



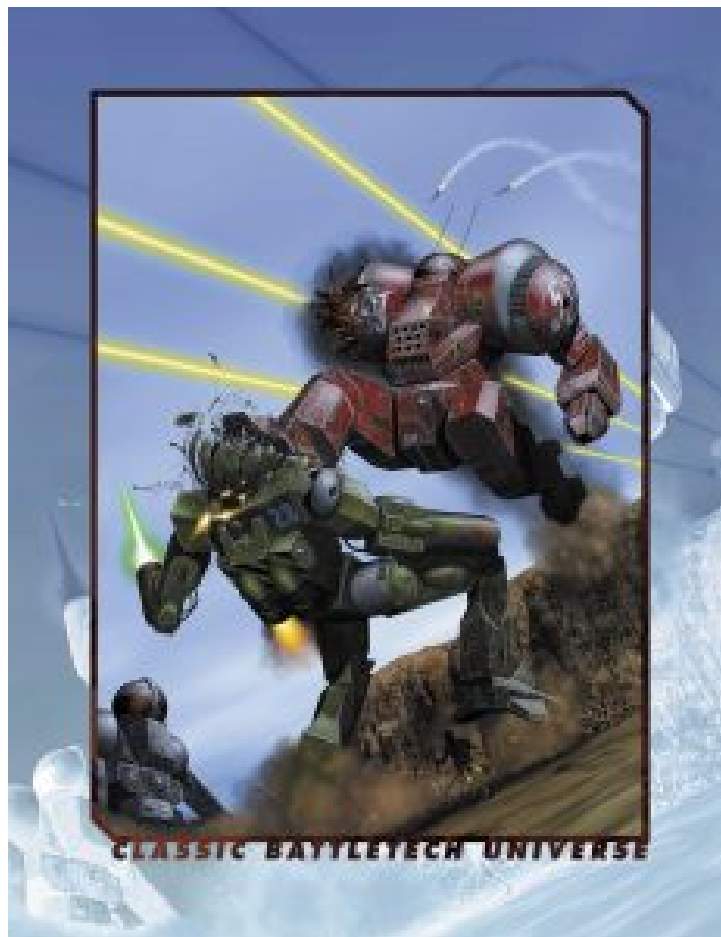
BattleTech Universe User Manual

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User Manual



BattleTech Universe

INTRODUCTION



BattleMechs are the most powerful war machines ever built. These huge, human-shaped vehicles are faster, more maneuverable, better armored, and more heavily armed than any other ground combat unit in history. Equipped with such deadly weapons as particle projector cannons, lasers, rapid-fire autocannons and missiles, these behemoths dominate the battlefields of the 31st century.

BattleTech is a game that pits 'Mech against 'Mech on the battlefields of the future. Each player controls several BattleMechs, deciding how each 'Mech moves, when to fire its weapons, and what targets to aim at. The outcome of the battle is determined by the players' decisions and the luck of the dice. Combat is played out on a game

board that represents the battlefield, using stand-up counters to represent the mighty BattleMechs that fight for supremacy over the Inner Sphere.

This book introduces players to the fascinating and stunning universe of BattleTech. A Time of War is a brief encapsulation of the BattleTech universe. With that, you'll have a frame of reference to jump right into the short story Perpetual War that provides a taste for what BattleMech combat is like for the men and women who populate this exciting universe. Next, A Brief History of the Inner Sphere provides a glimpse of how humankind has expanded to the stars in the last millennium, while the Faction section details the major states in the universe and what it's like to follow each banner, as well as a short section detailing other powers as well. This is followed by The MechWarrior section that explains a MechWarrior's place in this complex universe, as well as detailing how a he actually pilots a 'Mech. The final section of this book, The BattleMech, provides a general technical overview of the BattleMech and describes the specific capabilities and weapons of the twentyfour BattleMechs contained in this box.

A TIME OF WAR



For almost a thousand years, humans have journeyed into the far reaches of space, colonizing thousands of worlds and forming star-spanning alliances. From these grew the five vast star empires that make up the Inner Sphere. The Inner Sphere was rife with division as the ruling dynasties warred constantly over colony worlds with valuable resources. These titanic struggles led to the development of BattleMechs: gigantic, humanoid battle machines bristling with lethal weapons. From the twentyfifth century onward, these walking tanks ruled the battlefields.

As the price of conflict grew, the Inner Sphere tired of war. Eventually the five ruling Houses joined together in the Star League, a federation led by a First Lord and served by its own army. For nearly two hundred years, the Star League brought the Inner Sphere peace and prosperity.

The sudden death of the Star League's First Lord paved the way for an evil genius named Stefan Amaris to stage a bloody coup d'état. The Star League Defense Forces, commanded by the brilliant General Aleksandr Kerensky, refused to accept Amaris's rule. They fought him in a bitter civil war—the largest conflict ever fought by humanity, before or since. Kerensky's forces won, but at a terrible price. In the chaos that followed, the Council Lords were each determined to step in as First Lord. Despite the efforts of Kerensky to hold it together, the Star League dissolved.

Unable to halt the conflict, Kerensky appealed to his soldiers to join him in leaving the Inner Sphere. Nearly 80 percent of the Star League army heeded Kerensky's call to build a new Star League somewhere far beyond explored space. Kerensky and his followers abandoned their homes and headed into uncharted areas of the galaxy, presumably never to return.

War followed war in the wake of Kerensky's dramatic departure. For nearly three centuries, the Houses of the Inner Sphere fought in vain for the right to rule. These Succession Wars forged new alliances and cost the Inner Sphere lifetimes worth of scientific advancement and irreplaceable technology. Constantly maneuvering for position, the House Lords assumed that the greatest enemy they would ever face was each other.

They were wrong.

While the Inner Sphere sank into barbarism, Kerensky's followers built a new society in the harsh environs beyond known space. They developed a rigid caste system based on eugenics and martial ideals, designed to produce the ultimate warriors. For nearly three hundred years, they were unified by one burning goal: that when the time was right, they would return home and conquer the Inner Sphere. They planned to be the "saviors" of humanity and to rebuild the Star League in their own image. When the warlords of the clans decided the time had come to launch their invasion, they took their powerful 'Mechs and MechWarriors and drove straight toward Terra, the birthworld of humanity.

Faced with a common enemy, the states of the Inner Sphere united against the threat, establishing a new Star League. Finally victorious in 3060, the Star League halted the Clan invasion and a new era of peace seemed to loom on the horizon. It was not to be, however, as war once again swept through almost every House and Clan, with the most vicious fighting centered around the civil war between House Davion and House Steiner. Now, with the end of the FedCom Civil War, a weary peace has settled across the Inner Sphere, but it is a peace filled with tension.

This is but the eye of the storm.

PERPETUAL WAR



The two-meter wide metal claw swung down to drag dual furrows through the parched soil, kicking up plumes of dust that could be seen for clicks. The other claw, attached to a five meter long reverse-canted leg, swung forward to repeat the wound in the dirt in a lope that ate up the ground at a over sixty clicks an hour. The dust column behind was impressive, reaching almost a hundred meters into the brightening dawn morning. There was nothing to be done, though. Surprise was gone and speed was of the essence. The raid had already begun.

"Captain, I've got the coordinates confirmed by a fly-over." The electronically reproduced voice of her XO still managed to convey levity, a good humor that he carried like a shield.

"I copy, Joshua." Unlike her XO, Captain Suzanne Lewis had no need of such protection. Why hide when the pain simply proved you were alive? Alive, exhilarated, terrified, joyous, filled with glory at piloting sixty-five tons of lethal machinery: all of it brought an adrenaline high she could ride for days.

Then again, it felt like she had been riding it for weeks; eating and sleeping it, just to survive.

"I guess I owe you that Timbiqui Dark when this is over, Leftenant," she said. Suzanne tried unsuccessfully to hide the disgust in her tone at losing the bet.

"Sorry Cap, but you just shouldn't bet against me on something like this. It was pretty elementary to determine where the inbound DropShip was going to touch down by its trajectory as it hit the atmosphere. Comparing the intensity of the drive-flair with the known mass of the Union and correlating its velocity with the full possible range of empty to fully laden with a company of twelve 'Mechs, only synched it. They grounded in sector A23."

"Yea, yea, I know. Honors in math, as well as electronics, blah, blah." "Now you're just being a sore loser."

"That's because I lose sorely. You've been with me long enough to know that."

A barking laugh was answer enough. Clenching her jaw, she opened up a line to her entire company. "Alright, people, Joshua landed it on the head, as usual. We got bad guys grounding just a little too close to our supposedly hidden supply depot and that's simply too much of a coincidence for me. I say they found out about it and they're coming to ruin our party. But I hate gatecrashers, so who ever they are, we're going to show them what Davion troops can do.

Then, when this is over, I'm going to have a conversation with our friendly Intel man to discuss military intelligence issues." A good round of laughter erupted at that comment. Nothing like the age-old oxymoron to lighten the mood.

Push through! They're going to sack the depot if we don't push through," Suzanne said, re-stating the obvious in her frustration.

"Cap, they've got a good cross-fire going and have managed to bottle the only pass across the gorge," Joshua said. "We could try to traverse it further down?" She punched up her tactical maps and queued through several until she found the appropriate one. After seeing the distances involved, she quickly discarded the idea. It was almost ten kilometers further south until there was a passable area again; too long, way too long.

"That's not going to work," she said. "That'll take too long. The depot is their target and we've got to push through. Striker Lance, I want you through that breach as quickly as possible. The Command Lance will follow, providing cover fire. Now go." With a series of affirmatives echoing in her ears, her Striker Lance leapt into the breach of the canyon opening. Jessie's Grasshopper waded into the blistering weapons fire that immediately answered the move. Armor blasted off in chunks to rain down on the ravine floor, but the Grasshopper trudged forward; for a moment, Suzanne pictured a man leaning into the gale of a storm.

She pulled her targeting reticle across her forward view screen, lining it up with the shots' point of origin. Though the angle was off, she hoped that laying down some fire in the general area would make the other MechWarrior duck and give her Striker Lance the chance to close. She tightened her grip on the right-hand joystick, sending thirty long-range missiles downrange. She couldn't tell if the resulting series of explosions had actually damaged the enemy 'Mech, but the weapons fire from that quarter suddenly cut off.

As soon as her weapons could cycle through, she maneuvered to a better angle. The members of her Command Lance began following the Striker Lance into the breach as she ripped off another full salvo. Suzanne knew she was chewing through her ammunition reserves fast, but if it kept any of her company from harm's way to the end of the canyon pass, she'd burn every last round she had.

A warning siren of enemy fire blared, and a hard-rain of metal washed across her 'Mech, blasting armor and almost knocking her Catapult from its feet. She tried to get a bead on where the attack had come from, but it wasn't until her enemy locator designated the target that she was able to spot it, high up on the canyon wall. She smile grimly in admiration—the Dervish pilot had managed to jump up to a small ledge, barely wide enough for the

'Mech to stand on, and was returning missile fire in kind.

Before she could track her weapons up the wall, three coruscating beams of energy reached out to engulf the Dervish; one melted armor off the right arm, but the other two cored right into the right torso, the armor flashing instantly into a metallic vapor. The Dervish slammed back into the wall, and suddenly fire and death exploded out of the hole torn in the 'Mech's torso. The top of the Dervish's head blew off as the pilot ejected; the PPC strike to the right torso must have set off an ammunition explosion. As the 'Mech tore itself inside out, it slowly toppled and fell down the canyon wall, creating a huge landslide.

As luck would have it, the mountain of debris was far enough in front of her lead 'Mech that they were safe, but that didn't make her any happier. As the last rocks stopped moving, she slammed her fist into her dashboard. She may not have lost a 'Mech, but they had ten kilometers to go before they could traverse this gorge and make it to the depot.

The cerulean beam of twisting energy slammed into the ground at Suzanne's feet, paving a steaming glass trench in the dirt between her Catapult's legs. Instinctively, she stomped both feet down hard onto the pedals, igniting her 'Mech's jump jets and lofting into a ballistic arc that would bring the machine slamming back to the ground in a barely controlled fall, some one hundred-twenty meters closer to her target. Her hand clenched convulsively on her righthand joystick, sending thirty long-range missiles on tails of fire towards her elusive target. She knew her jump would throw the targeting off, but it would keep the enemy MechWarrior's head down while she sought cover herself—cover that was hard to find on this blighted prairie

"Incoming," the voice exploded inside the confines of her neurohelmet. "I repeat, we have an additional bogie coming through the south section of the facility's wall."

"Six and nine, I want that bogie taken down. Now," she said, gritting her teeth for the impact to come. With a sound like a hundred-hovercar pileup, the Catapult landed, its jump jets pumping out superheated reaction mass in an effort to bleed off velocity. With a perfectly flexed knee motion timed to touch down, she didn't even bite her tongue this time. A savage smile lit her face, while a chorus of "yes, sirs," answered her command. Quickly checking her secondary screen, she could see where the new threat had emerged. Luckily, this one was only a Panther. A fusillade of laser fire washed across her 'Mech from another quarter—looked like a Javelin out of the corner of her eye—as she wondered what brought the warriors of House Kurita to her door this time. Not that the snakes needed any particular reason to attack their ancient enemies, but.... Was it just the supply depot, or were they simply spoiling for a good fight? Well, she'd give them one.

Without warning, the enemy MechWarrior she'd been targeting swung his machine away from the blasted buildings of the supply depot and out into the open, pushing the 'Mech into a full run. Harsh sunlight glinted off the jutting torso and overly large shoulders, while the right arm ended in the barrel of an autocannon. For a heavy 'Mech, the Dragon's top speed of eighty-six kilometers an hour made it a dangerous opponent when the right person piloted it. This Kurita MechWarrior was obviously one of those people, as the 'Mech moved at an oblique angle away from her while torso twisting to bring its weapons to bear.

The autocannon spewed metal death at her, as a stream of depleted uranium slugs shot out to embrace her Catapult. The shock of the impact slammed her forward as her 'Mech tried to fall. She could feel the whine of the Catapult's gyroscope through the soles of her boots, drawing on her own sense of balance to keep the machine upright. A quick back pedal helped bring the machine back under control, giving her a chance to quickly assess the situation.

She glanced towards her damage schematic screen, seeing immediately how much damage the shot had done. Striking into her right torso, it had found the wound previously inflicted by the Dervish and chewed most of the armor off; another hit like that and she would be Dispossessed. She shuddered a moment at the thought of losing her machine.

Again launching a brace of missiles, she sped her machine at another angle to the Dragon, attempting to make

herself a more difficult target while keeping it at range; her own weaponry was better suited for a long-range fire-fight. A quick glance at the bottom of her view screen showed the Awesome, Hunchback and Assassin of her command lance attempting to maneuver into position. Of course the Assassin could have quickly outdistanced her, but the Dragon would shred its lightweight armor if it were on its own. Her plan was to force the Dragon into the range of the Awesome's weapons, where its three particle projector cannons should make quick work of even a heavy 'Mech.

The Dragon MechWarrior, however, was not so easily corralled. She was extremely proud of her command and their battlefield prowess, but there was no doubt that she was completely outmatched by this pilot. Who is he, she thought, as the last of her long-range missiles exploded harmlessly in the dirt at the feet of the Dragon. Though the enemy 'Mech proudly sported the logo of the Draconis Combine, no other unit markings marred any part of the surface.

"Striker Lance, I want you to move into a flanking position for this Dragon. He comes down now!" She couldn't help the yell. To be so outmaneuvered by a snake was more than she could stomach.

Suddenly the Dragon stopped, as though it was listening to something, then swung directly toward her. Taken aback, Suzanne brought her medium lasers on-line. The rest of her Command Lance was finally able to concentrate all of their fire on the machine. Like a wounded, angry bull, however, it continued to move forward as armor plating fell and inky-black smoke began to pour from its wounds.

The hairs on the back of her neck stood on end as the right-arm of the machine was completely torn away, and yet it still closed with her. Pushing the throttle backwards, she tried to maneuver out of the path; it was too late. With its last dying energy, the Dragon ran headlong into her Catapult.

The sound was like nothing she'd ever experienced before and she was slammed forward at the impact, exploding stars in front of her eyes. Her Catapult crashed to the ground with the Dragon's carcass on top. Her neurohelmet bounced heavily back against her command couch, and darkness closed in.

The slight breeze ruffled her hair, greeting her return to the land of the living. Suzanne re adjusted the cold compress on her head. She prayed the pounding in her skull would lessen soon, as she took a deep drink from the offered canteen and then slowly cleared her throat. "Say that again." Her words sounded more like a croak than a human voice.

"It looks like our friendly snake here played us good," her XO said, squatting down so as not to force her to look up at him. "He kept us busy long enough for the majority of his force to retreat to their DropShip and lift off world." He paused for a moment, then continued. "He must have gotten a message that they were within sight of the DropShip, so he felt it was time to die a glorious death."

She started to nod her head in agreement with her XO's sentiments, but stopped as a new round of pounding made her groan. After a moment, she spoke again.

