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FIRST SUCCESSION WAR™

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A SUCCESSION WARS ERA SOURCEBOOK

THE DREAM IS OVER

In 2784, the departure of General Alexsandr Kerensky and the remnants of the SLDF from known space leaves the Inner Sphere balanced on a knife-edge. With no Star League to keep the House Lords in check, greed, ambition and old grudges come to the fore once more, propelling the five remaining Great Houses into a war that threatens human civilization itself: The First Succession War.

The ***First Succession War*** describes the most devastating conflict ever fought by mankind as the five Great Houses battle for supremacy in the ruins of the Star League. Covering the collapse of the Star League, the militarization of the Inner Sphere and the horrors that ensued, this volume provides a detailed look at the major actions of the war, the motivations of its participants, and the deadly consequences of their decisions.

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THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

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GHOST RAIN

CNB Inc., Atreus City
Atreus, Marik Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
24 March 2826

[The camera whirs, focusing on a worn woman in her sixties, dressed in olive FWLM fatigues. Her face is lined, and scars crisscross her left cheek and down onto her neck. Her dark hair is shot through with streaks of gray.]

"I was six years old when the war between Amaris and Kerensky began. I didn't know much about it, but I knew it worried my father, Terran born and emigrating here with his father who was in the SLDF's Engineering Sub-Command. The time before the war was a golden age on Helm—people traveled from all across the League for winter sports—but even before the end, things started to get bad. Holidays were a luxury, and in those uncertain times people didn't want to spend money. Still, that didn't stop us school kids from making use of the facilities at the Nagayan Mountain resort.

"It was a week before my nineteenth birthday when we learned that Amaris had been captured and the war was over. Naïvely, we thought things would get back to how they were before, in our parents' day. How quickly we were disabused of that notion. The dukes knew things would only get worse and all the patriotic noise Kenyon had made was soon supplanted by something more authoritarian. We were just the wrong age, the perfect age to serve.

"My boyfriend, Joe, was one of those called up that autumn, thrown into a boot-camp and then shipped off-world to fill out a line unit. I never saw him again—he died on Anegasaki when the Capellans killed the Fourth Militia. I was luckier I suppose, drafted into the planetary militia, so at least I was near home where it was safe and quiet. At least at first.

"Then Kenyon got a mind to take over all the Star League facilities, following up on the rumors that Kerensky had left vast stockpiles on-world. That may have been true, but after four years spent on that wild goose, with little more than field rations, toilet paper, and SLDF recruitment pamphlets to show for it, the FWLM shifted their attention elsewhere. That didn't save me from a grilling by SAFE—several in fact—because of who Gramps was, and his involvement with the Engineering Sub-Command. He died when I was nine, but even so, SAFE struggled to accept that a pre-teen knew nothing about SLDF activity. Dad got it much worse, and was held at the facility in Freeport for three weeks before they decided that the English teacher from Durandel High wasn't going to give them much help either. In those days, the years before the start of the Succession War, I did wonder: if this is how badly we treat our own people, how are things going to go when we start shooting at people we don't like?"

[She scowls then leans forward to take a glass of water, loose hair falling across her face. Her left hand lifts to brush the strands back – two fingers are clearly missing. There is a muted question from off-camera.]

"What, this? An easy fix back before the war, just a graft or bionics, and good as new. But when it happened, everyone was struggling to stay alive, and so we had to make do. It was all we could do to avoid freezing to death, not that Helm was particularly warm to start with. We lost so many in those first months, so I consider not losing the hand a win. How did it happen? I guess that's what you really want to hear about, isn't it? You want to know about the Rain."

▲▼▲

Freeport
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
11 May 2788

The blast threw Rowan sideways, her seventy-five-ton war machine struggling to remain upright, gyros whining and servos protesting. The *Orion*'s left shoulder slammed into the front of a house, shattering ferrocrete and glass, but saving the machine from falling further. She braced the *Orion*'s bulbous right arm and levered the 'Mech fully upright again, all the while scanning the skies in case the fighters returned. Across the street, an office building slowly collapsed in on itself, floors concertinaing in the wake of the attack.

"Keeler, report," her radio crackled, the effort to break through the broad-spectrum jamming only partially successful.

"Copy, captain. We're still operational but there's lots of casualties." She hesitated as her eyes took in the sight. "Most of Sixth Street is just gone."

"They used a nuke on Fort Albert, so be thankful they're just using conventional munitions."

"Yeah, very thankful," she muttered under her breath as she shifted position to survey the wreckage. Fires raged unchecked in the ruins, but even so, people were emerging from their shelters into the late morning sun and moving to salvage what they could. She considered joining the salvage operation, but not while the raptors were still circling overhead.

As if on cue, her lance channel chirped. Sanderson in his *Griffin* in Prospect Park, looking out over the brackish Yehudan Sea. "Inbound from the west, look to be heavies, not bothering to fly NOE now that they know we have very little anti-air."

"Can you ID them? *Chippewas*?" She recalled the likely bomb loads of the ninety-ton fighters; the operational sims in basic training had made it clear how nasty those could be. She twisted the *Orion*'s torso to face west, lifting both arms to the sky.

"Negative, LT," Sanderson's voice juddered, his 'Mech clearly moving fast to get under cover before the bogies arrived. "Looks like SL-15s."

Rowan blinked, taking a second to digest the information. "*Slayer*s? Since when did the Elsies use *Slayer*s? That's a Drac design."

Any response from Sanderson was cut off by static and the distant sound of explosions. Then, almost before she heard the roaring engines, the aerospace fighters flashed overhead. She

triggered her lasers at the fast movers, but held back on her cannon and missiles. Both beams missed, but she got a clear look at the insignia on the underside of the wings and swore profusely.

▲▼▲

The slow-motion replay of Rowan's gun camera footage was unequivocal. A red disc, upon which lay a sinuous black dragon. "Kurita?" Captain Stanic exclaimed, as the Charlie company officers met outside the ruins of Government House, leaning over a portable holo-table. "But we're 150 light years from any of their star systems."

Baker, the graying ex-trooper who'd been dragooned to serve as the company logistics officer, nodded at Rowan. "Probably after the same thing the Captain-General was. The mythical cache."

Rowan, standing with her arms folded across her cooling jacket, her gray jumpsuit tied loosely at her waist, rolled her eyes but said nothing.

Stanic played the video again, then straightened up. "Force Commander West reports DropShips landing up at Durandel and at Helmdown, but she has no hard intel on anything headed here." He dismissed the video and pulled up a tactical map of the continent, tagging the known landing zones. "We can assume something will be headed our way, though." He flagged a possible landing at Freeport, drawing a wide circle that encompassed a large area of coastline. "Probably *Union*s, with a couple of *Overlord*s thrown in. 'Mech forces, no conventionals."

"So a raid?"

"In force—there's probably a regiment of them." His eyes flicked to the heavens, where an unknown constellation of WarShips and transports lurked. "What I wouldn't give for recon aircraft about now."

"Orders?"

"We hold, for now. West is bringing the rest of Baker Battalion up from Port Wayland, so together with the militia, we should hold Freeport against whatever the Dracs throw at us. The Old Man is taking Alpha and Gamma against the landings at Durandel. If they can be beaten back while they're still disorganized and we have numbers on our side, then we might stand a chance."

"And if they land here, too?" Rowan asked, straightening up.

"One problem at a time, Keeler. One problem at a time."

▲▼▲

Shores of the Yehudan Sea
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
19 May 2788

"On the left!" Rowan screamed, desperately twisting the *Orion*'s massive bulk to face the new threat. Servos whined and musculature protested the sudden move, warning lights flickering even before she depressed the firing stud and heat washed over the 'Mech. Her desperate shot went wide, but the blast tore through trees, throwing splinters like shrapnel for a dozen meters. The Kurita *Panther* seemed to flinch, its own shot going wide. Then, realizing he was outclassed, the Kurita pilot decided discretion was the best part of valor and ducked back around the bluff.

To her right, Ana Julián traded shots with a *Bombardier*, her low-slung *Hoplite* lofting missiles across the 500 meters to the enemy. Most were brought down by AMS, leaving only two munitions to detonate on the blocky 'Mech's hull. Unlike Rowan's opponent, this one stood its ground and ripple-fired its own missile racks. Smoke obscured the Kurita machine momentarily as its stubby projectiles raced across the gap. Ana swore as they staggered the *Hoplite*, her musical Oriente accent coming clear across the tac-net despite the enemy jamming.

As the smoke cleared, a second machine appeared from behind the missile platform, a *Warhammer*. Already off-balance thanks to the missile barrage, Julián's 'Mech had no opportunity to evade as the heavy machine angled both barrel-arms toward her and fired. The 55-ton Marik machine stood little chance. Even as Ana attempted to bring her own cannon to bear, twin PPC blasts tore into its damaged torso and threw the machine onto its back. For an instant, the *Hoplite* looked to have weathered the storm. Then its ammo bins erupted, tearing it apart from the inside.

Taking her eyes from where her own prey was hiding, Rowan sent a stream of autocannon shells at the Kurita behemoth, then backed away, taking care to keep both targets in her firing arc. "Six is down," she reported, looking in horror at the burning wreckage even as she continued to fire at the lumbering DCMS 'Mechs. "Falling back to point kappa." Buoyed by the death of the Marik machine, the *Panther* emerged from its concealment, sprinting in an effort to reach a flanking position on the *Orion*. Rowan snap-fired her missile pack at the lighter machine, but the pilot triggered his jump-jets and soared clear.

The *Bombardier* began lofting missiles at her, and the *Warhammer* was gaining. "I could use some help here," she growled through gritted teeth as she backpedaled. A roar of static was the only acknowledgement. A shot from the *'Hammer* grazed the *Orion*'s left shoulder just above the missile pack, scouring armor and causing static discharges to leap across the armor plates. Sensors reported the damage but did not show any compromised systems. Her autocannon barked in response and she saw a gratifying spalling of armor from her opponent's right leg. It staggered and had to use a gun-arm to maintain its balance.

Where had the Panther *gone*? She'd lost track of it in the exchange with the *Warhammer*. A quick scan of the wrap-around display revealed nothing, nor did her magscan. She fired again, her brain compartmentalizing combat tasks even as she sought the elusive light 'Mech. For a long moment there was nothing. Then a flash of movement over her left shoulder caught her attention, and she twisted to bring her weapons to bear. The *Panther* was already training its main weapon on her weaker flank. It was a race to see whose reactions were quickest, and who would be most accurate. Rowan knew she was going to lose.

The *Panther* twitched and staggered forward, its right arm drooping as it did. Rowan fired the lasers in her left arm, stitching a glowing scar across the *Panther*'s torso even as it began to fall, smoke billowing from scars in its back. Lieutenant Harrison's *Marauder* hoved into view, its heat-sinks shimmering as it vented excess heat. The birdlike machine came alongside the *Orion*, and she heard the lance commander's challenge on an unencrypted channel. "Which of you Snakes wants to dance?"

▲▼▲

Point Epsilon (FWLM Field Camp 350 km Southwest of Durandel)
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
26 May 2788

The spoon rattled off the side of the steaming can as Rowan struggled to extract the last of the bland rations. The hand clutching the can was gloved, shielding her from both the frigid air and the scorching metal container. The one clutching the spoon was unprotected, save for a layer of dirt, oil, and blood. After seventeen days of hell, none of them were clean—or warm. From the corner of her eye she watched Stanic's briefing. The company commander was now the de-facto militia leader after the Old Man had run into a second full regiment at Helmdown. The shattered remains of Charlie Company had been lucky to survive the running battles as they fled from Freeport.

"They're dug-in at the major settlements…"

"Those they didn't nuke," Saul Watling interjected between mouthfuls of some steaming mush.

Harrison nodded. "…And they have squads tearing through records offices and the old SLDF facility. They don't seem to have found what they're looking for, presumably information on the cache. The Dracs have taken brutal measures to try and find it." He exhaled deeply. "There are reports of mass graves, whole neighborhoods of Freeport executed to *persuade*—" he spat the word, "—the information from those that have it."

There was silence around the campfire as the horror of the situation sank in, only broken when Watling threw his can into the fire and swore profligately. No one had that information. Not any of the living at least. Some of the other troopers glanced at her, but Rowan feigned interest in the mess tin.

Mike Harrison joined the group sitting around the fire. The right side of his face was blistered, and the left sleeve of his jumpsuit was torn away to allow a series of bandages to wrap his arm from shoulder to wrist. The lieutenant had paid a hard price for red-lining his 'Mech in the brutal fight by the Yehudan Sea. "They seem to have mostly pulled back from Durandel. There's only a company holding the town." He looked around the assembled troops—there were nine of them.

"Payback?" suggested Watling, looking first at Harrison, then at the captain.

Stanic nodded. "Payback."

▲▼▲

Durandel
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
28 May 2788

The near-total surprise and initial successes against the Combine troops in Durandel felt good. Four of the Snake 'Mechs were down, with only light damage to the militia. They'd pushed almost to the center of town before the Dracs had put up any real resistance. But it wasn't enough; it never would be, now that the Dracs had nuked Freeport and broadcast the atrocity as an object lesson to the insurgents.

Rowan took a step toward the wreckage of the *Phoenix Hawk* she'd dueled moments earlier, the battered remains looking like a marionette whose strings had been cut. The cockpit hatch popped open, steam venting into the air, and a slender helmeted figure began to clamber out. She couldn't see his face, but she knew the moment when he saw her standing there, the *Orion*'s left arm aimed at him. The pilot stiffened, shoulders pushed back as he reached up and lifted the helmet from his head. *Her head*, Rowan realized, *much the same age as me*. The pilot's hands went up, her gaze looking directly into the *Orion*'s viewport. *Expecting mercy? After Freeport?*

She fired, lasers washing over the downed 'Mech.

She watched the burning wreckage for a moment, then turned and resumed the march toward the market. "Sector three clear. Where do you need me, LT?"

"Hold at the town hall and watch for stragglers," came Harrison's reply. "They're pulling back to that *Union* at the landing field."

"Bugging out?" she asked, incredulous.

"More likely regrouping, but we can hope."

Minutes passed, then stretched into hours. As dusk fell, she watched the DropShip as it soared upward, its drive plume leaving a contrail that arrowed into the sky and eventually braided with those of other vessels heading into orbit.

Emotion surged within her, and she fought the instinct to cry. *We survived!* It wasn't victory, not with so many fallen, but she dared to hope. *It's over*.

▲▼▲

DCS Honor of Pesht, Assault Orbit
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
28 May 2788

Tai-sho Olav Nansen floated before the holo-projector, surprisingly calm as he addressed the Coordinator on his distant flagship. "It isn't here. Or, if it is, it's so well hidden that Marik will land his counter-blow before we can extract it. I request permission to withdraw, *tono*."

The stern visage regarded him. "*So ka*. The informant will be…" He paused, menacingly. "Chastised. I suggest you do the same with the target. Make sure of it." The connection ended. Nansen used a convenient handhold to re-orient himself to face his communications officer, a bead of sweat emerging on his brow.

"Open a channel to all ships." Hands flew across the keypads and the officer nodded. "This is Dragon One. Ghost Rain protocols. Authentication *Nana-Yon-Roku-Go-Kyu-Go-Hachi-Yon*. All ships execute on Dragon One's mark." He watched the comm-board light up with acknowledgments, then glanced over at the tactical officer, Maria Tadanori.

She nodded at him. "The last ships are away, *Tai-sho*."

Now to damn myself to the annals of eternity. "Mark."

▲▼▲

The *Union*-class DropShip boosted for orbit, massive engines accelerating its egg-shaped bulk at 2.5 gees through the rapidly thinning atmosphere. Around it, the other vessels of the Kurita raiding force raced along similar paths into orbit, following the narrow corridor that fleet command had ordered them to use. That wasn't usual, though nothing about this war, now raging for eighteen months, was. The ship ran on autopilot, but *Tai-sa* Michiko Isonev kept a close eye on the instruments and was the first to see them.

As the Combine vessels soared upwards, something else fell towards the planet. Lots of somethings, steel-clad and cobalt laced. A rain intended to eradicate life.

Then the warships began firing, adding their lasers and shells to the bombardment.

▲▼▲

Durandel
Helm, Stewart Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
28 May 2788

There was no warning of the first blow, just a brief flash followed by a devastating concussion. By the time the bang of air rushing into the superheated void was audible, half of the town was gone and Rowan's seventy-five-ton war machine was being tossed around like a rag doll. She didn't hear the ripping sound that followed, as shells joined the energy weapon discharge to pulverize Durandel.

Metal tore under the immense force, an inhuman scream as limbs were ripped away and the chassis buckled. The *Orion* died, its twisted remains flopping to the ground and bouncing. Rowan blacked out momentarily, coming to as the machine bounced a second time. A five-point harness held her securely in the command couch but g-forces wrenched her body one way, then immediately the other. Her limbs, unsecured, flailed and slammed into the consoles. The stabbing pain of breaking bones brought her back to consciousness again. Blood streamed down her face from dozens of glass-shard cuts but she became aware of telltales on the console indicating mass system failures.

A warning sound impinged on her dull consciousness—containment failure—the tone rising. *Auto-eject*, she realized dully, feeling the sharp tug at her legs as the restraints pulled her legs into place in preparation for the BattleMech's attempt to save its pilot. *Arms*, her brain managed to register through the haze. She dragged her right arm into her lap, screaming at the pain of a broken wrist, but her left arm dangled loose and numb. The alert tone reached a crescendo and she made a last ditch effort to move the recalcitrant limb by jerking her body. It moved, but her left hand still dangled on the rim of the chair.

There was a moment of sharp pain as the ejection rockets fired, then darkness returned.

▲▼▲

CNB Inc., Atreus City
Atreus, Marik Commonwealth
Free Worlds League
24 March 2826

[The interviewee looks straight into the camera lens, wiping away tears from her stern face.]

"The Rain itself killed millions in the first few minutes. I'm not sure of the precise number. Helmdown, Durandel, Port Wayland, Freeport. All wiped out in a matter of minutes. Those of us in the hills were lucky, I suppose. The Dracs just used orbital bombardment and the odd air-burst nuke. It was slaughter, but people in the shelters survived.

"Freeport and Port Wayland, though, that was another matter. Ground impacts and salted weapons poisoned the land, turning the ruins into a deadly trap for the survivors. The Yehudan Sea eventually drained away, too. Only salt flats remained.

"So why don't the citizens of the League use Helm as a rallying cry, like the Davions do with Kentares? Because the DCMS only killed ten million or so with their nukes and bombardment. The rest—the other sixty million who died in the winters that followed—were collateral damage. As I said, Helm was never a warm world. With the climate wrecked by the bombardment, and no infrastructure to speak of, the greatest foes we faced over the next couple of years were cold and starvation. And each other.

"We had no law and order. People killed each other over scraps of food and the most rudimentary of shelters. The militia was smashed and the rest of the League was too preoccupied to do much to help. It was three years before any sort of order was restored, and another dozen before life returned to normal. Not that anyone who lived through that could call life 'normal.' We all did things we're not proud of to survive, and I'll have to live with that for the rest of my days.

"They say 'live and let live,' but how can that be justified when psychopaths like the Kuritans can get away with murdering hundreds of millions—Helm and Kentares are the tip of the iceberg. Our worlds and our people survived, but so many did not. Imagine it, whole worlds lost because of greed and ambition, not least the Combine's. I should argue for peace, for an end to this god-forsaken war, but I can't. I want vengeance. I want them to suffer as we have."

[Tears are streaming down the interviewee's face once more, and she pulls at the microphone attached to her jacket.]

"Is that enough for you? Is that what you wanted?"

[The technician steps forward to help her, his white robes a stark contrast to her dark uniform, the ComStar News Bureau logo clearly visible.]

"Thank you, Miss Keeler. We'll ensure this makes the news syndication. Peace of Blake be with you."

▲▼▲

INTRODUCTION

Nearly six centuries ago, two men with a vision sought to unite humanity in an era of peace and prosperity. Despite decades of bloodshed before their dream was realized, it ultimately prevailed for close to two centuries. Feuds and rivalries were set aside—but not forgotten—until one man's greed and ambition collapsed the old order, unleashing those pent-up frustrations in a torrent of violence virtually unmatched in human history.

The conflicts that followed the fall of the Star League and Kerensky's Exodus are known collectively as the Succession Wars and span the years 2786 to 3040. The First and Second Succession Wars were brutal affairs which saw the profligate use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons with little regard for civilian life and planetary infrastructure. Tens of billions perished, either as a direct result of the conflicts or as a side effect of economic and environmental collapse. Whole worlds died. Even non-belligerents such as the Periphery states were caught up in the spiral of destruction, their economies too closely wed to those of the warring Successor States.

And yet, further disaster could have been avoided. The First Succession War drew to a close around 2820 after thirty-five years of fighting, the belligerents exhausted and needing to regroup. Peace might have been achieved, but doing so ran contrary to the interests of agencies both within and without the Successor States. These influences ensured bitter warfare soon reignited. The Succession Wars continued for another two hundred years, at first in the high-tempo warfare of the Second Succession War and later in the incessant low-level conflicts of the Third Succession War. High-tempo warfare resumed with the so-called Fourth Succession War and the War of 3039, though both are arguably the last gasps of the Third Succession War, more akin to the grand campaigns of the First Succession War than conflicts in their own right.

The return of Kerensky's forces as the Clans just over a century ago shifted the balance of power and brought the traditional Succession Wars to an end. It could be argued, however, that the invaders' goal of dominating the Inner Sphere and re-creating the Star League was just a metamorphosis of the Succession Wars—as, in its way, was the Blakist Jihad. The subsequent formation of the Republic of the Sphere was a second attempt at a pan-human society. While the Republic achieved many of its goals, it was less inclusive and overall less successful than the original Star League. Since Grey Monday more than fifteen years ago, a storm has engulfed our home. The heart of the Republic remains safe behind the walls of the Fortress, but our enemies continue to press forward. Can it be long before we face a new day of judgment? Should we fail, humanity faces another dark time. We should—we must—learn the lessons of the Succession Wars and not allow the horrors of those dark days, the vendettas and ambition and greed, to doom mankind.

