech novels and sourcebooks. Rather than starting with a large sum of money and simply purchasing the different components of the unit, one founding player-character sets the ball rolling by proposing a new mercenary group and persuading other founding members to join him and serve as his sub-commanders. The commander's background—his military service, friends and family—determine whom he attracts. Similarly, the founding members spread the word of the new unit and bring in their own former unit mates, friends and family members. Next, these founding members begin open recruiting—hiring outside troops to bolster the group's strength and assemble the unit they want. Then the unit's commanders purchase any equipment still needed (generally, recruits supply their own 'mechs, vehicles and aerospace fighters). The Commanders acquire DropShips and/or JumpShips for the unit, and hire support personnel.

In addition to simulating the organic unit-generation process described in BattleTech fiction, this system also lets players create units that better reflect the backgrounds and abilities of their characters.

For guidelines on operating a mercenary unit after its formation, see Hand to Mouth.

Unit Creation Procedure

The general procedure for creating a new mercenary command is outlined below. The system is designed to work with BattleTech and MWII games. However, MWII rules should only

be used in gamemastered roleplaying campaigns.

Players should read through the entire system at least once to get a basic idea of how it works before using it, and gamemasters should feel free to modify any rules to produce fair and believable campaigns for their playing groups.

Procedure Outline

- Step 1: Create a Leader
- Step 2: Assemble Founding Members
- Step 3: Open Recruiting and Mission Experience
- Step 4: Obtain Equipment
- Step 5: Buy DropShips/JumpShips
- Step 6: Determine Payroll, Maintenance Costs and Support Requirements
- Step 7: Name the Mercenary Command and Establish War Chest

In **Step 1**, the controlling player of the unit's commander determines his character's background, which in turn affects the character's ability to assemble the unit's founding members.

In **Step 2**, the commander assembles the founding members of the unit. This step provides the first opportunity for other player-characters to be incorporated into the group. The commander may also create *special recruits* or assign special-recruit status to unit members. Special recruits may in turn recruit new members. This provides the second opportunity for other player-characters to join the new command.

In **Step 3**, the unit's commander and his staff organize the unit. The commander and the unit's special recruits also conduct open recruiting to fill vacancies. Players may provide the unit with mission experience at this time, which provides a chance to advance their troops' Quality Ratings and expand the unit roster. This step provides two more opportunities for player-characters to join the group if they have not already done so.

In **Step 4**, the players determine the overall technology level of the unit. The unit may acquire additional equipment and machines may be upgraded or customized. The unit's player-characters acquire transportation assets in **Step 5**, and support personnel in **Step 6**. Finally, **Step 7** concludes the unit-creation process by naming the unit and establishing its starting funds.

UNIT Paperwork

The Standard Form 3068 (Simplified) is used on Outreach to provide a brief description of the personnel, assets and history of a mercenary command or any of the unit's battalions, regiments or other component units.

A blank SF 3068 (Simplified) is provided at the back of the Field Manual. Players can use it as a worksheet to keep track of a unit's personnel, assets and history while creating a mercenary command, and as a convenient reference during game play. A sample form for the First Battalion of the unit Storm's Metal Thunder is provided.

Resolving Conflicts

When a group of players join to form a single mercenary command, disagreements often arise over such issues as who will command or the order of recruiting. Players can resolve such conflicts with one-on-one simulator battles using the map and unit quick-generation procedures in the Rules section.

Levels of BattleTech

At various points in the unit-creation process, it will be necessary to distinguish between levels of BattleTech and the technology associated with them.

All BattleTech rules now carry a Level One, Level Two, or Level Three designation. Level One BattleTech rules represent the basic level of play described in BattleTech, Fourth Edition, and use the technology available in 3025, including all 'mechs and weapons described in Technical Readout 3025. BattleMechs, conventional vehicles and aerospace fighters are considered to use Level One technology if they are equipped only with weapons and other equipment found in the BattleTech, Fourth Edition rules. Generally, the machines described in Technical Readout 3025 and Technical Readout 3026 have only Level One equipment and may therefore be used regardless of technology available.

The table below summarizes Level One equipment. For purposes of the technology base, vehicles with cargo space may be considered Level One.

AC/2, AC/5, AC/10, AC/20
Armor (standard)
Cockpit (standard)
Engine (standard)
Flamer, Flamer (vehicle)
Gyro (standard)
Hatchet
Heat Sink (standard)
Internal Structure (standard)
Jump Jet (standard)
Large Laser, Medium Laser, Small Laser
LRM 5, LRM 10, LRM 15, LRM 20
Machine Gun
PPC
SRM 2, SRM 4, SRM 6

Level Two BattleTech represents the rules used in most BattleTech tournaments and MechForce-level competition. Level Two BattleTech is defined by the rules contained in BTC: RoW, which includes all Level One rules and the technology available in 3059—the 'mechs, vehicles, equipment and other technology described in Technical Readouts 3026, 3050, 3055, and 3058.

Level Three BattleTech play may include any of the optional rules presented in various BattleTech products, as well as MechForce North America Quarterly magazine. These rules are always specifically identified as Level Three. Players may use Level Three rules as they see fit. Generally, Level Three rules are not used in tournament play.

Level One Equipment



By the Book

Homemade vs. Published 'Mechs

by Tony Trenti

Much has been written about how to construct 'Mechs. Unfortunately, a lot of homemade 'Mechs simply aren't necessary. Published designs can work just as well, or better. Homemade 'Mechs simply don't have the mystique that surrounds other BattleMechs. Would you be more impressed by some nameless 'Mech attacking you, or an Atlas?

A whirlwind of new designs have come out in the past few years, and they have covered many needs. These designs are even more important if you're playing in tournaments.

A Unit's Purpose

BattleMechs, vehicles, aerospace fighters, and even infantry should have their own specific place in a unit. Even line units have to operate on a budget, so the new trend in combined arms tactics makes economical as well as tactical sense. Fighters shouldn't be fighting the ground battle. Their job is protecting the Jump and DropShips. Light vehicles and VTOLs generally are deployed first in a scouting role. Light units may be used in direct assaults, but should have backup. Heavier vehicles' lack of mobility compared to a 'Mechs' may keep them from the front of the line, but they defend and hold positions well. Vehicles also transport units, provide logistical support, and artillery fire. 'Mechs may capture areas, however infantry are needed to "clean" them out, especially in urban battles.

A 'Mech's place is right in the thick of things. They can be used in many battlefield roles, occasionally substituting for other kinds of units. Lighter 'Mechs make up the bulk of the BattleMechs on the field. On less prosperous worlds, they may be the only forces. Light 'Mechs make excellent scouts, and their great mobility gives them a battlefield advantage. The main fighting forces are usually made up of medium 'Mechs. Heavy 'Mechs are relatively rare. Assault 'Mechs aren't often seen.

Construction

Sometimes, constructing a new 'Mech may not be necessary, because an existing 'Mech fits your needs. Existing ones often can be refitted with new equipment. Refits also can be a lot cheaper than having a brand new 'Mech designed and built. Salvage can further cut costs by not having to pay for the parts in the first place.