"I don't get it. That was it? They strike, rummage through the supply depot, take some spare ammunition they probably could have gotten anywhere and then leave? Meanwhile they lose several 'Mechs and one astonishing MechWarrior?" She hated wording it that way, but there was no denying his ability; they'd all fallen victim to it.

"Don't know, Cap. Maybe there was something in the supply depot we didn't know about and they did."

She tried to think things through, but the pain was simply too much; she'd yet to look at the damage her Catapult had taken because she knew that that pain would be too much as well.

Very carefully, she maneuvered to her feet. "I don't know either. But I do know one thing. They'll be back. Whether for something else our esteemed commander hasn't informed us about, or simply because they now think they

can. They'll come again... but the ending will be very different."

She removed the compress and looked her XO in the eyes, finding the same gleam of resolution. Yes, she thought, the ending would be very different next time.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INNER SPHERE

The history of human life among the stars, the creation of the great star empires and the formation of the human society known as the Clans begins with humanity's longago first steps into space. Among the ancient nations of Terra, the dissolution of traditional alliances and enmities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries created an era of unprecedented peace and cooperation, in which all human societies turned their energies toward the advancement of the human race. By 2020, the groundbreaking research of two scientists—Thomas Kearny and Takayoshi Fuchida—led to the development of a fusion reactor capable of powering a starship. In 2027 the Alliance starship Columbia, powered by the first Kearny- Fuchida fusion engine, made its historic journey to Mars. With that brief voyage, Man's migration from Terra began.



In 2102, the scientific community paid new attention to pan-dimensional gravitational mathematics, a breakthrough discovery made eighty years earlier by Kearny and Fuchida. Though twenty-first-century scientists had scoffed at this theory, twenty-second- century physicists used Kearny and Fuchida's work to develop the first faster-than-light ship in an intensive research effort known as the Deimos Project. Deimos produced the first Kearny-Fuchida drive, which created a space warp around a starship through which the craft could "jump" distances of up to thirty light years from its starting point. On 5 December 2108, Terra launched the first so-called JumpShip, the TAS Pathfinder, on its famous round trip between Terra and the Tau Ceti system.

The ability to travel between star systems in the blink of an eye led to an unparalleled expansion of human colonies to other worlds. The first human colony of New Earth, established on Tau Ceti IV in 2116, paved the way for hundreds of others. Under the banner of the Terran Alliance, man spread

throughout the galaxy as his ancestors had once swarmed over Terra. By the year 2235, an Alliance survey had counted more than six hundred human colonies scattered across a sphere roughly eighty light years in diameter. In an eerie parallel to earlier human history, however, this colonial expansion carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. Self-sufficient colonies far from their founding worlds began agitating for home rule; in 2236, a group of worlds at the edge of human-explored space declared independence from Terra. The Colonial Marines, dispatched from Earth to quell the rebellion, failed miserably. Within six years, the Alliance government had granted independence to all colonies that lay more than thirty light years from Terra.

RISE OF THE HEGEMONY

Over the next several decades, a combination of political infighting and the severe economic strain of supporting Terran colonies ate away at the fabric of the Terran Alliance. Tales of colonists starving to death sparked riots among sympathetic Terrans, while the ranks of the poor, dispossessed and angry grew. In 2314, civilian riots and political polarization erupted into Alliance-wide civil war. The Alliance Global Militia, which had remained uneasily neutral throughout the long years of unrest, stepped in to stop the violence at the behest of James McKenna, an admiral in the Alliance Global Navy. Using his newfound authority as the Alliance's military savior, McKenna tore down the corrupt Alliance government and established the Terran Hegemony in its place. In 2316, a grateful public elected him the Hegemony's first Director-General.

During McKenna's twenty-three-year term of office, he launched three military campaigns to bring independent colony worlds back under Hegemony control. The first two campaigns, though hard-fought, were largely successful; the third, launched in 2335, was not. The aging McKenna left control of the final campaign to his son Konrad, whose persistent refusal to follow standard procedure eventually ended in disaster for the Hegemony Navy. In 2338 Konrad led his naval convoys blindly into the heavily mined Syrma system, losing all but two



Inevitably, Cameron's Peer List led to the creation of feudal ruling families in the various independent states surrounding the Hegemony. In the latter half of the twenty-fourth and the early twentyfifth centuries, tensions between these fiefdoms escalated into open war. Humanity's interstellar nations fought battle after battle against each other, each more savage than the last, culminating in the unspeakable massacre of civilians on the world of

Tintavel in the Capellan Confederation. The Confederation's leader, Chancellor Aleisha Liao, responded to the tragedy by devising the Ares Conventions—a set of rules for warfare intended to keep such atrocities from ever happening again. On 13 June 2412, the Hegemony and all other nations signed the Ares Conventions, agreeing to limit their use of nuclear weapons and cease assaulting civilian targets. Though hailed as an act of peace, the Ares Conventions in effect made war legal. Many of the signatory states wasted little time in abusing their legal right to wage warfare. of his twenty-nine troopships. This failure also gave heart to the worlds opposing the Hegemony, who had begun to ally with each other in order to protect themselves from the expanding Hegemony influence. Konrad's disgrace left the Hegemony without an heir to fill McKenna's place; upon James McKenna's death in 2339, the Hegemony's High Council passed the leadership of the Hegemony to James McKenna's third cousin, Michael Cameron. The new Director-General immediately began efforts to cement good relations with the allied colony worlds that had by this time formed independent nations.

In 2351, Michael Cameron took an action whose cultural repercussions would echo for centuries. He created the Peer List, establishing the equivalent of a feudal nobility whose members owed their exalted rank to their achievements. Among the first to receive a title was Dr. Gregory Atlas, lauded for his work on refining myomer bundles. These incredibly powerful synthetic muscles were an integral part of early WorkMechs; when powered by a fusion reactor, myomer bundles give a BattleMech its strength and mobility. Though Dr. Atlas would not live to see the first BattleMech—used in action on 5 February 2439—his work ultimately changed the face of war.

THE STAR LEAGUE ERA

The Hegemony engaged in its share of battles over the next century or so, but equally as often served as a neutral mediator between warring parties. Despite the Hegemony's history of military expansion, the presence of Terra at its heart gave it a certain credibility as a peacemaker in the eyes of other nations. Ian Cameron, who became Director-General in 2549, expanded the Hegemony's peacemaking role and negotiated an end to a number of conflicts. In 2556, Ian persuaded the leaders of the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation to sign the Treaty of Geneva; this famous document laid the groundwork for the formation of the Star League, the glorious interstellar alliance that all too briefly ended wars and advanced the welfare of all humanity. The Lyran Commonwealth signed the treaty in 2558, the Federated Suns in 2567. With the inclusion of the Draconis Combine in 2569, Ian Cameron achieved his dream of uniting virtually all humanity under one ruler.

Led by the enlightened Cameron dynasty, the Star League gave its citizens peace and prosperity for two hundred years. Though even the Star League could not completely wipe out the human need for conflict, it kept disputes between its member-states under firm control. After Lord Simon Cameron's tragic death in 2751, the rulers of all the memberstates served as regents for Simon's young son, Richard Cameron, but unfortunately abused their positions to jockey for personal power. The lonely Richard turned to Stefan Amaris, ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic in the far-off Periphery, for friendship and advice. Amaris hated the Camerons, and used his false friendship with Richard to destroy the Star League from within. On 27 December 2766, Stefan Amaris murdered Richard and took control of the Star League.



Within weeks of his coup d'état, Amaris tried and failed to gain the support of General Aleksandr Kerensky, commander of the Star League Defense Forces. The honorable Kerensky despised the usurper Amaris, and launched a bitter, thirteen- year war to liberate the Terran Hegemony from his grasp. On 29 September 2779, Kerensky led the assault against Amaris's final stronghold on Terra. In the face of overwhelming force, Amaris surrendered. By order of General Kerensky, Amaris, his family and his closest aides were summarily executed by SLDF troops for their crimes against humanity. This act of vengeance closed the book on the Star League.

In late 2780, the Council Lords stripped General Kerensky of his title as Protector of the Realm and ordered him to disperse all SLDF units to their peacetime locations. Bereft of central leadership, the member-states of the Star League vied with each other for power. Unable to agree on which of them should become the new First Lord of the Star League, the lords officially dissolved the High Council in August of 2781. Each lord then left Terra for home, and began to build his own power base. When the various lords attempted to persuade SLDF units to back their personal bids for power, General Kerensky took drastic action. On 14 February 2784, Kerensky proposed to his troops that the SLDF should leave the Inner Sphere and found a new society beyond known space, basing that society on the dearly held ideals of the Star League. In late November of 2784, Kerensky's Operation Exodus became a reality; more than 80 percent of the SLDF departed with Kerensky. The bewildered people of the Inner Sphere, mourning the loss of their hero, comforted themselves with the belief that Kerensky and his people would return when humanity needed them.

CENTURIES OF WAR

In the resulting power vacuum, the rulers of the realms now called the Successor States fought endless, brutal wars, each seeking to re-establish the Star League under his own leadership. In three hundred years of conflict, the Successor Lords accomplished little save to blast humankind virtually back to the Stone Age. By the time the third of the so-called Succession Wars ended, humanity had lost nearly every technological advance that the Star League had made possible; only stringent restrictions on destroying JumpShips, DropShips, BattleMechs and other irreplaceable technologies of war allowed interstellar combat to continue. As the Successor States battered each other senseless, the fighting ground down to endless border skirmishes in which no combatant gained significant advantage.

As the Inner Sphere warred, so did the descendants of the SLDF. Within two decades of planetfall, the men and women who had followed Kerensky in order to preserve the ideals of the Star League had betrayed those ideals

and degenerated into vicious, fratricidal conflict. Determined to salvage something from the wreckage of his father's dream, Kerensky's son



Nicholas led eight hundred loyal followers to a safe haven, where together they forged the society later known to history as the Clans. Though the Clans would not arrive in force in the Inner Sphere until 3049, they did send one unit as a vanguard in 3005—Wolf's Dragoons. This famed mercenary unit fought for each of the Successor States in turn, testing the strength of their militaries. Ultimately, the Clan-born Dragoons would become one of the strongest units fighting against the Clans on the side of the Inner Sphere.

STEPS TOWARD PEACE

By the turn of the thirty-first century, common wisdom among Successor State militaries held that conquest of the Inner Sphere through conventional warfare was impossible. Those who wished to found a second Star League had to find another way. In 3020, Archon Katrina Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth sent a peace proposal to her fellow Successor Lords, but only Prince Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns showed any interest. In 3022, the Archon and the Prince concluded a secret alliance that would bind their realms together through Hanse Davion's marriage to Katrina's daughter and heir, Melissa Steiner. This union joined two families and two nations into a single strong realm, combining the prosperous Lyran Commonwealth with the militarily powerful Federated Suns. The union of these states put the Draconis Combine in an uncomfortable position between two of its greatest enemies, and led the smaller Capellan Confederation and Free Worlds League to fear conquest by the emerging Federated Commonwealth.

After months of secret negotiations between the Capellan Confederation, Draconis Combine and Free Worlds League, all three of those nations signed the Concord of Kapetyn in 3024. Intended as a counter to the Lyran Commonwealth–Federated Suns alignment, this triple alliance provided for mutual support and defense. It also guaranteed that any renewed war would engulf the entire Inner Sphere.

FOURTH SUCCESSION WAR

On 20 August 3028, Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner held their wedding on Terra in the presence of their fellow Successor Lords. At the reception following the wedding, Hanse Davion offered a gift to his bride. As he fed Melissa a piece of wedding cake, Prince Hanse announced, "Wife, in honor of our marriage, in addition to this

morsel I give you a vast prize. My love, I give you the Capellan Confederation!" With those words, Hanse Davion launched the Fourth Succession War.

In a series of military exercises held between 3026 and 3028, Hanse Davion had discovered that he could move vast numbers of troops swiftly to distant battlefields. He had also reorganized his army, regrouping battalions and regiments into Regimental Combat Teams consisting of one or more regiments of BattleMechs plus armor, infantry and artillery support. This organization gave Davion troops overwhelming advantages in numbers. The RCTs poured into the Capellan Confederation in seven successive waves, cutting it in half.

Such large-scale mobilization by the Federated Suns did not come without cost. The vast demand for JumpShips and DropShips to ferry troops across space reduced commerce between worlds to essential items only, inflicting economic hardship on many planets. In addition, the Holy Order of ComStar, whose members had preserved the technology of interstellar communications ever since the fall of the Star League, opposed Hanse Davion's war and placed the Federated Suns under Interdiction. ComStar's hyperpulse generators would relay no messages to, from or between any Federated Sun worlds. Hampered by the Interdiction and pleased with his conquests, Hanse Davion sued for peace in 3029. The battered Capellan Confederation agreed willingly to the Federated Suns' terms, desperate to free its scant military resources for use against other enemies. The Free Worlds League had exploited the Confederation's weakened state, taking more than a few worlds for itself; the Confederation's leadership could no longer afford war with House Davion if he hoped to preserve his nation.

SKIRMISHES AND PLOTS

Between 3029 and 3039, the Successor States jockeyed for power through covert dealings and small skirmishes in lieu of outright war. The Federated Commonwealth completed the integration of its militaries, governments, economies and conquered worlds, forming the largest and most powerful realm in the Inner Sphere. Meanwhile, the Draconis Combine took one lesson from the Fourth Succession War to heart, and overhauled its military in response to Hanse Davion's "lightning war." In his role as the Combine's Gunji-no-Kanrei, or Deputy of Military Affairs, Theodore Kurita took several steps to ensure his nation's safety. He revamped the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery, upgrading their training and loosening the command structure to reward personal initiative. In his most controversial act, Theodore signed a compact with ComStar, granting independence to several Combine worlds in exchange for ComStar's Star League-era BattleMechs. As a result, on 13 March 3034, the Free Rasalhague Republic announced its independence from the Draconis Combine.

The declaration of independence touched off a minor rebellion within the Combine, as reactionary commanders refused to pull their military units from the new republic. Theodore declared the reactionaries ronin, lordless, and sent his own units to drive them from Free Rasalhague. Theodore's troops and various mercenary groups joined the Republic's Kungsärmé in battle against the ronin, but poor contracts negotiated in haste with the mercenaries paid most too much money for too little fighting. Free Rasalhague won the freedom it had claimed, but its citizens learned to loathe the mercenary MechWarrior.



In April of 3039, Hanse Davion set in motion the second great wave of his war to unite the Inner Sphere. Selecting the Draconis Combine as his target, he launched a two-front attack on the Dieron district. The first assault wave succeeded brilliantly; Davion's military advisors believed they had taken the Combine by surprise. Before Federated Commonwealth forces could launch their second wave, however, the Combine counterattacked and threw the Commonwealth on the defensive. Aided by the Star League 'Mechs he had received from ComStar, Theodore Kurita gambled with the fate of his nation and won. By attacking in the teeth of the Davion onslaught, Theodore made Hanse Davion believe the DCMS stronger than it actually was. Also, Hanse Davion saw no reason to grind his troops down against soldiers armed with superior, Star League-era technology. By October of 3039, Davion chose to cut his losses and make peace.

The War of 3039 accomplished little for those who fought it, save to remind the Successor States of the severe cost of war. A few worlds changed hands, but the balance of power



remained the same. Aside from an assault in 3041, in which the Tenth Lyran Guards took the world of Skondia from the Combine, the states of the Inner Sphere seemed content to rebuild their realms in peace. Military readiness and overcharged rhetoric still ruled the day, but the Successor States had—at least temporarily—grown tired of war. The Inner Sphere rebuilt during ten years of peace, which ended abruptly on 13 August 3049.

ENEMIES FROM BEYOND

In that year, while hunting pirates in the Periphery near the Free Rasalhague Republic, a detachment of the famed Kell Hounds mercenary unit met and succumbed to a mysterious fighting force on a godforsaken planet known as The Rock. Casualties included Phelan Kell, only son of the Hounds' founder Morgan Kell and cousin to Victor Steiner-Davion, Hanse and Melissa's eldest son. Phelan was listed as missing, presumed killed, but the Inner Sphere did not learn his true fate until several months later. The Kell Hounds' defeat marked the first of many battles lost to the Clans, mighty warriors descended from the long-vanished Star League Army. The Clans invaded the Inner Sphere in order to conquer it and restore their version of the Star League.

In March of 3050, the Clans struck in force, hammering the Draconis Combine, the Free Rasalhague Republic and the Lyran side of the Federated Commonwealth. Wave after wave of Clan attacks followed, executed with blinding speed and ruthless efficiency. Using their technologically superior OmniMechs and tenacious armored infantry known as Elementals, Clan warriors cut down their Inner Sphere opponents like wheat before a scythe. Four Clans rolled across the Inner Sphere in the first wave: Clans Smoke Jaguar, Ghost Bear, Jade Falcon and Wolf. All took their share of planets, but Clan Wolf conquered more worlds than all its compatriots. Inner Sphere forces launched a few successful counterattacks, but those strikes came too little and too late. The Clan juggernaut thundered on, halted only when catastrophe struck.