To that end, we have commissioned a pair of primers exploring the Early Succession Wars and the motivations of those involved. You hold the first volume, which expands on the First Succession War; its companion details the Second Succession War.

—Paladin Constance McGuire, Geneva, Terra, 3150

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

BattleTech Historical: First Succession War is the latest in a series of products that explore major but little-detailed conflicts in the past of the BattleTech Universe. Here the focus is on the conflict known at the time as the Succession War, or the Great Succession War, but later called the First Succession War. This volume details the origin of the conflict, its major actions, and its aftermath: the Second Succession War (to be further detailed in *BattleTech Historical: Second Succession War*). As in previous entries in the *Historical* series, *First Succession War* is part sourcebook and part rulebook, and allows players to recreate key events of the war.

Ghost Rain, the introductory story, shows how the war impacted one world, detailing events only hinted at in the early days of *BattleTech*. *Prelude to War* provides the background to the First Succession War—the rise and fall of the Star League, and the preparations of the Great Houses in the dark days after Kerensky's Exodus. *The Succession War* details the major events of the thirty-five-year conflict, covering key engagements on all fronts as well as the internal political machinations of each nascent Successor State. *Eye of the Storm* covers the aftermath of the First Succession War and the attempts to broker a peace—while preparing for the next war—that ensued, providing a bridge to *BattleTech Historical: Second Succession War. Personalities* describes the histories and motivations of the House Lords and other notables of the conflict. The *Rules Annex* includes a number of items designed to aid play during the First Succession War, including rules for generating forces representative of the era and systems reflecting the impact of social and economic collapse.

PRELUDE TO WAR

"Whenever a man has cast a longing eye on offices, a rottenness begins in his conduct."
—Thomas Jefferson, *Letter*, 1799

"To assert brazenly that he is somehow better and more fitted to rule than any of the rest is the act of an egotistical man—a man hardly fit to rule over his own realm, let alone over us all."

—Archon Jennifer Steiner [*in response to Minoru Kurita declaring himself First Lord of the Star League*], 2787

OUT OF DARKNESS

Man's initial journey to the stars came under the auspices of the Western (later Terran) Alliance. However, the new domain of man soon grew too large to be effectively governed from a central point and, thanks to a mix of internal politics and local dissent, Terran authority collapsed, leaving hundreds of worlds to fend for themselves. Out of this chaos grew a plethora of new interstellar nations: the Chesterton Trade League, the Tamar Pact, the Principality of Rasalhague, the Marik Commonwealth, to name but a few. Many of these nations foundered, but others prospered, allying with their neighbors or subsuming their rivals to build larger and more robust powers. Over the course of a century, the modern nations we now call the Successor States emerged. These larger realms adopted the tenets of feudalism to facilitate their governance. As each came to be dominated by a single noble family, the name of those Great Houses became synonymous with their realms.

Soon, though, ambitions and rivalries emerged between these powers, and armed conflict became commonplace. The nations soon realized that unrestricted warfare would run contrary to their interests and, in 2412, they agreed to the Ares Conventions. For the Inner Sphere, this was both a boon and a curse: no longer would population centers or civilian infrastructure be targeted in these conflicts, nor would the military make indiscriminate use of weapons of mass destruction or orbital bombardment. However, in enshrining these protections the Conventions legitimized the use of warfare rather than diplomacy to solve disputes. To quote von Clausewitz, it was "politics by other means."

ROSE-TINTED GLASSES

According to popular myth, the Star League era was the pinnacle of human society, a golden age in which peace ruled and miracles occurred. Some aspects of that are true: under the League, there were unparalleled technological advances and the quality of life reached its pinnacle…if you could afford it. The gap between rich and poor was no less extreme than it is today, and for every civilized utopia there was a backwater hellhole. The idea of pervasive peace was equally illusory. The Star League began with bloodshed and rarely escaped it. There were a few decades without major conflict, but clashes between the member states and internal strife within each were commonplace. A farmer living on a border world in the "golden age" might have had a fusion-powered combine rather than one powered by ICE, but overall his standard of living was little different than before the League, and he could expect many of the same border issues as could his descendant in the years before the Clan Invasion.

Let's be honest, if the Star League had been a utopia, then we'd have never had the Succession Wars. Instead, the League was a pressure cooker, containing political and economic rivalries and allowing them to escalate to the point that, when the lid was blown off by the Amaris Coup and Kerensky's Exodus, a disastrous explosion ensued. That explosion—the First Succession War—was not only inevitable, but it was exacerbated far above what might have occurred had everything not been bottled up.

—Doctor Rebekka Maschke, Technisches Institut Berlin, 3098

The century and a half that followed became known as the Age of War and saw major advances in military technology, most notably the development of the BattleMech. Border wars were commonplace, including several whose adherence to the letter of the Ares Conventions rather than their spirit showed just how little life had improved for the common man. Eventually, in the mid-twenty-sixth century, Ian Cameron of the Terran Hegemony and Albert Marik of the Free Worlds League set about countering the horrors of the era, brokering alliances and settlements—or else browbeating and in some cases threatening the belligerents into ending hostilities.

The formation of the Star League in 2571 was intended to being about an era of peace and prosperity; the irony of the League's first major action being a war to bring the Periphery States into the benign despotism is not lost on most historians. That twenty-year conflict, the Reunification War, is detailed elsewhere, but its repercussions were felt throughout the two centuries of the Star League's existence. Most of the Inner Sphere states joined the Star League in order to benefit from trade or the technology of the Terran Hegemony, or else did so to prevent their Age of War rivals from gaining a decisive advantage. The early years of the alliance saw some drawing together of the Member States, but at the heart of their foreign and domestic policies was the idea of "what's in it for me?" Resenting their forced incorporation, few of the Periphery states ever paid the League more than lip service, even once the "benefits" of the alliance were thrust upon them.

The idea of cooperation was largely anathema to the leaders of the Great Houses, now the Council Lords of the Star League. By the League's first centennial in 2671, the cracks were beginning to show. During its second century, various internal and external conflicts emerged. The Star League largely kept a lid on those conflicts—though their policy in doing so proved erratic—but underneath, the rivalries festered.

When Stefan Amaris staged his coup in 2765, the Council Lords could have acted in concert and stopped him cold. They didn't, due to a combination of political rivalries and greed (though in the case of House Kurita, family members held hostage by Amaris played a role in that nation's inaction). Instead, they took a neutral stance, and aided neither Amaris nor Aleksandr Kerensky's counter-offensive. In some instances, their neutrality was so intense—and even belligerent—that Kerensky and various Houses believed that other Council Lords in fact conspired with the Usurper; the Draconis Combine was a particular target for these suspicions. Only at war's end did the Coordinator's motivations become apparent, and the records of Kerensky's campaigns prove that, unlike other member states, the Combine provided direct military aid to

TRAITOR OR MARTYR?

Kerensky's next action continues to divide opinions across the Inner Sphere. At the time, popular support backed Kerensky as the new First Lord, but the General refused to force himself onto the High Council. Instead, he focused on rebuilding the SLDF and undertaking relief operations within the Terran Hegemony. He worked closely with the Minister of Communications, Jerome Blake, all the while hoping that the Council would come to their senses. When they didn't, disbanding the body in August 2781, he began to explore other options.

His first step was calming interventionist elements within the SLDF, including a cabal headed by General Lauren Hayes of the 151st Royal BattleMech Division which planned a military campaign to force the House Lords to comply with Kerensky's wishes. Despite the General's efforts, tensions within the SLDF simmered, and the Houses regarded the SLDF as a knife held at their throats.

House efforts to suborn the SLDF during the summer of 2783 finally disabused General Kerensky of his hopes of a political solution. Having ruled out a military push, he found his options swiftly dwindling. By mid-September, the core of the Exodus plan was in place and, through the autumn, other interested parties such as Minister Blake were consulted amid the tightest security. Blake did not favor the departure of the SLDF, but a deal was hammered out to support his efforts to maintain the Hegemony with those SLDF troops who declined the option to join Kerensky's Exodus fleet.

The maneuvers associated with Kerensky's Exodus plan, outlined to the entirety of the SLDF in February 2784, heightened tensions. Feelings of guilt about their actions and treatment of the General made many of the House Lords fear punitive action, but they were surprised when the most of the SLDF upped stakes and, in November 2784, disappeared into the Periphery.

(CONTINUED ON P. 13)

the SLDF. The Lyran Commonwealth, on the other hand, went so far as to exploit the SLDF's operations in the Rim Worlds Republic for its own gain, with only the threat of a popular revolt among the pro-Star League populace curbing the Archon's actions. Thanks to long-standing personal issues between Captain-General Kenyon Marik and Kerensky, the Free Worlds League attempted military action against the SLDF because of "territorial violations," though their efforts were half-hearted and inept.

INTO DESPAIR

After years of bitter fighting, Kerensky prevailed, and Amaris was cast down. The Terran Hegemony lay in ruins and the Cameron family in their graves, but both the Star League and the Terran Hegemony could have been rebuilt. A new First Lord might have been selected from among the High Council—though Kerensky was the popular choice—and the lessons of the past thirty years, the rise of Richard Cameron and Amaris' usurpation, could have been used to forge the Star League anew.

Instead, the Council Lords stripped Kerensky of his office as Protector of the Realm and set about bickering among themselves. Some slighted Kerensky because he was a rival for power, others because of personal animosities. A few later admitted it was the wrong decision. In her memoirs, Barbara Liao decried the Council's stupidity, writing, "Too late, we came to realize that what we did that day was worse than any crime—it was a mistake." Even with the SLDF bloodied, Kerensky could easily force the Council to accept his authority—and the look of disgust he shot them before departing made the Council fear that he would—but the General's sense of honor prevailed. Despite pressure from his advisors to seize the throne, he refused to do so. Instead, as he prepared to depart Terra for the SLDF headquarters on New Earth, he called upon the High Council to adhere to the honors of war and to treat Amaris' defeated forces with compassion and respect.

The High Council spent ten months in deliberations, but other than dismissing Kerensky, they agreed on only one other thing: the installation of Jerome Blake as Minister of Communications. Rebuilding the Star League and Hegemony, though within the Council's power, seems never to have been seriously considered. With no Cameron heirs remaining and Kerensky standing aloof, each Council Lord advanced his or her own claim to the post. Diplomacy, bribery and threats were all employed, but none proved effective. On 12 August 2781 the House Lords abandoned their deliberations, dissolving the Council but stopping short of disbanding the Star League. Though it would be several more years before the effects of this decision struck home for the people of the Inner Sphere, the Council Lords knew only one course of action remained open to them: War.

Kerensky spent much of the next two years shuttling back and forth between the House capitals, attempting to broker a settlement between the former Council Lords. He hoped to stave off the collapse of the Star League and the eruption of warfare, a course of action which enjoyed massive support throughout all six nations. Only the people of the Periphery realms did not support Kerensky's diplomacy, though unlike their stance during the events that preceded the Amaris Coup, they did not oppose the Star League. If the League left them alone, they would leave it alone.

Kenyon Marik refused to meet with Kerensky face-to-face; the General instead met with the Speaker of Parliament, Isaac Venkatesan, during his visit to Atreus. The meeting was civilized but unproductive. The other heads of state were more polite but no more forthcoming. John Davion expressed sympathy for Kerensky's efforts but refused to support the candidacy of any other House Lord (though some entries from the General's personal log suggest Davion was amenable to having Kerensky as the new First Lord). The new Lyran Archon, Jennifer Steiner, was warmer to Kerensky than her late brother Robert had been—as a young child she had been present at the meetings between her father, Michael, and the future General—but Robert's annexation of the Rim Worlds Republic remained an obstacle to any agreement. Barbara Liao was perhaps the most sympathetic of the leaders. She already regretted the Council's treatment of Kerensky, but she felt that by early 2783 the situation had degenerated too far for recovery. No official records survive of Kerensky's meeting with Minoru Kurita, but Clan Goliath Scorpion possessed a painting dating to the Exodus depicting the General and the aged Coordinator kneeling in a traditional Japanese garden, sipping tea. Titled "The Venerable Warriors' Regrets," the painting's artist is unknown and its details are suspect—at least one of the species of cherry appearing in the picture does not exist on Luthien—but it remains the only record of the meeting.

It became clear to Kerensky that the five former Council Lords had little desire to return to the status quo. Though they paid lip service to continuance of the Star League, they reveled in the freedoms its absence offered. Prior to the Amaris Civil War, they managed to loosen

the shackles imposed by the Camerons, but with the League gone they were unfettered and free to act as their whims and conscience (or rather, lack of one) dictated. They suborned worlds, by diplomacy, coercion and guile, and sought to recruit troops idle since the war, both those of the Rim Worlds Republic and the SLDF. This latter trend became increasingly blatant, and, in the summer of 2783, it grew clear that Great House agents were attempting to entice whole SLDF formations into joining their armies. Kerensky protested; the House Lords' response was to call for both his resignation and the disbanding of the SLDF. When news reached the General on 3 September of the defection of the Ninety-first Heavy Assault Regiment (The Armadillos) to the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns, he knew the time for diplomacy was past.

Many histories blame the Council Lords' desires to rule the Star League as the trigger for the wars that followed—hence their name, the Succession Wars. While their claims to the First Lordship were a factor, the causes of the war were deeper and less rooted in political ambition. Often overlooked is the extent to which the Star League bound together the Inner Sphere financially, and how interdependent the economies of its nations became. Amaris' usurpation of power caused major disruptions to the economies of the five remaining Great Houses, but the collapse of the Hegemony and the Star League turned recession into depression. The severing of those economic links as the political situation worsened further inflamed the situation. The Houses found a short-term financial salve in gobbling up the worlds of the Hegemony, a process that began in 2783 and accelerated after Kerensky's departure. All wanted the jewel in the crown, Terra itself. But even when hostilities broke out, none were brave enough to make a direct grab for it.

(TRAITOR OR MARTYR? CONTINUED)

We know now that it was far from a unanimous decision. The interventionist core around Hayes chose to stay and work for Blake's Ministry of Communications (see p. 258), while others joined the House militaries or turned to mercenary work. For more than 250 years the fate of Kerensky's force was unknown and the subject of much speculation. Their return to the Inner Sphere in 3050 as the Clans forever changed the Inner Sphere and continues to be a focus of events a century later. Those interested in the fate of the SLDF and its metamorphosis should consult Dr. Saga Brest's *Operation Klondike*, or Phelan Kell's *The Clans: Warriors of Kerensky*.

At the time, some regarded Kerensky's departure as a noble sacrifice, a warrior removing himself and his men from the field of battle. Others regarded him as a traitor, someone who could have made a massive difference in the lives of those left behind. Kerensky was accused of abrogating his duty; the departure of the SLDF, the fear of which had kept the Houses in line, has been likened to removing the control rods from a fission reactor. Without the SLDF to act as policeman and parent, the disputes between the Great Houses escalated and the march to war became unstoppable.

—Professor Philip Lynch, *Legacies of the Fall*, Trinity-Dublin Press, 3128

TO THE BRINK

The early 2780s saw mass migration within the Hegemony as its population sought respite from the horrors of war. The SLDF and Ministry of Communications attempted to rebuild the nation, but there were massive differences between the core worlds of the Hegemony, which were the last liberated, most fiercely fought over, and benefited from the least time for reconstruction, and those on the fringes of the shattered state that were in more tolerable condition. Terra wasn't spared this outward migration from the Hegemony core to its fringes, which included significant emigration to the Successor States—more than six billion people, around half of Terra's population, departed for greener pastures. This drain of resources further hampered rebuilding efforts and placed additional strain on those worlds that had been partially restored. The Houses were more than willing to exploit the resulting chaos.

The Great Houses' dismemberment of the Terran Hegemony began slowly. At first, they undertook relief operations, winning hearts and minds before sending in "advisors" to rebuild local governments. Soon, troops were involved, and, as the Succession Wars loomed, the military aspects of these operations far exceeded the humanitarian ones. Though the First Succession War (at first just known as the Succession War) did not officially begin until 2786-2787, military operations within the former Hegemony and along its borders had been underway for almost two years prior.

Though active within the Hegemony since the fall of Amaris, the Great Houses reaped their initial rewards in early 2783. The first world to official leave the Hegemony was Syrma, which had been jointly controlled with House Steiner. Syrma's authorities petitioned the Archon for full membership on 19 July, and the world formally joined the Commonwealth six weeks later. Other worlds followed—a total of seventeen by the end of 2783, with the pace increasing over the next two years. By the eve of the First Succession War, sixty-seven Hegemony worlds had been absorbed by the Great Houses. The Free Worlds League was the largest beneficiary, annexing seventeen worlds, closely followed by the Capellan Confederation with fifteen and the Lyran Commonwealth with fourteen. The Draconis Combine claimed the fewest worlds in the land grab, as the Coordinator chose to build a solid base for future operations rather than over-extend the Combine's position. A few Hegemony worlds put up token resistance to their annexation, but most were relieved at the return of central authority, which represented an economic lifeline and the continuance of reconstruction efforts.

OVER THE EDGE

The period following Kerensky's departure and prior to the start of the First Succession War is commonly referred to as the Phony War. Though it did not feature the open warfare and mass assaults that would soon become commonplace, it saw numerous probes—and in some cases full-scale invasions—as the Great Houses jockeyed for position and tested their opponents' resolve and preparedness.

With military forces on the move, it became inevitable that clashes would ensue, and worlds such as Towne soon became hotly contested. Meanwhile, seeking to test Steiner resolve, the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery probed the defenses along its border with the Lyran Commonwealth. In 2785, a series of raids followed the pattern of the Third Hidden War, with the raiders disguised as bandits or mercenaries but their true identity nonetheless readily apparent to both sides. Not wanting to be the first to initiate open warfare, Archon Jennifer refused to rise to the bait (or, to the Combine mind, showed no fighting spirit). Realizing her hesitancy, Coordinator Minoru Kurita authorized additional raids. The DCMS soon

HIDDEN AGENDAS

Minister Blake undertook political and economic actions to safeguard his fief. During 2786, he visited leaders of each of the Great Houses and won approval for an accord that would become the Communications Protocol of 2787. The accord recognized the Ministry of Communications, rebranded ComStar in 2787, as a neutral body. The agreements also recognized ComStar premises and possessions, including all HPG stations, as sovereign territory and thus outside House law. At the time this seemed a minor provision to safeguard the HPGs, but Blake had a much wider goal for the protections of the Protocol.

In addition to the Protocols, Blake's negotiations established the ComStar Letter of Credit (later renamed the C-bill) as the standard of interchange between ComStar and the Houses. By extension, the C-bill became the standard of international commerce—such as it was on the eve of the Succession Wars—and gave ComStar economic as well as political leverage.

Though not revealed until centuries later, Jerome Blake had his own ambitions for the Terran Hegemony. The Ministry of Communications was the sole remaining Star League institution; Blake hoped that with the aid of the SLDF forces bequeathed to him by General Kerensky he would be able to hold and restore the shattered Hegemony. The rapaciousness of the Great Houses ended that dream, but backed by troops under General Lauren Hayes, Blake still hoped to establish a remnant under ComStar authority. In late 2786, amid the outbreak of the First Succession War, Blake began formalizing his plans, designating them Operation SILVER SHIELD.

Elements of eighteen divisions and a similar number of independent regiments chose to side with Blake. From this force, Hayes assembled eight full divisions with a similar quantity of reserve material. This force was not ready to take action at the time the Succession War began, but it soon would, masquerading as mercenaries.

—Misha Auburn, *A Complete History of the Succession Wars*, Tharkad Press, 3054

INTO THE FIRE

"None have the strength or moral fortitude required, and so the Dragon takes it upon itself to do what must be done. As of this day, the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine shall also be addressed as First Lord of the Star League. "

—Minoru Kurita, personal address, 31 December 2786

lost interest in their attacks against the Lyran Commonwealth—the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces' performance convinced Kurita that House Steiner posed little threat to the Combine. Instead, he chose to focus his efforts on his old enemy, the Federated Suns.

House Davion was relatively slow to capitalize on the post-Exodus situation, though the Suns recruited their fair share of SLDF troops and Hegemony worlds. Nonetheless, incidents such as the Towne Debacle, in which internal squabbling prevented a large Federated Suns garrison from crushing Capellan and Combine raiders, highlighted the organizational weaknesses within the AFFS. Rivalries between units and regions further exacerbated the situation, as certain troops and commanders refused to aid their comrades. The situation was later likened to a wall of bricks assembled without mortar; with nothing binding them together, it was possible to poke out individual bricks until, inevitably, the whole organization collapsed. Such were the AFFS defenses on the eve of war—superficially powerful but rife with weaknesses. Even had the political situation been better, there were other fundamental flaws in the Davion position. Like all the Great Houses, the Federated Suns struggled through a major economic downturn in the post-Star League era, which turned into a full-blown economic crash by late 2786. While spending extravagantly on new troops, Davion commanders' provincial mindset limited the realm's expenditure on logistics and transport assets. As such, even had they wanted to help their neighbors, many of the troops along the Suns' borders lacked the ability to do so.

The Draconis Combine's focus on the Lyran Commonwealth during the Phony War convinced Davion High Command that they faced only a limited threat from the Dragon. Instead, they chose to focus most of the nation's assets on the Capellan border, intending to pre-empt any Liao offensive by engaging the Capellan Confederation Armed Forces in their home territory and relying on static defenses along the Combine border to hold back any Kuritan raids. The error would nearly prove fatal.

Barbara Liao may have regarded the High Council's dismissal of Kerensky as a grievous mistake, but that didn't prevent her from strengthening the position of her Capellan Confederation. With several SLDF units added to her arsenal, Liao prepared for war against both the Free Worlds League and the Federated Suns. The Confederation also gobbled up as many former Hegemony worlds as the CCAF could reach, a process that continued more than a dozen years into the First Succession War. Showing little compunction about the morality of the looming conflict, Liao ordered the distribution of nuclear and chemical weapons to front-line units, and granted regional commanders release authority for the strategic weapons. She feared the Confederation would be forced to fight a bloody defensive on both the League and Suns fronts, though the reality would be far more deadly for the Confederation's neighbors.