In choosing any type of unit, usefulness, price, and availability are important. It costs serious money to have a 'Mech designed, and few manufacturers have space in their production assembly for new designs.

Smaller companies may produce special order 'Mechs for the right price. BattleMechs like the 40ton Watchman are around simply because they are cost effective.

Individual pieces of equipment can get very expensive. With XL engines, Inner Sphere 'Mechs risk losing the entire engine, but they are still good for getting more tons out of a 'Mech. You don't have to worry about blowing up if they're dead, because you have an extra ER PPC. However, they do cost four times as much. Vehicle XL engines can cost 16 times as much, but the tons you get back can make up for it. Case ammo storage is only useful on units with XL engines if you intended on salvaging it, as even a contained ammo explosion may kill the 'Mech. Gauss and ER PPC cannons can destroy a 'Mech in one hit, and that can't be ignored. Their excellent range and damage are a plus, too. Endo internal structure is both cost- and tonnage-efficient. If you have a choice of mounting that or Ferrofibrous, use endo.

Triple strength myomer, while nice, is horribly expensive. Double heat sinks are almost a must, but beware how much room they will take up along with their high price.

Some parts might not even be available. Much of the Inner Sphere's new technology manufacturing is coming out of the Free Worlds League, and if you aren't in good with them you may not get what you want. Other groups may have needed parts, but want to keep them for their own units. Some specific equipment is only available to certain successor states, and may be classified. Third level equipment is especially rare and expensive. Its prototype nature can be hazardous. The great houses are not free with these things either. Simply possessing such material may cause an assassin to visit in the night. Being part of a House unit does not guarantee you access to good parts. Only the most elite units get all-new equipment, other units might not even get upgrades. If you're part of a mercenary group, your purse is probably a little light, and you might not be able to afford good equipment. You will also need better skilled techs to upkeep and repair higher tech material. Objective Raids is a good sourcebook to look up where certain things are manufactured, and how much a certain product costs.

You can enjoy the game equally well with both original and custom 'Mechs. Decide for yourself how to use them, and how to have them fit your needs.

QuarterMaster's File

Things That Go Boom

by Gerald Hall

More new equipment is starting to be fielded for the common infantry soldier to make him or her more effective in an increasingly dangerous battlefield. Elementals, both wearing their formidable powered armor suits and those fighting without such protection, are going to be encountered in greater numbers as the Inner Sphere begins to take the battle to the Clans. Many of the new pieces of equipment are ingenious adaptations of existing equipment and technology. This makes production by existing plants easy to retool for.

Spider Mine Fuse Adapters

In a defensive situation, mines historically have been a force multiplier for infantry short of heavy weapons and sufficient manpower to effectively defend a large area. "Smart" mines which used sophisticated electronics to detect targets and were self-neutralizing after a specified period replaced less capable mines at the beginning of the 21st century. There was too much public outcry over civilian casualties from the many minefields still unswept from dozens of minor conflicts. This continued to be the case after mankind spread out to the stars until the beginning of the Succession Wars. The necessary industry to build the smart mines was mostly destroyed. Once again, civilians were maimed or killed from forgotten minefields throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery worlds. After the Fourth Succession War and the rapid rediscovery and application of advanced technology, smart mines rapidly replaced the older devices.

With the limited amount of equipment that an infantryman can carry on his back, many new devices have been put into production to increase the versatility of his existing equipment.

The PyroTex Spider Mine Fuse Adapter is an excellent example of such a device. Rather than have an infantryman carry several mines in addition to his primary weapon, grenades, body armor, food, water, and other personal equipment, the well-equipped infantryman now carries several such fuse adapters instead. When the combat situation requires that a small minefield be quickly emplaced, the infantryman simply takes several of his standard grenades, unscrews the time fuse, and replaces them with spider mine fuse adapters. The soldier then activates the grenade and throws it where the minefield is to be. Upon landing, the fuse assembly throws out eight 1.5 meter long synthetic trip lines which will detonate the grenade body if disturbed.

Electronics within the fuse body will deactivate the mine within a few days as their battery charge runs out, making the area safe to traverse for friendly troops and civilians.

The lethal radius of the mine corresponds with the existing terminal effects of the grenade body used.

All types of standard grenades can be fitted with the Spider Mine Fuse Adapter including, micro, mini, maxi, smoke, and inferno grenades.

The Spider Mine Fuse Adapter has already seen service against the Clans as well as during the battles in what is now known as the Chaos March. Production is continuing with as many customers awaiting delivery.

["I love using these spider mine fuse adapters. If the bad guys happen on my trail while I'm out on a scout mission, I just toss out a few of my grenades with their fuses replaced with the mine adapters. It never fails to stop a pursuit dead in its tracks." Jake Marx; Recon Team One, TekTeam Technical Services.]

["We were chasing after this saboteur in the forest just southeast of our position when my two lead men just blew up. I know that we didn't have any minefields out there. By the time that we got things sorted out, we had lost all trace of the guy we were chasing after." Unknown Infantry squad leader in the so-called Chaos March.]

Item	Tech Lvl/Avail.	Wt	Base cost	Multiplier
Spider Mine Fuse	3/B	200g	30	1.5-2.5

Inferno Grenade

Taking advantage of the human fear of fire, the inferno grenade is a frighteningly effective new weapon for all kinds of foot soldiers. While relatively ineffective against BattleMechs due to the small incendiary filler of the grenade body, the inferno grenade is still extremely effective against unprotected personnel within a radius of about five meters of the grenade's impact. The inferno grenade is approximately the same size of the standard maxigrenade.

["Fire is a great personal motivator, isn't it? Sgt. John "Hotfoot" Salvana; Flamer Squad Leader, Brion's Legion.]

Item	Tech Lvl/Avail.	Wt	Base Cost	Multiplier
Inferno Grenade	3/B	200g	30	1.0-3.0

"David" BattleArmor

While the St. Ives Compact has purchased a number of Inner Sphere pattern BattleArmor suits from the Federated Commonwealth, Compact infantry commanders were simply not satisfied with the performance and lethality of the existing designs. Duke Kai Allard-Liao's own experience piloting Clan Elemental suits led him to share his infantry commander's opinions as well. Several companies within the St. Ives Compact received tendered bids to produce an improved BattleArmor design to be produced for the Compact's armed forces and for export.

The key features to be emphasized were mobility, fire power and armored protection. Unlike the early FedCom BattleArmor designs, the proposed BattleArmor models were to have full jump capability as well as a viable anti-armor weapon with sufficient combat endurance. Other BattleArmor designs either compromised mobility like the Combine's *Kanazachi* or armor protection and firepower like the Gray Death Legion's recon suits.

The winning bid was the David produced by Texlos Industries in association with TekTeam Technical Services. It is reported that TekTeam provided its partner with samples of Clan Elemental suits along with ClanTech technical data which assisted in the development of the David. The key feature of the David was its innovative primary weapon. The David used an enlarged and upgraded version of the gauss rifle technology used by the Federated Commonwealth in its latest series of infantry support weapons. This gauss weapon is called the Slingshot and is interchangeable with the other modular weapons for other standard Inner Sphere BattleArmor designs. However, the power and versatility of the Slingshot make it unique.