On 31 October 3050, a Rasalhagian pilot named Tyra Miraborg crashed her Shilone fighter into the Clan flagship Dire Wolf, killing the Clans' war leader. The death of the ilKhan accomplished what six months of desperate fighting had not; the Clans ended their assaults, garrisoned the worlds they had conquered and pulled much of their military strength out of the Inner Sphere. For several months, later dubbed the Year of Peace, the leaders of each Clan debated the question of who should be the new ilKhan. In mid-3051, they chose Khan Ulric Kerensky of Clan Wolf to lead a renewed assault against the Inner Sphere.

In this year of peace, Colonel Jaime Wolf of Wolf's Dragoons summoned the leaders of the Successor States to

the world of Outreach. There, Wolf revealed that he and his fellow Dragoons were actually Clan warriors—and that they were prepared to aid the Inner Sphere against their own people. The Inner Sphere leaders spent the better part of that year formulating a combined response to the overwhelming Clan threat. Setting aside centuries' worth of mistrust between their two nations, Hanse Davion and Theodore Kurita sealed a non-aggression pact. Davion also extorted material aid from the Free Worlds League by promising its leader, Thomas Marik, that he would devote all the resources of the New Avalon Institute of Science toward curing Thomas's son Joshua of leukemia.



In November of 3051, the Clans renewed their invasion of the Inner Sphere. In January 3052, Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat attacked the Combine capital of Luthien. In an act of unexpected political courage that sealed the loose alliance between the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, Hanse Davion sent the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons to help defend his age-old enemy's homeworld. The trust engendered between the two nations by Davion's action enabled both to devote all their efforts to fighting the Clans.

Despite the close cooperation between the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, the Inner Sphere's unity remained largely an illusion. ComStar had negotiated with the Clans soon after the initial invasion, and upon their return to the Inner Sphere the Order offered to administrate the Clans' conquered worlds. ComStar's leader, Primus Myndo Waterly, intended to use the Clan conquest to bring about the collapse of civilization; ComStar would then step in as humanity's savior, thus gaining power over all of human-occupied space. When Waterly discovered that the Clans intended to conquer Terra, ComStar's homeworld and the cradle of humanity, she abruptly changed her tactics. At the urging of her Precentor Martial, Anastasius Focht, Waterly struck a deal with the invaders and sent the Com Guards to fight the Clans on the backwater world of Tukayyid. If the Clans won, ComStar would give them Terra. If they lost, the Clans would halt their advance toward Terra for fifteen years. Unknown to the Precentor Martial, Waterly also set secret plans in motion to strike at the Clans and the Inner Sphere simultaneously.

The Com Guards defeated the Clans on Tukayyid in May of 3052, in a horrific blood bath that cost ComStar's forces dearly. While the Com Guards fought and died on Tukayyid to save the Inner Sphere, Primus Waterly gave the word to her agents. They launched Operation Scorpion, making a series of covert attacks on worlds in the Clan occupation zones and striking at communications sites across the Inner Sphere. By this bold gambit, Waterly hoped to cripple both the Inner Sphere and the Clans in the same blow, enabling her ComStar loyalists to seize

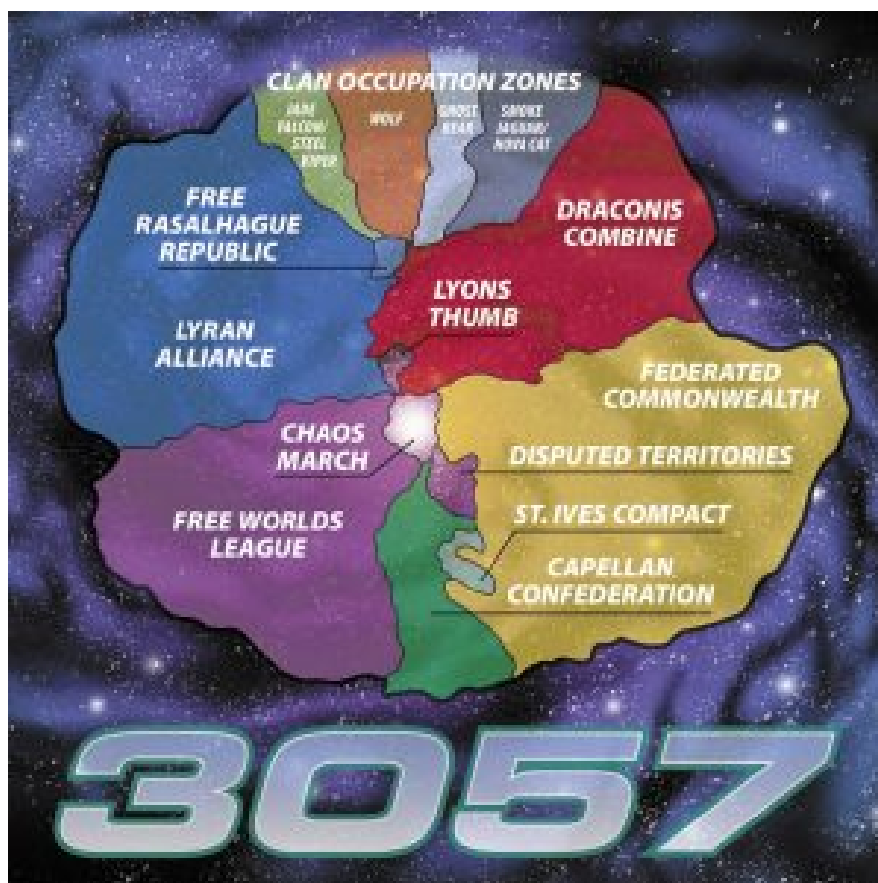
power. The strikes failed; upon Focht's return to Terra, he deposed Primus Waterly and began a massive reform of ComStar.

VICTORY AND CHANGE

The end of the Clan invasion brought other changes in its wake. Hanse Davion died of a massive heart attack at the end of the war; Chancellor Romano Liao of the Capellan Confederation died at the hands of an assassin, leaving her son Sun-Tzu on the Celestial Throne. Sun-Tzu immediately began to build a power base, allying himself to House Marik through an engagement to Thomas Marik's illegitimate daughter, Isis. Within a few short years, Theodore Kurita succeeded his father Takashi as Coordinator of the Draconis Combine. Ryan Steiner, perennial thorn in the side of the Federated Commonwealth's rulers, began agitating for an independent Isle of Skye. ComStar, meanwhile, split into two factions over Precentor Focht's reforms. The reactionary group, calling itself Word of Blake, emigrated to the Free Worlds League planet of Gibson with Thomas Marik's blessing.

On 19 June 3055, a bomb blast at a charity event on Tharkad killed the Federated Commonwealth's beloved Archon, Melissa Steiner. Authorities failed to apprehend a suspect. Ryan Steiner, riding the crest of anti-Davion sentiment he had spent years creating, accused Archon Prince Victor Steiner-Davion of engineering Melissa's death in order to ascend her throne. Ryan's native Isle of Skye, already seething with secessionist fever, erupted in open rebellion. Victor's sister Katrina tried to mediate between her brother and the rebel faction, with little success.

In April of 3056, Victor's aide and Katrina's lover, Galen Cox, fell victim to a bombing attack in a Solaris hotel that narrowly missed Katrina. Four days later, an unknown assassin shot Ryan Steiner dead. Suspicion centered on Ryan's aide, but many people suspected that Victor ordered Ryan's death to silence his allegations about the death of Archon Melissa. In an effort to defuse the hostilities in the Lyrans half of the Federated Commonwealth, Victor declared the Lyrans world of Tharkad and the Davion world of New Avalon co-capitals. He then shifted his government to New Avalon and left Tharkad in Katrina's hands, naming his sister as his official regent. This move, coupled with Ryan's death, quelled the rebellion—but the brief peace could not last.



Victor arrived on New Avalon, only to be faced with the disturbing news that Joshua Marik was dying of leukemia despite the best efforts of the NAIS to save him. Knowing that his realm still desperately needed war materiel that only the Free Worlds League could provide, Victor could not afford to lose the only hold he had over Captain-General Thomas Marik. Victor replaced the dying child with a substitute. Marik, however, had his suspicions, and soon learned that the Joshua Marik on New Avalon was not his son, but a duplicate. To retaliate for the death of his son, Marik sent troops into the Commonwealth's Sarna March.

A horrified Katrina publicly denounced Victor for his deception, recalled all Lyran troops to her half of the Federated Commonwealth, severed relations with her brother's realm and announced the formation of a neutral Lyran Alliance. In conjunction with Marik's invasion, Sun-Tzu Liao sent Capellan troops into the Sarna March to reconquer worlds his grandfather had lost during the Fourth Succession War. Aided by Katrina's neutrality and united by their hatred for House Davion, Marik and Liao prosecuted their war against the Federated Commonwealth with surprising speed and success.

As the threat of a wider war between the nations of the Inner Sphere loomed, political infighting between the Clans intensified. The Clans had long been divided into two camps: the Crusaders, who sought to restore the Star League to the Inner Sphere through conquest, and the Wardens, who believed their responsibility lay in safeguarding the Inner Sphere until the Great Houses reestablished the Star League on their own. Many of the Clans, especially Clan Jade Falcon, chafed beneath the truce that ilKhan Kerensky had signed and willingly seized any excuse to break it. Opposition to the Truce of Tukayyid soon erupted into a Clan-style civil war between Clan Jade Falcon and Clan Wolf, known as the Refusal War. Led by Phelan Kell, who had risen among his Clan captors to become Khan Phelan Ward of Clan Wolf, a significant portion of Clan Wolf's warriors fled to the safe haven of the Kell Hounds' homeworld, Arc-Royal. The rest of Clan Wolf fought a losing battle against the Jade Falcons. Both conflicts ended suddenly and swiftly, in a surprising series of twists. Having taken back from Victor Davion the worlds that had once belonged to the Free Worlds League, Thomas Marik concluded a peace treaty with the Archon Prince. Sun-Tzu Liao, unwilling to continue his own campaign in the absence of Marik's backing, grudgingly agreed to end hostilities. The Kell Hounds, having refused Katrina Steiner's demand for aid in defending the Lyran Alliance against Capellan aggression, established an anti-Clan defensive zone centered on Arc-Royal. By this act, the mercenary unit carved its own fiefdom out of Katrina's realm. In the oddest turn of events, the Wolves who had battled the Jade Falcons were Absorbed by that Clan and then won freedom from their Jade Falcon conquerors, lead by Khan Vladimir Ward.

THE UNIVERSE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

The first five years after Tukayyid, tumultuous though they were, seemed positively tranquil compared to the explosive events of 3058–3061. Those years saw many of the certainties by which Clan and Inner Sphere alike had lived violently overturned, giving way to a new order fraught with possibilities and perils.

In the wake of the Sarna March invasion, the Word of Blake seized its chance to capture Terra, cradle of humanity and ComStar's stronghold. Troop movements from the Free Worlds League into the so-called Chaos March provided cover for the Word of Blake Militia to move several divisions within striking distance of humanity's homeworld, and the high demand for mercenary troops in that same region of space did the rest. Brion's Legion, a mercenary unit that had constituted nearly half the strength of ComStar's Terran Defense Force since the Fourth Succession War, abruptly ended its ComStar contract in favor of a higher-paying Chaos March assignment. Unwilling to relocate Com Guard forces from the Clan border, ComStar's Precentor Martial chose to replace Brion's Legion with another mercenary unit—the Twenty-first Centauri Lancers. The Lancers, however, never arrived on Terra. Instead, the Word of Blake sent its own troops, which masqueraded as the Lancers for long enough to move the rest of their forces into position.

In late February of 3058, the Word of Blake struck, from the inside as well as on the battlefield. The Com Guards on Terra, taken by surprise and unable to use the planet's formidable defenses because of Blakist sabotage, fought a bloody but ultimately losing battle across every Terran continent. By early March of 3058, the Word of Blake held Terra in an iron grip from which it has yet to be dislodged. Precentor Martial Focht of ComStar declined

to attempt the reconquest of Terra as long as the Clans remained a greater threat to the Inner Sphere.

During those same months, Clan Jade Falcon drove deep into the Lyrans Alliance and captured several planets, until Inner Sphere forces stopped the Falcon advance on the world of Coventry. Conceived as a show of strength in the aftermath of the Refusal War, the Coventry campaign was to have far more ominous consequences for the Clans than the Falcon commanders could have anticipated. On Coventry, the Falcons were deprived of victory by two events: strikes by Khan Vlad Ward's Wolves at worlds in the Jade Falcon occupation zone, and the arrival of a coalition force from across the Inner Sphere, led by Prince Victor Steiner-Davion of the Federated Commonwealth. The Inner Sphere and Jade Falcon armies were evenly matched; neither side could win Coventry without a protracted and bloody battle, and both commanders realized it. Prince Victor invoked the Clan rite of *safcon* to ensure a safe landing for his troops, and then offered Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde the only honorable way out—*hegira*, the traditional right of a defeated enemy to leave the field with his forces and honor intact. Under other circumstances, Pryde might have refused; but with the Wolf Khan making clear his intent to attack her Clan's holdings, she could not afford to leave those worlds defended by mere garrison troops. She accepted *hegira*, and the Jade Falcons left Coventry without another shot being fired.

THE STAR LEAGUE REBORN

In October of 3058, the leaders of the various Inner Sphere powers gathered on the Lyrans capital of Tharkad to accomplish peacefully what they had failed to achieve during centuries of war—the rebirth of the Star League. Despite the deep divisions that remained among them, fueled by the legions of dead soldiers and civilians from all sides, the rulers of the Inner Sphere agreed to join together for a single purpose—to end the Clan threat, once and for all. To prove themselves a force to be reckoned with, the new Star League chose to destroy a single Clan: the Smoke Jaguars. Initially, the Star League intended only to drive the Jaguars out of their occupation zone. However, information from a Clan traitor enabled them to strike at Clan Smoke Jaguar's homeworld as well.

In 3059 and 3060, Clan Smoke Jaguar died at the hands of the combined armies of the Inner Sphere. Their occupation zone overrun, their homeworld in ruins and their warrior caste decimated, the Jaguars essentially ceased to exist. The Inner Sphere force then turned its attention toward the rest of the Clans. Lacking the might to defeat the entire Clan military, Prince Victor Steiner-Davion led his forces to Strana Mechty, the heart of Clan space and Clan culture. There, they defeated the Crusader Clans in a hard-fought Trial of Refusal. The Crusaders' defeat ended the invasion, in a way none of its proponents could have envisioned. Far from taking Terra and rebuilding the Star League in the Clans' image, the Crusader Clans found themselves locked into their Inner Sphere occupation zones or driven from the Inner Sphere entirely.

Clan Nova Cat, which had sided with the Inner Sphere in obedience to the mystic visions of its leaders, was given its own fiefdom in the Draconis Combine. For what their fellow Clans termed treason, the Nova Cats were Abjured and their holdings in Clan space found forfeit. Clan Ghost Bear, which chose not to fight in the Trial for a cause it no longer believed in, also became a permanent presence in the Inner Sphere, claiming the majority of the Free Rasalhague Republic as their Dominion.

Clan Steel Viper suffered the most humiliating fate of all the Invading Clans, next to the shattered Smoke Jaguars. Thinking to take advantage of Jade Falcon weakness in the aftermath of the Refusal War, the Vipers challenged Falcon dominance of the two Clans' shared occupation zone. They failed, and left the Inner Sphere rather than be destroyed by their Falcon antagonists.

As the man who ended the most fearsome threat the Inner Sphere had ever known, Victor Steiner-Davion should have been the hero of the hour. In the eyes of many, he was—but his own people were not among them. The Prince had left his youngest sister, Yvonne Steiner-Davion, as regent on New Avalon in his absence. He returned to the Inner Sphere to find Yvonne deposed and the Federated Commonwealth in the hands of a deceitful and ambitious Katrina Steiner-Davion, herself looking to become the next First Lord of the Star League. Even without a realm, however, Prince Victor remained a political force to be reckoned with. At the Second Star League Conference, Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht of ComStar announced his retirement and named Victor as his successor. The new Precentor Martial used his position to vote Coordinator Theodore Kurita into the post of First Lord.