Unlike the other Great Houses, the Free Worlds League was not a monolithic entity easily pressured into war. However, Captain General Kenyon Marik used the instability of the Phony War to forge his authority, traditionally limited by the role of his nation's Parliament, into real power. Resolution 288, passed in 2784, granted the Captain-General extraordinary powers for "the duration of the crisis." In effect, Parliament handed over executive power to the Captain-General—while retaining control of the purse strings—and allowed him to undertake whatever military and diplomatic actions he saw fit. Marik's biography blames the Lyran Commonwealth for the outbreak of hostilities between the two nations, a strike against Bolan in May 2785. Though far from decisive engagement, it briefly focused the Free Worlds League Militia's attention on their old rivals. Unfortunately for the Capellan Confederation, the distraction would be brief.

On New Year's Eve 2786, Coordinator Minoru Kurita fired the first shot of the Succession Wars. By claiming the lordship of the Star League for himself, he provided the other House Lords with the excuse they had been waiting for. The other Lords soon followed suit and issued their own claims—either with due solemnity, such as John Davion's speech to the former High Council, or with a sense of irony, as in Jennifer Steiner's address. Their claims had little basis in jurisprudence or fact, but that mattered little to the five Great Houses. Now, they had a justification for war.

The Succession War had begun.

WAR
WAR
WAR

THE SUCCESSION WAR (2786-2821)

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
—George Santayana, *Reason in Common Sense*, 1901

"Leaving? What do you mean 'leaving'? To where? He can't leave! Who is going to pick up the pieces after we beat each other into oblivion?"
—Archon Jennifer Steiner, regarding General Kerensky's Exodus, 2784

To many historians, General Kerensky's Exodus sealed the Inner Sphere's fate, ensuring the final death of the Star League era and the beginning of the Succession Wars. Had Kerensky and his SLDF loyalists stayed, they argue, the superior technology of the battle-hardened survivors from the war against Amaris might have managed to reclaim the Terran Hegemony, establish a new ruling line, and maybe even force the Council Lords back to the negotiating table. Even with the benefit of more than three centuries' hindsight, many of these presumptions persist today. But collectively, they miss the greater picture of an Inner Sphere that was ultimately destined to collapse, no matter what Kerensky did.

In 2784, General Aleksandr Kerensky commanded an active-duty army of some three million front-line soldiers, distributed across forty 'Mech divisions, ninety-five infantry divisions, and 117 independent commands—for a total of approximately 635 regiments of BattleMech units alone. The SLDF naval forces at the time consisted of 414 active WarShips, with perhaps twenty times as many combat-capable DropShips and other large support vessels. After the fierce fighting against the Usurper Amaris, virtually all of these forces were staffed by seasoned veterans.

By all accounts, the officers commanding these assets pledged their loyalty to Kerensky and were willing to fight to restore the Terran Hegemony with him as its new monarch. Some among them, such as General Lauren Hayes of the 151st Royal BattleMech Division, went far enough to plan just such a campaign. Even General Aaron DeChavilier, Kerensky's right-hand man and most trusted friend, was said to have favored the idea.

That Kerensky was exhausted by the war against the Usurper is beyond any doubt, but his reluctance to take up the mantle of the next First Lord was rooted in the ideal that doing so would betray the Star League as long as it still stood. He had led his soldiers to save the League, after all, not become its next usurpers. To him, doing so while there was a chance the House Lords could possibly reach a peaceful consensus would have destroyed all that his troops had fought and died for. But, as many have noted, all of those reasons vanished the moment the Council Lords disbanded the High Council in February of 2781. Technically speaking, that official declaration would have voided Kerensky's responsibilities to the League's government, and opened the door to a swift, overwhelming military takeover of the Hegemony worlds.

Understanding why Kerensky chose to instead lead more than three-fourths of the surviving SLDF into exile is a subject that has filled many volumes since that fateful day in 2784. Looking over the numbers, there is little doubt that they would have succeeded in any campaign to reclaim the Hegemony, whether it was Hayes' ambitious CASE RED plan, or something more measured. Even with postwar defections and other troop departures, and the increasingly rapid build-up of the other House armies and fleets since 2780, Kerensky still had as many 'Mech regiments at his command as all five neighboring states combined, supported by a combat fleet that could easily overpower the entire navy of any single other realm.

But none of that would have *prevented* the Succession Wars, and the great general knew it.

Kerensky was a principled man, but he was not naïve. The damage from the war against Amaris had left many of the Hegemony's industries in shambles, and some of its key worlds were already beginning to slide toward complete collapse despite the best efforts of men like Jerome Blake. At the same time, the Houses raced to build their own armies larger than ever, massing troops and launching even more WarShips. Seizing Terra and the rest of the Hegemony was within Kerensky's means, but he would then be placed in the unenviable position of trying to hold a realm in a state of near-total infrastructural collapse while surrounded by hostile neighbors. The House Lords were so set on their own desires to dominate the Inner Sphere that they actually disbanded the League, rather than allow any of their competitors to claim the throne, but they had already demonstrated their mutual fear of Kerensky when they defrocked him. Knowing that, Kerensky could easily see the divided Houses uniting just to bring down his restored Hegemony, all but guaranteeing that his next war would come swiftly, and from all sides.

Thus, knowing that all he could hope to accomplish was to add one more faction to the wars that were certain to come—a faction that would surely draw the most devastating attention from all sides—Kerensky chose to lead this troops and their families into exile. For all of his efforts, he knew that a new age of war was certain, and decided to ensure the survival of the finest men and women he'd ever known by finding them a home as far away from the crossfire as he could.

RACING TOWARD ARMAGEDDON

Long before the end of Kerensky's war against Amaris, the House Lords had been waging covert wars, cloaked as random piracy, while whittling away at the Star League-era edicts that kept the SLDF singularly superior to their own militaries. Whether for their own ends, or as a result of their indecisiveness during what many cast as a Terran-vs-Periphery conflict, these rulers stood by as Kerensky's forces first pummeled the Periphery rebels, and continued to do so after the Usurper's coup. Having taken advantage of First Lord Richard Cameron's youth and naïveté, they built up their strengths, and fortified their borders. Under a veneer of passive neutrality, each prepared for the chance to seize the Star League's throne for his or her own House—or for the equally likely possibility that their ancient enemies would strike first.

COMPARATIVE INNER SPHERE MILITARY STRENGTHS

Realm	'Mech Regiments* (2780 / 2784 / 2786)	Active WarShips** (2780 / 2784 / 2786)
Star League Defense Force	635 / 515 / —	414 / 414 / —
Capellan Confederation	92 / 96 / 121	92 / 119 / 153
Draconis Combine	114 / 139 / 147	100 / 150 / 194
Federated Suns	116 / 139 / 143	110 / 149 / 184
Free Worlds League	95 / 106 / 119	103 / 133 / 163
Lyran Commonwealth	94 / 104 / 122	130 / 180 / 216

*Approximate numbers, based on regimental strength averages of 120 BattleMechs, discounting supporting elements

**Figures do not include reserve vessels and other non-combat vessels

In the wake of the Terran liberation, this arms race only accelerated. With the possibility that Kerensky might yet make a play to install himself as a new Hegemony director-general, thereby laying claim to the First Lordship regardless of the legalities, the House Lords saw the Hegemony worlds as potentially their strongest foes in the wars ahead. As they moved to annex the closest Hegemony worlds under the pretext of protection, military industries shifted into overdrive in all five Member States. Within the span of less than five years, each realm had increased its BattleMech forces by ten percent or more, and their fleet strengths ballooned by as much as fifty percent.

Even before Kerensky's fateful exodus, few believed that the future held anything *but* war; it was merely a question of when the first shots would be fired, and who would pull the trigger. The SLDF's departure eliminated the single biggest potential combatant from the field, but merely put the remaining five Houses on equal footing. Naturally, this led to another scramble in military preparedness, as tensions on every border rose with each passing day.

The Inner Sphere became a tinderbox, just waiting for the spark that would ignite it.

IGNITION POINTS

The first shots of what would eventually be known as the Succession Wars came some months before the official declarations of hostilities. These battles served as pretexts under which the various House Lords informally acknowledged the new era of conflict.

THE BOLAN OFFENSIVE

The first major action of the Succession Wars was the Lyran Commonwealth's "surgical offensive" against the world of Bolan. Dubbed "Operation ELBOW JOINT" by the LCAF High Command, this attack was officially classified as a pre-emptive strike, launched in response to "signs of naked aggression" from the Free Worlds League. This justification was backed up by the Free Worlds' annexation of Millungera and Saltillo in 2783 and 2784, respectively; the two worlds were jointly administered by House Marik and the former Star League to keep an eye on the flow of traffic into the Thumb region. Lyran historians who prefer to see their native realm as a state that rarely starts a conflict point to these facts to explain the necessity of the Bolan offensive, even though the existence of such "naked aggression" remains disputed by Free Worlds historians to this day.

INTO THE VOID

Aleksandr Kerensky's Exodus in November 2784 cleared the last major roadblock to the ambitions of the House Lords. Though they had already disbanded the Star League and defrocked its Protector, and spent the better part of five years gradually dismantling the Terran Hegemony while massing their armies, few believed that any of the ruling families would have dared to launch a major offensive with the threat of the SLDF still present. For many, the six months that followed Kerensky's departure had the feel of an Inner Sphere holding its collective breath, waiting for the conflict that no longer seemed avoidable.

As the realms left behind them slid into the inevitable chaos of the First Succession War, Kerensky's exiles spent nearly two years beyond the boundaries of settled space, traveling first spinward, then coreward, in their search for new homelands. The journey was not without incident, as agitators among the assembled ships soon grew disillusioned and advocated a return to the Inner Sphere. In 2785, this dissent culminated in the *Prinz Eugen* Revolt, a mutiny that Kerensky took drastic measures to put down.

In August 2786, the self-exiled remnants of the once great Star League finally set down to begin their life anew on a cluster of five planets that came to be known as the Pentagon Worlds. Harsh conditions, and a need for more hands to build their society than defend it, prompted Kerensky to enact strict protocols to weed out lesser troops in the name of strengthening each planet's infrastructure. While wars spread throughout the Inner Sphere, the Star League-in-Exile grew and explored the nearby worlds of what would be known as the Kerensky Cluster.

For almost twenty years, the Exodus survivors expanded their colonies, and began to raise a new generation far from mankind's homelands. But survival alone was not enough for some; the seeds of doubt and the bitterness of eking out an existence on hostile planets under an enforced policy of social engineering took their toll. The Pentagon settlers also began to group themselves along traditional cultural lines, carrying over the attendant resentments to their new home. Uprisings erupted with increasing frequency, and finally boiled over into all-out war with the death of Aaron DeChavilier during an insurgency on Eden. Overcome with grief at the loss of his old friend, Aleksandr Kerensky's response was a heavy-handed military action which only intensified the violence, until all five Pentagon worlds were in open revolt.

(CONTINUED ON P. 18)

INTO THE VOID (CONTINUED)

Upon the death of the Great General in 2801, the remaining leaders of the SLDF-in-exile split on whether his son and heir apparent, Nicholas Kerensky, should assume his mantle and quell the uprisings. The younger Kerensky decided instead to lead those officers and troops loyal to him on a second Exodus to the Kerensky Cluster world of Strana Mechty. There, determined to build a new society and military free from the legacies of Inner Sphere identities, he furthered the social engineering protocols his father had employed to build the Pentagon colonies, and reorganized his top loyalists into twenty hyper-elite groups known as the Clans. Through years of grueling tests and training, Nicholas prepared his Clans for their first great challenge: the reclamation of the Pentagon worlds.

In June of 2821, scarcely two months after the signing of the Bella Accords in the Inner Sphere, Nicholas Kerensky launched Operation KLONDIKE. As the First Succession War came to its end, the might of the newborn Clans was unleashed against the Pentagon Worlds.

—Winston Chambers, *A Pocket History of the Inner Sphere*, Terra Press, 3122

Regardless of which party was the more aggrieved, the outcome of the Bolan Offensive quickly set the tone for the entire war to come.

The Commonwealth attack centered on three BattleMech regiments, supported by twice as many regiments of infantry and armor, plus four wings of aerospace fighters. These forces arrived in the Bolan system escorted by a combat naval task force that included three *Commonwealth*-class cruisers, and four *Mako*-class corvettes.

Commanding the operation was Leutnant-General Baron Richart Johonson von Eilenburg. A young officer, Johonson's pre-war combat experience consisted of several bloodless actions during House Steiner's capture of the Rim Worlds Republic worlds already crushed by Kerensky's SLDF. He was a virtual unknown to the majority of the troops and officers he led to Bolan. That a wealthy member of the nobility rose to the rank of leutnant-general in the LCAF scarcely surprised anyone, but how he won the command of the Lyrans' first major legitimate military action since the end of the Age of War has been hotly debated for centuries.

On 7 March 2785, Operation ELBOW JOINT began with the arrival of the JumpShip *Lucian Bell*, an independent merchant well known to the Bolan region outposts on both sides of the League-Commonwealth border. Docked with this vessel was a single *Mule*-class DropShip, operating under civilian registry. Shortly after materializing at Bolan's zenith jump point, where the system's sole recharge and customs station was located, the *Lucian Bell* unfurled her jump sail and hailed the station chiefs. After what seemed a routine exchange of pleasantries, the *Bell* prepared for an equally routine customs inspection of its cargo—a common protocol even before the days of rising border tensions between House Lords.

As the customs shuttles approached, both the *Mule*'s cargo bay doors and the *Bell*'s flight bays opened, disgorging two squadrons of LCAF fighters that swiftly dispatched the inbound craft. Immediately afterward, the *Mule* detached itself and burned toward the station while broadcasting heavy ECM. The short firefight that followed ended with more than a platoon of Lyran marines forcibly boarding the customs station, while the fighters destroyed every other non-Lyran ship in the vicinity.

Despite the attackers' efficiency, one of the League patrol shuttles did manage to get word out to the in-system defenders. By the time the message was received, however, it was too late; within minutes of the first shots fired, a *Commonwealth*-class WarShip jumped in at the zenith jump point, escorting a flotilla of JumpShips carrying a regiment of LCAF troops. At nearly the same time, a second group of ships—this one carrying the task force's remaining ground forces, and backed up by an additional six WarShips—materialized at a LaGrange point along Bolan's orbital plane.

On the planet were two regiments of the Free Worlds League's Bolan Defenders brigade, formations raised from the worlds of the Bolan Thumb after they were captured during the Age of War. These regiments, nominally commanded by Colonel Salam Tutt of the Sixth Defenders, were dispersed across the planet's major landmasses; half were engaged in war games exercises at the time the alerts came in. Meanwhile, Bolan's orbital defenses consisted almost entirely of three *League*-class destroyers and the *Manaslu*, a reconditioned *Aegis*-class cruiser.

Topping off the defenders' assets was a massive fortress known as the Overwatch. Formerly the headquarters for the SLDF's 418th Mechanized Infantry Division, the Overwatch was a heavily reinforced complex on the planet's lightly settled Sebari continent. Though not quite a fully-functional Castle Brian like those of the crumbling Terran Hegemony, the Overwatch did boast several surface-to-orbit defense batteries and long-range strategic missile platforms. These facilities, according to Commonwealth intelligence, were being used as a storage site for munitions and equipment intended for an imminent Free Worlds offensive against the Lyran Commonwealth.

As it happened, House Steiner's intelligence was correct—Kenyon Marik was indeed preparing to employ the strategically placed Bolan worlds as a springboard to a great Commonwealth invasion. But the League's captain-general could not resist the opportunity to claim Terran worlds as soon as Kerensky was out of the picture. Thus, the ships and troops intended for the campaign against House Steiner were diverted spinward, even as stockpiles were built across the Thumb.

When the alert reached Bolan itself, the Marik forces scrambled into action. After sending an emergency HPG request for reinforcements from the nearest garrisons, Colonel Tutt conferred with his fellow regimental commander, Colonel Henri Balkichek of the Tenth Defenders. He ordered the bulk of the Tenth to defend the planetary capital of Mumbai on the Sakete continent, with a battalion of the Sixth deployed at the nearby port city of Quetta. A battalion of the Tenth was also dispatched to cover the city of Calcutta, the largest settlement on the Kashmir continent, with a third of the Sixth's supporting elements assigned to back them up. The rest of the two 'Mech regiments' collective support assets were peppered in company-sized formations throughout the major townships on Sakete and Kashmir, including Multan, Peshawar, Sibi, Sukkur and Vadora. Finally, local militia and security forces were placed on high alert to watch for incoming invaders, but given strict orders to avoid engagement and instead report all contacts and determine enemy troop strength should they appear in these lower-populated areas. This left the remainder of Tutt's ground strength—two battalions of BattleMechs—to defend the area around the Overwatch itself.

In space, the League WarShips first squared off against the Lyrans inbound along the solar plane. These ships—the *Commonwealth*-class cruisers *Caledonia* and *Donegal*, escorted by the *Mako*-class corvettes *Aurelius*, *Nerva*, *Vespasian*, and *Vitellius*—presented more than enough firepower to shatter the Marik defense fleet by themselves, but also included secondary support in the form of two squadrons of assault DropShips and fighters. Despite the Steiners' superior numbers, however, their attacking fleet divided itself too broadly; the four corvettes ranged far ahead with light DropShip support, eager to engage the Marik destroyers *Talwar*, *Turk*, and *Tyberium* that rose to meet them. Using a series of feints and sudden retreats, the League ships further scattered the inbound corvettes, and managed to inflict enough damage to force the *Nerva* and *Vespasian* to fall back before the attacking cruisers reached planetary orbit with a mass of transport DropShips close behind them.

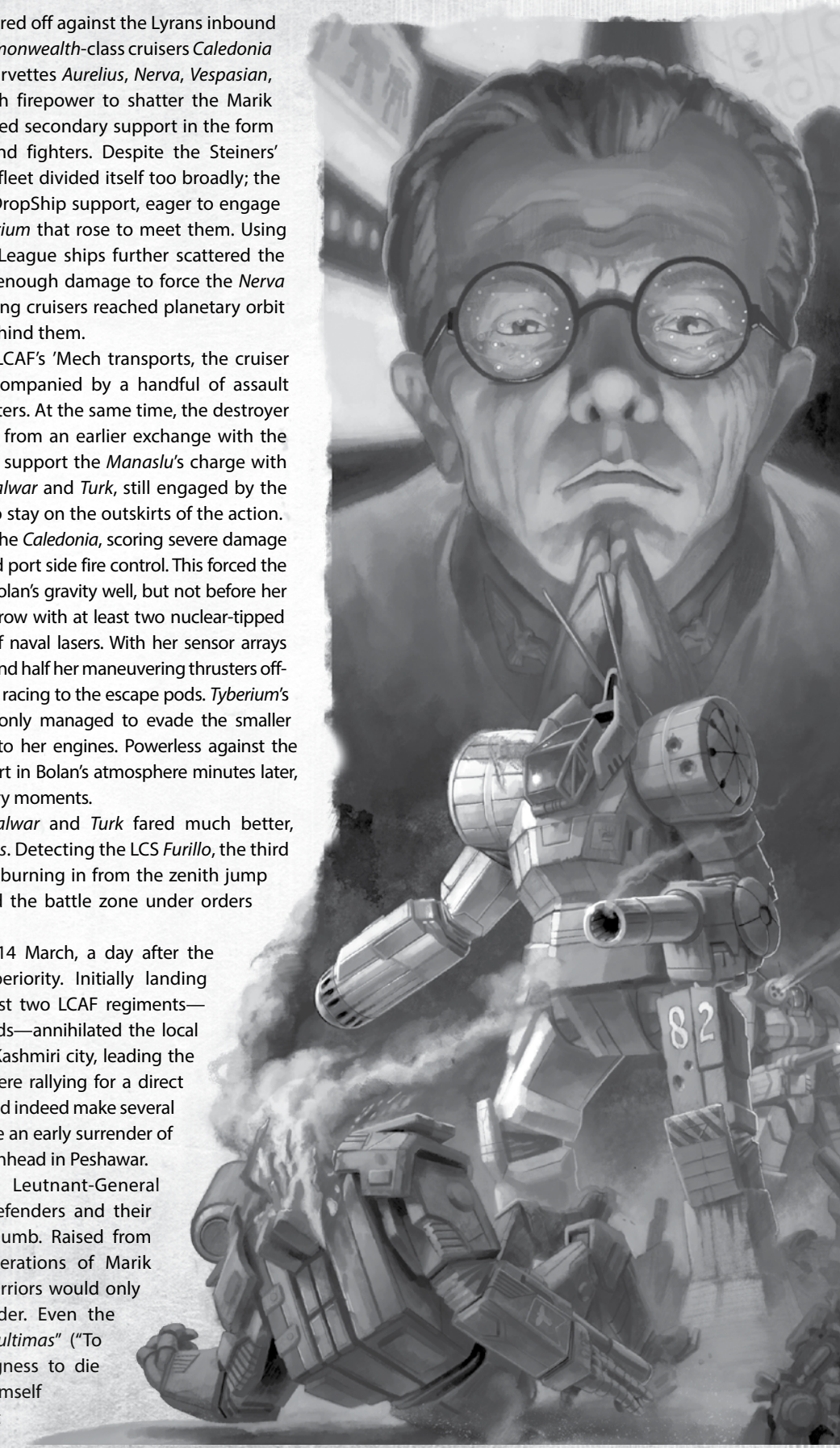
In a desperate effort to intercept the LCAF's 'Mech transports, the cruiser *Manaslu* engaged in a headlong rush, accompanied by a handful of assault DropShips and two squadrons of heavy fighters. At the same time, the destroyer *Tyberium*—already suffering heavy damage from an earlier exchange with the corvettes *Nerva* and *Vitellius*—attempted to support the *Manaslu*'s charge with a suicidal run at the *Donegal*. Meanwhile, *Talwar* and *Turk*, still engaged by the remaining two Steiner *Mako*s, were forced to stay on the outskirts of the action.