Since the Inner Sphere designers have not been able to produce a BattleArmor design with the variety of weapons that Clan Elemental suits have, Texlos Industries engineers designed and built a compact dual feed gauss weapon effective against both infantry and armor targets. The Slingshot uses a high density, unitary discarding sabot armor-piercing round (APDS) for use against BattleMechs, BattleArmor, and other armored targets. Against soft area targets such as formations of unarmored infantry formations, the Slingshot's dual feed system loads a canister round which separates into eight lethal segments which tumble upon impact. Each segment inflicts less damage and has a shorter range than the unitary APDS round, but are highly effective against light infantry, even those wearing body armor. The Slingshot has a low firing signature and efficiently utilizes both ammunition and energy from the David's power packs.

To assist the David in swarming attacks, the BattleArmor design has two innovative features. The first feature is a built-in titanium hook on the underside of the weapon's arm to hook in between BattleMech armor plates when climbing up during a

swarming attack. This hook also makes a formidable close attack weapon against infantry. The David also has a grapple rod incorporated into its non-weapons arm for use for transport by friendly BattleMechs and for use in climbing onto enemy 'mechs.

It is also rumored that a variation of the Clan's anti-personnel charge used on their OmniMechs has been fitted on the chest armor plate of the David BattleArmor suit. This device could give the David a formidable one-shot anti-personnel weapon to supplement the Slingshot. The David certainly carries several satchel charges for use in kneecapping enemy 'mechs. The David is also equipped with various sensors and features advanced surface coatings designed to reduce observability to enemy sensors and targeting equipment.

Already further development of the David continues as the original design is produced. Versions with heavier armor, additional weapons, higher mobility and advanced sensors are rumored to be under development.

The David BattleArmor suit, when equipped with the Slingshot gauss weapon, has the following range and damage effects. When using APDS (unitary round), it inflicts 4APV (Armor Penetration Points) and has a range of 1-2/3-4/5-6 for short, medium and long ranges, respectively. When firing cluster ammunition, treat as a MG for range and damage purposes.

["We got to try out a couple of squads of these new David BattleArmor suits during a mission to resupply the folks out at Camelot Command. Right when we were off-loading cargo on the planetoid, a Jade Falcon SuperNova decided to come visit the old SLDF station on a raid. My boys and girls shot down a good dozen Elementals off of TekTeam and Irregulars' 'mechs before those Clanners could make a mess of things. We topped things off by kneecapping a couple of Clan OmniMechs before they decided to cut their losses and ride their Union-C back toward the WarShip that brought them. I wouldn't trade my David and its Slingshot for anything. My people want every one of these new BattleArmor suits that they can get their hands on." Lt. Francesca Moore: Armored Infantry Platoon Leader, TekTeam Technical Services SAR Company #3]

MechWarrior/BattleTroops Statistics

The David BattleArmor suit is identical to the standard Inner Sphere BattleArmor suit designs with the exception of when it is fitted with the Slingshot Gauss Weapon system and the integral grappling rod fitted on the non-weapons arm.

Slingshot

Range: 1-30/31-80/81-140 (APDS); 1-20/21-60/61-90 (Cluster)

Damage: 18D6+18 (APDS); 8D6+8 (Cluster)

Power Usage: 10 per shot

Ammo: Two ammunition cassettes of 15 rounds each

Firing Signature: Low

(Cluster ammunition considered as burst fire)

Chapter Challenge

ComStar Archives Expands Your Universe

by the BC Legion

We have reached a safe haven for the moment, and we've stopped on Styk long enough to upload more history from the Archives to the local HPG. We can't stay long. The Blakists have sworn to destroy us, and even now we can hear the howling of their hounds as they search for us. Until next time.....

Layman Level

1. Which House has a Dragon emblem?
2. Name the intelligence service of the Federated Commonwealth?
3. What is the capital of the Free Worlds League?
4. Name the current coordinator of the Draconis Combine?
5. How much does a *Mad Cat* class OmniMech weigh?
6. What fanatical organization took control of Terra in 3058?
7. How much heat does a large laser generate?
8. On which world did the Com Guards defeat the Clans?

Scandal-Vid Watcher

1. What two Clans attacked Luthien in 3052?
2. Name the Smoke Jaguar ILKhan who led the Clan invasion?
3. What mercenary unit is based in the Arc-Royal Defense Cordon?
4. Which Clan attacked Coventry in 3058?
5. Which Inner Sphere realm was nearly destroyed by the Clan invasion?
6. Name the House that developed the Inner Sphere OmniMech?
7. Who is the current head of the Magistracy of Canopus?

Intelligence Operative

1. What Clan was absorbed by Clan Wolf in 2834?
2. Who is the natural enemy of the Dragon?
3. When were the Ares Conventions signed?
4. Name the founder of the Federated Suns.
5. What rite of passage unique to Clan Ghost bear helps determine the high command of the Clan?

Intelligence Director to the First Lord

1. What Lyran assassin killed Yoguchi Kurita in 2850?

Any Questions

The BC legion wants your trivia questions. If we use one of your questions in the ComStar Archives, we will give you credit on this page. Send your trivia to: ComStar Archives, care of the BC Legion at 5230m N. Reserve, Chicago, IL 60656. As you can see from the list of answers below, we have included the book and page number of the source most applicable to the trivia questions. This lets you verify that we know what we're

talking about. When you send your questions, include the sourcebook and page number along with the answer.

Answers on pg. 31 (Now don't peek okay?)



Things Can't Get Any Worse

A Little Letter for Home

Branth Outpost Bravo, Lopez
Free Worlds League
January 17, 3063

by
Matthew Vanx

guard against the zoological services' worst enemy, BEI--Biological Exports, Inc. They've been sending hit squads to get the tranq vaccine used on the Branths. Who knows what they want it for.

Dear Mom:

It was morning on Lopez. The clouds hung heavy with rain, and the ground was all muddy from the previous night's downpour. That made my job harder. And just what is my job nowadays? I'm a Branth hunter. You're probably asking "What's a Branth?" Well, I'll explain it to you. A Branth is a dragonlike creature with a nasty attitude. It doesn't like having humans and 'mechs on its planet.

The only 'mechs we've got capable of taking these creatures down are specially-equipped light 'mechs. I pilot a *Wasp*.

On its arms, are numerous hash marks identifying how many Branths I've taken down--twenty-five if anyone's counting. Just the other day, I got one. It was rather upset when I accidentally stepped on its tail while it was feeding on some lesser creature. I tried to apologize, but a Branth isn't a good listener. I hopped back on my jump jets as it lashed out. It caught my 'Mech's right leg and sent me on my back. I'm still sore from the jostling.

Still, I wasn't about to just sit there and let it nibble on my 'mech. I used the 'mech's right hand to push off and right myself, and I used the other to make a rude gesture. I wonder if the Branth knew what the gesture meant, 'cause it seemed to get angrier--if that's possible. It slashed its tail forward, along with one of its talon-covered claws. The former hit, but didn't damage my 'mech.