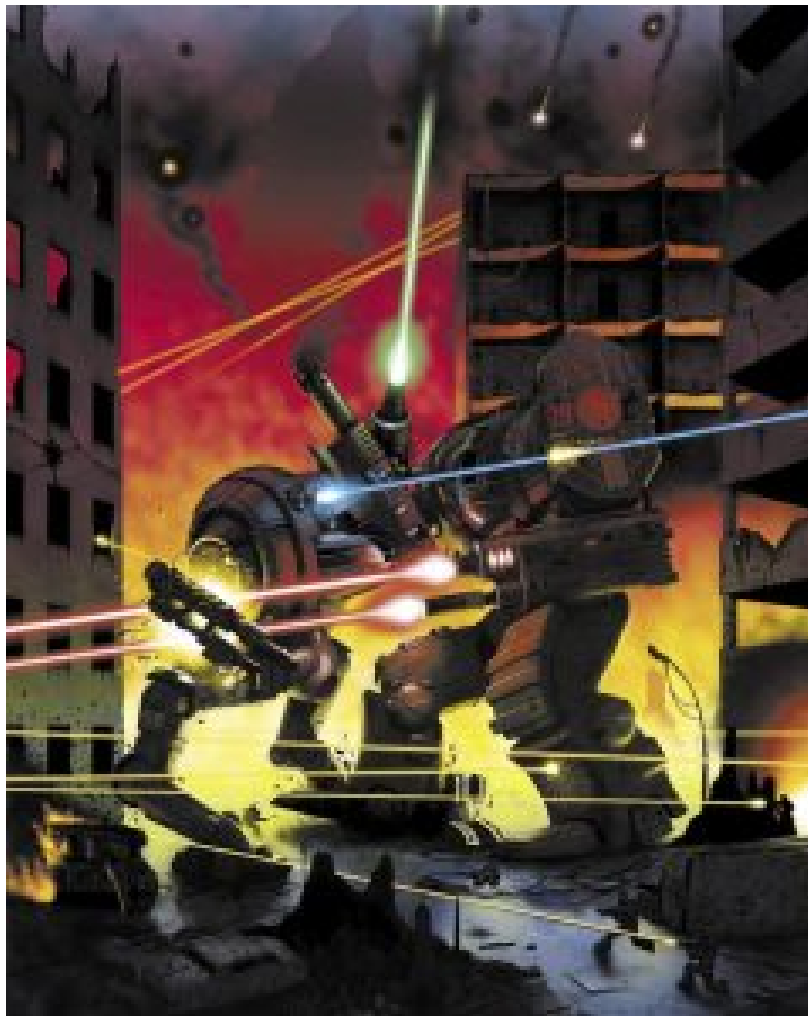


POWER PLAYS

Despite their best attempts, the Lords of the Great Houses could not put aside their most basic of instincts. Using his position as First Lord to validate his actions, Sun-Tzu Liao launched a war of aggression aimed at reclaiming the St. Ives Compact, the nation that his aunt had split from the Capellan Confederation following the Fourth Succession War. Before the Second Star League Conference even took place, Sun-Tzu had involved troops from every nation in the Inner Sphere in support of his own goals. When First Lord Kurita ended Star League support for his war, Sun-Tzu drafted two Periphery realms—the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat—into a Trinity Alliance that allowed him to swallow his aunt's realm whole in June of 3063. In exchange for the blood of their young men and women, the leaders of the two Periphery nations gained precious recognition within the Star League and access to technologies that the Successor States had long held secret.

At the same time, the presence of the Nova Cats and the stresses of reabsorbing Jaguar-held worlds in the Draconis Combine have breathed new life into moribund reactionary movements opposed to the Coordinator and his liberalization of Combine society. Emboldened by their Coordinator's apparent lack of vision and the resurgence of traditionalism within the Combine, the so-called Black Dragon Society sponsored a number of audacious moves designed to force their leader's actions. A raid on the Lyran world of Skye ignited the fury of the late Ryan Steiner's people, who retaliated by attacking Combine troops in the Lyons Thumb—a region belonging to the Lyran Alliance but garrisoned by Combine troops under the banner of Star League peacekeepers. In response, Theodore Kurita annexed the worlds in August of 3062, punishing the Lyrans and playing right into the hands of the Black Dragons.

The Black Dragons then took the next step, but went too far. Under their command, the four regiments of the Combine's Alshain Avengers went rogue in October of 3062 and attacked their former homeworld deep within the Ghost Bear Dominion. Unfortunately, Alshain was also the Clan's adopted capital. Instead of rallying the shouts of the Combine's people behind their masters' causes, the Avengers only awakened the sleeping Bear. Aroused, the Bears crushed the Avengers in a single sweep of their claws and began their own punitive war against the Combine, one that lasted for more than a year, bringing war to dozens of worlds and killing countless young warriors on both sides. As befitting the two warrior cultures, however, the war ended in December of 3063 with an honor duel—one that the Combine lost.



CIVIL WAR

While the Bears punished the Draconis Combine, Khan Vlad Ward convinced Hells Horses Kahn Malavai Fletcher to take advantage of their long-time ally. Determined to carve a fiefdom of his own from the Ghost Bear Dominion—and in doing so secure for himself greater prestige among Kerensky's children—Fletcher embarked on his own campaign against the Ghost Bears. Fletcher did not succeed, however. Instead of taking worlds from the Dominion, the Bears forced them from the three worlds that Khan Ward's Wolves had granted them and send them running back to Clan Space, disgraced.

By and far, though, the events of the decade were overshadowed by the disintegration of Katherine Steiner-Davion's grasp over the nations she had stolen from her brother. While the former Archon-Prince had at his command the military might of ComStar, he refused to inflict the pain and suffering of a long and bloody civil war upon his people, even as evidence of his sister's involvement in the murder of their mother mounted. Fate, as it turned out, would make the decision for him.

For every day that Katrina remained on the throne on New Avalon she lost just a little bit more of her grip over the people of both the Federated Commonwealth and her Lyran Alliance. Her heavy-handed measures to keep order only caused more resentment for her rule among the common people, while her military commanders became more and more divided in their loyalties. In August of 3062, tempers briefly flared on Solaris VII when a scheduled bout between two favored MechWarrior champions—one of Lyran heritage and the other of FedSuns'—turned into a massive riot between fans and other MechWarriors on both sides.

Though optimists hoped for the best when a ceasefire calmed the fighting on the planet, it was only a matter of time before tempers between those who supported Katrina and those who opposed her rule flared. The inevitable finally came in November when fighting broke out in the Federated Commonwealth's Capellan March. This time there was no cease-fire, no going back. It wasn't until Arthur Steiner-Davion, the youngest brother of Victor and Katrina, was killed in a bomb blast, though, that Victor Steiner-Davion finally succumbed to fate. On 8 December 3062 he officially accused his sister of complicity in the murder of their mother and called upon the people of the Federated Commonwealth and the Lyran Alliance to rise up and topple her dictatorial regime.

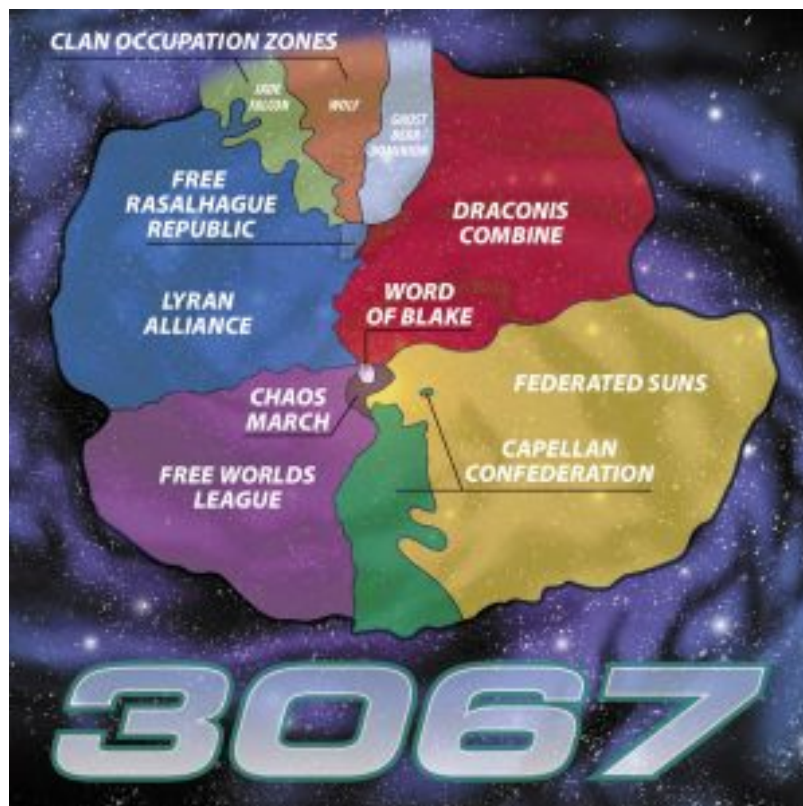
What followed was five years of the bloodiest fighting the Inner Sphere had seen since General Kerensky lead the Star League armies against Stephan Amaris. From the coreward reaches of the Lyran Alliance, where he had been inspecting ComStar troops, Victor organized an army of patriots to oust the tyrannical regime his sister had forged in both nations. Soldiers and citizens from not only the Lyran Alliance and the Federated Commonwealth, but from the entire Inner Sphere, flocked to his side.

War erupted in all regions of the two nations as Victor fought his way down the length of the Lyran Alliance and into the Federated Commonwealth with his newly christened Armed Forces of the Federated Suns. Though suffering defeats and personal hardships—including the assassination of his lover, Omi Kurita, on orders from Katrina—Victor finally made his way to New Avalon in November of 3066, spending the next five months fighting the last vestiges of his sister's loyalists. At the same time Morgan Kell and Khan Phelan Kell landed on Tharkad with Peter Steiner-Davion to face the Katrina loyalists under the command of Nondi Steiner, the sister of Victor and Katrina's maternal grandmother.

PAIN AND HEALING

The armies arrayed behind the former Archon-Prince carried the day and removed Katrina from power, but only at a horrible price. Countless millions had died during the carnage of the previous five years and the armies of the Lyran Alliance and the rechristened Federated Suns were a mere shadow of what they once were.

For his part, Victor Steiner-Davion did not assume the throne he had fought so long and hard to remove his sister from. Acquiescing to fate, he instead handed the reigns of leadership to his two remaining siblings: Yvonne on New Avalon and Peter on Tharkad.



In the aftermath of the Civil War, the two leaders now have their work cut out for them. Not only do they need urge their people to move onward, but they must also contend with the aftermath of invasions into their nations—the Jade Falcons with their campaign in 3064-65 against the Alliance, the renewed Skye Rebellion of 3065-66, the Combine attacks into the Federated Suns in 3065-66 and finally the presence of Capellan troops on Suns' worlds. Only with the help of regional lords, like Dukes George Hasek and Robert Kelswa-Steiner, will they be able to

hold their realms together.

The nations of the former Federated Commonwealth were certainly not the only ones to suffer during their Civil War. Coordinator Theodore Kurita lost not only his daughter, Omi, but also his wife, Tomoe Sakade, while war racked his two closest neighbors. While the elevation of his final son, Minoru, to the post of Clan Nova Cat Loremaster can bring him some comfort, the Dragon is not the man he used to be, and his subordinates have been forced to compensate.

After all of his victories in the past decade, Sun-Tzu Liao is now coming to realize just how precarious a position he and his nation are in. Having expelled Isis Marik from the Confederation, Liao has lost the support and friendship of Thomas Marik and his Free Worlds League in a time when strong alliances may be the only thing to prevent utter annihilation. Even Marik's nation may be in dire straits—with the Word of Blake's recent militarization drive, the peaceful League may explode into war at any minute.

The Star League Conference again approaches in this time of unease and unrest. Only time will tell whether the new First Lord will be able to once and for all put aside personal interest and settle the differences between the nations of the Inner Sphere.

For now, the Inner Sphere is poised precariously between peace and war. At any moment the balance of power may shift, setting BattleMechs on the march and worlds ablaze.

HOUSE KURITA (DRACONIS COMBINE)



Honor and duty are the touchstones of life for a House Kurita MechWarrior: the honor of the House he serves and his duty to serve it well. In discharging that duty, he finds his personal honor inextricably linked with the good of the Kurita dynasty that has ruled the mighty Draconis Combine ever since that realm's inception. Steeped in the culture of medieval Japan, trained in the ancient samurai code of bushido, the Kurita MechWarrior knows that his deepest value lies in his dedication to the Kurita dynasty. He will risk whatever its scions may require of him, including his life, without question or fear. Such devotion helped the Combine's founder, Shiro Kurita, build his realm from a single desert planet to a world-spanning military empire. That same loyalty, carefully nurtured throughout Combine society and concentrated in its military, will preserve it for generations to come.

The armed forces have always represented the pinnacle of service to House Kurita, from the early days of conquest to the Combine's battle for survival against the invading Clans. Even during the realm's darkest period, when the corrupt Von Rohrs dynasty indulged in a reign of terror, the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery kept the Combine alive until a true scion of House Kurita appeared to redeem it. DCMS units played a major role in the Inner Sphere's ultimate victory over the Clans, and briefly served with distinction as peacekeeping troops under the banner of the reborn Star League. Each individual MechWarrior, whether a graduate of the finest military academies or a product of the rough-and-ready proving grounds, knows this proud history and is determined to add to it. He does not seek mere personal glory, but the infinitely greater distinction of having offered his best to his Kurita liege lords.

No matter what world he hails from, a Kurita MechWarrior embodies the values of bushido. Like the samurai of old, he dedicates himself to the art of war as the only means to achieve true peace. On the thirty-first century battlefield, the legions of House Kurita are legendary for their skill, courage and tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds. They believe House Kurita is destined to rule over all of known space, and they take pride in doing whatever is necessary to further that goal.

At times throughout the Combine's history, this willingness to follow orders with fanatical zeal has unfortunately placed MechWarriors at the mercy of individual unit commanders who were not always worthy of the job. The far-reaching reforms enacted by Theodore Kurita over the past three decades, however, have done much to eliminate that weakness. First as Warlord and then as Coordinator, Theodore reminded the fighting forces that the true spirit of bushido lies not in blind loyalty to every command by every superior, but in each warrior doing his best to preserve and extend the power and honor of the Draconis Combine. MechWarriors most truly serve House Kurita by acting in the interests of the empire to which that House has likewise dedicated itself.

A Kurita MechWarrior is more than a fighting machine. Martial prowess goes hand in hand with such gentler arts as haiku, origami or bonsai, reminding the warrior of the deep connection between them. Only the willingness to fight and die makes peaceful pursuits possible, and the warrior values them all the more for their contrast to the battlefield. No blade stays permanently honed to a razor's edge, and Combine warriors are no exception. By offering a brief respite from the brutal demands of warfare, artistic pursuits and intellectual studies enable a MechWarrior to face the next battle with renewed dedication.

From regular line units to elite commands like the Genyosha to the Ghost regiments—many of whose members hail from the lower classes and even the yakuza (the Combine criminal underworld)—the MechWarriors of House Kurita cover the entire spectrum of Combine society. A MechWarrior from the middle or noble classes may proudly serve in a district unit like the Third Benjamin Regulars, whose members cost the Smoke Jaguars so dearly during that Clan's conquest of the planet Asgard in the Clan War.

Elite units draw fighters of exceptional talent; even those with the best connections cannot hold a place in a unit like the Genyosha without the ability to back them up. First formed by the legendary MechWarrior Yorinaga Kurita after his unprecedented defeat in single combat, the Genyosha units stand along with the Sword of Light regiments and the famed Otomo—the Coordinator's personal guard—as the ultimate embodiment of the Combine's warrior soul. As for the Ghost regiments, these creations of the visionary Theodore Kurita offer less fortunate Combine citizens a rare chance to serve their House and nation in battle. Though initially suspect because of their ties to criminal elements, many Ghost regiments have proven their skill and loyalty since their formation in the wake of the Fourth Succession War. Units like the Sixth Ghost, which fought Clan Smoke Jaguar to a temporary standstill on Marshdale in 3051, are living proof that every citizen of the Combine may aspire to fight for House Kurita.



HOUSE DAVION (FEDERATED SUNS)



House Davion reigns over the Federated Suns and has long been considered the military powerhouse of the Inner Sphere. To the soldiers who fight for it, the Federated Suns and its noble ruling House are the bannerbearers of liberty in an otherwise benighted universe. The Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation exist merely to glorify their leaders, while the Lyran Alliance and the Free Worlds League concern themselves with money-grubbing at the expense of higher ideals. Only House Davion understands that true prosperity depends on freedom—and the willingness to fight the enemies of liberty, wherever they may be. Proud, ambitious, brimming with energy and eager to spread the blessings of freedom throughout the Inner Sphere, House Davion's fighting men and women are among the most talented and innovative soldiers of any Successor State military.

The personal freedoms guaranteed to its people are the foundation of the Davion realm's overwhelming confidence in its own rightness. That confidence enabled the nation to survive historical downturns that might

have crippled a lesser people or rulers. In the centuries since the nation's founding by Lucien Davion, the Federated Suns and the Davion family have become living symbols of the vitality and hope of a place where freedom rings. Harnessed to a sprawling military machine, that same vitality has extended the reach of House Davion time and time again, most notably when it conquered large stretches of Capellan territory during the Fourth Succession War. The strength of the Davion military and its determination to preserve freedom made it a major force during the Clan War, when it faced a foe whose victory might well have extinguished liberty forever. Under the leadership of Prince Victor Davion, the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns helped fight the Clans to a standstill on the Clan homeworld of Strana Mechty, thereby freeing the Inner Sphere from the specter of domination by rigidly conformist, authoritarian conquerors.

A House Davion MechWarrior embodies the truest spirit of Davion ideals. He keeps the nation strong, defending it from attack and expanding its borders at the direction of his liege lords. Without his fighting skill and tactical expertise, the Davion way of life might vanish under assault by its many enemies—especially the Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation, longtime rival states whose people are shackled by slavish devotion to the dictatorial Houses Kurita and Liao.