The *Manaslu*'s withering fire pummeled the *Caledonia*, scoring severe damage to the enemy cruiser's maneuvering drives and port side fire control. This forced the Lyran cruiser to retreat, lest she tumble into Bolan's gravity well, but not before her return fire tore open the *Aegis*-class vessel's prow with at least two nuclear-tipped Barracuda missiles and a savage broadside of naval lasers. With her sensor arrays destroyed, her command centers obliterated, and half her maneuvering thrusters off-line, *Manaslu* tumbled out of control, her crew racing to the escape pods. *Tyberium*'s attack likewise failed, and the *Donegal* not only managed to evade the smaller League WarShip, but dealt a crippling blow to her engines. Powerless against the planet's gravitational pull, *Tyberium* broke apart in Bolan's atmosphere minutes later, shedding escape pods right up to her final, fiery moments.

At the fringes of the orbital fight, *Talwar* and *Turk* fared much better, dispatching both the *Aurelius* and the *Vitellius*. Detecting the LCS *Furillo*, the third cruiser in the Commonwealth's attack fleet, burning in from the zenith jump point, the wounded League destroyers fled the battle zone under orders from the Overwatch.

The ground war for Bolan began on 14 March, a day after the Commonwealth fleet attained orbital superiority. Initially landing together in the vicinity of Peshawar, the first two LCAF regiments—the Eleventh and Fourteenth Arcturan Guards—annihilated the local defenses and held their position inside the Kashmiri city, leading the League commanders to believe that they were rallying for a direct attack against Calcutta. Although Johonson did indeed make several threats to that effect in an effort to encourage an early surrender of that city, his forces merely fortified their beachhead in Peshawar.

Despite his relative inexperience, Leutnant-General Johonson was well aware of the Bolan Defenders and their reputed devotion to the worlds of the Thumb. Raised from the local populace, and steeped in generations of Marik propaganda since the Age of War, these warriors would only see House Steiner as a conquering invader. Even the Defenders' brigade motto—"*Ad respiratio ultimas*" ("To the last breath")—attested to their willingness to die for their homeworlds. While Johonson himself felt—as did most of his fellow Lyrans—that



the Bolan worlds were stolen from the Commonwealth when the Star League's creation "ratified" the border, he knew the recipe for fanaticism when he saw it.

Instead of driving toward the Overwatch, Johonson divided up his regiments to pursue multiple objectives. His orders to each field command were to strike hard and fast at the largest concentrations of Marik forces in the major cities of Quetta and Calcutta, while his aerospace forces and assault DropShips swept the townships nearest to each objective for bombing missions. Each ground force was to maintain mobility, denying the defenders easy targets for artillery strikes and orbital bombardment.

On 16 March, the Tenth Skye Rangers made planetfall directly over the outskirts of Quetta, their arrival heralded by an orbital attack from the *Furillo* against the city's spaceport. While the port facilities were primarily commercial in nature, at the time they sheltered several of the Defenders' DropShips and acted as a primary fueling station for Bolan's remaining air defenses. The Rangers combat-dropped near the fortified positions around the spaceport, where they found the opposition in disarray due to smoke and fires raging from the detonation of nearby fuel storage tanks and a hangar filled with munitions. Amid the blazing inferno, the Lyrans pounded the League positions, sowing as much chaos as possible.

On the other side of the planet, the Eleventh Arcturan Guards boarded their DropShips as soon as the Quetta assault began, and executed a sub-orbital hop to land in the hilly countryside between Quetta and Mumbai. League fighters attempted to oppose this landing, but the ravages of the last two days and air support from the Rangers swept them from the sky. The Eleventh moved on Mumbai, establishing control of the city's southern suburbs even as the Bolan Defenders there fell back in a vain effort to draw the Steiner force into a maze of pre-laid traps. While the Lyran 'Mechs held their positions just outside each city, their artillery support began a sporadic bombardment of both sites, moving intermittently after every few barrages.

By the morning of 17 March, the sieges against Quetta and Mumbai had reduced the central districts of both cities to smoking, rubble-strewn enclaves. Within, the increasingly desperate Bolan Defenders found themselves constantly scrambling for safe havens, while their counter-artillery had yet to score more than a few hits against the enemy. Meanwhile, Johonson ordered the Fourteenth Guards to move on Calcutta. Under heavy air and artillery cover, the regiment of mostly medium- and light-weight 'Mechs converged on the thick woodlands to the city's north and west sides, while a mix of fast-moving hovertanks and VTOLs skirted the city's edges in an effort to identify possible League positions within. Although artillery from Calcutta and harassing forces from the township of Multan damaged some of the inbound Lyrans, local sunset found the city effectively surrounded by a regiment of LCAF BattleMechs.

In space, the *Donegal* and the *Furillo* played a game of hide and seek with the League's surviving destroyers, each relying on DropShip support to cover most of their reconnaissance and ground support missions, while conspicuously steering clear of the Sabari continent and the orbital defense weapons at Overwatch. The Bolan Defenders, holding to the shelter of their positions, denied these WarShips any easy targets on the ground while their destroyers led them on a merry chase above the moonless world. By all appearances, Colonel Tutt's defensive strategy, the capabilities of his Overwatch, and the losses inflicted during the naval battle made the Commonwealth invaders cautious enough to hold back. The Lyrans still held the advantage in sheer firepower and numbers, but the Bolanese commander vowed a long and bloody fight before his world fell—long enough, perhaps, for his reinforcements to arrive.

The illusion of a possible stalemate lasted only until the mid-day hours on 18 March, when Baron Johonson launched the next phase of his campaign. Gathering the bulk of the aerospace fighters from all three regiments, and loading them with a combination of incendiary, high-explosive, and cluster ordnance, he ordered a massed attack on Calcutta. Coordinated with a sustained barrage of artillery, the bombing run leveled the city in minutes, killing more than twenty thousand Bolanese civilians, and effectively annihilating the Tenth Defenders' 101st Assault Battalion. Incensed, Colonel Tutt ordered the destroyer *Talwar* to execute an orbital strike on the Eleventh Arcturan's DropShips—still parked perilously close to the township of Peshawar.

Talwar's attack fell just as Johonson broadcast one final call for Tutt's surrender, assuring the Marik colonel that his remaining forces had the ability and the will to eradicate all of the League-occupied positions on Bolan with similar savagery. Picking up on Johonson's allusion to the nuclear ordnance carried by his orbiting cruisers, Tutt vowed that his Defenders would stand to their last man, reciting the brigade's motto as he cut off the transmission. Despite that promise, Tutt ordered all non-essential personnel to evacuate the Overwatch, taking as many surviving combat elements as could fit aboard the DropShips. To his remaining field commanders, Tutt then issued orders for all forces to abandon their defenses and engage the enemy directly, and keep them bottled up in their present positions at Quetta and Mumbai.

This, his officers knew, was to be their final stand. As the remaining Defenders surged out from cover to attack their Lyran besiegers, Tutt authorized the launch of the Overwatch's strategic arsenal, targeting their positions. When the first nuclear warheads impacted the planetary capital of Mumbai and inside the township of Peshawar, Johonson recognized the scorched earth strategy for what it was. Abandoning his containment tactics, he ordered his siege forces to disengage and retreat at best speed, while his WarShips turned swiftly for the Sebari continent, to bring their own nuclear ordnance to bear. Determined to avert the total annihilation of his ground forces, Johonson commanded the cruisers to wipe the Overwatch off the face of Bolan. Capture of the valuable facilities, and the supplies within, was no longer an option.

The battle for Bolan was won by the Lyran Commonwealth, but at horrific cost. The cities of Mumbai, Calcutta, Peshawar, and Quetta were reduced to radioactive ash, along with the bulk of the Sebari island continent and the Overwatch base. Civilian casualty estimates ranged from three to eight million. Only a single battalion of the Sixth Bolan Defenders managed to retreat to Zdice, while the LCAF lost more than two-thirds of the Tenth Skye Rangers and a third each of the Eleventh and Fourteenth Arcturan Guards. The League's naval losses at Bolan were total; the *Manaslu*

was recovered by the Lyrans, but would be deemed irreparable and scrapped soon afterward. The *Talwar* and *Turk* were destroyed while covering the escaping ground forces. The Commonwealth naval losses were limited to the corvettes *Aurelius* and *Vitellius*, but the *Nerva* and *Vespasian* would spend nearly two years undergoing repairs at New Kyoto's Bolson Shipyards before reentering service just in time to see those facilities destroyed. The cruiser *Caledonia*, also badly damaged, would remain on station at Bolan with her sister ship *Furillo* until later in the war.

The Bolan Offensive became a template for the conflict ahead. With no Star League Council to answer to, the Great Houses would spearhead their invasions with heavy naval forces, while defenders fell into their cities to discourage bombardment, or take to heavily fortified positions left behind by the SLDF. These strategies, in turn, would prompt many an impatient commander to unleash nuclear and chemical weapons to avoid protracted campaigns, rationalizing these decisions as necessary to shock their enemies into submission and preserve their own strength. To prevent their foes from recovering their losses quickly, heavy industries would also fall under the House Lords' crosshairs—even those located deep within civilian population centers. And, if all else failed, scorched earth was always an acceptable last resort.

To the Free Worlds League, the battle for Bolan signified the beginning of the Succession War, its outcome a rallying cry that filled recruitment centers to capacity. Colonel Tutt was honored posthumously as a hero of the realm, who sacrificed himself in a desperate bid to hold back a monstrous invader. For the Lyran Commonwealth, it was a necessary evil—as much a reclamation of Commonwealth territory as a safeguard against certain League aggression. Baron Richart Johonson was simultaneously praised for his victory and chastised for the savagery and clumsiness with which he won it. Though he would be promoted for the action, he would never again command a major operation, and ultimately retired as a controversial figure in the history books of his home realm.

THE COMBINE STRIKES

The Lyran Commonwealth was not the only nation determined to launch the first strike of the war. In the Draconis Combine, Coordinator Minoru Kurita had already determined that his House would be the next to claim the mantle of the Star League. To his mind, this would be determined as much by the character of his realm as by its military strength; victory could only be achieved through his interpretation of the bushido code.

Striking first, from a position of equal strength and preparedness, was one such aspect of this code: *iaijutsu*. A true samurai, skilled in *iaijutsu*, would be the one best able to draw his sheathed wakizashi to strike at his equally readied opponent with speed and grace. Seeing both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns as potential "equally readied opponents," Minoru planned to execute probing strikes against both, with the expertise of an *iaijutsu* master.

Of equal importance to him was the concept of courtesy toward one's enemy—a "way of war" known as *bujitsu*. Under the bushido code, there was little honor to be gained in striking at an enemy that was proven ill-prepared to fight and die on the field of battle. Under this courtesy, it was acceptable for a strong warrior to bypass his unready opponent, ignoring the enemy's weakness and giving him the chance to prepare for a more equal match in the future. The bypassed opponent, in the meantime, would feel great shame for his lack of composure. Such shame would then inspire the unready samurai to improve himself for the future challenge.

And so it was that, before his fateful announcement and declarations of war, Minoru Kurita decided he would use his skills in *iaijutsu* to gauge his competition—and thus determine which of his enemies would be the Dragon's worthiest foe with a decisive first strike by the codes of bushido and *bujitsu*.

The Commonwealth Incursions

In August of 2785, a battalion of unmarked medium 'Mechs struck the lightly defended world of Bone-Norman, a former Rim Worlds Republic holding that the Lyran Commonwealth had seized only a decade before. After quickly dispatching the local paramilitary militia, the attackers tore through several cities, including the planetary capital of Red Stone, setting some settlements ablaze, and plundering others for assorted industrial and military supplies.

Within days of the Bone-Norman attack, smaller, aerospace-based raiding forces—some allegedly bearing insignia of the former Rim Worlds Army—harried civilian merchant traffic and recharge stations at Barcelona and Somerset. Several local media outlets, speculating on the identity of the mysterious raiders, latched onto the possibility that these bandits were indeed remnant Republic forces, come to avenge House Steiner's de facto conquest of their realm.

Despite rising political tensions with the Draconis Combine, the possibility of a resurgent Republic-affiliated bandit army was of sufficient concern to prompt the LCAF High Command to shift many of its Combine-border formations coreward. When several Tamar Pact nobles suggested the possibility that the raid could have been a Kurita ploy, General of the Armies Paul Steiner—younger brother to Archon Jennifer Steiner—countered that the possibility of a Rim Worlds revival was a threat that simply could not be ignored, especially so close to the Combine border. Furthermore, he argued, the Bone-Norman strike underscored how much more exposed the Commonwealth was to attacks from its Periphery region; if the attackers were DCMS, they would likely try to use that weakness to circumvent the better-fortified front.

A month after these troop movements began, House Kurita's Second Benjamin Regulars and Fifth Arkab Legion invaded the world of Trolloc Prime, easily overpowering the conventional defenses left behind there after the Second Lyran Regulars' departure. A week later, Gram was likewise attacked by Combine forces—this time in the form of the Seventh Proserpina Hussars and the Twelfth Benjamin Regulars. Once more, the departure of that world's defending Sixth Donegal Guards left its remaining conventional militia unable to repel the invaders. Relying on lighter units to outmaneuver the slower tanks and infantry left on both worlds, the DCMS quickly decimated their opposition.

By late December of 2785, the Dragon's banner flew over the capital cities on Gram and Trolloc Prime. Although General Steiner reacted to the incursion by moving additional forces to cover the region, the Archon was reluctant to declare war against the

WHY THE COMMONWEALTH?

One of the more baffling events of the early Succession Wars was Coordinator Minoru Kurita's decision to strike first at the Lyran Commonwealth. While many historians cite his strict adherence to the codes of bushido and the practices of *bujitsu*, the fact remains that the Draconis Combine had clashed with the Federated Suns as recently as sixty years before. During that conflict, House Kurita had tried—first through legal maneuvers, and later through military action—to secure the reign of a scion born from the union of Mary Davion, eldest daughter of the late Prince Roger Davion, and Soto Kurita, youngest brother of then-Coordinator Takiro Kurita.

By contrast, the last serious fight with the Steiner family outside of the Star League council chambers had been more than two centuries earlier. With grievances so recent that the sitting Coordinator could recall them from personal experience (Minoru was in his twenties at the time of the War of Davion Succession), it seemed the Dragon would be more motivated to turn its sword against the Suns first and foremost. Indeed, due to the movement of Kurita forces toward the Terran borders prior to Kerensky's exodus—when the Combine had feared potential retaliation from Kerensky and his followers—so many DCMS forces were posted closer to the Davions that conditions were all but ripe for such an invasion.

So, leaving the *bujitsu* theories aside, why did Minoru really target the Commonwealth first?

The answer could be as simple as a probing campaign, a test to determine House Steiner's willingness to go to war. But at the time the raid-and-conquer missions that seized Gram and Trolloc Prime were being planned, the Combine received word of the Commonwealth's martial prowess—and its willingness to resort to weapons of mass destruction—in the Bolan attack. Would the Coordinator truly wish to attack a realm that had effectively pulled off the first serious incursions of what could be a second Age of War?

Or perhaps it was *because* of House Steiner's apparent commitment to attacking the Free Worlds League that the Coordinator felt he could seize some of its wealthy border planets. Either way, the Lyrans' inability to stop him should have encouraged a full-on invasion, perhaps even a drive straight for Tharkad itself. Instead, Minoru waited for half a year before launching another raid, humiliating the LCAF on Skondia.

(CONTINUED ON P. 23)

Draconis Combine. Between the theoretical threat of a resurgent Rim Worlds, efforts to secure valuable Terran Hegemony worlds, and the state of war with the Free Worlds—declared by the Captain-General soon after the Bolan invasion—Jennifer Steiner was reluctant to open up yet another front. As a result, she ordered the LCAF to simply reinforce the worlds near the Dragon's new conquests, promising that vengeance would come later. In addition, she ordered no less than five recently contracted mercenary regiments, drawn from the remains of the SLDF Regular Army that Kerensky left behind, to further bolster the Combine border.

On Luthien, Coordinator Kurita found the Commonwealth's lack of response somewhat perplexing. House Steiner's brutal invasion of Bolan, according to all reports he'd heard, spoke of an enemy fully prepared for a serious war. It was with that action in mind that he used his Second Arkab Legion and some low-class hired guns to perpetrate a "bandit" feint to distract the LCAF and deliver a decisive blow to the center of their line. And yet, the Lyran reaction to the humiliation of losing two worlds was little more than tersely worded condemnation of Combine aggression—delivered, no less, by simple HPG. Had the Dragon misjudged the quality of his enemy?

In June 2786, after six months of minimal contact or combat along the Combine-Commonwealth border, a *Star Lord*-class JumpShip, flagged as an independent Commonwealth-based merchant and laden with unmarked DropShips, arrived at the zenith jump point in the Skondia system. A heavily industrialized world in the Federation of Skye region located near the still-shrinking boundaries of the former Terran Hegemony, Skondia was frequented by many such ships, even during the increased interstellar tensions of the time. Thus, the Commonwealth WarShips posted at the nearby recharge station effectively ignored the arriving freighter, while the understaffed customs patrols made little more than cursory scans and inquiries of the ship and its flight plan—even after its attached DropShips undocked and began a high-G burn toward the planet.

Twelve days later, three of these unchallenged DropShips entered into Skondia's orbit, while the other three entered the planetary atmosphere over the planet's northern continent of Edel. Before the ground-based flight trackers understood what was happening, these vessels began dropping close to a battalion of Kurita BattleMechs near the cities of Passageway and Wurston. The defending LCAF regiment, the Ninth Arcturan Guards, mobilized at once to defend the factory sites they were initially assigned to cover, but the Combine attackers—now identified as elements of the DCMS' Ninth Benjamin Regulars—turned their efforts instead toward the nearest civilian and commercial targets they could find. After reports of mass slaughter drove the Arcturan Guard 'Mechs to relieve the besieged cities, a second wave of Kurita 'Mechs dropped from the still-orbiting DropShips on the now-defenseless factory sites.

Meanwhile, the first wave, comprising the Combine's lighter and more mobile 'Mechs, outflanked their heavier Lyran opponents just as they drew close enough to engage. The continued harassment of the Steiner forces was so effective that the bulk of the Guards' Edel continent detachments were still tied up near the main cities while the second wave forces plundered the factory complexes dozens of kilometers away.

By the time the rest of the Ninth Arcturan managed to mobilize from sites on Skondia's other continents, and boarded their own DropShips to assist the defenders on Edel, the Combine raiders were already beginning to disengage from combat there. Suffering only modest damage after their two-day rampage, they rendezvoused with their now-landed DropShips in the foothills of Skondia's Lafferty mountain range—but not before razing three of the largest factory complexes near Passageway, Wurston, and Vorenstag. Blasting off while the rest of the Arcturan Guards regrouped, the escaping Combine DropShips linked up with their original JumpShip near the orbit of the Skondia system's third planet—where the vessel had casually jumped just over a week after its initial arrival. This allowed the Kurita forces to execute a clean getaway well ahead of the Lyran WarShips sent to intercept them from the zenith jump stations, capping one of House Steiner's most humiliating defeats since the Age of War.

The Commonwealth military and security forces had failed to protect both the people of Skondia and its important factories from the predations of an enemy that had already embarrassed the LCAF less than a year before. The news of this incredible defeat scandalized the LCAF High Command, and resulted in a complete shakeup of its core leadership. Even General Steiner was forced to admit to several "egregious errors" in the state of the realm's defense protocols. Procedures for system security were revamped, and the need to protect more than just important industrial targets became a major topic of focus for numerous military and civil agencies.

In the Draconis Combine, the ease of this victory led Coordinator Minoru Kurita to finally conclude that the Lyran Commonwealth truly was a weak opponent after all, ill-prepared to fight and die against the Dragon's samurai. By the dictates of his bushido code, Lord Kurita turned his sights away from House Steiner, and instead focused on House Davion's Federated Suns.

Towne

The Federated Suns annexed the Hegemony world of Towne in 2783, one of the few combat actions sanctioned by Prince John Davion before the Succession War began. Looking to tout himself as a true successor to the Camerons, Davion had forbidden his military to commit any "unseemly" acts against the Terran worlds. Because of this, while the other Houses seemed intent on swallowing up Hegemony territory more overtly, the AFFS had to buy or secretly steal anything of value to comply with their lord's directives.

Meanwhile, due to years of budget cuts to military transportation during the Star League era, many Davion regiments had grown increasingly provincial, more often than not identifying themselves by their postings. This made the troop shifts needed in the wake of the League's collapse somewhat jarring for many, who felt such movements severed their roots in local communities. That these attitudes ran all the way up to many field marshals led to an excessive amount of distrust between military commands and comrades they came to see as "foreign", even if they merely hailed from the next combat region over. Provincial and inter-service cooperation was at low ebb in the years following Kerensky's Exodus—a fact that would become glaringly apparent on Towne in early months of 2785.

Because Towne was home to a number of valuable industries and ex-SLDF equipment stores, Prince Davion assigned the Fifty-Sixth Avalon Hussars to guard the planet, in concert with the 123rd Aerospace Interceptor Wing. Hailing from the Fairfax Combat Region in the Draconis March, the 'Mech-heavy Fifty-Sixth had just begun to come into its own identity after decades of training skirmishes with the more established Fourth Avalon Hussars back on their native base of Colia. The 123rd, in contrast, hailed from Ulan Bator, a world in the Capellan March's Chesterton Combat Region, where they had originally been attached to the Twelfth Syrtis Fusiliers. Though the Fusiliers had vociferously complained about the assignment, the AFFS High Command justified the 123rd's assignment to Towne as a way to make up for the Hussars' relative lack of experienced air support assets.