Then it did something purely disgusting. It spat a toxic blob on my 'mech. That meant that I was dealing with a female Branth, as only they spit. My 'mech was equipped with an oversized tranquilizer cannon that fires a round hard and fast enough to penetrate the Branth's tough skin. One shot usually is enough, but sometimes it takes more. It took me a couple of seconds to line up the shot and keep the Branth from beating my 'mech into a metallic pulp. After what seemed to be a couple of millenniums, bells rang in in my cockpit sounding a lock. It was nighty-night time. I fired. A direct hit in the stomach! I left the Branth to the pickup crews. When it wakes up, it will be half way to some rich fool's zoo.

Besides Branth hunting, we also pull duty at the outpost to

Two weeks ago, I fought off two companies of BEI troops. They thought my *Wasp* was only armed with tranq cannons. **Wrong.** I never go anywhere without my Martell medium laser that I put on my 'mech to replace the Diverse Optics one that broke. This BEI squad had a large friend with them--an *Orion*! A light 'mech versus a near assault 'mech is like pitting a mouse against a tiger.

"Hey, pal, any chance you want to change sides?" I asked sheepishly over the main com line.

"That's a joke, right?" came the reply from the *Orion's* pilot.

He was probably laughing as he lined up his main weapons. As I closed my eyes and waited for the proverbial axe to fall, there was a loud screeching. I looked to see a pair of Branths attacking the *Orion's* upper torso. Where they came from, who knew. And I didn't care. I was just thankful they were there. the Branths didn't let up, they just kept scratching at the big 'mech. I wasn't going to waste this chance. I lined up the Martell at the enemy 'Mech's head. I pulled the trigger twice

and the laser was right on target. It cracked the viewport--enough so the Branths could get their claws into the cockpit.

With the enemy pilot dead, the Branths turned their attention to me. I started to run for the nearest outpost, with the creatures at my backside. just when I got to within two kilometers of Outpost Delta, a set of three enemy 'mechs stepped into my path. The *Orion* must have been part of their lance. There were two *Cicadas* and a little *Stinger*. I took out the *Stinger*, and the Branths and my reinforcements took out the other two.

Well, I'd better close. I have to get back to my job. The Branths and my boss don't like to be kept waiting.

Your son,
Tuggle Grenaidera



KHAN'S

C.Y.A.--COVER YOUR ASP

BY
MICHAEL
CAMPBELL

CHRONICLES

January 13 3058. Strategy and Planning Dept. A36. Star Adder Sector. Planet Arcadia. Pentagon Worlds of Clan Space.

"We will enter system with Adder Supernova Alpha," Star Captain Simone said. He was a ristar of the Star Adder Clan. "The Stiker Cluster is familiar with Diamond Shark battle tactics."

The Trueborn Elemental sitting with the two MechWarriors stirred. Inhaling deeply, he said, "Quiaff, the Supernova is acceptable if the Elementals are not bid away in the final cutdown."

The other MechWarrior paused. He was a Trueborn MechWarrior like Simone, but not of the Star Adder Clan. The medals he won from the Inner Sphere invasion made him feel superior. However, his survival of the final battle made him sad. The triangle encasing a silvery Viper identified his Clan.

Star Colonel Leong wanted to keep the Trial of Possession in focus. "Our contract calls for you to capture the prototype suits, retrieve the scientists working on them, and capture the warrior testing them. We will share the suits and the scientists. The Elemental testing the suits, will become our bondswoman. Afterward, we would like to coordinate further development with your Clan to complete the project. You do not have to be concerned with being "cut out" Star Colonel Montain."

"This I understand and accept. Her becoming a member of your Clan should be as beneficial as our having the most advanced prototype suit," Star Colonel Cory Montain said. "It is a pity your losses at Kozice Ranch Station prevent your Viper Keshik from participating in the Trial. We Adders are fortunate to receive your generosity."

"I accept your thanks and will have my 'mech Aboard your DropShip later today," Leong said.

"The Serpent's Claw will depart next week," Simone cut in. "You will be part of my Command Star. Until then, Star Colonel."

As soon as Leong departed, the two Adders considered the Trial of Possession. Montain remained standing and began to pace, flexing his artificial arm. The half-shirt he wore exposed his shoulder and the arm. Clan scientists concentrated on function instead of cosmetics. His left arm was almost black in contrast to his European stock. Most Warriors with such a crippling injury would have tested out of the Warrior Caste. Montain went on to get a Bloodname.

"The Vipers are willing to hold a Trial of Possession for the genetic legacy of a treasonous bloodnamed warrior to capture an advanced BattleArmor design," Simone said. "Do you think we can trust them?"

Montain was familiar with the subtle sarcasm in Simone's words. It was one of the many bad habits warriors were adopting after the invasion. The influx of Inner Sphere blackmarket goods brought books that could be considered chalcas or subversive. Montain blamed the decline on the Clans who failed to conquer the Inner Sphere.

He turned to face Simone. "Their Khan will offer Surkairede to them if we are successful. Certain indiscretions they make will be forgiven or blamed on us. I am sickened by the idea of accepting a treasonous warrior as bondswoman. There is only one way we can perform this Trial and maintain our honor." He had Simone's full attention.

"I have asked the saKhan for permission to hold the Trial of Possession for the entire complex at Cerenus IX. When we are done, we will accept the scientists and prototype suits as isorla and turn Leong and his treasonous warrior to the Grand Council for charges of gross misconduct. Can you imagine the outcome?"

Simone knew the Star Colonel never expected an answer to his question. "I expect we will inform Leong of these changes during batchall? Quiaff?"

"Aff. I will take him into custody myself while you are bidding with the Sharks," Montain answered. "Cerenus is not a large facility, but we can use it as a staging point for raids on Strata Domingo."

Simone accepted the changes amazingly quick. He tended to adapt better than most young warriors Montain knew. "Perhaps these new Warriors can be of use," he whispered.

January 13 3058. Garrett Plains Freeborn Enclave. Diamond Shark Sector. Planet Babylon. Pentagon Worlds of Clan Space.

The sun rose over the horizon as the Hammerhead Attack VTOL passed between the plateaus and rock formations carved out many millions of years ago when a great ocean covered the entire desert region.

Vaughn Nagasawa was loremaster of the Diamond Shark Clan. His large head and small frame identified him as a Trueborn Warrior. He was a product of genetic breeding that the Clans used for almost two centuries. He was born to be better. Pilot Lyn sat behind him. She was a Freeborn Warrior who earned the right to have Nagasawa as mentor. She survived all the tests he could put her through. Were she Trueborn, her destiny would be to command whole Galaxies. Those paths were not available to Freeborn. Not yet at least.

They were enroute to the enclave to see Lyn's grandfather. Vaughn found him helpful as counsel when he had questions about the Inner Sphere. He was captured when his ship mis-

jumped into a sector of space being explored by the Clan. Her Grandfather was not able to adapt to Clan life and was banished to this far off area of the Diamond Shark sector on Babylon. The Loremaster was responsible for maintaining the secrecy of their guest's identity.

Their journey was interrupted by an alert on the Comm Security Net. An attack by Bandits had occurred and several children were kidnapped in the early morning. At least six children were missing. They left the town in a transport hovercraft stolen from a local farm. Local Security Response Units were able to intercept all of the more lethal bandits, but the transport broke through. Freeborn Security teams did not want to endanger the children. The unproductives might have escaped using the children as shields, but Vaughn did not accept this option. He held no such sentimentality for children.