The overwhelming Clan threat temporarily eased hostilities between those Houses and the Davions, but the end of the Clan War has brought these ancient and deep-seated cultural conflicts back to the fore. As long as such oppressive states exist, the ideals of liberty cherished by House Davion will remain under threat.

Knowing this, a Davion MechWarrior gives his all to his job. It is not enough to master basic fighting skills and follow orders; he must also hone his own tactical judgment to the highest possible level and master different fighting styles through extensive cross-training. With this kind of background, in the heat of battle even a lance commander may make the snap decision that snatches victory from defeat.

Soldiering is a glamorous job in the Federated Suns, fueled by popular admiration for the warriors who keep the flame of freedom alive. From the rawest recruit to the battlescarred veteran, every member of the Davion armed forces takes pride in his role as the ultimate guarantor of liberty and honor. The ideal of freedom is the heart of the Davion realm; the reality of successful conquest built that realm and sustains it to this day. Davion warriors safeguard the people and planets of the Federated Suns, while the overall enterprise of war brings jobs and prosperity to worlds across the Davion empire. Widespread approval of the military gives the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns an endless supply of eager recruits drawn from almost every world and all walks of life.

The AFFS is also among the best equipped Inner Sphere militaries, owing much of its technological edge to the famed New Avalon Institute of Science. This flagship institution, located on the Fed Suns capital and Davion homeworld of New Avalon, has provided the Davion military with cutting-edge improvements in battlefield technology ever since its founding. The acquisition of a Star League memory core in the 3020s further enhanced the abilities and reputation of the NAIS, and even the relatively widespread adoption of Clan-based technologies over the past decade has not completely erased House Davion's technological superiority. Consequently, whether serving in a militia unit or an elite front-line Regimental Combat Team, a Davion MechWarrior can generally expect the best equipment commensurate with his unit's mission.

Individual AFFS units cover the spectrum. All incorporate combined-arms organization, on which the AFFS relies more than any other Inner Sphere military. The Davion MechWarrior is therefore more likely than his foreign counterparts to know something of and respect the other branches of service. This mutual understanding greatly enhances esprit de corps, another potent battlefield advantage that helps keep House Davion in the first rank of humanity's interstellar nations.



HOUSE LIAO (CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION)



The single element that most shapes a warrior of House Liao is pride—not the overweening personal ego of the secretly insecure, but a deep and unshakable national pride in the Great House and the nation he serves. To be Capellan is to be among the most tenacious peoples in the Inner Sphere, member of a nation and vassal of a dynasty that have met setback after setback with determination and grit. No matter what the universe throws at them, House Liao and its subjects survive. And sooner or later, they find a way to prosper at their enemies' expense. As the defender of House Liao and the Capellan nation, the Capellan soldier—especially the MechWarrior—enjoys respect from his fellow citizens that borders on reverence. In return for this near-sacred regard, the warrior owes unstinting loyalty to the civilians he protects, the state that employs him and the ruler of that state as his commander-in-chief. This ideal, enshrined in the warrior philosophy known as the Lorix Creed,

underlies the entire Capellan military. Such mutual devotion between rulers and ruled is the source of Capellan patriotism, the wellspring of each MechWarrior's identity.

Capellan patriotism also owes much to the Confederation's long history of struggling to survive against larger and more powerful enemies. The ruling House Liao first came to power in just such a struggle; if not for the quick thinking, dazzling political acumen and sheer ruthlessness of Duke Franco Liao, the Capellan nation would likely have been absorbed by the expansionist House Davion in 2367. Throughout the Confederation's existence, its people have fought however they could to preserve what was theirs, often in the face of incredible odds. The leaders of House Liao both embodied and encouraged this instinctive defiance of fate, inspiring those who served them to ever-greater achievements.

The Chinese cultural bent of the ruling Liao dynasty added its own thread to the Capellan tapestry. Like their Han Chinese ancestors of old, the scions of House Liao saw their traditions as the height of human achievement and themselves as destined for greatness. Their nation adopted these ideals with fervor and came to revere House Liao all the more as the truest embodiment of Capellan identity. An ancient culture, marked by subtlety, patience and an unyielding sense of its own worth, took those traits to the stars and has used them ever since to carve and keep its own niche among humanity's warring star empires.

This fierce Capellan pride finds its primary antagonist in House Davion, whose rival Federated Suns attempted to strangle the Confederation in its cradle and has never since given up attempts to conquer Capellan territory. The Davions enjoyed their greatest success in the Fourth Succession War, when their machinations on and off the battlefield cost the Capellan realm nearly half its worlds. The military and diplomatic efforts of Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao, however, have regained large portions of that lost territory over the past decade or so. More than ever before in Confederation history, the nation owes its good fortune to House Liao and to the valiant warriors of the Capellan Armed Forces.

The Liao MechWarrior of the latter thirty-first century serves a nation finally beginning to achieve the greatness of which it has long dreamed. Buoyed by conquest and the sweeping tide of a cultural renaissance, the Capellan Confederation is reveling in its newfound power—and the fighting forces that brought it that power are more revered than ever before. New recruits are flocking to the military academies and testing grounds, while new and faster 'Mech designs are making the average CCAF unit more maneuverable and dangerous on the fast-shifting battlegrounds of thirty-first century combat. Meanwhile, the Lorix Creed and other patriotic ideals are enjoying a revival fueled by hope.

Capellan reverence for the warrior extends throughout all military ranks, but finds its clearest and deepest expression among the Warrior Houses, elite military units akin to ancient orders of knighthood. First formed in the latter twenty-ninth century after the massive destruction of the Second Succession War, the Warrior Houses served a dual purpose: to rebuild the strength of House Liao's armies and give the Capellan people a much-needed morale boost. Strict discipline, mystical underpinnings and intensive training made this breed of MechWarrior the ultimate symbol of Capellan pride, fighting skill and devotion to the Liao family. To this day, the mere presence of Warrior House troops can freeze the blood of the enemy forces, winning half the battle for Liao before combat is even joined.

On the other end of the spectrum are recently created or rebuilt units like the Hustaing Warriors—with more than their share of green troops and rough around the edges, but nonetheless exhibiting a common Capellan determination to get the job done. From the most elite to the greenest unit, the soldiers of the CCAF display three traits that enable them to do disproportionate damage on the battlefield: bulldog tenacity, unquestioning devotion to House Liao, and a willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure victory.



HOUSE MARIK (FREE WORLDS LEAGUE)



Presiding over a hodgepodge of mini-states, each with their own political and cultural bent, House Marik earned and kept its position as ruler of the Free Worlds League by possessing a badly needed talent: the knack for bringing order out of chaos. Like the House they serve, Marik MechWarriors also have a talent for coping with upheaval and coming out on top. Though the heat of battle may turn any plan awry, the supremely adaptable Marik soldier has justified confidence in his and his commanders' ability to pull off a victory, even when it looks impossible.

Marik adaptability has its roots in a long history of political infighting that left deep marks on the Free Worlds League military. Throughout the realm's existence, the warriors of House Marik have had to balance conflicting loyalties between their home provinces and the larger nation, and often found it difficult to serve the interests of both. Units unable to manage that feat generally succumbed in brutal civil wars and other internal conflicts. The survivors learned and grew stronger. Over the centuries, the intense provincial loyalties of Marik units gradually shifted toward a more workable balance between parochial pride and a larger national patriotism.

In the 3030s, with the League facing yet another civil war that this time might destroy it, the years of slowly strengthening loyalty to the Marik family allowed Thomas Marik—the legitimate heir in a disputed succession—to rally much of the armed forces behind him and genuinely unify the League for the first time in nearly eight hundred years. This accomplishment further strengthened the same loyalty that had made it possible, by proving even to diehard doubters that the League needed the strong hand of a Marik to keep it from falling apart. Though raging individualism is far from dying out among Free Worlds citizens, the sense that House Marik brought the League back from the brink has gone a long way toward tempering divisiveness among the people and the military.

Though he gladly gives his loyalty to the leader of the House that has brought the League renewed strength and prosperity, the typical League MechWarrior remains as much of an individualist as the military life will allow. From their earliest days, Leaguers have valued independence above all; a mere three decades of brilliant rulership from a single talented statesman cannot change such a long-standing tradition, even in the armed forces. Marik soldiers are therefore allowed—expected, in fact—to take initiative and learn from their mistakes, to an extent that would be unthinkable in more tightly controlled militaries like the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. A Marik warrior who only knows how to follow orders is doing half of his job. From a lifetime of balancing loyalty to his home region with loyalty to the entire League, the average League soldier knows almost instinctively when to do as he is told and when to take other action.

The illustrious career of the Second Oriente Hussars offers a sterling example of such initiative gone right. This light reconnaissance regiment, nicknamed “the Crazy Second,” has more than earned its reputation for near-miraculous survival after undertaking seemingly suicidal recon runs on behalf of other regiments. Members of the Second owe their amazing combat record to a loose command structure that fosters individual initiative on the part of company and lance commanders.

A less fortunate result can be seen in the questionable loyalty of the Sirian Lancers, which stems from House Marik’s reluctance to spend military resources liberating the Sirian units’ homeworlds from the Federated Commonwealth in the decades following the Fourth Succession War. Ordered to abandon their home planet of Pollux in the face of a Lyran assault, the First Sirian Lancers initially refused, and were only persuaded to follow the order by a promise to liberate Pollux in the near future. That promise did not materialize for almost three decades, and more than a few Lancers still bear House Marik a grudge.

A Free Worlds League MechWarrior is most likely to serve in a provincial or a League unit—the former drawn from and financed by the soldier’s home province, the latter sponsored and staffed by state-run military academies. Historically, provincial units were the likeliest breeding grounds of trouble when the interests of a particular region conflicted with those of the realm as a whole. House Marik’s control of the Captain-Generalcy was no guarantee of power over provincial troops, whose loyalties might lie with their local leaders or be torn to the point of paralysis. Since Thomas Marik’s accession to power, regional loyalties have gradually subsided in favor of pro-Marik feeling. The recent practice of stationing provincial units away from their homeworlds and native regions has built on this newly vital national pride, and in the process made Marik troops a more cohesive, disciplined and powerful force in combat.



HOUSE STEINER (LYRAN ALLIANCE)



Streamlined, reorganized and eager to prove its mettle, the Lyrans Armed Forces faces the second half of the thirty- first century confident of its strength and itching to reclaim a prominence diminished by territorial losses to the invading Clans. Combat with the Clan juggernaut was a trial by fire for the Lyrans armed forces, which had long struggled to develop an officer corps worthy of its rank-and-file talent. Lyrans units that survived encounters with the technologically lethal Clans learned to value competence on the battlefield over social or political position in a way their predecessors rarely achieved. Proud of its role in ending the Clan War and determined to live out the lessons of that conflict, the modern Lyrans military is finally living up to the sheer energy and grit of its personnel.

As the military arm of House Steiner's wealthy mercantile empire, the Lyran army has always been among the best equipped and trained of the Successor State militaries. From planetary garrisons to elite line regiments, the average Steiner MechWarrior is more likely than his counterparts to pilot the best 'Mech money can buy, and to benefit from excellent instructors drawn to Steiner-sponsored military academies by impressively high salaries. Spare parts are rarely a problem, thanks to the efforts of the well-endowed Quartermaster and Replacement Depot Corps. In addition, the Steiner military is the only one in the Inner Sphere with a set of troops dedicated to testing and development of new military machines in concert with the still-sizable Alliance military-industrial complex.

Like House Davion, with whom it was briefly allied after the Fourth Succession War, House Steiner and its military see themselves primarily as guardians of their people's prosperity. A soldier of House Steiner knows that the peace of his realm and the material welfare of his fellow citizens rests as much on his ability to fight off enemies as on the typical Lyran merchant's skill for striking deals. Unlike the Davions, however, the warriors of House Steiner harbor no delusions of being bearers of righteousness throughout the Inner Sphere. The typical Steiner soldier will defend his people and their way of life to the death if necessary, but won't go out of his way to export it beyond Lyran borders. Offensive military action, in House Steiner's terms, must offer a chance to enrich the realm before it can truly be said to serve Lyran interests. Whatever keeps House Steiner and the Lyran nation prosperous is a cause for which a Steiner warrior will gladly fight.

The Steiner-Davion alliance, which lasted almost thirty years, greatly benefited the Lyran military. Prolonged exposure to House Davion's supremely competent higher-level officers gave new impetus to Lyran efforts to remove the so-called social generals: superior officers given command through social and political connections rather than on merit. The reassignment or retirement of large numbers of these less-than-sterling commanders left their positions to be filled by genuinely talented personnel, eliminating much of the dead weight that had previously kept many Steiner units from their full combat potential. The LAAF also adopted the Regimental Combat Team, adapting that unit structure and its underlying combined-arms doctrine to fit Lyran needs. Davion-style RCTs currently make up a rough third of the LAAF's line units, with the rest divided between standard BattleMech regiments, aerospace assets, armor and infantry.

One element of the Steiner military that sets it apart from its fellow Great Houses is its willingness to use mercenary troops. Though every Successor State hires at least some merc units, House Steiner has historically relied on far greater numbers of them to defend itself. Given their own long history as merchant princes, the scions of House Steiner tend to regard mercenary units as fellow businessmen rather than potential traitors for sale to the highest bidder. They pay and equip their hired guns extremely well, with little of the price-gouging and other gamesmanship in which the other Great Houses frequently indulge. With the instinctive Steiner feel for a sharp bargain, the Lyran military exercises tight control over command rights in exchange for this material bounty.

The LAAF retains the command structure of the old Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces, reflecting House Steiner's deep love for tradition. Almost every Lyran unit feels a similar pride in its own combat history. New recruits to the Second Donegal Guards still hear stories about that long-lived unit's descent from the Eleventh Terran Rangers and its exploits in such major epics of Lyran military history as the Fourth Succession War, the War of 3039 and the destruction of Clan Smoke Jaguar in Operation Bulldog. Even planetary militias like the Penobscot CTM, with far less combat experience than front-line commands, take immense pride in the action they have seen and the abilities of their members. A lingering reputation as bunglers in the eyes of outsiders—a legacy of the social generals' influence; one which has reared its ugly head once more with the sundering of Davion ties—only intensifies the average Lyran soldier's regard for his unit. Whatever their level of service, the warriors of House Steiner take a back seat to none in their willingness to prove their combat skills for the good of their nation and the honor of their leaders.



MERCENARIES



Independence is the hallmark of the mercenary life—the freedom to choose his own causes, his own missions and his own risks. Whether an ordinary soldier tired of being one small cog in a giant House military machine, a scion of royalty looking to make her way on merit rather than lineage, or a maverick with a will to fight but a distaste for backing leaders in whom he does not believe, the modern mercenary warrior is looking for the one thing a House military cannot give him—the chance to be his own boss.

Large or small, prestigious or obscure, the mercenary unit of the thirty-first century fights for a paycheck as well as a cause. The mercenary soldier bows to no lord and serves no GreatHouse. Instead, his primary loyalty lies with his comrades in arms. Colleagues, friends and family all in one, mercenary warriors are bound to each other by ties far deeper than nationality or politics. More so than any other type of soldier, mercenaries depend on each

other to survive and prosper on and off the battlefield.

Despite stereotypes to the contrary, the average mercenary is not up for sale to the highest bidder. A merc unit is a business first and foremost, with the unit's equipment and circumstances dependent on decent pay, salvage and command rights. For mercenary commanders and the soldiers under them, a successful career means striking the right balance between material compensation and any higher ideals. A given unit may choose an employer because its members believe in that employer's cause, but no merc can afford to forget about the bottom line. Well-negotiated contracts are the lifeblood of the mercenary; he depends on pay and battlefield salvage for equipment, materiel and everything else that keeps a merc unit running. House units have an entire military establishment to fall back on when necessary; a mercenary has only himself and his comrades. And he likes it that way.

Mercenaries in the Inner Sphere run the gamut from legendary outfits like Wolf's Dragoons to hardscrabble units barely better than pirates. Most merc commands fall between those two extremes, providing solid fighting skills and earning a modest profit. In general, mercenary units can be counted on to fulfill their contracts to the best of their ability; their livelihoods depend on their reputations, and those who don't perform well or who cheat their employers rarely get hired again. Professionalism among mercs, however, cuts both ways. Employers who exploit their soldiers-for-hire will have a hard time attracting reputable merc commands and may face legal proceedings before the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission on the Wolf's Dragoons world of Outreach.

Though all the Great Houses employ mercenary units, the circumstances under which they do so and their attitudes toward them vary widely. House Kurita is the most famous for hostility toward mercenary outfits, fueled by a culture that prizes personal loyalty to its ruling family above almost all other virtues. Coordinator Takashi Kurita's infamous "death to mercenaries" order, in effect for much of the early thirty-first century, was merely the ultimate extension of a general suspicion of the "masterless warrior," or ronin. Theodore Kurita's ascension to the throne in 3053 marked a change in official Kurita attitudes toward mercenaries, but widespread distrust remains among many subjects of the Kurita realm. On the other end of the spectrum are the Federated Suns and the Lyran Alliance, both of which have long relied on mercenaries for expansion and defense. The Lyrans in particular are known for easy acceptance of mercenaries, whom they tend to see and approve of as fellow businessmen.