In the months following their initial postings to Towne, communications between the two commands were virtually non-existent. The Hussars, based out of the planetary capital of Port Howard on Towne's Hyborian continent, conducted numerous drills with local militia cadres, and maintained regular patrols throughout the planet's northern hemisphere, while the 123rd Wing spent most of its time flying defensive recon missions out of its base near Kale Bay, Towne's second-largest city, located on the southern continent of Gherst. Although the commanders of the two forces acknowledged each other in public, and regularly affirmed their commitment to cooperative planetary defense to their AFFS superiors, the relationship between the two verged on completely dysfunctional.

In February of 2785, elements of the Capellan Confederation's Seventh Tikonov Lancers arrived in the Towne system at a non-standard LaGrange jump point, and burned quickly for the planet, targeting the undefended southern continent of Fetryl. Even as the Davion Aerospace Interceptors readied themselves for battle, orbiting sensors detected the arrival of another attack force coming from behind the shadow of the planet's moon—this one identified as elements of Draconis Combine's Eighteenth Benjamin Regulars, projected to make planetfall on Hyborian.

WHY THE COMMONWEALTH? (CONTINUED)

Practical House Lords at the time might have taken those successes as clear evidence of an enemy that was weak-willed and strategically inferior, and feel almost obligated to strike as deeply into that enemy's heart as possible. The potential to eliminate one of the five rival claimants to the Star League's mantle alone virtually demanded it. And yet, Minoru turned his attention toward House Davion instead.

Why?

The claim that samurai idealism alone formed his decision only carries so much weight. Nor does Minoru's age—eighty years, at the time of the first Commonwealth strikes—explain away the Combine's turnabout; Minoru remained a clear-headed commander and combat-ready MechWarrior all the way up to his demise on Kentares IV. Rather, the relative lack of complaints from his contemporary warlords over the decision to leave the Lyrans alone speaks to a greater plan at work, one possibly hatched by his son and heir apparent, Jinjiro Kurita.

Taking into account that Jinjiro would plan the initial phases of the Combine's eventual assault on the Davion realm—a campaign that seemed well-prepared, many years before the shooting started on either front—a greater picture soon materializes. In this picture, one might see the Dragon's first strikes on the Commonwealth as part of a far greater strategy of misdirection. Here, House Kurita's Lyran blitz might have been engineered to look just serious enough to convince the Federated Suns that the Combine's true target lay far from their borders. At the same time, the LCAF defeats on Trolloc Prime, Gram, and Skondia would serve to forestall any possible Steiner adventurism into the Combine, placing that border safely in defensive mode while the armies of the future Coordinator launched their inevitable drive toward the real threat: New Avalon.

—Alison D. Sterling, *The Logic of Warlords*, Prefectorate Publications, 3115

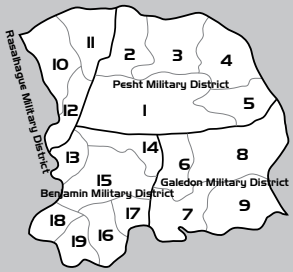
INNER SPHERE - 2786

Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
3) Camlann Shire

Protectorate of Donegal
4) Coventry Province
5) Alarion Province
6) District of Donegal
7) Furillo Province

Federation of Skye
8) Kannon Shire
9) Virginia Shire
10) Rahneshire
11) Isle of Skye



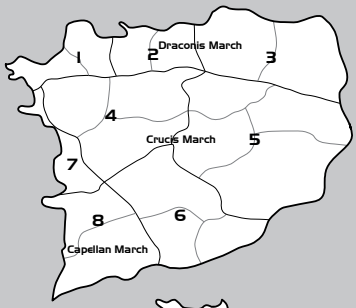
Draconis Combine

Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Coudoux Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Rasalhague Military District
10) Radstadt Prefecture
11) Trondheim Prefecture
12) Tinaca Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Baldur Prefecture
14) Xinyang Prefecture
15) Kajikazawa Prefecture
16) Prosperina Prefecture
17) Irurzun Prefecture
18) Kuzuu Prefecture
19) Ashio Prefecture

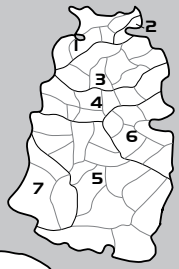


Federated Suns

Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Fairfax Operational Area
3) Woodbine Operational Area

Crucis March
4) Markesan Operational Area
5) Minette Operational Area
6) Chirikof Operational Area

Capellan March
7) Kathil Operational Area
8) Taygeta Operational Area



Capellan Confederation

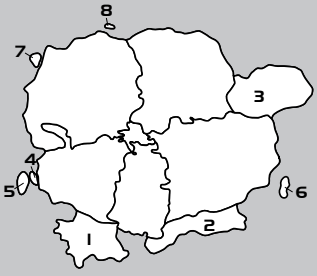
1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capella Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Andurien Commonality

Free Worlds League

1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Federation of Oriente
3) Principality of Regulus
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Stewart Confederation
6) Duchy of Graham-Marik
7) Rim Commonality
8) Regulan Free States
9) Principality of Gibson
10) Abbey District

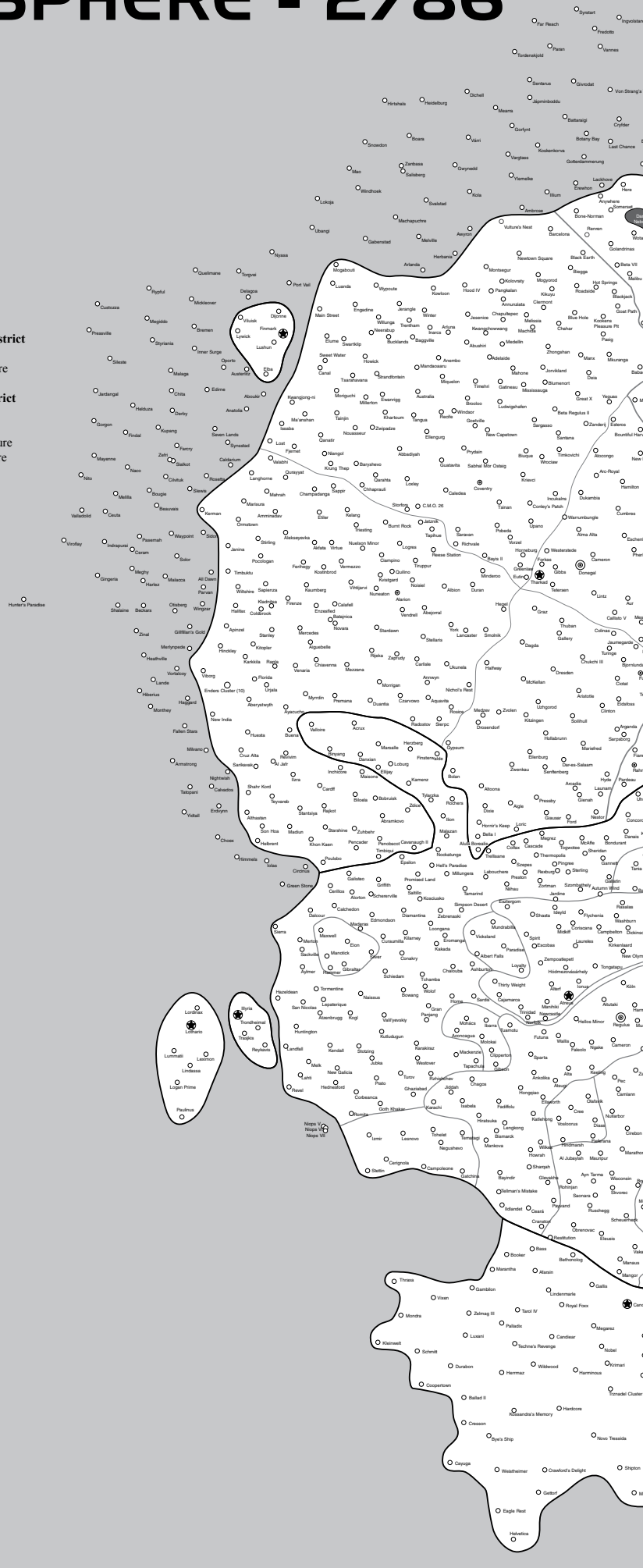
Terran Hegemony Remnants

1) Alliance Core
2) Lone Star Province
3) Lockdale Province
4) New Dallas Province
5) Brownsville Province



The Periphery

1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Illyrian Palatinate
5) Lothian League
6) Tortuga Dominions
7) Finmark Free Republic
8) Oberon Confederation



LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 36.8 PARSECS
Region capital
District capital
National capital
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward
Map compiled by COMSTAR.
From information provided by the COMSTAR EXPLORER CORPS
and the STAR LEAGUE ARCHIVES on Terra.

Although both incoming attack forces were relatively small in size—numbering barely more than a reinforced battalion each—the commanders of the two Davion defense forces deadlocked on which one to repel first. The Hussars' commander, Major Colin Wilkins, insisted that the Kurita force represented the more serious threat, claiming their landing targets suggested a likely run on the planetary capital, perhaps in advance of a greater DCMS incursion. Major Imrich Donner, commanding the Aerospace Interceptors, countered that the Capellans were the greater threat, suggesting that Wilkins was allowing his regional biases to get the better of him. With neither man willing to back down, the Combine forces landed on Hyborian virtually unopposed, while the Confederation raiders managed to punch through the southern hemisphere's aerospace defense and land on Fetryl with minimal damage.

On the ground, the raiders from both realms tore simultaneous paths of destruction, looting several poorly defended warehouses on Hyborian and Fetryl. By the time the Davion commanders realized that their enemies were running roughshod while they bickered over imaginary jurisdictions and responsibilities, the Capellan force was already beginning to fall back in the face of a surprisingly resourceful guerilla attack staged by the local militia from the Fetrylan city of Vale. Though the Confederation invaders suffered only minor damage in the attack, they realized the citizenry's willingness to stand up to them would slow them down long enough for the AFFS troops on world to rally.

A squadron of the 123rd harried House Liao's raiders as they retreated to their DropShips, while a detachment of conventional and 'Mech forces from the Fifty-Sixth Hussars relocated to Fetryl to relieve the local militia. Whether it was the embarrassment of being upstaged by a citizens' militia, the increasingly desperate pleas for aid from several local government officials, or simply the convenience of having one of the two enemy raiding forces withdraw before the other, the Davion forces managed to compromise enough to not only ensure the Confederation's departure, but also mount a loosely coordinated defense on the Hyborian continent. Their final counterattack was far from perfect, but it was enough to convince the DCMS raiders that their free reign over Towne's northern hemisphere had come to an end. Withdrawing in good order, the Combine attackers boosted into the sky with minimal losses.

In less than two weeks' time, the simultaneous raids of the so-called Towne Debacle claimed the lives of over four thousand civilians, two hundred and fifty military personnel—mostly belonging to the local citizens' militia—and displaced another five thousand residents. Seven of Towne's valuable warehouse depots—three on Fetryl, and four on Hyborian—had been plundered or outright destroyed by the raiders, costing the AFFS equipment and munitions worth well over seventy million pounds, to say nothing of the greater costs to civilian infrastructure. Public outrage over the mismanagement of the planet's defense reached all the way to New Avalon, while Majors Donner and Wilkins continued to blame each other for the catastrophe.

In an effort to mitigate the effects of the disaster, Prince John Davion issued the Towne Charter, a formal declaration of the Towne citizenry's right to strengthen their defense force, courtesy of the AFFS. This act enabled the local militia to access much of the remaining military equipment stores on the planet, improving their readiness in the face of foreign attack.

But the worst was yet to come.

Recognizing the Suns' weakness on Towne, House Kurita followed up their raid with a full-scale assault on the planet in December of that same year. Spearheading this assault was the Fifth Dieron Regulars, escorted by a small naval flotilla, and backed up by seven regiments of conventional infantry and aerospace support. Still recovering from their earlier humiliation, the Hussars and the 123rd Interceptors found themselves caught with their proverbial pants down once again.

Even though the new threat came from a single enemy force, the attacking formation was far stronger than the combined might of February's raiding actions. To their credit, Donner and Wilkins not only agreed to work together against the invaders, but also realized that they would need to call for off-world reinforcements immediately.

Unfortunately, despite their newfound sense of cooperation, the two defending commanders were not the only ones reluctant to set aside their differences. Local loyalties and bureaucratic interference hindered AFFS efforts to send relief forces to Towne, delaying their arrival for nearly two months. By the time reinforcement JumpShips arrived in late February of 2786, it was too late. The Fifty-Sixth Avalon Hussars and the 123rd Aerospace Interceptor Wing had been crushed by the Combine's superior numbers and coordination. Those who survived had either gone to ground, working with the straggling remnants of the planetary militias in an ongoing guerilla campaign, or were now prisoners of the Dragon.

THE GREAT HEGEMONY LAND-GRAB

In the years just before the start of the Succession Wars—indeed, even before Kerensky's Exodus—the Star League Member States began to absorb the worlds of the Terran Hegemony closest to their borders. These annexations, often made under the pretext of relief and reconstruction efforts, often occurred with little actual exchange of fire; the locals who had survived the horrors of the Amaris Empire and the war against it were grateful for any assistance by that point.

Aleksandr Kerensky and his SLDF loyalists, who saw the bigger picture, strenuously objected to these blatant "land grabs," but were unwilling to commit to war in the wake of the fighting they had already endured. Sensing opportunity in this, each of the Great Houses also began attempting to woo the SLDF garrisons they encountered in these regions—many with promises of wealth and landholds in exchange for fealty. As these efforts began to lure some of his less-resolute commanders into mercenary service, and chipped away at the SLDF's already-crumbling morale, Kerensky came to realize the lost cause of preserving the Hegemony, and drew up his plans for Exodus.

After Kerensky's departure, the various House Lords grew much more aggressive in their acquisitions, especially as each one drew closer to Terra itself. Still, it was not until the middle of 2786—after the Commonwealth offensive against Bolan, and the Combine conquests of Trolloc Prime and Gram, that their digestion of the Terran Hegemony and its jointly administered worlds turned into war.

Capellan Confederation Gains

The Capellan Confederation began its territorial gains in 2783 with the reclamation of Ningpo and Slocum from the Hegemony border region. Both worlds had been previously administered jointly by the Terran and Capellan governments, but had fallen under Amaris' rule during the crisis. At the same time, Capellan "security forces" also arrived on Andurien and Claybrooke—two key joint-administration worlds on the Confederation's border with the Free Worlds League.

In 2784, the Confederation sent more "civic relief" forces to the jointly-administered Terran worlds of Tikonov and Yangtze, both of which had also suffered extensive damage during the Amaris crisis, before expanding the annexation to include Aldebaran, Arboris, Azha, New Canton, and Zurich. Meanwhile, CCAF security forces also took over the now-abandoned SLDF outposts on joint-administration world of Valexa, near the Davion-claimed world of Chesterton. While this move alarmed the Federated Suns government enough to file a formal protest and request support from the SLDF, Kerensky's army was well underway with its Exodus plans, and the complaints went unanswered.

After the Exodus in November of 2784, the emboldened Confederation advanced deeper into Hegemony space, taking Bex, Capolla, Genoa, Nanking, and Terra Firma in one sweep during the early half of 2785. The capture of the Hegemony's former regional capital facilities on Terra Firma proved particularly valuable, as they enabled the Confederation to better integrate the administrative and logistical support left behind by the SLDF's now-departed military governors. The Capellans also claimed the jointly-administered worlds of El Giza and Andro on the Marik and Davion borders, respectively. In the latter case, this put CCAF security troops within striking range of the key world of Kathil in the Federated Suns. This fact, combined with the still-fresh memories of the 2760-2762 border war between the realms, undoubtedly fueled Prince John Davion's decision to mass his forces for a campaign against the Confederation.

House Liao's continued expansion into Terran space slowed in 2786 with the taking of Outreach and Fletcher. On the Free Worlds border, the jointly-administered worlds of Carbonis and Mosiro were claimed by CCAF troops, as was the world of Stein's Folly on the FedSuns front. With word of conflict erupting elsewhere in the Inner Sphere by that point, the Confederation's limited gains underscored Chancellor Barbara Liao's caution as she waited to see which of her neighbors might strike first.

Draconis Combine Gains

Compared to the Capellan Confederation—indeed, compared to almost every other Star League member-state—the Draconis Combine's drive to claim worlds from the Terran Hegemony was far less subtle. In 2783 alone, the Combine assimilated eight worlds either wholly or partly administered by the Terrans, including the Amaris-ravaged worlds of Nashira and Telos IV, and the watery world of Moore, some of which had already been partially ceded to the Dragon by the Amaris Empire. On the Lyran border, the Combine also took over the jointly-administered worlds of Keisen, Minakuchi, and Setubal, while DCMS troops near the Federated Suns assumed full control over Delacruz, Kesai IV, and Valentina.

In 2784, Combine "peacekeepers" further claimed the Hegemony worlds of Murchison and Pokhara, while also taking over the largely-abandoned SLDF facilities on six other co-administered planets—Homam, Huan, Mara, and Misery on the Davion border; and Halesowen on the Steiner front. It is worth noting that virtually all of House Kurita's gains against Hegemony-administered worlds were part of a greater build-up of DCMS troops along the Terran region, as Coordinator Minoru Kurita and his son, Jinjiro, anticipated a potential war with the remnants of the Star League military.

The same concern drove the annexation of worlds all along the Combine-Suns line, as SLDF troop ships were sighted moving through the region to rally at New Samarkand. House Davion's intelligence recognized that the Kurita forces seemed far more preoccupied by the possible threat posed by Kerensky's loyalists; as a result, Prince Davion chose to align his defenses toward the Confederation rather than the Combine.

In 2785, after the Exodus fleet had departed, House Kurita claimed only five more systems from the abandoned Hegemony and its co-administered Combine border worlds. This included the war-ravaged world of Lambrecht, and Al Na'ir—one of the earliest planets colonize Star League: the Lyran border world of Engadin, and Deshler and Fellanin II near the Davion border. Because the latter two worlds lay a full jump or two away from the border itself, these acquisitions again aroused little alarm on New Avalon. The takeover of Engadin, on the other hand, ratcheted up tensions with the Lyran Commonwealth, especially after the DCMS invasions of Trolloc Prime and Gram.

In 2786, the Coordinator and his son began analyzing their options against both the Commonwealth and the Suns. Prior to December of that year, the DCMS seized only two more systems where once the Star League and Terran banners waved: Helen, within the Hegemony's crumbling Lockdale Province, and Sulafat, near the Commonwealth border. When the wildly successful raid on Skondia drove home the utter weakness of House Steiner's resolve in June of that same year, Minoru diverted some of the reserves earmarked for his planned campaign against the Lyrans, and instead sent them into the Hegemony, striking deep enough to claim the important shipyard world of Dieron by December. This drive also struck at the worlds of Deneb Algedi, Inglesmond, Kervil, and Styx. While Kervil fell with relatively little difficulty, militia presence and naval support—much of it traced to a surprisingly robust Inglesmond—prevented the Combine from claiming Deneb Algedi and Styx until the early weeks of 2787. By that time, the Coordinator had proclaimed himself First Lord of the Star League and officially launched the Succession War.

Inglesmond would not fall to the Dragon until 2789. By then, the interference from Steiner and Davion exploratory forces—ironically summoned by the Inglesmondians themselves—resulted in massive nuclear devastation as all three House armies resorted to scorched earth measures to prevent their prize from falling into enemy hands.

Federated Suns Gains

Much has been made of Prince John Davion's reluctance to commit to anything that would make his personal claim to the Cameron legacy "unseemly". Believing the Davion line to be the superior claimant for the Star League throne, he forbade his military from engaging in naked aggression against the Terran Hegemony or the various border worlds that the Star League co-administered with the Federated Suns. Nevertheless, the Suns moved just as quickly as its fellow realms to secure several Hegemony systems.

In 2783, FedSuns administrators quietly assumed full control of the jointly-administered worlds of Mirach and Schedar, both of which were located near the Hegemony and Combine borders and fell under Amaris rule during the Crisis. At the same time, AFFS "peacekeepers" moved in to claim Towne and Ozawa—two industrial worlds that House Davion found too important to ignore, or worse, let fall to either the Capellan Confederation or the Draconis Combine. In addition to these acquisitions, a combination of backroom deals and open diplomacy secured full Federated Suns authority over the worlds of Wappingers and Midale, both of which hosted Star League agencies intended to keep the peace on the Capellan and Taurian borders, respectively.

This pattern of acquisitions continued in 2784, when Suns administrators assumed full control over Elbar and Mallory's World—two more joint-worlds left crippled during the days of the Amaris Empire—as well as the distant Capellan-Periphery border system of Mandaree. To ensure greater logistical control of the Hegemony area holdings, AFFS peacekeepers also landed on New Rhodes III.

When Kerensky departed from the Inner Sphere in late 2784, the First Prince finally loosened some of the military restrictions on the Suns' expansion into Hegemony space, but he still preferred non-violent annexations over conquest. In 2785, Davion peacekeepers extended their reach to the Terran worlds of Galatia III, New Florence, and Ronel in a more determined drive aimed at Terra itself. By this point, however, they found themselves outpaced by the Draconis Combine in the coreward direction.

FedSuns intelligence continued to regard the Combine's build-up along their shared border as a response to Kerensky's actions prior to the Exodus, rather than an imminent invasion of the Davion realm. This conclusion meshed with the reports of Combine hostilities against the distant Lyran Commonwealth, and the fact that the only significant military encounter with the DCMS came during their raiding action on Towne. Nevertheless, Prince Davion authorized additional security forces to New Mendham, a former co-administered world near the center of Draconis March. As his sights narrowed on the Capellan Confederation, Davion also directed his forces to assume full control over Jaipur, in the rimward reaches of the Capellan March.

In 2786, the Suns annexed the Hegemony worlds of Addicks and Hean, while also securing full control over Narellan and Robsart near the Confederation front. This would be the last of House Davion's truly peaceful conquests of former Terran holdings; in February of that same year, House Kurita conquered the world of Towne. Even to the idealistic Prince, it was now clear that a new age of war was inescapable.