The Loremaster did not care about a few missing Freeborn children. Clan law must be maintained. It was not honorable to hunt bandits. His duty would be to protect Clan resources from being lost.

Lyn held strong emotions where children were involved. However, she also understood that the Way of the Clan came above all else. From the initial report, Lyn was able to estimate the most probable escape routes for the transport. The radar scan identified a craft ahead crossing the open desert. Their course was not heading toward a known settlement in the area. Vaughn increased the thrust of the Hammerhead's rotors.

Now that they had located the transport before the security forces, she was unsure how Nagasawa would handle the situation.

"How do you plan to stop them, Sir?" she asked.

"Standard procedure for bandits," he answered. "Shoot them all. The vehicle can be replaced."

"And the children?" Lyn knew she was their only chance. "If they are to be fodder what lesson will be gained?"

The Loremaster was always willing to negotiate. Lyn often exploited that weakness during times like this.

"They are only Freebirth," he answered. "Our present attack vector provides you forty-five seconds to formulate an alternative. Otherwise, I will continue my attack run."

Lyn began quickly, "If you can stop them without harming them, I will free the children."

Vaughn was intrigued by his pupil's never ending ability to prove her worth. He would give her a chance. As the HUD showed the hovercraft in the crosshairs, he said, 'I will disable the transport using my rotors. Old transports of this type are susceptible to clogged sand filters during sand storms. An experienced driver can restart the craft by back flushing the turbines to clear out the sand. You have until then.

The Hammerhead banked hard in front of the hovercraft and blew up a wall of dust. The driver, blinded momentarily, tried to turn. There would be no way they could escape. It turned and slowly stopped.

Vaughn turned to watch as Lyn exited the hatch and said, "It should take about ten minutes for the turbine to flush out the sand and allow power plant restart. Well bargained."

"And done." Lyn grabbed the Loremaster's patch from the breast of his flight suit as she lowered herself to the ground.

The Diamond Keshik emblem showed a pair of sharks centered around a bright orange sun with small diamond-shaped moons. Lyn placed the patch on her shoulder and stood straight. As she cleared the rotors, Vaughn lifted the Hammerhead off to circle the area. Whispering to Lyn through the comm link, he said, "I hope you will not disgrace me by using any contractions."

She ignored Vaughn and stopped only meters from the hovercraft. "The comm link should be audible by the transport's basic communications equipment." Lyn thought to herself, that this has to work. The sun glared before her. She said loudly and calmly, "This is Loremaster Vaughn Nagasawa of the Clan Diamond Shark. By the order of the Khan, you will surrender. I care nothing for the Freebirth children you have. General Order 137 must be obeyed. You have thirty-five seconds to respond or I will begin execution of your sentences. Of course, if your communication is not able to read my signal, your destruction will begin just the same. Thirty seconds..."

Every member of the Clans knows the requirements of General Order 137 meant death to anyone opposing Clan law. It had been the same since the mutiny during the first exodus with General Kerensky. Lyn's gambit was that not all members of a Clan knew their Loremaster's face or even gender.

Lyn took her flight glasses out of her jumpsuit pocket and put them on. Then she placed her hand on her holstered pistol, almost defying them to ignore her. The hatch opened and small children began to exit into the sunlight. Each covered their eyes from the blazing sun as they headed toward her.

Lyn quietly rejoiced as each child came into view. Vaughn ordered additional security forces to the area while circling. They reported five children confirmed missing. He held his pattern just behind Lyn. Clearly he could see the five children now safely behind her.

"Release the final child so you can have an honorable death," Lyn demanded. As the seconds passed, Vaughn felt her tension. "Your deaths do not matter. The child can die with you!" She shouted and drew her pistol to fire directly at the driver's area of the hovercraft.

Inside the vehicle, the bandits panicked. Without the sixth child, they felt death approaching. The driver engaged the thrust in reverse to flee the mad woman. One of the bandits attempted to exit the craft, as it slid on the air curtain. Lyn fired and struck him in the chest. The Hammerhead swooped down on the hovercraft, firing its shells of depleted uranium Autocannon rounds. Vaughn knew he had taught his student well. Her willingness to sacrifice the child meant that she accepted The Way of the Clans.

Lyn attempted to shelter the remaining children from the destruction of the vehicle. She did the best she could. As only any Freeborn would have done.

January 14, 3058. Elemental Simulator Facility. Diamond Shark Sector. Planet Babylon. Pentagon Worlds of Clan Space.

The internal display within the BattleArmor training simulator identified the bondsman's next target. Most Trueborn Elementals spent years training for what he would need to learn in a short time. Or they died trying.

This scenario involved a dark forest morning. The bondsman held one point of an Elemental Star at a rear guard post. He switched to magnetic imaging to scan a larger portion of the perimeter. The computer provided additional updates and communications from the other members of his computer-generated Star.

Not being satisfied with the first scan, he changed positions swiftly and checked using infrared sensing. Panning back and forth slowly, he knew the cool forest would not hide a heated fusion reactor behind the thousands of trees.

The *Uller* 'mech cleared the light woods and bore down on his position. The light 'mech carried an ER large laser, ECM Suite, and Active Probes. It was perfect for artillery strikes combined with forward patrol missions. Light and fast with a punch.

Not wanting to appear surprised, he attacked. Head on. The bondsman fired his jump jets and reached the *Uller* before it could lock onto him. A laser bolt streaked through the air as he reached the 'mech. It missed. His reflexes were sharp as ever. The time he trained with the Lohengrin made him that way. His first taste of blood happened on planet Roadside against the Jade Falcons. He was barely able to escape. So many others of his team did not.

After crashing into the light 'mech, he clinched at the 'Mech's torso with this claw. The wild ride began as the *Uller* attempted to shake the bondsman off. Riding a 30-ton raging bull wasn't good for his health.

The bondsman fired his laser directly at the cockpit to threaten the pilot. The computer ignored his attack and smashed him against the nearest tree. Every breath he had was lost in that moment. "At least I'm alive," he said to himself.

Visual within the pod went dark. He could hear the hum of his BattleArmor power plant and felt entombed. The visual came on an instant later, to show the large metal foot of the *Uller*, and to answer any questions he may have had. The chamber went through sequencing to equalize internal and external pressure and temperature. The silence and darkness reminded the bondsman of how close he came to death many times.

He unbuckled the restraint straps just as the chamber seal cleared with a woosh of air allowing the access door to open. His eyes adjusting to the dim lighting could discern a large pair of hands reaching for him.

His tutor lifted him out of the small pod and off the ground to reinforce some of his previous training lessons. Her eyes bore through him. The Elemental's grasp tightened. The sides

of her head were shaved and she wore a long tight braid of blond hair. This allowed the EI neuro implants to match her veins' natural pathways and feed additional estrogen throughout her body. The primary implants increased a warrior's aggressive nature, but aged the body abnormally. Some warriors would literally burn up from the inside because of the implants.

The estrogen feeds allowed a female warrior to live a longer lifespan with fewer side effects. Few warriors reached an old age. Most died in battle, seeking glory.