Just as there are good and bad employers, there are also good and bad merc units. The best of the Inner Sphere mercenaries are among the most illustrious units in known space: Wolf's Dragoons, the Kell Hounds and the Northwind Highlanders, just to name a few. These commands are distinguished by the professionalism and brilliant fighting skills that easily make them the equal of the most elite House units. Some, like the Kell Hounds or McCarron's Armored Cavalry, are also noted for their passionate loyalty to a particular ruling House (though not always to the specific incumbent of the throne in question). The Hounds have carved out their own fiefdom on the border of the Clan Occupation Zones, from which they defend House Steiner and the Lyran realm. The Armored Cavalry owes its loyalty to the Capellan Confederation, so much so that it recently became a formal part of the Capellan armed forces.

On the other extreme are units like Vinson's Vigilantes, a once-respectable merc command that went rogue after a minor contract dispute with the then-Federated Commonwealth. The Vigilantes abandoned their post, raided the armories of several nearby Commonwealth planets and hijacked the JumpShip in which they fled, killing several people in the process. They ended up on Antallos, a rough-edged Periphery world known for vicious fighting between local warlords. The Vigilantes soon became major players in planetary politics, using their superior military equipment to take over the planet's largest city-state.



OTHER POWERS

Other powers in the Inner Sphere include the small Free Rasalhague Republic as well as the powerful Clans. The rest of human-settled space lies in the distant Periphery region, whose tiny states often serve as pawns in the shifting alliances of Inner Sphere politics.

Though not political entities per se, the organization known as ComStar (and its splinter group the Word of Blake) play significant roles in the BattleTech universe.

FREE RASALHAGUE REPUBLIC



In the mid-twenty-third century, citizens of the Federal Republics of Norway, Sweden and Finland emigrated to Rasalhague, a planet far from Terra, to escape oppression. Though conquered by the expanding Draconis Combine and ruled by that realm for centuries, the fiercely independent Rasalhagians preserved their customs and rebelled against their conquerors at every opportunity.

Following the Fourth Succession War, in 3034, Haakon Magnusson declared the formation of the Free Rasalhague Republic with the support of ComStar. The Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine acknowledged the Republic and gave up control of ancestral Rasalhague worlds within their own borders. Some Combine soldiers opposed their leaders' actions and attacked the newborn Republic in what became known as the Ronin Wars; the Combine declared them traitors and helped the small Republic army defend its nation. Several mercenary units hired during this period took advantage of poorly written contracts or stopped fighting because of them, which fueled strong anti-mercenary sentiment that persists to this day.

The coming of the Clans in 3050 nearly destroyed Free Rasalhague. Savage Clan assaults claimed world after world; by the time the Clans signed the Truce of Tukayyid in 3052, the Republic had shrunk from eighty-four worlds to seven. The current ruler is facing new problems. Having lost Terra to the Word of Blake in 3058, ComStar moved its base of operations to the Republic, a mutually beneficial move for both powers at the time. But ComStar's presence—especially its large army, the Com Guards—has begun to spark anti-ComStar sentiment among the Republic's citizens, who fear that the Com Guards may become an occupation force.

COMSTAR AND THE WORD OF BLAKE



ComStar, the interstellar communications network, is the brain child of Jerome Blake, one of the most influential men in the thousand-year history of interstellar space travel. An electronic engineer and high-level bureaucrat, Blake was appointed Minister of Communications in 2780 by the High Council of the Star League, after Aleksandr Kerensky defeat the usurper Stefan Amaris. The council charged Blake to restore the League's extensive communications network to its pre-civil war efficiency. Fearing that the Successor Lords would destroy the Inner Sphere's communications technology in their struggle for supremacy over the collapsing Star League, Blake obtained a promise from the Council Lords that they would guarantee the safety of the communications network if Blake agreed to keep it out of politics.

After hastily recruiting several BattleMech regiments, Blake captured Terra in a lightning operation in the summer of 2788. He then declared Sol a neutral system under the protection of the communications authority. Because communications were crucial to all concerned, Blake was able to save the network and much of the high technology that had built it.

Much of the early history of the interstellar communications net, which soon adopted the name of ComStar, is shrouded in religious mystery. Blake realized that the tremendous scope of destruction caused by the wars would eventually consume civilization unless some of the precious knowledge was retained; he believed that the organization had a higher obligation to maintain and preserve knowledge at all costs. Thus, ComStar became a haven for all manner of technicians, prospering while BattleMech regiments tore the rest of interstellar society apart.

Secrecy was an essential part of Blake's strategy to ensure the survival of vital knowledge; as long as only ComStar knew the secrets of interstellar communications, ComStar could act as a neutral tempering force. The First Circuit, which became ComStar's governing body, met only in closed sessions and imposed a "secret-society" mentality on its subordinates. An internal security force known only as ROM (an acronym whose original meaning has been lost to history) was formed in 2811 to help prevent leakage of technological information to the outside and to help thwart defection of ComStar personnel to the Successor States. ROM quickly became feared and respected throughout ComStar, punishing not only acts of treason but also policy disputes with dispatch and efficiency.

In 3029, Myndo Waterly took over as Primus of ComStar. Waterly believed ComStar should play each Successor State against the others to weaken them. Her goal was to enable ComStar to step in and take total control, thereby fulfilling its role as savior of humanity and restorer of the Star League. This led to the slow unveiling of the Com Guards, a fanatically loyal force equipped with Star League-era technology it had kept hidden for centuries, and culminated in her attempt to gain control of the Inner Sphere and the Clans through military and clandestine operations in 3052. Following her failed bid for power, Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht of the Com Guards

forcibly removed her and enacted sweeping changes that secularized ComStar; he believed that ComStar's first priority should be to protect the Inner Sphere from any threat, as well as to provide neutral communications service. This promoted a schism within the order, with those who felt that Focht had betrayed Blake and his teachings moving into exile, where they built power and recaptured Terra while ComStar was focusing on the Clans.

Currently ComStar attempts to walk the fine line of a neutral party that is fixed on the continuing dangers of the Clans threat—regardless of the Clans defeat in the Great Refusal that repudiated their invasion—repairing their public image, which was horrible tainted with the schism and further hurt when units fought in the FedCom Civil War, and keeping an eye on their fanatical, estranged brethren, the Word of Blake.

THE CLANS



Born to lead and bred to win: that more than anything else sums up the Clan warrior caste. Formed in the tumultuous days following General Aleksandr Kerensky's Exodus and the Exodus Civil War, the Clans instilled in their members a sense of unfailing loyalty to their new extended families and to the ideals of their founder, Nicholas Kerensky. Shaped as they were by their difficult beginnings on largely resource-poor planets, the Clans learned frugality and conformity above all. From those simple ideals sprang the complex fabric of Clan culture.

First among the five castes that compromise Clan society, the warriors are the rulers. Elitism is rampant among them, and trueborns—those genetically engineered and bred from virtual cloning machines—are considered the truest inheritors of the Kerensky legacy. Only those born from the so-called “iron wombs” are deemed fit for command. Freeborns—those born naturally—are scorned and derided. Many Clans allow freeborn warriors to serve in their militaries, but usually only in restricted capacities. No matter their skills or accomplishments, few freeborns receive the respect they deserve from their trueborn comrades.

Widespread prejudice against freeborns is one of the many attitudes central to the Clan way of life. Though a necessary resource, Clansmen outside the warrior caste are considered even lower than freeborn warriors. In addition, many Clans have centuries-old rivalries with one another that constantly fuel new attacks. Members of the Clans' two major political factions, Wardens and Crusaders, fight for dominance even within the same Clan. Finally, all Clansmen are taught from an early age to look down on the “barbarians” of the Inner Sphere.

Clan warriors begin military training almost from the time they begin to walk and talk. With few outside influences to disrupt their instruction, they can easily outperform Inner Sphere soldiers years their senior. That fact, coupled with their technological edge, won the Clans hundreds of planets when they invaded the Inner Sphere. Contrary to initial appearances or their own beliefs, however, the Clans were not invincible—a humiliating truth not lost on many Clansmen these days.

PERIPHERY



Beyond the boundaries of the Inner Sphere lie the endless reaches of the Periphery, traditionally home to the independent-minded souls who sought escape from the often-repressive regimes of the Great Houses. The Periphery is the galaxy's frontier, keeping the spirit of exploration and discovery alive and well. The less savory aspects of frontier living are equally abundant; numerous pirate bands and petty bandit kingdoms thrive in this almost lawless region of space. Largely unexplored and sparsely populated compared with the Inner Sphere, the Periphery has nonetheless played a pivotal role in several major interstellar events, including the fall of the Star League.

The Periphery's reputation as a backward and technologically inferior region is only partly true. Though it is indeed under-developed industrially and well behind the technology curve compared with the Inner Sphere, it includes scattered regions that boast cultural and technological advancement. The Taurian Concordat is well known for its excellent educational system and high literacy rate, while the Magistracy of Canopus exemplifies some of the most progressive views on human rights in known space.

THE MECHWARRIOR

As soon as the first BattleMechs dominated the battlefields of the twenty-fifth century, the humans that piloted these awesome machines gained a power and influence well beyond other soldiers on the field. An entire social class soon formed around those who piloted these increasingly important war machines. These so-called MechWarriors, the modern incarnation of knights, were given the monumental task of defending their homelands and their rulers. As with the middle ages of Europe on ancient Terra, these MechWarriors were made knights and given honors. Some were even bestowed royal titles, conveying authority over entire worlds and more. This romantic image of the MechWarrior-knight has eroded somewhat over the past few decades, but it remains strong in the hearts of the Inner Sphere's people.

During the Succession Wars, many MechWarriors owned their 'Mechs and passed them down through generations. That custom has changed radically during the past half-century. Nowadays, only the Great Houses can afford the massive amounts of new construction that followed the rediscovery of so much lostech. Consequently, House militaries now own most 'Mechs in service in the Inner Sphere. Among the Clans, all property belongs to the Clan—a Clansman MechWarrior never owns his 'Mech.

PILOTING A 'MECH

A MechWarrior controls a BattleMech through a series of several complex systems that allow a single human to manipulate such a large, complicated war machine.



COCKPIT

Sitting in the cramped cockpit of a 'Mech—usually located in the “head” of the 'Mech—a MechWarrior is strapped into a command couch that allows him access to all of his 'Mech's systems. Foot pedals are used to generate walking motion as well as to ignite a 'Mech's jump jet system (provided the 'Mech has that capability). Twin joysticks located on the command couch's arms allow for torso movement, manipulation of a 'Mech's arms and full targeting capabilities of the 'Mech's entire arsenal of weapons. A battery of screens brings a plethora of information before the MechWarrior: standard visual, infrared, MagScan, seismic, tactical maps, satellite feeds and so on, while the 'Mech's heads-up display projects all of the relevant targeting information right in front of the MechWarrior.

NEUROHELMET

All of those systems would mean nothing without the neural impulse helmet, which actually allows a twelvemeter tall metal giant to walk upright. Commonly called neurohelmets, these bulky items normally cover a MechWarrior's entire head, attaching firmly to the shoulders of his cooling vest. Electrodes on the interior of the neurohelmets channel sensory information from the BattleMech directly to the pilot, converting raw data on posture, movement, balance and speed into neural impulses for the human brain. At the same time, the helmet and its linked computer translate impulses from the MechWarrior's brain into signals transmitted directly to the 'Mech's gyroscope and myomer musculature. In this way, the reflexive bodily movements of the BattleMech are controlled subconsciously by the pilot, leaving his conscious brain free to control the various weapons and other systems as needed.

THE BATTLEMECH

The modern BattleMech is the end result of more than three thousand years of battlefield technology development. Combining awesome destructive power and unparalleled maneuverability, the BattleMech is perhaps the most complex machine ever produced. The undisputed master of thirty-first century warfare, the

BattleMech seems destined to reign supreme centuries into the future. The machines described in this section represent a mere fraction of the BattleMech designs in use today. Every 'Mech contains thousands of different components, grouped into four primary systems: chassis, locomotion/ movement, armor and weapons and power systems.



CHASSIS

Every BattleMech contains a chassis that consists of several dozen “bones.” Each “bone” is a honeycombed, foamed-aluminum core wrapped with stressed silicon-carbide monofilament and protected by a rigid, titanium-steel shell. Each of these artificial “bones” has attachment points for their myomer “muscles” and servos that drive the BattleMech. This skeletal construction helps make BattleMechs less vulnerable and easier to repair than vehicles supported by stressed-skin shells.

LOCOMOTION/MOVEMENT SYSTEMS

Two different systems are used to drive BattleMechs and control their movements. Small, electrically driven actuators move a 'Mech's light weapons and sensor arrays. Bundles of polyacetylene fibers called myomers control a 'Mech's limbs and main weapons. Myomers contract when exposed to electrical current, much like human muscles. If a BattleMech's myomers are damaged in battle, technicians can replace the fiber bundles with new ones or “transplant” myomers from other parts of the 'Mech's skeleton. Transplanted myomer bundles cannot restore full function to a damaged limb, but they do provide limited mobility and strength.

ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Two separate layers of armor provide modern BattleMechs with protection against energy and projectile weapons. Aligned-crystal steel is usually used for the outer layer of 'Mech armor. The aligned-crystal steel has excellent heat-conducting properties, and so it provides excellent protection against lasers and particle-beam weapons. An inner layer of boron nitride impregnated with diamond monofilament stops high-explosive armor piercing (HEAP)

rounds and fast neutrons. This second layer of armor also prevents any armor fragments from damaging a BattleMech's internal systems.

Because energy weapons can be powered indefinitely by a 'Mech's onboard fusion reactor and do not require ammunition reloads, BattleMechs usually carry charged-particle-beam weapons or lasers as their primary armaments. Additionally, many BattleMechs carry launching racks for short- or longrange, non-nuclear missiles. Still other 'Mechs mount rapid-fire autocannons or machine guns for use against infantry, aircraft and other BattleMechs.

POWER SYSTEMS

BattleMechs require a large, constant power supply for movement and combat. The fusion reactor, which produces enormous amounts of electricity from ordinary water, is the most efficient system for providing this power. Because the fusion reaction created by a BattleMech's power plant does not release neutrons, the power plant can operate indefinitely without becoming radioactive.

The fusion plant produces electricity by a process known as magnetohydrodynamics. In this process, magnetic fields are used to channel plasma from the fusion reaction into a loop. This plasma is electrically conductive, and so the loop functions as a powerful generating coil, producing both electricity and waste heat. Every BattleMech carries radiators called heat sinks to help dissipate this waste heat. Heat sinks are especially important because excessively high internal temperatures can disrupt the magnetic containment fields around a BattleMech's reactor. If a power plant's magnetic "jar" is disrupted, an uncontrolled fusion reaction may occur, releasing neutrons and exposing the BattleMech's internal systems and its MechWarrior to lethal radiation.

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

The hundreds of BattleMech models in existence display a myriad of design features, but all 'Mechs share two defining characteristics. First all BattleMechs possess movement capabilities unmatched by any other type of modern war machine. Second, all BattleMechs possess heat-dissipation systems to reduce the internal heat levels generated by their power and weapons systems.

MOVEMENT CAPABILITIES

BattleMechs can attain walking or running speeds ranging from forty to one hundred kilometers per hour in open terrain. Dense forests, swamps and steep slopes will slow a 'Mech, but very few terrain features can stop one. In addition, many 'Mechs can jump over obstacles by superheating air with their fusion reactors and releasing it through so-called jump jets. (Jump-capable BattleMechs operating on worlds without atmospheres often carry their own reaction mass for their jets.) All BattleMechs can also move under-water when crossing rivers or small lakes.

Spaceborne BattleMechs can make assault landings from low orbit. Special reaction jets housed in their feet allow them to soft-land from altitudes of up to 320 kilometers. During reentry, breakaway ablative shields protect a BattleMech's vulnerable sensors and weapons.

HEAT-DISSIPATION SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES

Because a BattleMech's systems are pushed to their limits during combat, 'Mechs engaged in combat rapidly generate large amounts of waste heat—heat that can disrupt a fusion reactor's magnetic containment shields and impair or permanently damage a 'Mech's electronics and computer systems, thereby slowing the BattleMech's movement and reducing the accuracy of its weapons. Heat sinks are one way of controlling the heat build-up in a 'Mech. The heat pouring out of these radiators can produce strong infrared (IR) signatures, however, which can

make a 'Mech easy to target.

To sidestep this problem, MechWarriors have found other ways to control heat build-up. MechWarriors often place their machines in shallow lakes or rivers. (Through the processes of conduction and convection, moving water helps dissipate a 'Mech's internal heat.) On temperate or cold worlds, the atmosphere itself can help dissipate waste heat. On the other hand, the high outside temperatures of a desert or jungle environment can exacerbate a BattleMech's heating problems.