Free Worlds League Gains

Compared to even the Draconis Combine, the Free Worlds League's absorption of worlds owned by or shared with the Terran Hegemony was particularly aggressive. Having long nursed a personal hatred toward Aleksandr Kerensky, and contemptuous of the other House Lords, Captain-General Kenyon Marik commanded his forces to begin securing Hegemony territory almost as soon as the Star League disbanded in 2782. Indeed, by the first weeks of 2783, Free Worlds League "security forces" had already closed down the Star League administrative offices on the shared worlds of Dieudonne and Dubhe, with many officials escorted to outbound DropShips at gunpoint.

In 2783, Marik-affiliated forces conducted a similar "expedited closure" of the joint-administrative offices on Millungera and Sierra, two systems located on the key transit routes into the Bolan Thumb region. This act was not only aimed at purging the League of Terran influence, but also to close off any advance warning of the military stockpiles "The Eagle" was sending to the Bolan Defenders in anticipation of the war sure to come. Chertan and Wasat, two worlds fully within the Hegemony's boundaries, were also annexed in this time. In the case of the latter world—which had been contested since before the days of the Star League—Marik dispatched an exceptionally large "security detachment," consisting of the Sixth and Twenty-Third Marik Militias, in order to stave off potential Capellan invaders.

In 2784, Kenyon's troops added the Terran world of Berenson to their prizes, while also ousting Hegemony administrators from the shared border worlds of Wing and Zion—systems that jutted into the Lyran Commonwealth and Capellan Confederation, respectively. By the end of that same year, Terran-sponsored administrative offices on all five of the remaining League worlds bordering House Steiner were closed down, as were their counterpart offices on Gomeisa, near the Confederation.

It was perhaps this wave of Free Worlds League annexations that truly set the Lyrans' military intelligence networks on high alert. Given that Kerensky's forces across the Inner Sphere were abuzz with activity, the League's efforts appeared even more focused on their Steiner front than on the Terran border. In retrospect, this had as much to do with Kenyon's wariness over exactly what Kerensky was up to as it did with his plans to beef up the Bolan Thumb for an eventual campaign against the Commonwealth.

With Kerensky's departure in late 2784, however, the Captain-General had an abrupt change of mind. Now aware that the SLDF's heart and soul had fled the Inner Sphere entirely, he shifted troops originally earmarked for the Bolan Thumb toward the Terran Corridor. Within the course of a single year, the Free Worlds League added seven Hegemony systems to its number, claiming worlds ranging from Callison and Marcus to Talitha and Van Damien IV with a relative minimum of violence. Only the world of New Dallas was missed in this sweep (an oversight the Captain-General would come to regret later). In addition, the Terran satellite offices on the Capellan-front worlds of Fujidera, Hamilton, and Holt were shut down, with the remaining one—Fletcher—set to end operations by the spring of 2786.

For Kenyon, the "liberation" of Hegemony worlds—combined with the uncertainty of the period following the Star League's collapse—served as an enormous political boon. The addition of each new holding promised more wealth for the League as a whole, which earned him Parliament's unabashed admiration. Boosting this support was the fact that Marik had the League's intelligence agency, SAFE, actively suppressing news of just how war-ravaged these Hegemony planets were, thus playing up their value. Furthermore, the uncertainty that preceded Kerensky's November Exodus, followed by the spike in war fears that followed, had the realm's various rulers and representatives truly worried about their immediate future. These war fears, combined with the Captain-General's success in "peacefully securing" the League's borders, helped to lock in support for Resolution 288. This law not only reaffirmed Kenyon's supreme authority over the military, it all but ensured House Marik's absolute rule over the Free Worlds League for centuries to come.

In 2786, League troops pushed further toward Terra, seizing both Castor and the war-ravaged provincial capital of Tyrfing. Although Marik fully planned to continue his march all the way to the core of the Hegemony's withering corpse within the next two years, the campaign stumbled to a crawl by the middle of the year, when news of the Lyran invasion of Bolan announced the start of the Succession Wars.

Lyran Commonwealth Gains

As befitting a realm that prides itself on its mercantile prowess, many of the Lyran Commonwealth's acquisitions from the Terran Hegemony were achieved through negotiations and monetary exchange. Having invested in many of the Star League's industrial conglomerates, the Lyrans were quick to secure controlling interests in virtually all factories and non-government institutions throughout their realm. The Defiance Industries factories on Hesperus II, for example, changed hands in the course of a single board meeting when Commonwealth investors proposed a "mutually beneficial" defense and production deal.

As its neighbor realms began gobbling up Hegemony worlds ravaged during the Amaris Crisis, House Steiner also moved to "stabilize" similar systems all along its borders, starting first with shared-dominion worlds like Zebebelgenubi, Syrma, and Galatea in 2783. In addition to these, Commonwealth ships and security troops also secured the Combine-bordering worlds of Sabik (within the Hegemony's Lone Star Province), and The Edge (a co-managed world on the coreward fringe of Lyran space).

In 2784, Commonwealth agencies also assumed full control over the Terran worlds of Alchiba, Menkent, and Mizar, while sending troops to secure Summer and Wyatt. At the same time, the Star League administrative centers and military outposts on Gram, Lovinac, and Stanzach were also reclaimed by Commonwealth authorities. In virtually all of these cases, the resident non-Lyrans serving these facilities were offered positions within the local government bureaucracy, rather than being outright expelled. This reflected Archon Jennifer Steiner's preference to treat the increasingly orphaned Hegemony agencies with respect, a technique aimed at retaining the expertise of their personnel—and one that would also secure several ex-SLDF regiments in the months leading up to Kerensky's departure.

In the year that followed the Exodus, the Commonwealth's advance into Hegemony space slowed as the LCAF shifted to high alert along the Free Worlds League frontier. Given the launch of ELBOW JOINT, after all, the potential for a massive shooting war all along the Marik front loomed large. For this reason, Lyran gains in 2785 consisted largely of taking full control over the co-administered worlds of Unzmarkt and Vorarlberg on the Combine border, while securing the Hegemony worlds of Cor Caroli, Milton, Lyons, and Rocky. These gains proved bittersweet, however, when reports came in of possible "Rim Worlds bandits" striking Bone-Norman—followed by the fall of Trolloc Prime and Gram to a sudden invasion by House Kurita.

With her realm effectively at war with the Free Worlds League, and the Combine now pushing into its spinward front, Archon Jennifer ordered the LCAF to exercise great caution in its Hegemony conquests. Nusakan, a co-administered world rich in heavy industries, was secured by diplomacy and corporate deals that began two years before, but it took Commonwealth troops to claim planets of Afleir and Denebola. Of these, Denebola proved the most difficult, as the arriving Fourteenth Lyran Guards—a newly-minted 'Mech regiment—encountered the equally green Thirty-Fourth Marik Militia.

The Marik forces had arrived on Denebola as part of the League's 2785 surge into Hegemony space, and were still settling into the battered facilities that once housed the SLDF's 282nd Mechanized Infantry Division there. Sporadic fighting with remnant pro-Hegemony guerrillas cost the Militia nearly a company of 'Mechs, but the planet was largely pacified by the time Steiner's troops arrived. Unfortunately for them, the Lyran attack force included a WarShip escort of the *Commonwealth*-class cruisers *Odessa* and *Porrima*. With so much of the League military on the move elsewhere, only a pair of *Vincent*-class corvettes was on station to fight for orbital superiority. After an initial volley of capital missiles and laser fire from the *Odessa* completely vaporized the FWLS *Francisco*, the remaining Marik ship fled the area, essentially abandoning the planetary defenders.

Eager to expedite the conquest of Denebola, LCAF Colonel Hoshi DeWitt, commander of the Fourteenth Guards, requested an orbital strike on the site of the former Star League base. The two-hour bombardment reduced the sprawling complex to smoking rubble, killing over half of the defending Marik Militia forces within. Though some two companies of Militia infantry and armor went to ground, and would continue to harass the Fourteenth for months to come, the bulk of the Thirty-Fourth Militia's survivors surrendered within two days of the Commonwealth's landings.

NEW DALLAS: TERRAN TO THE FINAL, FIERY END

Aggressors:

FWLM: Third and Fifth Atrean Dragoons, and Seventh Marik Militia Regiments

Defenders:

New Dallas: New Dallas Militia (approximately three 'Mech regiments)

Lying just one jump away from Free Worlds League space within the Terran Hegemony's Tyrfing Province, the world of New Dallas was a textbook example of planetary engineering. Swathed in a thick atmosphere made sweltering by an abundance of greenhouse gasses, New Dallas was only marginally habitable at the time the first human settlements were established there in the mid-2300s. Within a century, Hegemony-sponsored terraforming efforts transformed the planet from a hellish hothouse into a sub-tropical paradise, ideal for agricultural development. As the original underground settlements gave way to mega-farms and ranches fed by abundant water and blessed with long growing seasons and nutrient-rich soils, New Dallas became a breadbasket world during the Star League era, its produce capable of serving the needs of a dozen nearby systems.

Its settlers were largely descended from Terra's North America continent and took great pride in their world, reviving much of the rugged individualism they carried there from their "cowboy" ancestry, as well as their close relationship with the Terran government. In time, the importance of New Dallas, combined with this cultural pride and deeply ingrained belief in self-reliance, led the locals to raise one of the largest and best-equipped planetary militias in Hegemony space. The Star League further bolstered this respectable defense force with three Castles Brian, dozens of SLDF bases, training facilities, a naval base, and an SDS network. All of this protection made subverting the world difficult for Stefan Amaris' forces and ultimately forced them to use widespread orbital bombardment to pummel the planet into submission—in the process, destroying much of the carefully maintained environment-management equipment.

Even after the Rim Worlds bombardment, a local resistance managed to harass the Usurpers' troops through much of their occupation, drawing on ample supplies from the SLDF facilities missed by the earlier attacks. While never successful in throwing off Amaris' yoke entirely, this resistance was a great asset to Kerensky's army during New Dallas' liberation in 2773. Unfortunately, in their eventual retreat, the Rim Worlds forces resorted to scorched earth tactics, including the complete destruction of the major city of Port Vera. This act further crippled the planetary infrastructure, and its recovery remained far from complete when the Star League later dissolved.

Then came House Marik's invasion in March of 2787.

Despite the collapse of the Star League, the people of New Dallas still considered themselves loyal citizens of the Terran Hegemony, and they vowed never to relinquish their world to any of the treacherous Houses that turned on her. In the process of their own efforts to rebuild, the local militia uncovered a nearly forgotten subterranean storehouse of "royal-quality" BattleMechs, vehicles, and other heavy equipment. These weapons, feared lost during the Amaris Coup, now turned against the invaders from the Free Worlds League, and most were piloted by "retired" SLDF warriors who'd refused to join Kerensky's Exodus.

Expecting an easy time of their invasion after securing many of the surrounding Hegemony systems, the Marik forces were completely unprepared for the level of resistance put up by New Dallas' militia. After the Seventh Marik Militia was all but destroyed by militia forces throughout the planet's Lake Galvez region, and the Third Atrean Dragoons experienced fierce resistance outside Caddo City, the invasion commanders authorized the use of nuclear weapons to wipe out the resistors.

The Marik nuclear assault not only wiped out virtually all of New Dallas' militia, it also laid to waste most of the planet's remaining major population centers. What few survivors remained afterwards witnessed the ravaging of their planet's remaining resources by the League's corporate and military scavengers, as their world quickly regressed toward its original, hellish state. Between the Amaris and Marik conquests, and the loss of so much support, New Dallas has been left to die, its population dwindling as its environment slides inexorably toward complete ruin.

—Stephen Latt, *Forgotten Battles of the Succession War (Vol. 2)*, Greenbay Press, 2825

AFTER THE DECLARATIONS

Although a state of war had already existed for well over a year, the closing weeks of 2786 marked the point most historians refer to as the formal start of the First Succession War. In late December, Coordinator Minoru Kurita issued the proclamation that he and his House were the only rightful heirs to the Star Lord's throne. Broadcast by HPG across the Combine and beyond, and followed up by missives sent from the remaining Kurita embassies within the other four realms and on Terra, Minoru backed up his grandiose claim with a declaration of war against any House Lord "foolish enough to defy the will of the Dragon".

Almost as soon as the message went out, the outrage began. Chancellor Barbara Liao was the first to counter with her own claim on the First Lordship and declaration of war, formally throwing her Capellan Confederation into the widening conflict. Archon Jennifer Steiner, with her own far more cynical response, declared war against the Combine that New Year's Eve. With the Free Worlds League already at war against the Commonwealth, House Marik merely added its own claim to rule the Star League in the days after that, followed quickly—and finally—by House Davion and its Federated Suns.

Combined, these declarations merely confirmed what was already apparent. Where once the common folk could try and convince themselves that the House Lords would settle their differences in border campaigns against their neighbors, it was now clear that all five sought the same goal.

That goal, Terra itself, ensured the final demise of crumbling Hegemony. In the years to come, each of the five "Successor States" would drive toward humanity's home planet with the same zeal with which they waged war against one another.

Some of the Terran worlds would fall easily enough, accepting the rule of their neighboring Great House in exchange for salvation from the chaos that came with nearly a decade of economic and political ruin. But as the warring realms closed on their final prize, it became inevitable that their armies would soon meet each other wherever their new borders fell. This was especially true among the innermost Hegemony systems, which became apocalyptic battlegrounds where between two and all five powers vied for control.

To the hapless residents of these worlds, it was as if Amaris had come back from the dead for one more round of carnage.

THOSE LEFT BEHIND

Even with all of the damage sustained in their war against Amaris and the mass exodus of so many with Aleksandr Kerensky, a massive number of SLDF forces remained in the Inner Sphere. In addition to these troops were a much smaller number of orphaned regiments and commands from the former Rim Worlds Republic, plus a noteworthy smattering of mercenary groups that had managed to ply their trade even during the halcyon days of the Star League.

As the Successor States prepared themselves for war and gobbled up the remnants of the Terran Hegemony, many of these groups were approached by the House Lords for either mercenary employment or outright absorption into their growing armies. The following list, drawn from numerous sources, accounts for most of these "strays," and what became of them as the Succession Wars began. In those cases where only elements of such units made their transitions, the approximate force strength that did so is noted in parentheses.

The years listed for each entry indicate when the associated military formation joined (or was hired) by its new affiliation, or—in the case of unaffiliated/uncontracted units—was officially stricken from the rolls of its last parent organization. For additional reference, several notable mercenary commands that existed at the time of the Star League's collapse and throughout the First Succession War are also listed.

Joining CCAF

Unit	Year	New Formation
17th Army, 265th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2775	6th and 7th St. Ives Lancers (after 2784)
15th Army, 7th Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2782	9th Tikonov Lancers (after 2783)
4th Army, 166th Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2783	17th Liao Lancers (after 2783)
8th Army, 360th BattleMech Division (6 regiments)	2783	18th through 23rd Sian Dragoons (after 2784)
8th Army, 189th Battle Regiment	2783	24th Sian Dragoons (after 2786)
15th Army, 84th Light Horse Regiment	2783	10th Tikonov Lancers (after 2783)
18th Army, 147th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	9th Tikonov Lancers (after 2783)
13th Army, 133rd Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2784	8th Andurien Hussars (until 2822)
18th Army, 258th Hussar Regiment	2784	11th Tikonov Lancers (after 2784)
20th Army, 202nd Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2784	10th Confederation Reserve Cavalry
12th Army, 258th Dragoon Regiment	2785	19th Liao Lancers
14th Army, 3rd French Infantry Regiment	2785	8th and 9th Andurien Hussars (until 2822)

Joining DCMS

Unit	Year	New Formation
12th Army, 29th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2782	24th Dieron Regulars
13th Army, 133rd Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2782	23rd Dieron Regulars
14th Army, 95th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2782	21st Dieron Regulars
11th Army, 294th Hussar Regiment	2783	25th Dieron Regulars
16th Army, 66th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2783	26th Dieron Regulars
20th Army, 18th Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	27th Dieron Regulars
20th Army, 200th Jump Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	27th Dieron Regulars
15th Army, 7th Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2784	9th Galedon Regulars
1st Army, 114th Hussar Regiment	2784	28th Dieron Regulars
10th Army, 4674th Striker Regiment	2784	29th Dieron Regulars
18th Army, 361st Dragoon Regiment	2785	10th Galedon Regulars
18th Army, 963rd Independent Aerospace Wing	2785	10th Galedon Regulars

THOSE LEFT BEHIND (CONTINUED)

Joining AFFS

Unit	Year	New Formation
2nd Army, 1008th Heavy Assault Regiment	2782	1st Crucis Lancers
19th Army, 13th Royal French Demi-Brigade	2782	4th, 5th and 8th Deneb Light Cavalry
7th Army, 250th BattleMech Division (1 battalion)	2783	3rd Ceti Hussars
15th Army, 91st Heavy Assault Regiment	2783	2nd Crucis Lancers
5th Army, 5th Hussar Regiment	2784	2nd Avalon Borderers
8th Army, 2004th Battle Regiment	2784	3rd Avalon Borderers
8th Army, 149th Dragoon Regiment	2784	4th Avalon Borderers
14th Army, 142nd Battle Regiment (1 battalion)	2784	7th Crucis Lancers
17th Army, 1894th Light Horse Regiment (1 battalion)	2784	2nd Ceti Hussars, 1st Argyle Lancers
17th Army, 8th Striker Regiment (2 battalions)	2784	2nd Ceti Hussars
20th Army, 200th Jump Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2784	41st and 42nd Avalon Hussars
18th Army, 199th Dragoon Regiment (1 battalion)	2785	3rd Ceti Hussars
18th Army, 396th Dragoon Regiment (1 battalion)	2785	3rd Ceti Hussars

Joining FWLM

Unit	Year	New Formation
5th Army, 189th Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2782	12th Bolan Defenders
11th Army, 346th Heavy Tank Regiment	2783	346th Heavy Tank Regiment
18th Army, 209th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2783	5th Defenders of Andurien (after 2783)
18th Army, 288th Hussar Regiment	2783	6th Orloff Grenadiers
4th Army, 166th Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2784	6th Regulan Hussars
15th Army, 63rd Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2784	7th Regulan Hussars
9th Army, 802nd Independent Aerospace Wing	2785	802nd Aerospace Wing
14th Army, 5th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2785	8th Orloff Grenadiers

Joining LCAF

Unit	Year	New Formation
17th Army, 205th Heavy Assault Regiment	2781	17th Arcturan Guards
2nd Army, 567th Striker Regiment	2782	3rd Lyran Regulars
11th Army, 236th Mechanized Infantry Division	2782	6th Arcturan Guards
11th Army, 11th Royal Heavy Assault Regiment	2782	7th Arcturan Guards
17th Army, 68th Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2782	11th Hesperus Guards
17th Army, 22nd Dragoon Regiment	2782	5th Donegal Guards
18th Army, 199th Light Horse Regiment	2782	1st Sakhalin Regulars
20th Army, 18th Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2782	18th Lyran Guards
4th Army, 238th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	8th Lyran Regulars
6th Army, 101st Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	8th Lyran Regulars
14th Army, 231st Light Horse Regiment	2783	14th Donegal Guards
8th Army, 3002nd Heavy Tank Regiment	2784	181st Heavy Assault Regiment
15th Army, 63rd Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2784	9th Lyran Regulars
19th Army, 368th BattleMech Division (1 regiment)	2785	19th Lyran Guards

THOSE LEFT BEHIND (CONTINUED)

Joining ComStar

Unit	Year	New Formation
5th Army, 213th BattleMech Division	2784	2nd ComStar Expeditionary Division*
5th Army, 197th Mechanized Infantry Division	2784	3rd ComStar Expeditionary Division*
9th Army, 151st Royal BattleMech Division	2784	1st ComStar Expeditionary Division*
11th Army, 184th Mechanized Infantry Division	2784	4th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
14th Army, 3rd Striker Regiment	2784	8th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
15th Army, 13th Royal Infantry Division	2784	5th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
15th Army, 326th BattleMech Division	2784	6th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
17th Army, 321st Hussar Regiment	2784	8th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
18th Army, 287th BattleMech Division	2784	7th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
18th Army, 89th Dragoon Regiment	2784	8th ComStar Expeditionary Division*
18th Army, 231st Striker Regiment	2784	8th ComStar Expeditionary Division*

Joining Joining Periphery/Going Rogue

Unit	Year	New Formation
Magistracy of Canopus		
13th Army, 100th Hussar Regiment	2765	None (Destroyed 2766)
9th Army, 218th Mechanized Infantry Division (2 regiments)	2766	None (Destroyed 2767)
10th Army, 237th Hussar Regiment	2766	None (Destroyed 2766)
12th Army, 29th CAAN Marine Regiment	2766	1st and 2nd Canopian Light Horse (after 2785)
13th Army, 186th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2786	1st Canopian Cuirassiers, Magistracy Guards
Outworlds Alliance		
15th Army, 284th BattleMech Division (1 regiment)	2782	Alpheratz Guards (after 2784)
16th Army, 165th Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2782	Alliance Grenadiers (after 2784)
Taurian Concordat		
19th Army, 36th Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2765	None (Destroyed 2766)
19th Army, 161st Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2766	None (Destroyed 2767)
2nd Army, 35th Dragoon Regiment	2784	Concordat Cuirassiers
4th Army, 159th Hussar Regiment	2766	Red Chasseurs (after 2784)
Renegade/Pirate		
17th Army, 108th Mechanized Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2766	None (Destroyed 2769)
17th Army, 265th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2766	None (Destroyed 2767)
17th Army, 38th Royal CAAN Marine Regiment (1 battalion)	2766	None (Destroyed 2768)
17th Army, 48th Jump Infantry Division (2 battalions)	2766	None (Destroyed 2767)
17th Army, 11th Hussar Regiment	2766	Battered Brood (Pirate)
20th Army, 192nd Dragoon Regiment	2770	McLaren's Forgotten (Pirate)
4th Army, 238th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2771	Charon's Children (Pirate)
AEAF 38th Amaris Fusiliers Regiment	2775	Cameron's Curse (Pirate)
AEAF 141st Amaris Dragoons (2 battalions)	2778	Blood Rain (Pirate)