The bondsman was never sure how much control Evonne had over her aggression.

"You are to become an Elemental," Evonne stated. "Why do you insist in fighting as a MechWarrior or pilot? You have to act as a Star. In this drill, you should have joined one of the other pairs of your Star to defeat a 'mech or withdraw to report a recon in force and call in an artillery strike."

"I wanted to slow the probe down," he lied. "I.."

She knew his tactics were instinct. No lie could hide his need to fight alone. "You should be training with a Star," Evonne said as she allowed his feet to touch the ground.

"I will get a Star at base camp," the bondsman argued.

She released him and reached for a water packet, emptying the liter container in long swallows. She did the same thing again and each time they were together. Always large amounts of water. Three or four of the one-liter containers within a few hours, and she never seemed to sweat much.

"Who do you think will volunteer to fight in your Star? Yes, Freebirth are very popular. Everyone wants a Freebirth bondsman in their Star," Evonne said in disgust.

"If no warrior will fight with me, I'll fight alone," the bondsman finished, as he reached for a water packet himself. "Why so much water?"

"Watch your contractions, and you should be observant of how much water I drink." She smiled at him. It was the first time he saw her teeth without her biting him in combat training. "Remember, you have a debt to me. My training you has an obligation." She sat down against the simulator. "You know how the implants work. As I age, they begin to burn more. This eventually causes madness. Warriors are put down as the rage sets in. You will have the honor of putting me out of my misery. Our contract was arranged by Rigel. He bid quite well on your behalf. You must kill me. You will still bid against any others assigned the task by the Khans."

Curiously, he asked, "What should I bid to win?"

"It does not matter. You will win the bid easily. It is not honorable duty." She looked at him with concern. "Still, whatever you bid will not be enough to kill me. Unless you can pilot a fighter and not fly too low."

"I will remember," the bondsman said and poured the remains of his liter over his head. He wished he were a pilot for the first time in his life. "I will thank Rigel when I see him again."

THE WIDOW'S WEB

Common Sense and Common Problems

by Mike Nelson

Well, it is time to partake of the banquet of knowledge that we've all come to know and love, the Widow's Web (at this point you're thinking, "boy this guy has finally gone over the edge"). This quarter we are going to bite into something quite a bit different than our usual fare.

I have had a couple of conversations with the editor of this fine magazine about the dos and don'ts of the Internet (now you're thinking, "What a kiss up!"). As a writer who listens to the requests of his editor, the subject of a column devoted to kind of an Internet "How To" came up several times. The result is what you see before you.

We are bombarded with an incredible amount of information everyday of the week. It seems that almost every ad you read in a magazine, see on television, or hear on the radio had the proverbial "<http://www.here.we.are.com>" somewhere in its message. Each one of these sites adds to the information glut on the net.

Let me give you an example. Those of you who have been reading my column since the beginning, probably remember seeing this before (at least I hope you remember). I first searched for BattleTech sites using Web Crawler, which is the search engine that AOL is hooked to.

My original search netted me a little more than one-hundred listings for BattleTech. I did the search again this morning in preparation for this article and got back an incredible four-hundred-seventy-one! The result of so much information means that the Internet is actually starting to slow down in some areas.

My own experience bears this out. I no longer even attempt to go out looking at sites at night, or at least I have curtailed it radically. Almost all of my surfing is done in the morning hours when there is less traffic. Of course, I have a job that allows that (no, I just don't write for a living). You will have to find out what the non-peak hours are for your area.

To work around this, you need to streamline your time on the Net. I know, I know, a lot of the attraction is surfing in a random pattern across the electronic highways of the world. That is fun, but there is a time and a place for everything.

Decide in advance what you are going to look for then, go look for it. Beware of checking that extra link just before you shut down for the night. You might still be there two hours later. I am not saying that you are wasting your time, but if time is important to you, map out your journey in advance.

Turning on the Engines

To help you along the way, use one of the many Search Engines that are out there. When you use Netscape, it comes with links to Lycos, Web Crawler, Excite, Yahoo!, Alta Vista, and Infoseek.

"The Net" magazine--<http://www.thenet-usa.com/>--has a page called Search Central set up at its site with direct links to Yahoo!, Lycos, Dejanews, Infoseek, Alta Vista, Hot Bot, Info Space, Search.com, and Excite.

You might think that the next step would be to type in the word BattleTech and press enter. Not! Unless you want to spend an inordinate amount of time sifting through different sites to get to what you want, don't go that route. I have listed the results of searching on the word BattleTech below using each of the search engines mentioned above. Check out the column under BattleTech. Unbelievable, huh? Next, I narrowed my search and used only Jade Falcon. Quite a difference isn't it?

Search Engine	URL(Address)	BattleTech	Jade Falcon
Yahoo	http://www.yahoo.com/	57	8
Lycos	http://www.lycos.com/	1,916	45
Dejanews	http://www.dejanews.com/	4,863	411
Infoseek	http://www.infoseek.com/	1,852	281
Alta Vista	http://www.altavista.digital.com/	5,680	900
Hot Bot	http://www.hotbot.com/	7,433	500
Infospace	http://www.infospace.com/	N/A	N/A
Search.Com	http://www.search.com/	5,680	981
Excite	http://www.excite.com/	5,113	378

Virus Season

Next on the list of "How To" stuff is virus protection. Like it or not, there are people who sit around and dream up the nastiest, meanest, worst, despicable...Well, I think you get the idea! Suffice it to say, people write these things just to make life miserable for the rest of us. So, the adage is, Downloader Beware! You need to get a good virus protection program and use it.

Every time you download a file from the net, check for viruses! I place all of my files that I download into the same directory every time, this includes graphics. Call me paranoid, but this directory gets checked constantly. Also, check any files that you get on disk from someone else. The esteemed editor of this magazine can attest to that. She has a tale of woe that would make the mightiest MechWarrior hide in the cellar for days. While working on a novel, she received a disk that was infected with a virus. A few days later, you guessed it, half a novel trashed. Not a pretty sight! So, like I said, Downloader Beware!

The next item on the menu today is backing up your information. You have heard this before I am sure, but let me say this again. Backup! Backup! Backup! There are many reasons to backup, but I will cover one that directly relates to the Internet.

First and foremost is protection against the above-mentioned viruses. How can a backup save you from a virus you might ask? Well, say that despite all that you do, a virus gets into your PC (remember, MACs are expendable). Despite your best efforts, you cannot get rid of the little sucker and it corrupts your files. What do you do if the only way to get rid of it is to reformat your hard drive or some other drastic measure? If you have done regular backups that are virus free, you can go back to the most recent one and reclaim most of your data from the abyss.

You might be asking by now, well what programs can you suggest to do all of this stuff? There are as many choices out there as you can imagine, each having good and bad points. To help you out, I have listed several sites on the Net where you can download shareware programs to try.