The most common methods by which MechWarriors control heat build-up are manually regulating the movement and firing rates of their 'Mechs or reprogramming the machine's movement-control computer and its secondary systems. These computers can be used to limit the 'Mech's rate of activity and the resulting heat build-up. For example, when a 'Mech is sent to a high-temperature world, its activity-rate setting may be lowered. The 'Mech will move more slowly and fire less often than it would on a temperate planet. When a 'Mech is sent to fight in an arctic climate, the setting is raised, allowing faster movement and a higher rate of fire. Reprogramming is usually carried out while a BattleMech force is enroute to its assignment aboard DropShips. The process takes approximately two weeks.

Because BattleMechs are always adjusted for the expected external temperature of their combat environments, sudden increases in outside temperature can have a devastating impact on a 'Mech's ability to dissipate waste heat. Tacticians have developed a whole series of battle tactics to take advantage of this 'Mech characteristic. For example, commanders regularly set forests on fire while enemy BattleMechs are advancing through them. The superheated air roaring around the 'Mech can overload the machines' cooling systems or drastically reduce their efficiency, thus hampering the BattleMechs' combat capabilities.

COM-2D COMMANDO

Mass: 25 tons

Chassis: Coventry Metal Works

Power Plant: GM 150

Cruising Speed: 64.8 kph

Maximum Speed: 97.2 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Lexington Limited

Armament:

1 Shannon Six-Shooter Missile Pack

1 Coventry 4-Tube Missile System

1 Hesperus-B3M Medium Laser

Manufacturer: Coventry Defense Conglomerate

Communications System: TharHes Crystal Flower RG-2

Targeting and Tracking System: TharHes Star Shark

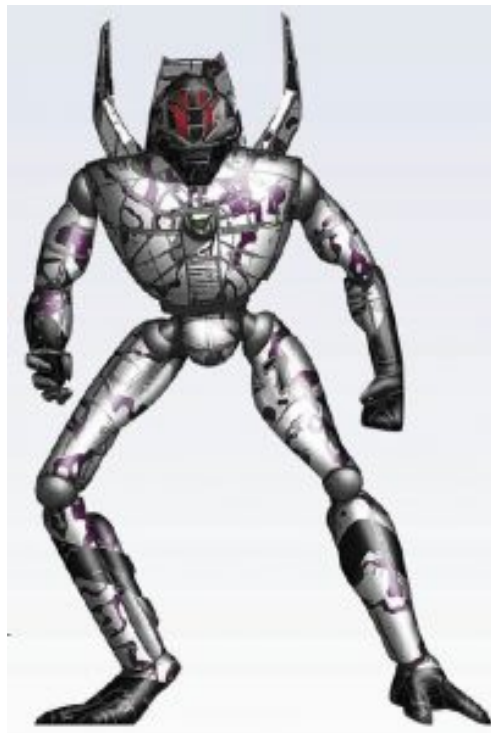
**Commentary:**

Primarily designed for reconnaissance work, Commandos are often dispatched singly or in pairs to scout ahead of main forces and monitor pursuing enemies. The Commando's twin SRM systems provide it with impressive firepower for a scout 'Mech. The unusual configuration enables a Commando to direct heavy missile fire at a single target or fire missiles at two different targets simultaneously. Additionally, the dual launcher set-up prevents an enemy from knocking out a Commando's entire missile capability with a single lucky shot. Despite this firepower, the Commando's thin armor makes it a poor match for heavier 'Mechs, so most Commando pilots prefer to shoot and run when facing such opponents. An arm-mounted medium laser and articulated hands—which give the Commando an edge during physical combat against light and medium 'Mechs without hands—complete the design's weapon configuration.

SDR-5V SPIDER**Mass:** 30 tons**Chassis:** Newhart 1200**Power Plant:** Pitban 240**Cruising Speed:** 86.4 kph**Maximum Speed:** 130 kph**Jump Jets:** Pitban LFT-10**Jump Capacity:** 240 meters**Armor:** Durallex Light**Armament:**

2 Aberdovey Mk III Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Newhart Interstellar Industries Ltd.**Communications System:** O/P 500A**Targeting and Tracking System:** O/P TA1240



Commentary:

The Spider is a fast-moving, light reconnaissance and attack 'Mech. The design features a system of powerful, pivoting jump jets that enable a Spider pilot to alter the path of his machine in mid-jump, a tactic that tends to wreak havoc with even the most sophisticated targeting systems. This jump-jet system, along with the Spider's impressive walking and running rates, makes the Spider one of the most maneuverable 'Mechs in existence. The Spider's twin torso-mounted, high quality Aberdovey Mk III medium lasers give it ample firepower. Combined with the Spider's superior maneuverability, these lasers make the Spider ideally suited for lightning attacks. Furthermore, all Spiders are constructed with highly reliable parts, which reduce the design's maintenance requirements and enable Spider units to remain in the field for long periods.

JR7-D JENNER

Mass: 35 tons

Chassis: Diplan Scout-A

Power Plant: 245 Magna

Cruising Speed: 75.6 kph

Maximum Speed: 118.8 kph

Jump Jets: Smithson Lifters

Jump Capacity: 150 meters

Armor: Starshield

Armament:

4 Argra 3L Medium Lasers

1 Thunderstroke SRM-4

Manufacturer: Diplan Mechyards

Communications System: Dawson III

Targeting and Tracking System: Bk-309

**Commentary:**

A long-time workhorse of the Draconis Combine 'Mech forces, the Jenner possesses a well-balanced combination of speed, jump capability and fire-power that makes it ideally suited for fast hit-and-run guerrilla-style tactics. The 'Mech's speed and jump capability make the Jenner a difficult target to hit, and its two pairs of side-mounted Argra 3L medium lasers provide the Jenner with good close-range firepower (the 'Mech's optimal range is 30 to 90 meters). Additionally, the Jenner carries a torso-mounted Thunderstroke SRM-4, which provides the 'Mech with extra hitting power to supplement its laser attack. Because the Jenner relies primarily on lasers for its firepower, it can operate for extended periods without stopping to replenish ammunition supplies.

PNT-9R PANTHER

Mass: 35 tons

Chassis: Alshain 56-Carrier

Power Plant: Leenex 140

Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph

Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph

Jump Jets: Lexington Lifters

Jump Capacity: 120 meters

Armor: Maxmillian 42

Armament:

1 Telos Four-Shot SRM Missile System

1 Lord's Light Particle Beam Weapon

Manufacturer: Alshain Weapons

Communications System: Sipher CommCon CSU-4

Targeting and Tracking System: Cat's Eyes 5

**Commentary:**

The Panther is a rugged, well-armed design commonly used to provide supporting fire for reconnaissance units. MechWarriors have long appreciated the 'Mech's ample armor, which enables the Panther to take considerable hits and stay on its feet. But the Panther's most distinguishing feature is its arm-mounted Lord's Light PPC. An uncommon weapon for a light 'Mech, the PPC provides the Panther with excellent long-distance striking capacity. For close range fighting, the Panther relies on a Telos SRM-4 system. The Telos is mounted in the Panther's center torso, a configuration that provides the SRM system with superior protection against enemy fire. The Panther is especially well-suited for city combat. Its maneuverability makes it nimble enough to move through the restricted spaces of an urban battlefield, while its PPC allows it to disable all but the most heavily armored 'Mechs with a few well-aimed shots.

ASN-21 ASSASSIN**Mass:** 40 tons**Chassis:** Maltex 40**Power Plant:** 280 VOX**Cruising Speed:** 75.6 kph**Maximum Speed:** 119.0 kph**Jump Jets:** 100AFVTA**Jump Capacity:** 210 meters**Armor:** Lox Lift Series 1**Armament:**

1 Martell Medium Laser

1 Holly-5 LRM Launcher

1 Holly-2 SRM Launcher

Manufacturer: Maltex Corporation**Communications System:** Garret T15 B**Targeting and Tracking System:** Garret 500S



Commentary:

The Assassin is a medium-weight design that incorporates the maneuverability and jump capabilities of common to light 'Mechs with the increased firepower typical of heavier designs. The 'Mech's seven jump jets enable the Assassin to jump an impressive 210 meters, a capability that makes the Assassin particularly effective in muddy or otherwise irregular terrain. The Assassin also features a torso-mounted Holly LRM rack, an arm-mounted Martell medium laser and a Holly SRM rack. The LRM rack provides good long-range striking power that has made the Assassin popular with MechWarriors throughout the Inner Sphere, while the medium laser and SRM system provide adequate medium and short-range punch. Though this mix of weapons gives the 'Mech a full range of strike capabilities, the Assassin can carry only 74 missile loads, limiting the effectiveness of its missile systems during long-running battles.

CDA-2A CICADA

Mass: 40 tons

Chassis: Hartford 300

Power Plant: 320 Pitban

Cruising Speed: 86.4 kph

Maximum Speed: 129.6 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: 3/Star Slab

Armament:

2 Magna Medium Lasers

1 Magna 200 Small Laser

Manufacturer: HartfordCo

Communications System: Hartford J15 B

Targeting and Tracking System: Hartford S1000

**Commentary:**

The Cicada was designed as an alternative to lighter scout 'Mechs. The 'Mech's 320 Pitban engine provides it with a top speed of 129.6 kph, which enables the Cicada to cover great distances very quickly and makes it an excellent choice for reconnaissance work. Though the Cicada's speed is undoubtedly its greatest asset, the design also boasts twin torso-mounted Magna medium lasers, a single Magna 200 small laser, and a considerable amount of Star Slab armor—features that enable the Cicada to outgun lighter recon 'Mechs and face opponents that would send most light scouts fleeing. The Cicada's speed, firepower and armor protection make it a popular choice for raiding and reconnaissance missions.

CLNT-2-3T CLINT**Mass:** 40 tons**Chassis:** Andoran Model III**Power Plant:** Pitban 240**Cruising Speed:** 64.8 kph**Maximum Speed:** 97.2 kph**Jump Jets:** Andoran Model JIII**Jump Capacity:** 180 meters**Armor:** Durallex Medium**Armament:**

1 Armstrong Autocannon/5

2 Martell Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Andoran Industries Ltd.**Communications System:** Raldon R1**Targeting and Tracking System:**

Sloane 220 Lockover System

**Commentary:**

The Clint is a well-armed, low-weight medium 'Mech originally designed for reconnaissance missions. The Clint's arm-mounted Armstrong Autocannon/5 provides the 'Mech with a powerful punch, but the Clint's ammunition-storage bins can store only twenty autocannon reloads at a time. As a result, the Clint must often rely on its torso-mounted Martell medium lasers to attack opponents and defend itself during extended engagements. Though many 'Mech commanders often relegate Clints to scouting and defensive duties, the design is an able urban fighting machine. Most heavier 'Mechs can easily outgun the Clint, but most also lack its jump capabilities. The Clint possesses six Andoran Model JJII jump jets, which enable it to make death-from-above attacks—tactics that have proved highly effective on urban battlefields.

HER-2S HERMES II**Mass:** 40 tons**Chassis:** Irian Chassis Class 40**Power Plant:** Pitban 240**Cruising Speed:** 64.8 kph**Maximum Speed:** 97.2 kph**Jump Jets:** None**Jump Capacity:** None**Armor:** Riese—456**Armament:**

1 Oriente Autocannon

1 I.W.W. Medium Laser

1 Olympian Flamer

Manufacturer: Irian BattleMechs Unlimited**Communications System:** Irian E.A.R.**Targeting and Tracking System:** Wasat Aggressor

**Commentary:**

The Hermes II is a heavy scout 'Mech, distinguished by its large Olympian Flamer and impressive communications system. The Hermes is a popular choice for fighting in city and forest terrain, where Hermes pilots often use the 'Mech's flamer to set fires. (Most MechWarriors avoid fires because they incapacitate infrared sensors and can cause BattleMechs to overheat—which makes the Hermes' flamer an excellent tactical weapon in such terrain.) An Oriente autocannon provides a good long-range hitting power, and an I.W.W. medium laser round out the Hermes' weapons array. The design also features the powerful Irian E.A.R. communications system. This advanced system enables a Hermes to communicate with distant 'Mechs, satellites, DropShips and JumpShips via short-burst, narrow-beam signals.

WTH-1 WHITWORTH**Mass:** 40 tons**Chassis:** Whitworth Type I**Power Plant:** LTV 160**Cruising Speed:** 43.2 kph**Maximum Speed:** 64.8 kph**Jump Jets:** Whitworth Jetlift**Jump Capacity:** 120 meters**Armor:** Durallex Light**Armament:**

2 Longbow-10 LRM Launchers

3 Intek Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Whitworth Company**Communications System:** Garret T14**Targeting and Tracking System:** Garret D2j



Commentary:

The Whitworth is a well-armed, versatile heavy scout design. Though the Whitworth possesses jump capabilities, it lacks the speed of lighter recon 'Mechs. The Whitworth's eight tons of Durallex Light armor enables it to withstand considerable punishment, however, a characteristic that largely compensates for its slower speed. The 'Mech's weapon configuration consists of one head-mounted and two arm-mounted Intek medium lasers and twin torso-mounted Longbow-10 LRM launchers— the Whitworth's true claim to fame. The Longbow missile systems give the Whitworth superior long-range firepower. BattleMech commanders commonly use Whitworths to provide long-range fire support, though many militaries frequently team Whitworths with faster recon 'Mechs for scouting missions and light raids.

VND-1R VINDICATOR

Mass: 45 tons

Chassis: Ceresplex IV

Power Plant: GM 180

Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph

Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph

Jump Jets: Anderson Propulsion 30

Jump Capacity: 120 meters

Armor: Starshield

Armament:

1 CeresArms Smasher PPC

1 Sian/Ceres Jaguar LRM Missile System

1 CeresArms Medium Laser

1 Hessen Small Laser

Manufacturer: Ceres Metal Industries

Communications System: CeresCom Model 21-Rs

Targeting and Tracking System: C-Apple Churchill



Commentary:

Though the Vindicator's performance specifications may seem lackluster, the 'Mech can ably perform a variety of tasks such as fire support, point defense, and offensive duties—which is exactly what the Vindicator's designers had in mind when they created this multipurpose 'Mech. An arm-mounted Smasher PPC serves as the Vindicator's main weapon, while medium and small lasers provide supplementary medium-and short-range firepower. Additionally, the Vindicator boasts a Sian/Ceres Jaguar LRM mounted behind an armored door in the 'Mech's left torso—a configuration that provides the LRM with good protection against enemy fire. The Vindicator's other features include an articulated hand that enables it to manipulate large objects, four jump jets and sixteen heat sinks to relieve the internal heat caused by jumping.

ENF-4R ENFORCER

Mass: 50 tons

Chassis: Dorwinion Standard

Power Plant: Nissan 200

Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph

Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph

Jump Jets: McCloud Specials

Jump Capacity: 120 meters

Armor: Starshield

Armament:

1 Federated Autocannon

1 ChisComp 43 Special Large Laser

1 ChisComp 32 Small Laser

Manufacturer: Achernar BattleMechs

Communications System:

Achernar Electronics HICS-11

Targeting and Tracking System: Federated Hunter



Commentary:

Armed with a Federated autocannon, a large laser and a small laser, the Enforcer can quickly lay down a withering pattern of weapons fire to soften up an enemy force or blunt an opponent's attack. In fact, 'Mech commanders commonly exploit this feature by directing groups of Enforcers to concentrate their fire against enemy forces. The Enforcer's autocannon and large laser also make the 'Mech a formidable sniping machine, particularly in urban environments or other irregular terrain where it can use the maneuverability afforded by its jump jets to maximum advantage. The Enforcer is also a good "brawler," thanks to its nine tons of Starshield armor. Most of this armor is concentrated in the 'Mech's front torso, which enables the Enforcer to shoot it out toe-to-toe against nearly any other 'Mech on the battlefield.

HBK-4G HUNCHBACK

Mass: 50 tons

Chassis: Komiyaba Type VIII

Power Plant: Nissan 200

Cruising Speed: 43.9 kph

Maximum Speed: 63.5 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Starshield

Armament:

1 Tomodzuru Autocannon Mount Type 20

2 Ichiba 2000 Medium Lasers

1 Diverse Optics Type 10 Small Laser

Manufacturer: Komiyaba/Nissan General Industries

Communications System: Sony MST-15

Targeting and Tracking System: Tacticon Tracer 300

**Commentary:**

Designed for short- and medium-range combat, the Hunchback is renowned for its street fighting abilities in the confined spaces of urban battlegrounds. The 'Mech's main weapon—the massive Tomodzuru Type 20 autocannon—can rip through even the heaviest armor. Twin arm-mounted Ichiba 2000 medium lasers give the Hunchback extra hitting power at medium range, while the design's two battle fists and head-mounted small laser provide extra close-range punch. The Hunchback's weapons and considerable armor make it more than a match for most medium weight 'Mechs and even a few heavy ones—but overconfident Hunchback pilots have found themselves outgunned on occasion when attempting to slug it out with heavier machines.