THOSE LEFT BEHIND (CONTINUED)

Unit	Year	Became Mercenary New Formation
Capellan Confederation		
Northwind Highlanders (5 regiments)	ca. 2365	Northwind Highlanders
5th Army, 15th Dracon Regiment	2784	15th Dracon Regiment
7th Army, 81st Mechanized Infantry Division (1 regiment)	2784	4th Tau Ceti Rangers
SLDF 42nd Striker Regiment	2785	12 Stars Guard (12th Star Guards)
SLDF 10th Heavy Assault Regiment	2785	12 Stars Guard (12th Star Guards)
Ad-Hoc SLDF/RWR Force (3 regiments)	2786	Always Faithful
Ad-Hoc SLDF/RWR Force (2 regiments)	2799	Narhal's Raiders
Draconis Combine		
8th Army, 28th Heavy Horse Regiment	2784	28th Heavy Horse Regiment
9th Army, 52nd Heavy Assault Regiment	2783	52nd Heavy Assault Regiment
9th Army, 104th Striker Regiment	2783	104th Striker Regiment
19th Army, 208th Hussar Regiment	2783	Bolton's Rangers
225th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2775	Red Eagles
AEAF 13th Republic Light Lancers Regiment	2781	Black Sharks
AEAF Tartan Brigade (1 regiment)	2784	Fuchida's Fusiliers
AEAF 23rd Amaris Dragoons (1 regiment)	2768	Daemien's Destroyers
AEAF 201st Republican Lancers (1 regiment)	2780	Longhorns
CCAF Ariana Grenadiers (1 battalion)	2802	Bad Dream
Ad-Hoc SLDF/RWR Formation (1 regiment)	2815	Paul Bunyan Regiment
Free Worlds League		
16th Army, 71st Light Horse Regiment	2798	Eridani Light Horse
16th Army, 151st Light Horse Regiment	2798	Eridani Light Horse
16th Army, 21st Striker Regiment	2798	Eridani Light Horse
Ad-Hoc SLDF, Black Cobra Regiment	2788	Baldwin's Cobras Heavy Brigade
Ad-Hoc SLDF, 789th Striker Regiment	2788	Baldwin's Cobras Heavy Brigade
Ad-Hoc SLDF, Alexander's Asps Heavy Regiment	2788	Baldwin's Cobras Heavy Brigade
Ad-Hoc SLDF/RWR Force (1 regiment)	2794	Clinton's Cutthroats
Ad-Hoc RWR Force (1 battalion)	2797	Edom's Bandits
Ad-Hoc RWR Force (1 battalion)	2820	Salicia's Defiants
Calloway Lancers Planetary Guard (1 regiment)	2795	Langendorf Lancers
Darabout's Damned (1 regiment)	2789	Dark Spirits*
Gladstone's Gladiators (1 regiment)	2784	Gladstone's Gladiators
Federated Suns		
Redfield Planetary Guard (1 regiment)	2763	Redfield Renegades
3rd Army, 225th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2775	Simpson's Samurai
17th Army, 38th Dragoon Regiment	2784	Lexington Combat Group (241st Battle)*
18th Army, 167th Light Horse Regiment	2784	Lexington Combat Group (32nd Recon)*
18th Army, 238th Striker Regiment	2784	Lexington Combat Group (180th Dragoon)*
11th Army, 23rd Heavy Assault Regiment	2784	Tyson's Troublemakers
7th Army, 250th BattleMech Division (5 regiments)	2785	Screaming Eagles
17th Army, 1894th Light Horse Regiment (2 battalions)	2786	Blue Star Irregulars
AEAF 21st Rim Worlds Regiment	2786	Blue Star Irregulars
17th Army, 8th Striker Regiment (1 battalion)	2786	Lazy Eights
Hsien Planetary Guard (1 regiment)	2788	Hsien Hotheads
Ad-Hoc SLDF/RWR/AFFS Force (1 regiment)	2793	Belinda's Irregulars
The Fighting Urak-hai (3 regiments)	2795	Fighting Urukhai

THOSE LEFT BEHIND (CONTINUED)

Became Mercenary

Unit	Year	New Formation
Lyran Commonwealth		
1st Army, 12th Heavy Assault Regiment	2782	12th Heavy Assault Regiment
4th Army, 238th Mechanized Infantry Division (1 battalion)	2783	Iron Raven Mercenary Group
12th Army, 25th Striker Regiment	2783	Fomorians
Illician Lancers (4 regiments)	2786	Illician Lancers
Ad-Hoc RWR Force (1 battalion)	2800	Freeman's Fanatics
AEAF 38th Amaris Fusiliers Regiment	2803	Raymond's Redcoats*
AEAF 23rd Republic Light Lancers Regiment	2785	Stealths (nationalized 2810)
Periphery Mercenaries		
6th Army, 262nd BattleMech Division (1 regiment)	2774	Black Band Legion
20th Army, 428th BattleMech Division (1 regiment)	2771	Cardinal Sins
The Warriors of the Dawn (1 regiment)	2779	Grim Determination (after 2780)*
AEAF 2nd Mexican Legion (1 battalion)	2781	King's Wild Cards
SLDF 77th Special Operations Group (1 regiment)	2784	Blackhearts
Black Warriors (1 regiment)	2785	Black Warriors
Unaffiliated/Uncontracted Mercenaries		
Verlo Planetary Guard Force (5 battalions)	2820	12th Vegan Rangers
CCAF 8th and 9th Andurien Hussars (2 regiments)	2822	Dismal Disinherited
The Grave Walkers (1 regiment)	N/A	Grave Walkers

Missing, Deactivated, or Unaccounted

Unit	Year	New Formation
14th Army, 79th Mechanized Infantry Division	2784	None (Destroyed on Terra, 2788)
12th Army, 123rd Mechanized Infantry Division	2784	None (Destroyed on Terra, 2788)
11th Army, 295th BattleMech Division	N/A	None (Stranded in Periphery, ca. 2790)
3rd Army, 280th Mechanized Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
4th Army, 90th Dragoon Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
7th Army, 997th Striker Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
10th Army, 9th Royal CAAN Marine Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
12th Army, 54th Mechanized Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
13th Army, 173rd Mechanized Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
15th Army, 272nd Mechanized Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
16th Army, 126th Mechanized Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
19th Army, 359th BattleMech Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
19th Army, 31st Infantry Division	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
19th Army, 509th Battle Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
19th Army, 242nd Hussar Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)
20th Army, 277th Dragoon Regiment	N/A	Unknown (MIA ca. 2766-2769)

*Original identity or designation suspected, but unconfirmed

SAVAGERY UNLEASHED

Even though all of the Great Houses had formally entered a state of war by January 2787, the first few months after those declarations seemed little different than those that preceded it. The various realms shuffled troops a bit, and a few raiding parties crossed their various shared borders, but the bulk of the action focused largely on the continued dissolution of the former Terran Hegemony.

This was merely the calm before the coming storms, of course. As 2787 dawned, each of the House Lords had chosen a primary target for their first campaigns—plans that blindly raced each other to reach fruition. House Kurita's Draconis Combine would launch the first major offensive of the Succession War, but within a year, all five of the Inner Sphere realms would be locked in mortal combat.

THE DRAGON RAMPANT: KURITA'S WARS

Despite Coordinator Minoru's declarations, the Draconis Combine in the opening months of 2787 appeared no more belligerent than before. DCMS forces, seeking to consolidate their Terran Hegemony gains, moved to secure the worlds of Saffel, Nirasaki, and Quentin. Along the Lyran front, Kurita regiments had settled into a largely defensive posture, their numbers now including most of the former SLDF troops and mercenaries the Dragon had acquired over the past few years.

A state of alert remained in place on the Federated Suns border, as it had since the year of Kerensky's Exodus. Unbeknownst to House Davion, this alert had become a smokescreen behind which the Coordinator's heir, Warlord Jinjiro Kurita, had carefully amassed more than fifty BattleMech regiments, and at least three times as many regiments of supporting infantry, armor, and aerospace elements.

The time when this army would be unleashed was fast approaching. But for maximum effect, Jinjiro wanted the Suns to be caught completely unaware. To do so, he sent explicit orders to all field commanders from the Hegemony border expansion to the Combine's spinward frontier: if engaged by the Davions, their mercenaries, or any of their potential allies, the DCMS was to fight with the *minimal* amount of its might. At this critical stage, even the loss of a few worlds or battalions was preferable to the unraveling of what would be the Dragon's masterstroke.

These orders were put to the test in the earliest months of the war.

Holding Back: The Battles for David and Saffel

In February 2787, elements of the Eleventh Avalon Hussars, supported by a battalion from the former SLDF's 1894th Light Horse Regiment (now operating under the livery of the Blue Star Irregulars mercenary command), raided the Combine-held world of David. There, the DCMS garrison—the Third Arkab Legion—had been further augmented by more than four regiments of conventional armor and infantry, as well as the Third Dieron Regulars 'Mech regiment. Pursuant to Jinjiro Kurita's orders, the defenders held back all of their reinforcements, and engaged the raiders with only half of the Arkab Legion's manpower. The Davion forces savaged these troops near the port city of Sassari, where the Legion made a show of falling back after less than an hour of fighting. The warehouses they left behind for the raiders to plunder contained significant stores of munitions, small arms, and spare parts, but even these had been deliberately reduced in the days prior to the attack, thanks to the early warning of the planet's satellite sensor network.

Lacking the strength to claim the planet outright, and convinced that the defenders had already called nearby systems for reinforcements, the Hussars and their mercenary support only lingered on David for a week before withdrawing, content that they had suitably tested House Kurita's border defenses. Although the raiders conducted a series of recon air patrols over the planet's other major settlements, they never discovered the concealed bases housing the Third Dieron, deep in the Northern Andropo badlands, or the numerous vehicle bunkers disguised as scattered transient villages along the nearby Fatima River Basin.

In April 2787, during the Combine's attack on Saffel, the Sixth Benjamin Regulars discovered elements of the Twenty-First Rim Worlds Regiment were already on planet. Kuritan intelligence identified the former Republic troops as another part of the Blue Star Irregulars, but had not anticipated their presence on the planet after the raid on David. Evidently dispatched to Saffel to secure an Amaris Empire cache left behind during Kerensky's campaign to liberate Terra, the Irregulars were also tasked with holding the world as a provisional staging area for additional FedSuns operations within the Terran Corridor.

Once more, the DCMS field commander, *Tai-sa* Shiro Knutesson, was bound to limit his force's strength and preserve the impression of a weaker Combine presence in the region. Here, this meant dispersing his attack units across multiple settlements, diluting their effectiveness, and ordering them to give ground easily when the mercenaries eventually came to root them out. Feigning weakness and incompetence in the face of the "honorless dregs" of the fallen Rim Worlds galled the Sixth's warriors, but a pointed reminder from Knutesson that any who defied these directives "would be free to explain to Lord Jinjiro why they did so" kept them in line.

The Sixth Benjamin Regulars finally retreated from Saffel after ten days of sporadic fighting. As fate would have it, Jinjiro's meticulous plans paid off mere days after their JumpShips leapt out of the system.

THE DRAGON'S RECKONING: THE COMBINE-SUNS FRONT

House Kurita's assault against the Federated Suns was finally unleashed on 1 May 2787. In less than twelve hours, the JumpShips and WarShips carrying virtually every combat formation along the Combine-Suns border leapt into Davion space like an interstellar tsunami. Where possible, these task forces emerged at stable non-standard jump points nearest to their objectives, while others arrived at the local jump stations in what amounted to a glorious show of force. To further weaken the Davion response, all transport JumpShips and communications hubs were priority targets.

Having planned for an invasion of the Capellan Confederation, and convinced that the Combine's attention was focused on the distant Lyrans, the AFFS had redeployed several key 'Mech

BARLOW'S FOLLY

Located on the Davion-Kurita border since Age of War, Cussar had seen more than its share of raids by military forces bearing the Dragon's symbol, and its citizenry took the duty of homeland defense as a tradition almost as sacred as attending church. This rugged spirit, and the fierce pride in the Federated Suns that reigned over them, was so pronounced that many natives developed the symbolic habit of setting an extra plate at the dinner table for friendly AFFS troops, while also keeping a rifle by the front door in case they received a Kurita visitor instead.

At the dawn of the First Succession War, troop shuffling placed the Thirty-Eighth Avalon Hussars on Cussar. Among the members of this regiment was Colonel Michael Barlow, a Cussar native who knew the planet's mountainous terrain well. He loved his world and believed that only House Davion would treat her with the respect she deserved.

When the Draconis Combine's first offensive began, Cussar—like virtually every other Davion world along the border—was among its first targets. As two DCMS 'Mech regiments landed, along with four supporting regiments each of infantry and combat vehicles, the Federated Suns' defenders found themselves facing more than twice their strength in ground troops. Worse, the Combine force commanders, spurred on by orders to subjugate the planet as quickly as possible, quickly resorted to burning a swath of destruction everywhere they went.

Despite the numbers, and the Combine's quick assertion of aerospace superiority, the Avalon Hussars fought valiantly for over two weeks, long enough for news to come in that House Kurita's invasion effectively spanned the entire border. Reports of the fall of Marduk and Scheat—both virtually without a fight—mixed with others describing heavy fighting on Alnadal and New Mendham, nuclear strikes on Royal, and chemical attacks on Elbar. Each bit of news further demoralized the Hussar commanders.

(CONTINUED ON P. 39)

regiments and WarShip groups to the Liao border. Knowing this, the Combine's Internal Security Force had identified several weak points along the Davion lines—areas where the Suns was over-reliant on local militia and mercenary troops to take up the slack in their regular defense. This information enabled the Dragon to focus its attacks for maximum effect.

Of particular interest to the first wave of Lord Jinjiro's campaign was a bulge of seven FedSuns worlds jutting into Kurita space. While this salient centered on the otherwise-unremarkable world of Paris, it also represented the coreward edge of the Robinson Combat Region, the heart of the Suns' Draconis March. To this region, the DCMS concentrated the most of its initial invasion strength—including fifteen BattleMech regiments and over twenty-five WarShips.

The surprise, border-wide assault took the AFFS completely by surprise. Making things worse, the initial Combine attacks on communications proved so effective that, in several cases, border worlds fell silent without even sending a distress call. This gave many FedSuns regional defense commanders the impression that the Combine's invasions were fewer in number and much more dispersed than they were. Local commands thus received conflicting orders to stay and fight, or make an orderly retreat, while the various Combat Region leaders failed to effectively coordinate with each other.

In the critical "Paris Bulge", this confusion resulted in the retreat of the Tyson's Troublemakers mercenary regiment (formerly known as the SLDF's Twenty-Third Heavy Assault Regiment) from Marduk, while the First Syrtis Hussars and Thirty-Eighth Avalon Hussars held their positions on Galtor III and Cussar, respectively. The DCMS was quick to take advantage, surging into the region and destroying all enemy space traffic with a mix of heavy fighter strikes and nuclear-tipped "ship-killer" capital missiles. In the first month of the campaign, close to a dozen Davion WarShips and more than three times as many JumpShips were destroyed or captured by the Kuritans, most with only a minimal loss of Combine aerospace power.

The Combine's world-by-world strategy was simple and straightforward. Once local aerospace and communications were neutralized—effectively stranding the planetary defenders—each invasion group would land the bulk of its assault units on the target world. These forces would inflict as much damage to the Davion ground troops as possible, and as quickly as they could. These vanguards were not tasked with completely destroying their enemy or rooting out insurgents; that "mop up" action would be left to a second wave set to arrive in their wake. This freed the primary attack groups to return to their ships and move on to the next world.

Three days into the invasion, a second surge of DCMS forces struck at the Clovis Combat Region—this one personally led by Coordinator Minoru Kurita, at the head of the elite Third Sword of Light regiment. At the same time, Warlord Jinjiro, leading the First Sword of Light, entered the fray in the Dahar IV Combat Region. Unlike the initial attack wave, the forces attached to these two men were equipped and supplied for longer operations. They would form the prongs that would encircle the Robinson Combat Region on their way toward New Avalon.

The Battle for Clovis

Minoru's flank targeted the worlds of Cartago, Clovis, and Olancha. On the regional headquarters world of Clovis, the Third Sword of Light landed alongside the Third Pesht Regulars and the Ninth Dieron Regulars. In the space above, a fleet of two *Samarkand*-class carriers, four *Narukami* destroyers, and an old *Aegis* cruiser—all from the DCA's Third Fleet—ensured the Combine's orbital and aerospace supremacy. To their credit, the FedSuns WarShips opposing them—the *New Syrtis*-class carrier *Midale* and the *Davion*-class destroyers *Reynard Davion* and *Samuel Davion*—managed to tie up the Kuritan task force near the planet's lunar orbit for nearly six hours. Although they succeeded in crippling the *Narukami*-class *Firewind*, and inflicted serious damage to the *Samarkand*-class *Hagiwawa*, the destruction of both the *Midale* and *Reynard Davion* ended the contest.

On the ground, the Clovis Combat Region's commander, Field Marshal Grover Simons, used the time bought by the WarShips to order his troops to reinforce their headquarters position and the defenses around the planetary capital of Gorst City. In addition to this, he sent the first of what would be many requests for reinforcements from the surrounding systems. By the time of the Kurita landings, Simons' First Clovis Guards Regiment, augmented by three regiments of conventional armor, were dug into positions all around the mountain-encircled valley that surrounded Gorst City. Rightly understanding the Combine's intention to smash the regional headquarters, which could potentially throw half of the Draconis March border into disarray, Simons mounted a spirited defense. Even with three 'Mech regiments, roughly eighteen regiments of armor and infantry, and full aerospace superiority in the skies, the DCMS attackers would only claim a small foothold in the Gorst City Valley after a week planetside.

[*Editor's Note: The lack of orbital artillery and weapons of mass destruction used on Clovis—despite both being readily available to the DCMS throughout their campaign—has been debated by many scholars since the end of the First War. Ironically enough, most theories hinge on the Coordinator's presence in the region. Determined to fight a war under samurai ideals, it is likely that he felt a world as important as Clovis was worthy of a "respectable battle," and thus forbade the use of "overwhelming destruction" against the planetary forces. His field commanders were also tasked with capturing as much intel as possible from the AFFS command centers, and became extra-cautious when options for more direct action became available, choosing to stretch out the conflict to avoid rousing their lord's ire. Adding to this the fact that the DCMS apparently suspected at least two more 'Mech regiments were on Clovis at the time (a rare failure in what may have been the Combine's best military intelligence effort to date), these commanders might have also held back in anticipation of a threat that simply never developed.*]

Meanwhile, Simons' continued pleas for assistance roused only token support from the nearby systems. With attacks happening all along the Combine front, the AFFS troops on several nearby worlds had either already fallen to the Kurita blitz, or were currently fighting for their own lives. Indeed, the only notable support Clovis received came in the form of a small naval flotilla consisting of the *Robinson*-class carrier *New Ivaarsen* and four attached DropShips bearing troops hastily pulled from Xhosa VII. Unfortunately, this assistance arrived at Clovis' nadir jump point five days into the second week of the ground war—too late to save the fighters around Gorst City.

The *New Ivaarsen* and her DropShip escorts were only halfway to the planet, and gearing up for a savage fight with the waiting Draconis flotilla, when Simons saw his northern and eastern flanks collapse in the face of a determined Kurita assault. Exhausted, low on munitions, and certain that the inbound reinforcements would accomplish little more than delaying the inevitable, he called for an orderly retreat. The remains of his Clovis Guards, now worn down to barely a battalion of 'Mechs, did their best to cover the bulk of his support staff and armored troops as they fell back to the few DropShips grounded in the Gorst City Spaceport that had not already been bombed or strafed into ruins over the last two weeks.

Simons himself boarded the last of these outbound ships after battle damage rendered his *Thug* nearly inoperative. The field marshal's evacuation, however, would be cut short barely ten thousand meters off the ground when Combine aerospace fighters intercepted the ship and ordered it to surrender and land. Determined to avoid capture, the small *Leopard*-class DropShip attempted to fight its way out, but was shot down with all hands lost.

Simons' death and the fall of Clovis shattered the Suns' defensive line almost immediately. By the end of May, House Kurita had taken nearly the entire Clovis Combat Region, half each of the Robinson and Dahar Combat Regions, and half a dozen worlds from the Fairfax Combat Region. Minoru Kurita and his Third Sword of Light stood on Cartago, while Jinjiro Kurita and the First Sword seized Franklin.

BARLOW'S FOLLY (CONTINUED)

Then came word that the Combine had taken Clovis and killed Field Marshal Simons, commander of the neighboring Clovis Combat Region. Sensing the complete collapse of the Davion front, Colonel Barlow's commander, Leftenant General Louis Santonio, issued a general retreat order to all remaining AFFS units on Cussar. Colonel Barlow, however, refused to abandon his homeworld. After failing to convince Santonio to remain as well, he and the survivors of his battalion stayed behind.

As the last of his comrades made their escape, Barlow led his force into the Trinity Mountains, a rocky, heavily wooded, and snow-capped range circling the planet's three major cities of Angelius, Patrónne, and Solus. For the next three years, Barlow's 'Mechs harassed the Combine's occupation forces with hit and run attacks, scavenging just enough parts and supplies along the way to keep their machines battle-worthy with technical support from local collaborators. When their 'Mechs eventually failed, Barlow's insurgents turned to small arms and captured vehicles to fight on for another ten years.

It was not until 2801, after fourteen years of low-intensity warfare that claimed countless DCMS soldiers and destroyed tons of enemy equipment and supplies, that the Kurita garrison on Cussar finally killed the last of Barlow's original guerrilla force. Unfortunately for the occupiers, the Davion warriors' bravery and persistence had inspired a spirit of resistance among the planet's citizens. Numerous new insurgent actions were conducted in the name of the late Colonel Barlow, leaving the planet's new masters to face a population that would remain hostile to their presence for centuries to come.