Tucows	http://www.tucows.com/
Stroud's CWSApps list	http://cws.wilmington.net/
JUMBO!	http://www.jumbo.com/
CNET Resources	http://www.cnet.com/Resources/Software/

With shareware, you get to use the software before you pay for it. That way you can see if it meets your needs. I found the program that I write my web pages with at one of these sites. I also picked up my first copy of Paint Shop Pro on a trial basis from the Tucows site. The trial time is usually thirty days, after which time the developer of the software asks that you pay for the program. You usually get a manual to go with it and sometimes you get a CD and everything. This is how I ended up with two of my favorite programs, Hot Dog and Paint Shop Pro.

You will need a good source of information to help you along the way in your journey across the Net. There are magazines out there for all aspects of the Net, all the way from stuff for kids to magazines that tell you how to program in the latest language for the Net. Trust me sports fans, I have read them all. I mean, how many times can you read how to set up your own web page?

One of the best that I have found is the "The Net" (<http://www.thenet-usa.com/>) which is put out by Imagine publishing. It is, in my opinion, one of the best magazines out there for the Internet. The Net offers a good mix of What's New and How-To articles along with more Internet listings than you could ever look at. You can get it with or without a companion CD-ROM that is loaded-- and I mean loaded with all sorts of stuff. It is well worth the price of \$24.95 per year for a subscription.

Well that is it for now. I hope that you enjoyed the meal for today. Keep the safety of your computer and data foremost in mind at all times and you will do fine. When we perform a rope rescue at work, we never go over the edge with one line. There is the possibility that something could go wrong.

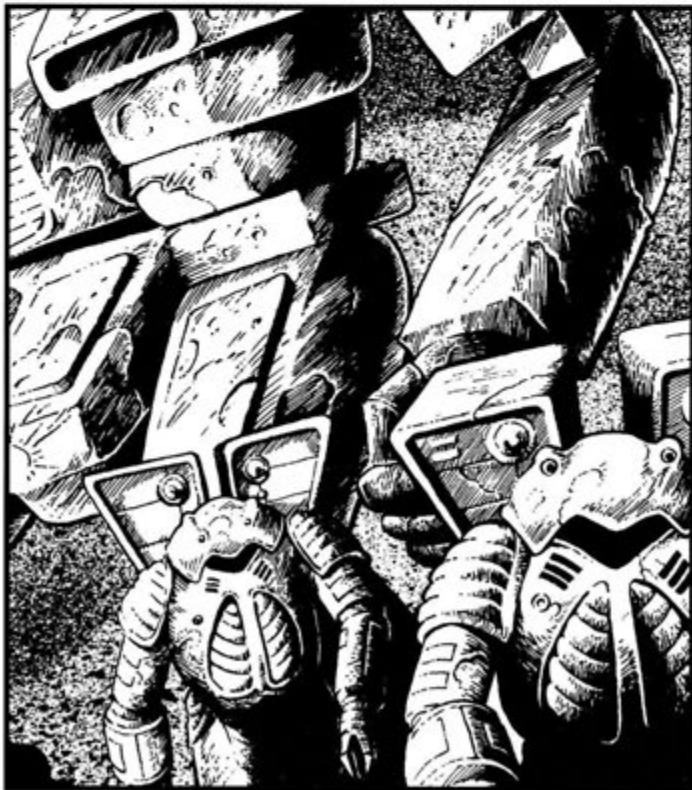
So why take a chance? If you have any questions or need some help, drop me a line. Just be careful out there and have fun.

Widow's Web Update

I have provided the following list for those of you who have just joined MechForce North America. These are the sites that have been the subjects of previous Widow's Web articles. Some of them have also changed their addresses from the ones printed earlier. You can find these articles at (<http://home.earthlink.net/~seeaweed/widow/widopen.htm>). Hope to see you there some time.

MFQ Roquefort O'Leary	http://www.st.nepan.uws.edu.au/~rocky/btech.html
MFQ Marauder's BT Page	http://www.csc.calpoly.edu/~jmoerdyk/Btech/btech.html
MFQ Colony World MyOps	http://sunset.bph.jhu.edu/Myops.home.html
MFQ Multi-Player BattleTech	http://info.kesmai.com/
MFQ Slayer's BT Page	http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/3058/index.html

I would like to devote an upcoming Widow's Web to MechForce member sites both chapter and individual--it just has to have BattleTech content. The column will contain a brief description of each site, probably around a paragraph or so in length. So, if you would like to be included, let me know! My email address is seeaweed@earthlink.net--hope to hear from you.



The BattleTech Museum

The
Magazine Exhibit

With your Curator,
Precentor Martial
Randall Bills

Greetings everyone. I am conducting a tour of the BattleTech Museum. The Museum exists to give all of you the opportunity to view products and ideas related to BattleTech. Please enjoy the tour, and more importantly, enjoy the game.

Exhibit 4: BattleTech Magazines

This exhibit displays all the various magazines and fanzines that have been published over the past many years and that deal exclusively with BattleTech. I know of many more small leaflets and foreign fanzines, but they are too numerous to mention. In particular, BattleTech players in Germany have a large number of publications.

Magazines give players an avalanche of optional rules, scenarios, stories, new 'mech designs, as well as articles covering conventions, minatures, and more.

BattleTechnology

Published by Pacific Rim Publishing Company
22 Issues

MechForce North America Quarterly

Published by FASA Corporation
8 Issues

ComNet

Published by MechForce United Kingdom
24 Issues

'Mech

Published by AWOL Productions, Inc.
14 Issues+1 special retrofit issue

Announcements

Conventions

Stop by the FASA booth and meet our staff at the following conventions

June

Dragon• Con

June 26-29

Atlanta, Georgia

For info contact:

Dragon Con '97

PO Box 47696

Atlanta, Georgia

30362-0696

(770)925-0115 (8:30am-5:00pm)

(770)623-6321 (24hr info line)

July

Chicago ComicCon

July 4-6

Rosemont, Illinois

For information call:

(914)268-2000

Ask for Brenda

Origins '97

July 17-20

Columbus, Ohio

For Info Contact:

Origins '97

PO Box 1740

Renton, WA

98057

(206)204-5815

August

GENCON® Game Fair

July 7-10

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

(414)248-3625

BattleTech Releases

Field Manual: Free Worlds League

The second volume in the BattleTech Field Manual series. This sourcebook provides an extensive look at House Marik's Free Worlds League, the new industrial giant of the Inner Sphere. This manual provides the full history of this realm from the Succession Wars to the present, profiles of all the FWL regiments, including the elite Marik Guard, and the Knights of the Inner Sphere, BattleMechs and weapons exclusive to the Free Worlds League, color renderings of FWL uniforms and insignia, and much more.

Available Now #1699 \$20.00

Binding Force

A BattleTech novel by Loren Coleman

Aris Sung, a rising star in House Hiritsu, noblest Warrior house of the Capellan Confederation. Chosen to break the newborn Sarna Supremacy and bring its worlds back into the Capellan fold. But Sung finds that he is caught up in a race against time and treachery. If he fails, House Hiritsu will fall in the brutal crossfire of intrigue and shifting loyalties.

Available Now # 5633 \$5.99

Maximum Tech: The BattleTech Advanced Rulebook

This sourcebook provides a wealth of new additions for BattleTech. Included are optional rules for added realism, more weapons, more details and more fun! Maximum Tech gives you rules for things like salvage, repair, expanded artillery and vehicle rules, minesweepers and much, much more.