TBT-5N TREBUCHET**Mass:** 50 tons**Chassis:** Corean Model 9C**Power Plant:** 250 Magna**Cruising Speed:** 54.0 kph**Maximum Speed:** 86.4 kph**Jump Jets:** None**Jump Capacity:** None**Armor:** Starshield**Armament:**

2 Zeus LRM-15

3 Magna Mk II Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Corean Enterprises**Communications System:** Corean TransBand-J9**Targeting and Tracking System:** Corean B-Tech



Commentary:

The Trebuchet is a main-line medium 'Mech designed to perform long-range bombardment and close-range fire-support duties. Twin Zeus LRM-15 racks give the Trebuchet considerable long-range striking power, though the 'Mech's low ammunition-storage capacity (it carries only eight reloads for each missile rack) limits the effectiveness of these weapons. As a result, Trebuchets are commonly used to "soften up" enemy 'Mechs before heavier machines finish them off. Three arm-mounted Magna Mk II medium lasers provide the Trebuchet's shortand medium-range firepower. The cooling capacity of the 'Mech's ten heat sinks allows the Trebuchet to simultaneously fire all three lasers while moving at cruising speed.

DV-6M DERVISH

Mass: 55 tons

Chassis: Dorwinion Standard 55T

Power Plant: Core Tek 275

Cruising Speed: 54.0 kph

Maximum Speed: 86.4 kph

Jump Jets: Swingline X-1000

Jump Capacity: 150 meters

Armor: Maxmillian 105

Armament:

2 Federated 10-Shot LRM Missile Systems

2 ChisComp 39 Medium Lasers

2 Federated 2-Shot SRM Missile Systems

Manufacturer: Achernar BattleMechs

Communications System:

Achernar Electronics HID-21

Targeting and Tracking System:

Federated Hunter Mk II

**Commentary:**

Often maligned as a mediocre fighting vehicle, the Dervish possesses several noteworthy features. The 'Mech's twin LRM-10 racks are mounted inside the Dervish's torso for superior protection against enemy hits, and it carries a supply of twelve reloads for each rack as well. The Dervish's twin hand-mounted SRM-2 racks are similarly well supplied, with fifty reloads each. In the unlikely event a Dervish depletes its missile supply, it can strike with two arm-mounted medium lasers. Though the Dervish's relatively light armor provides poor protection against the more powerful weapons in current use, the 'Mech's five jump jets enable it to flee from a tight situation, close quickly with an opponent and exploit battlefield terrain features.

DRG-1N DRAGON**Mass:** 60 tons**Chassis:** Alshain Type 56-60H**Power Plant:** Vlar 300**Cruising Speed:** 54.0 kph**Maximum Speed:** 86.4 kph**Jump Jets:** None**Jump Capacity:** None**Armor:** Starshield**Armament:**

1 Telos DecaCluster LRM Missile System

1 Imperator-A Autocannon

2 Victory 23R Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Luthien Armor Works**Communications System:** Sipher CommSys 3**Targeting and Tracking System:**

Eagle Eye SY10-10

**Commentary:**

A well-balanced blend of speed and firepower makes the rugged Dragon a popular close-assault 'Mech. The Dragon's arm-mounted autocannon serves as the 'Mech's main weapon, and the Dragon's generous supply of forty reloads virtually ensures that a Dragon pilot will not run out of autocannon ammo during even the most protracted battle. An LRM-10 rack with an ample twenty-four reloads provides long-range hitting power. Two forward- and rear-mounted medium lasers complete the Dragon's impressive weapons array. Additionally, the Dragon features ample torso armor, enabling it to withstand considerable punishment. 'Mech commanders often hold their Dragons in reserve until weaknesses or breaks appear in enemy lines, then send them in to rush through the gaps. Dragons also make excellent defensive 'Mechs, because their armor and weapons enable them to remain in prepared defensive positions and lay down withering patterns of fire against approaching enemies.

QKD-4G QUICKDRAW**Mass:** 60 tons**Chassis:** Technicon Type E**Power Plant:** Vlar 300**Cruising Speed:** 54.1 kph**Maximum Speed:** 86.7 kph**Jump Jets:** Chilton 460**Jump Capacity:** 150 meters**Armor:** Riese-475**Armament:**

4 Omicron 4000 Medium Lasers

1 Delta Dart Long-Range Missile 10-Rack

1 Hovertec Short-Range Missile Quad

Manufacturer: Technicon Manufacturing**Communications System:** Garret T12E**Targeting and Tracking System:**

Dynatec 2180

**Commentary:**

The Quickdraw is a fire-support 'Mech designed for medium- and short-range combat. The Quickdraw's four Omicron 4000 medium lasers enable it to fire in every direction. Two of the lasers are mounted in fixed rear-facing mounts in the 'Mech's torso, while the remaining arm-mounted pair can be fired to the front or rear. The Quickdraw's torso-mounted Delta Dart LRM-10 rack and Hovertec SRM-4 provide additional striking power at long and short distances. Though the Quickdraw carries relatively light armor for a heavy 'Mech design, its VLAR 300 power plant and five Chilton 460 jump jets give the 'Mech good speed and maneuverability—characteristics that enable the Quickdraw to evade enemy fire and avoid head-to-head slugfests with more powerful machines.

CPLT-C1 CATAPULT**Mass:** 65 tons**Chassis:** Hollis Mark II**Power Plant:** Magna 260**Cruising Speed:** 43.2 kph**Maximum Speed:** 64.8 kph**Jump Jets:** Anderson Propulsion 21**Jump Capacity:** 120 meters**Armor:** Durallex Heavy**Armament:**

2 Holly Long-Range Missile 15-Racks

4 Martell Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Hollis Incorporated**Communications System:** O/P COM-211**Targeting and Tracking System:** O/P 1078

**Commentary:**

The Catapult is a second-line, fire-support design that combines excellent long-range striking power with jump capability. The Catapult's twin arm-mounted Holly LRM-15 racks enable the 'Mech to fire on opponents at long distances, minimizing the risk posed by return fire. For targets at shorter distances, the Catapult relies on four torso-mounted Martell medium lasers. Four Anderson Propulsion 21 jump jets provide the Catapult's jump capability. Extensive use of these jump jets, however, can cause their conductive housings to break down, sending jet exhaust into the Catapult's interior and causing the 'Mech to overheat. Additionally, the Catapult's lack of infantry-defense weapons leaves it at a disadvantage during close-combat situations.

JM6-S JAGERMECH

Mass: 65 tons	Armament:
Chassis: Kallon Type XII	2 Mydron Model C Medium Autocannon
Power Plant: 260 Magna	2 Mydron Model D Light Autocannon
Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph	2 Magna Mk II Medium Lasers
Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph	Manufacturer: Kallon Industries
Jump Jets: None	Communications System: Garret T11-A
Jump Capacity: None	Targeting and Tracking System: Garret D2j
Aarmor: Kallon Royalstar	

**Commentary:**

The JagerMech is a well-armed, long-range support design. Twin arm-mounted Mydron Model C medium and Model D light autocannons comprise the heart of the JagerMechs arsenal. The 'Mech's generous ammunition supplies—twenty reloads for each Model C cannon and forty-five reloads for the Model D—enable the JagerMech to lay down sustained barrages of autocannon fire to pound the enemy before an assault or siege. When used in conjunction with the JagerMech's sophisticated Garret D2j targeting and tracking system, the autocannons are an effective anti-aircraft weapon. Generally speaking, JagerMechs avoid fighting at shorter distances where their autocannons cannot be fired with maximum accuracy. When forced into close combat, however, the JagerMech can ably defend itself with its two Magna Mark II medium lasers, as well as kicking and charging attacks.

GHR-5H GRASSHOPPER**Mass:** 70 tons**Chassis:** Mingh 233/7**Power Plant:** 280 VOX**Cruising Speed:** 43.2 kph**Maximum Speed:** 64.8 kph**Jump Jets:** Leviathan Lifters**Jump Capacity:** 120 meters**Armor:** Durallex Heavy**Armament:**

1 Diplan HD Heavy Laser

4 Diplan M3 Medium Lasers

1 Conan/S LRM-5

Manufacturer: Lantren Corporation**Communications System:** Allet-C308**Targeting and Tracking System:** Allet-T11

**Commentary:**

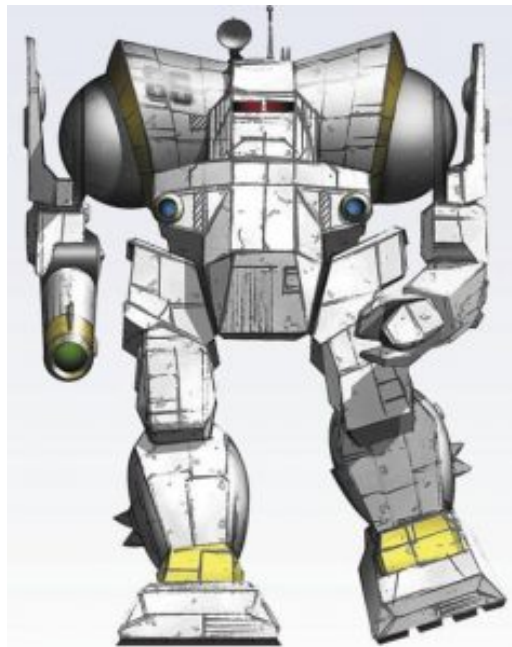
The Grasshopper is a highly mobile, jump-capable close-range fighter. Though the Grasshopper is not particularly well armed for a 'Mech of its weight class, its Conan/S LRM-5 (supplied with 24 reloads) enables the Grasshopper to produce a higher rate of fire than most heavy designs. The Diplan HD large laser and four Diplan M3 medium lasers that complete the 'Mech's weapon configuration require no ammunition, allowing the Grasshopper to operate independently for extended periods—making it an excellent 'Mech for hit-and-run guerrilla-style raids. Grasshopper pilots also frequently use the design's jump capability to outflank opponents or jump into the middle of enemy 'Mech lances and blast away.

AWS-8Q AWESOME**Mass:** 80 tons**Chassis:** Technicon Type G**Power Plant:** Pitban 240**Cruising Speed:** 35.4 kph**Maximum Speed:** 51.2 kph**Jump Jets:** None**Jump Capacity:** None**Armor:** Durallex Heavy Special**Armament:**

3 Kreuss Particle Projection Cannons

1 Diverse Optics Type 10 Small Laser

Manufacturer: Technicon Manufacturing**Communications System:** Garret T19-G**Targeting and Tracking System:** Dynatec 2780



Commentary:

The heavily armored Awesome was designed to lead assaults against enemy 'Mech forces. Primarily engineered for ranged combat against heavy machines, the Awesome can damage or even destroy opponents with a single salvo from its three Kreuss PPCs. At short distances, where the PPCs are less effective, the Awesome can strike with a head-mounted Diverse Optics type 10 small laser. While intended as an attack 'Mech, the Awesome's impressive arsenal and generous armor also make it a formidable defensive weapon. The Awesome's sole weakness is its poor maneuverability, which can leave an Awesome vulnerable to rear and flanking attacks from faster machines.

ZEU-6S ZEUS

Mass: 80 tons

Chassis: Chariot Type III

Power Plant: Pitban 320

Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph

Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Valiant Lamellor

Armament:

1 Thunderbolt ASM Large Laser

1 Coventry Star Fire Long-Range Missile 15-Rack

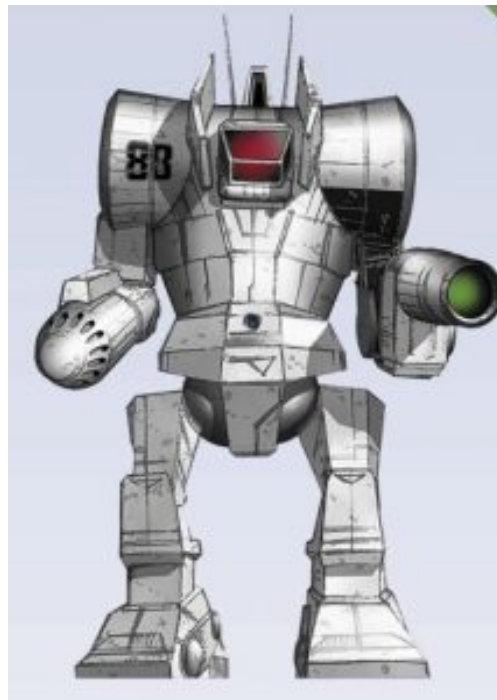
1 Defiance Autocannon

2 Defiance B3M Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Defiance Industries of Hesperus II

Communications System: TharHes Calliope ZE-2

Targeting and Tracking System: TharHes Ares-7



Commentary:

The Zeus represents an attempt to create an assault-class 'Mech suitable for hit-and-run missions. The 'Mech's Defiance autocannon, Coventry Star Fire LRM rack and Thunderbolt A5M large laser give the Zeus impressive firepower at long distances. For shorter ranges, the Zeus mounts two Defiance B3M medium lasers. Though the Zeus's weapons array is geared toward stand-off fighting, the Zeus can also close and grapple with opponents quite effectively. It has excellent armor protection, especially around its torso, which enables it to withstand all but the heaviest weapons fire. The Zeus's heavily armored legs and loaded left arm make its kicking and punching attacks particularly lethal.

CP-10-Z CYCLOPS

Mass: 90 tons

Chassis: Stormwanger HV-7

Power Plant: Hermes 360

Cruising Speed: 43.1 kph

Maximum Speed: 61.8 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Starshield Special

Armament:

2 Diverse Optics Type 20 Medium Lasers

1 Delta Dart Long-Range Missile 10-Rack

1 Hovertec Short Range Missile Quad

1 Zeus-36, Mk III Autocannon

Manufacturer: Stormwanger Assemblies, Unlimited

Communications System:

Olmstead 840 with SatNav Module

Targeting and Tracking System:

Tacticon Tracer 280



Commentary:

Originally designed as a heavy assault 'Mech, the Cyclops features a sophisticated computer and communication system that make it an ideal command vehicle. The 'Mech's Tacticon B-2000 battle computer enables the Cyclops to coordinate a full BattleMech battalion, while the 'Mech's tight-beam communications system—an Olmstead 840 fitted with a SatNav module—allows it to conduct planet-wide and orbital communications. The Cyclops also possesses a diverse weapons array that enables it to defend itself at any range. The 'Mech's Delta Dart LRM-10 provides good striking power at extreme distances, while its Zeus-36 Mk III autocannon handles opponents at middle distances. For close fighting, the Cyclops relies on two medium lasers and a Hovertec SRM-4 rack. Though the 'Mech possesses an impressive arsenal, its head is only lightly armored, which leaves the Cyclops's computer and communications system vulnerable.

BNC-3E BANSHEE

Mass: 95 tons

Chassis: Star League XT

Power Plant: GM 380

Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph

Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Starshield

Armament:

1 Magna Hellstar PPC

1 Imperator-A Autocannon

1 Magna Mark I Light Laser

Manufacturer: Star League Weapons Research

Communications System: Dalban Commline

Targeting and Tracking System: Dalban HiRez-B



Commentary:

The Banshee was originally designed as a close-assault 'Mech, but the development of new BattleMech technology has left the design poorly suited for such missions. Though the Banshee's powerful fists and legs enable it to easily destroy lighter 'Mechs with physical attacks, the 'Mech presents a poor match against comparable machines in ranged combat. The Banshee possesses hefty amounts of heavy-laminate Starshield armor and a Magna Hellstar PPC, but its Imperator-A autocannon and Magna small laser are inadequate secondary weapons. As a result, better-armed 'Mechs can pick apart a Banshee with long-range fire before it can close to an effective fighting distance. In recognition of the design's limited effectiveness, many militaries now relegate their Banshees to second-line and rear fire-support lances, where these machines can use their autocannon and PPC fire to support the advance of other BattleMechs.

AS7-D ATLAS

Mass: 100 tons

Chassis: Foundation Type 100

Power Plant: Vlar 300

Cruising Speed: 32.4 kph

Maximum Speed: 54.0 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Durallex Special Heavy

Armament:

1 Defiance 'Mech Hunter Autocannon

1 Far Fire LRM-20 Missile System

4 Defiance B3M Medium Lasers

1 ThorHes Maxi SRM-6 Missile System

Manufacturer: Na'ir, Hesperus, Quentin

Communications System: Army Comm. Class 5

Targeting and Tracking System: Army Comp. Type 29K

**Commentary:**

Few 'Mechs possess the raw power of the renowned assault design called the Atlas. Its devastating firepower and extensive armor protection make it such a formidable foe that the mere sight of an Atlas can strike fear into a MechWarrior's heart. Its LRM-20 rack provides superb long-distance striking power, while four medium lasers, a SRM-6 rack and a massive Class 20 autocannon gives the Atlas ample firepower at shorter distances. Additionally, the Atlas's heavy-duty internal structure lends its physical attacks enormous power. (Atlases have been rumored to pick up lightweight 'Mechs and toss them to the ground like children's toys.) The Atlas's nineteen tons of Durallex Special Heavy armor enable the 'Mech to withstand vast amounts of punishment. The design's sole weak point is its slow speed, a characteristic that Atlas opponents commonly attempt to exploit.

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