Available in June #1700 \$15.00

Exodus Road: Twilight of the Clans I

A BattleTech Novel by Blaine Lee Pardoe

Star Captain Trent of Clan Smoke Jaguar is a warrior born and steadfast believer in the Way of the Clans. But, political intrigue and a Com Guard captive named Judith are giving him cause to question those ideals. She gives him hope for a new life of honor in the Inner Sphere, but such an escape comes at a high price...

Available in June #5634 \$5.99

Grave Covenant: Twilight of the Clans II

A BattleTech Novel by Michael A. Stackpole

As the Truce of Tukayyid nears its end, the lords of the Successor States embark on a radical scheme to stave off galactic war--creating a new Star League Defense Force to destroy a powerful invading Clan. But intrigues and power plays threaten the Inner Sphere's surface unity--and may extinguish the last hope for its survival.

Available in July #5635 \$5.99

BattleTech Field Manual: Mercenaries

This sourcebook plunges players into the deadly world of cash-and-carry warfare in the 31st century. Included are the history and secrets of more than forty of the most famous mercenary units in the BattleTech universe, including their troop strengths, histories, and favored tactics. This book's extensive games rules section, also gives players rules for creating their own units from scratch and maintaining their unit from one battle to the next.

Available in August #1701 \$20.00

Rai Partha Releases

June

- 20-683: Hankyu (Omni) \$5.95
(Resolicited from Dec '96)
- 20-697: CLN-7V Chameleon \$5.95
- 20-698: BCN-3R Buccaneer \$5.95
- 20-699: EMP-6A Emperor \$7.95

July

- 20-696: SuperNova (90 Tons) \$7.95
(Originally solicited 4/23/97)
- 20-748: Challenger X 90 Ton M.B.T. (2) \$8.25
- 20-749: Goblin Infantry Support Vehicle (2) \$6.75
(Originally solicited 4/23/97)
- 20-820: MHL-XI Marshall (55 Ton) \$5.95
(The Periphery pg 105)

September

- 20-747: Zhukov Heavy Tank (75 Tons) \$7.50
- 20-754: KW1-LH2 Lineholder \$5.95
- 20-755: Spt-N2 Spartan \$7.95
- 20-756: AKU-1X Akuma \$7.95

Upcoming Related Products

Wizards of the Coast:

Mercenaries Expansion Set for BattleTech TCG
(August)

Activision:

MechWarrior2
Sega Saturn (available)
Sony Playstation (available)

Reaper Miniatures:

(pins and key rings releasing by August)
ComStar
Federated Commonwealth
Diamond Sharks
Nova Cats
Steel Vipers
Wolf's Dragoons

Richard/Thomas Assoc. Inc

BattleTech Lithographs
Double-matted and ready to frame
Atlas by Tom Baxa
(cover BattleTech 4th ed)
Atlas by Doug Chaffee
(cover Technical Readout: 3025)
(Available this Summer)

Impressive Images

BattleTech Mouse Pads
BattleTech Checks
(Available this Summer)

Answers for the Chapter Challenge: (Now, you didn't peek did you??? For shame, if you did!)

1. Snow Fire (House Kurita, pg 68)

Intelligence Director to the First Lord

5. The Clawing (Invading Clans, pg 14)
4. Lucien Davion (House Davion, pg 19)
3. 2412 (The Star League, pg 28)
2. The yellow bird (House Kurita, pg 113)
1. Clan Widowmaker (Wolf Clan Sourcebook, pg 22)

Intelligence Operative

7. Emma Centella (The Periphery Second Edition, pg 30)
6. House Kurita (Technical Readout: 3058, pg 78)
5. Free Rasalhague Republic (MechWarrior Second Edition, pg 129)
4. Clan Jade Falcon (The Battle of Coventry, pg 7)
3. Kell Hounds (Malicious Intent, pg 91)
2. Leo Showers (Invading Clans, pg 53)
1. Clan Smoke Jaguar and Clan Nova Cat (Luthien, pg 7)

Scandal-Vid Watcher

8. Tukayyid (Tukayyid, pg 4)
- Warfare, pg 105)
7. 12 heat points (BattleTech Compendium: The Rules of
6. Word of Blake (The Fall of Terra, pg 10)
5. 75 tons (Revised Technical Readout: 3050, pg 32)
4. Theodore Kurita (Field Manual: Draconis Combine, pg 5)
3. Atrous (House Mark, pg 153)
- (Intelligence Operations Handbook, pg 34)
2. MIIQ-Ministry of Information, Intelligence, and Operations
1. House Kurita (House Kurita, pg 113)

Layman Level



Ok, so we changed a "few" things.....

As many of you have noticed, we have been talking about a new manual with a revised ranked battles system and battle-evaluate system. **Well, it's here!**

Very soon, all members will be receiving the new manual. New members will get it in their packets, current members will get it in the mail.

Because of this, all Ranked Battles using the current system will not be tallied after this point. Please do not send in any more battle forms, as they will not count toward your point total.

With the new system, the Battle Value of all 'mechs have been reworked, and many new 'mechs have been added. This includes many of the designs and variants developed in the other international organizations. The tournament rules have been changed as well.

The reasons for all these changes are simply to unify the entire MechForce system. The rules, values and rankings will now be a universal system. In other words, no matter where you go in the world, when you compete in a MechForce event, you will be playing with uniform rules and 'mechs.

As for the old system, we do not wish to see your hard work and fighting spirit go unrecognized, so we will tabulate the remaining points, and the holders of the top three scores will be recognized and rewarded.

If you have any questions about the new system, contact us. We are here to help.

On another note, due to unforeseen problems, the first annual BattleTech World Championship Tournament at GENCON® will be postponed until next year. The winners of the previous regional season (a season runs from September to August at GENCON®) will still hold their slots for the event, and the winners of next season's regionals will fill out the number.

One more thing. Look on the cover and see what is different. Go ahead, I'll wait.....what did you see? Or did not see? That's right. We have dropped the "North America" in "MechForce North America." This is to reflect the fact that MechForce has expanded into the international community. We have members all over the world, not counting the other international organizations. With this in mind, we have decided to expand our focus to the entire world of BattleTech. This does not mean that we will sell American readers and players short. Instead, we will allow your fellow MechWarriors from around the world to share in what we are building. We think that we will be the better for it.

By the way, my title is Precentor Epsilon, not Precentor Chi. That title goes with my predecessor and is hers for life. Here's a quickie quiz... What does my title mean and why did I take it? The clue to one of those questions is in this issue. Send the answer by snail (postal) mail to me. The first five correct answers will get something special from me. So put those thinking caps on. Take care.

Beryl J. Turner III



Regional Tournament
Winners

New England Regional

1st Place
Jason Blanchet

2nd Place
Aaron Thurston

3rd Place
Paul Meredith

Mid-Atlantic Regional

1st Place
Nick Marsala

2nd Place
John Hudson

3rd Place
Aram Mirzadeh

Congratulations!!

Keep up the
Good Work!!

Next Issue:
Are you going to
GENCON®
and
Origins™ '97?

We are !
And we'll
tell you all about
it!

Also,
another
MechForce Special
Preview!
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