Fueled by the tales of Michael Barlow's determined resistance to Kurita rule, and the persistent rebellion that has lingered there ever since, locals on both sides of the Combine-Suns border began calling Cussar "Barlow's Folly." Over the many years since the First Succession War, even the Combine's government came to identify the world by this new name.

—From *First Succession War Battlefields*, by Marcia Barker, Ever-Free Publications, New Syrtis, 3112

ROUT

In the third week of the Combine invasion, Prince John Davion was with the First Davion Guards on Muskegon, where several regiments had massed for his own assault into the Capellan Confederation. It was here that he received the flood of HPG messages from throughout the Draconis March, and realized the enormity of the situation. With that front in disarray, he immediately put his plans for the Confederation on hold, and issued orders for all AFFS commands on the Combine border to fall back, hoping to reestablish the Suns' defensive lines.

Unfortunately, the specter of the same divided loyalties and conflicting chains of command that led to the 2785 Towne Debacle rose again to impair the "complete and orderly withdrawal" called for by the Prince. Unwilling to abandon their homeworlds, many AFFS soldiers refused to retreat, while others fled so eagerly that they abandoned thousands of tons of valuable military equipment to the enemy. The disorganized retreat worsened the gaps in the Draconis March lines, which House Kurita was quick to exploit.

Indeed, the splintering of the Suns' border defense played perfectly into the Combine's overall war strategy. Determined to strike a decisive blow to the Davions as quickly and efficiently as possible, Jinjiro Kurita conceived a "planet-hopping" approach to the invasion. Having already acknowledged the martial skill of the Federated Suns (if not its strategic prowess), he and his father agreed that their blitz would have to circumvent any heavy resistance to maintain its devastating pace. This was why most planetary assaults began by crippling communications and aerospace traffic; doing so effectively stranded any FedSuns forces that could not be overcome quickly, so the Combine's rear guards could take them out later, preferably after their besieged and essentially-surrounded worlds began to starve and give way to decaying morale.

Most of the AFFS commands left behind in the initial wave of the Combine's invasion were virtually destroyed the first two years of the war. Examples of those who proved resourceful, resilient, or just plain fortunate enough to survive include the Thirteenth Robinson Chevaliers' Doughboys battalion (on Dobson), the Fourth Robinson Chevaliers' Gorgons battalion (on Franklin), and the Tenth Robinson Chevaliers' Chargers battalion (on New Rhodes III). Many of these commands, made up from remnants of their parent regiments and supporting formations, went to ground for years after their base worlds fell, engaging in periodic raids for supplies and causing whatever havoc they could for the Kuritan warriors left to deal with them.

FIGHTING THE TSUNAMI

By February 2788, Prince John Davion's dreams of a Capellan invasion were in shambles, and morale was collapsing all along the Draconis front. In a desperate effort to boost morale and blunt the Kurita advance, he gathered together several regiments originally deployed to strike at House Liao, and aimed them at Elbar, Schedar, and Cartago. Davion hoped his counter-offensive would break through the DCMS lines along the Terran flank, and, more importantly, disrupt the prong of the invasion reportedly being led by Coordinator Minoru himself.

Unfortunately, poor coordination and anemic WarShip support doomed the counterattack almost from the start. Having grouped together his strike forces from among the regiments nearest to his position at the time, Davion's main regiments consisted of his First Davion Guards, the Twenty-Eighth Avalon Hussars, and the Eighth Syrtis Fusiliers, plus twice as many armor and infantry regiments drawn from regional militias of the Marlette Combat Region. None of these commands had sufficient time to train together for their parts of the operation, and each was provided a naval escort of only two WarShips each to cover their strikes.

The Prince was fully aware of these issues, and his field commanders voiced their concerns, but he felt that speed was critical if they were to have any effect on the Kurita juggernaut. Time, he knew, was not on his side. In the hopes of boosting his chances of success, Davion ordered the regiments that had fallen back in the Fairfax Combat Region to advance again.

That May, the three attack groups struck at their targets; the Twenty-Eighth Hussars on Schedar, the Eighth Fusiliers on Elbar, and the First Davion Guards on Cartago. In all three cases, the DCMS response was brutally effective. Having achieved aerospace superiority months before, and retaining ample fighter and DropShip support in close proximity to these worlds, each of the enemy defense groups saw the FedSuns ships coming well in advance, and was able to call for additional WarShip support as needed while their ground troops dug in below.

The results were devastating. At Schedar, the Kurita defenders included a pair of *Lola I*-class destroyers—the *Minekaze* and *Shiokaze*—as well as the *Vincent*-class corvette *Kaiten*. The Twenty-eighth Hussars' escorts were the *Carrack*-class transport *Liverpool* and the *Vincent*-class corvette *Robespierre*. Outnumbered and outclassed from the start, the Davion ships nevertheless tried to shield the Hussars on their way in, but the *Minekaze* and *Shiokaze* ignored the easy kill the *Liverpool* presented, while the *Kaiten* tied up *Robespierre* in a high-orbit duel. Targeting the Davion DropShips as a swarm of DCMS fighters ravaged *Liverpool*, the Combine destroyers shredded the 'Mech transports one by one, ultimately preventing all but two companies from making landfall.

At Elbar, the Combine naval defense was notably lacking in WarShips—until the surprise appearance of the *Narukami*-class WarShip *Tsutsuji* and two squadrons of DCMS fighters caught the Davion JumpShips before they could finish their recharge and destroyed all of the Eighth Syrtis Fusiliers' transport ships. Realizing that they were diving into a trap, the Eighth's ships retreated. Lacking suitable docking collars on their WarShip escorts, however, the Fusiliers hurriedly transferred as many of their DropShip crews, passengers, and equipment into the *Carrack*-class *Port Victoria* before abandoning their excess vessels and jumping back to safer space.

But the worst failure happened at Cartago, where the Combine forces actually allowed the First Davion Guards to make landfall after only a cursory battle in the skies above. Originally encountering only a pair of *Baron*-class destroyers in orbit, the FedSuns attackers, flanked by the *Davion II*-class destroyers *Duke Henry* and *Edmund Davion*, thought they held the upper hand and dropped a full regiment into the valley outside of the capital city spaceport. Prince John began to suspect a trap, however, as

soon as his 'Mechs disembarked. Instead of Kurita DropShips sitting on the tarmac just five kilometers away, he noticed that most of the hulls were civilian ships—and all stood in obvious disrepair. His order to fall back almost came too late as the entire site erupted in the flash of a nuclear detonation. Close to a company of First Guards 'Mechs and a squadron of fighters were lost in the initial blast, but Prince John managed to board his ship in time. Ordering his entire assault force airborne, he barely survived the second attempt on his life during the flight to space, when a group of Draconis fighters swept over the area, intent on downing the Davion Guards. Meanwhile, the Combine's orbiting corvettes returned to face the FedSuns ships in orbit—only this time, they were flanking the *Omodaka*, a *Narukami II*-class destroyer that had managed to evade detection by lurking on the far side of the planet. The *Omodaka*'s arrival turned the retreat from Cartago into a bloody chase that only ended after the Kuritan corvettes had been disabled, an effort that cost the fleeing Davions the *Duke Henry*.

By the time Prince John and his task force returned to friendly space, he learned that his failed counterattack plan had cost the Federated Suns three WarShips; the *Liverpool* and *Robespierre* at Schedar, and the *Duke Henry* at Cartago. The AFFS also lost eight JumpShips and over a dozen DropShips at Elbar, while nearly two full 'Mech regiments, plus their supporting forces, had been lost or abandoned in the three actions. The unmitigated disaster had cost the enemy only a pair of destroyers, roughly three squadrons' worth of fighters, and a mixed battalion of 'Mechs and armor.

The FedSuns propagandists tried to spin the entire affair as a defeat for the Dragon; Kurita had failed to take out Prince John on Cartago, after all, and the Fairfax advance had actually liberated a handful of worlds in the bargain. Despite this, morale plunged across the AFFS as the news spread.

Cholame

In the aftermath of his first failed counter-attack, Prince John immediately turned his attention toward mustering a second. Recognizing from battle reports that Kurita naval strength had played the key role in his defeats, he decided to direct this second counteroffensive toward eliminating that advantage.

This new plan was filled with as much desperation as his last campaign, if not more. DCMS troops had effectively overrun the entirety of the Clovis, Robinson, and Dahar Combat Regions by then, claiming half of the Draconis March by the end of 2788. Their pace unbroken, Combine attack groups began surging into the Marlette and Kestrel Combat Regions during the opening weeks of 2789. As before, the Dragon's WarShips and aerospace assets took point, eliminating any transport ships they found, while their elite vanguard regiments shattered the core of any ground forces at hand before moving on. With so many of the Suns' original border troops already smashed or scattered, however, this only made things easier for House Kurita. Seeing the invasion of the New Avalon region as a virtual certainty, what AFFS strength could be spared to contain the threat was being mustered on and around the capital world.

But John Davion had no intention of sitting and waiting for his enemy's killing blow. Even with the shadow of Cartago hanging over him, he sent orders to divert as much of the Suns' WarShip fleet as possible to a staging area in the Arcadia system, well in advance of Kurita's spearheads. This included as many ships as he could spare from the Capellan March and the Periphery border regions—areas that, at the time, remained downright placid compared to the coreward front. It also included ships already arrayed across the systems surrounding New Avalon, a move that alarmed many of his already rattled senior officers.

This assembled force, which totaled more than one hundred WarShips and assault vessels, paired with a roughly equal number of fighter wings, would be tasked with turning the Dragon's blitz back on itself. Rather than taking worlds back, this armada was to destroy or capture House Kurita's naval assets, focusing primarily on transports and capital combat ships. Secondary objectives for this fleet included providing whatever assistance they could for pro-Davion resistance groups encountered behind the enemy lines, including air support operations, supply delivery, and evacuations.

AN EXPENSIVE LEARNING CURVE

The failure of Operation SOLAR SHIELD, the 2788 counteroffensive against House Kurita's invasion of the Federated Suns, was more than just a humiliating defeat for the AFFS. Though the feint forces in the Fairfax CR did manage to liberate some worlds, those victories came at a cost in men and materiel the Suns could scarcely afford. Indeed, poor force integration, overreaching goals, and a lack of naval assets to protect the main attack groups very nearly decapitated House Davion itself. Combined with the disastrous failure of Operation BRASS RING over Hesperus II a month earlier, it appeared that all of Prince John's "Hail Mary" campaigns to save his realm were doomed from the "go" order.

Some of these lessons, first learned in the disastrous Towne Debacle, were already being rectified—albeit not nearly fast enough to outpace the Combine's offensive. Others only became crystal clear after John's retreat from Cartago.

In the wake of SOLAR SHIELD, John Davion realized that if he was to have any hope in driving back the Dragon, he needed to address the naval strength it brought against him. The ships he had already requested for the defense of his core worlds were still massing in the Crucis March, preparing for the inevitable arrival of Kurita invaders. But he still felt that the best way to knock the wind out of his enemy was to take the fight to him first, and so he summoned even more ships with orders to rally at Arcadia. These orders stripped every WarShip, assault DropShip, and fighter squadron the AFFS could spare from the Capellan and Periphery fronts, along with over half of those assigned to New Avalon's defense. These forces finally massed in the space above Arcadia by the final weeks of 2789—at which point, Davion handed them over to his best fleet commander, Admiral Kenneth Jones.

With over a hundred WarShips and support vessels, plus an equal number of fighter wings, Jones commanded perhaps the largest task force the FedSuns admiralty had assembled since the Age of War.

—Willis Lavernius, *Profiles in Determination: The History of the Federated Suns*, Avalon Press, 3110

As with the Combine's invasion strategy, this force was to avoid loitering in any one system for too long. After all, the Department of Military Intelligence had noted that the Kuritans might have been moving their ships in small combat groups, but these flotillas demonstrated more than enough coordination and communication between them to cause nasty surprises like those Prince John himself experienced at Cartago.

Leading this naval campaign was Admiral Kenneth Jones, one of the best commanders in the Federated Suns' black navy. Jones' flagship—the *Defender*-class battlecruiser FSS *Golden Lion*—had already seen heavy action since the onset of the war, and boasted one of the fleet's most experienced crews.

By the time the fleet was ready, House Kurita's farthest advance into the Suns included the worlds of Batavia, Acoma, Saunemin, Kestrel, and Imbrial III. Based on intelligence gleaned from the Longhorns mercenary regiment (which defected from Combine employment during the 2789 invasion of Imbrial), Admiral Jones selected Imbrial III for his first strike; the DCMS aerospace forces there had yet to recover, leaving their WarShip and JumpShip escorts relatively undefended. Following Imbrial, the fleet would hit a series of eleven more systems along the forward edge of the captured territories.

Jones divided his fleet evenly into two battle groups to maximize its coverage within the operation's strict timetable. Each battle group would follow a zigzag course, intended to keep the Combine navy guessing, and end their first sweep with the worlds of New Valencia and Corydon, before regrouping again at the single-planet system of Cholame.

According to DMI reports, Cholame was effectively abandoned; its local militia had already fallen back ahead of the DCMS invasion, and its small resident population and lack of major industrial resources made it a world the Dragon had simply bypassed in favor of more important targets. After Cholame, the fleet was to jump to the free world of Rosamond for resupply, launch a second series of strikes that would cut as deeply behind the enemy lines as Robinson, and take a circuitous route back toward New Avalon.

The two battle groups finally launched into Combine-occupied space in the first week of January, 2790. Admiral Jones' battle group hit Imbrial, Kestrel, Saltural, Saunemin, Acoma, and New Valencia, while his second group hit the worlds of Evansville, Bogard, DeWitt, Blandinsville, and Corydon. With only a week to spend in each system, these groups worked as fast as possible.

Combine WarShip presence was remarkably light, but the Davion fleets nevertheless won several engagements during their whirlwind tour behind enemy lines. At Imbrial, for example, the first battle group encountered and destroyed the *Halland* and *Stockholm*—two *Congress*-class frigates whose hulls dated back to the early Star League—as well as two DCMS transport JumpShips, and four attack DropShips. The second group, meanwhile, neutralized the DCS *Benjamin*, an ancient *Samarkand*-class transport, along with two more JumpShips in the Bogard system.

By the time the battle groups left their final attack objectives, they had destroyed twenty-two transport JumpShips, twenty-five DropShips, and six WarShips—having added the hull of the *Narukami*-class *Tsutsuji* to their kills, along with the *Lola*-class destroyers *Mizuki* and *Kiaria*. They had also provided aid to beleaguered resistance cells on Kestrel and destroyed virtually all Kurita aerospace assets in the Saunemin system. Between the two groups, House Davion lost only four JumpShips, eight DropShips, and four WarShips: the *New Syrtis*-class carrier *Novaya Zemlya*, the *Aegis*-class cruiser *Sabertooth*, and the *Vincent*-class corvettes *Neptune* and *Mercury*. These losses were partly offset by the capture of four more Kurita JumpShips, as well as the DCS *Sahand*, a *Sovetskii Soyuz*-class heavy cruiser seized at New Valencia. Though New Avalon remained imperiled, and the lack of a heavy Combine fleet presence still nagged at Admiral Jones and his support staff, morale was quite high among the fleet when he gave the command to jump for Cholame on the morning of 9 March 2790.

Unfortunately for Jones and his fleet, the DMI had made a critical error. Far from leaving Cholame unoccupied, the Draconis Combine had actually selected the system as the perfect place for its own fleet anchorage. Furthermore, in an effort to contain the highly mobile Davion battle groups, the Combine had gathered much of its offensive fleet there in an effort to intercept them. Following news of the attacks on Corydon and New Valencia, the Kurita ships were in the midst of preparing for their jumps to both worlds—when the first Federated Suns craft materialized at Cholame, practically on top of them.

On the bridge of the *Samarkand*-class carrier *An Ting*, *Tai-sho* Isoru Khalfani, admiral of the Combine fleet, feared that the arrival of Jones' armada was a pre-emptive strike against his gathered ships. Believing that the enemy would target his weaker transports first, Khalfani chose to mount an aggressive defense. He ordered his fighter groups—already primed for battle—to launch immediately against the inbound Davions, hoping that their screen would distract the attackers while his WarShips maneuvered to shield their nearest JumpShips. He also ordered all available assault DropShips to detach and deploy around their transports for added protection, effectively putting a cloud of combat ships between his weakest vessels and any incoming fire.

But when the enemy failed to scramble more than a handful of fighter squadrons in the first tense minutes after their emergence, Khalfani realized that the Davions might not have anticipated his presence at all. Indeed, as FedSuns transports began appearing just a few minutes after their capital ships, it became clear that they'd assumed the Cholame system to be completely empty. Eager to seize the advantage, he commanded a third of his WarShips to accelerate toward the enemy at maximum thrust, and to launch as many capital missiles as they could at the largest Davion ships the moment their gunners could plot a solution.

On the FSS *Golden Lion*, Admiral Kenneth Jones was desperately trying to contain a pandemonium. From his perspective, his battle group had just materialized squarely in the middle of a Combine ambush, and only the air patrol squadrons were ready for immediate launch. As these fighters deployed, he and his command staff scrambled to get the rest of their fighters launched, and all DropShips detached for battle. Even as he did so, he knew his JumpShips would be sitting ducks no matter what occurred; his fleet had simply materialized too close to the Kuritans to evade their fire for long. Worse, according to the strict timetable established for the entire campaign, his second battle group could

arrive in the same area at any moment. He needed to warn that group of the danger and safeguard their transport assets, while holding his position as long as possible to try and protect as many of his own transports as possible.

Fortunately, the *Golden Lion* was equipped with a mobile hyperpulse generator, as was her counterpart in the second combat group, the FSS *Black Bear*. This feature, limited to only a few of the Federated Suns' WarShips, was the primary reason for their assignment to this campaign, and had been used extensively to coordinate between them for the previous two months of operations. Jones now used that HPG to advise the *Black Bear* of the situation at Cholame, ordering the second group to send its transports to the system's nadir jump point, rather than its zenith. Meanwhile, the JumpShip crews attached to Jones' battle group were ordered to abandon their ships and scuttle them to avoid capture. Their DropShips would retrieve all evacuated crewmen while Jones' WarShips and fighters held off the Kuritan fleet.

The warning to *Black Bear*'s battle group, under the command of Vice Admiral Marjorie Stone, came just in the nick of time. Her ships had just initiated their pre-jump procedures, intent on regrouping with Admiral Jones at Cholame. Signaling red alert, Stone ordered her JumpShip commanders to commence emergency calculations for an alternate jump point, while she and the bulk of her WarShips would adjust their arrival point at Cholame's zenith only slightly. The plan was for her task force to reinforce Jones and flank the enemy at the same time. It took her group less than twenty minutes to make their adjustments and bring all fighter pilots and gunnery crews to battle readiness.

The Battle of Cholame would be the largest naval action the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns ever fought against each other. Raging for six weeks, the running fight stretched across the Cholame system as Admirals Jones and Stone desperately tried to buy time for their surviving transports to recharge and jump to safety, with *Tai-sho* Khalfani's armada in hot pursuit. By the time the battle ended on 17 April, the Suns had lost ninety-two WarShips—including the *Golden Lion* herself—along with twenty-six transport JumpShips, 115 DropShips, and virtually all of its fighter wings. The Draconis Combine's losses at Cholame were nearly as catastrophic: eighty-three WarShips, nineteen JumpShip transports, and 105 DropShips were destroyed. Khalfani's fleet also lost more than eighty percent of its aerospace fighters in the battle.

From the sheer number of casualties, Cholame was a Pyrrhic victory for House Kurita. The Suns had lost the bulk of its navy in one battle, but in doing so, they had essentially hobbled the Combine's invasion. It would take more than fourteen months, in fact, for the Dragon to reallocate enough of its commercial JumpShips to make up for its loss of transports along the front line. Additionally, most of the Combine's attack forces would now make planetfall without the benefit of naval support and with only a bare minimum of air cover once battle was joined.

Shamed for having squandered so much of House Kurita's space fleet against the Suns' navy, *Tai-sho* Isoru Khalfani committed *seppuku* on 30 April 2790. In contrast, the actions of his Davion counterpart, Admiral Kenneth Jones, posthumously earned him the highest award the AFFS could bestow: the Medal Excalibur.

ON THE BRINK

After Cholame, the remnants of the Federated Suns' navy were ordered to fall back, their losses simply too grave to risk another attempt. But while the primary mission was considered another resounding defeat for House Davion, it did accomplish one of its main objectives: it slowed the Combine invasion. For two years after the battle, the DCMS was effectively stalled at Saunemin, Kestrel, and Imbrial III. The loss of so many aerospace assets forced the DCMS to consolidate its positions, while reinforcements and replacement transports were sent forward from within the Combine to enable the next push toward New Avalon.

The Suns would use this borrowed time to reinforce its defenses around New Avalon, while providing any aid possible to behind-the-lines resistance cells such as those that continued to fight on Dobson, Galtor, Kentares, and New Rhodes. House

REBELLION ON NEW RHODES

House Kurita's strategy against the Federated Suns was remarkably successful, but not without its problems. One of the largest was that many of its conquests went incomplete. If a world's on-site defenses were too great to overpower quickly, the DCMS settled for isolation instead, leaving the enemy contained on their base world for a second (or third) wave of forces to deal with. This allowed the Combine to keep up its crippling pace toward New Avalon, but also left plenty of room for resistance groups to flourish.

In March of 2789, one such group—Warrent's Chargers—dealt the Dragon one of its more humiliating defeats in the First War, on the arid planet of New Rhodes III.

The Federated Suns seized the New Rhodes system from the crumbling Terran Hegemony during the pre-war planet-grab before Kerensky's Exodus. When the Combine's border-wide offensive began, the former Hegemony worlds were some of the hardest hit, and New Rhodes III was no exception. But the civilian population proved more difficult to cow than the DCMS expected, and the survivors of the Tenth Robinson Chevaliers only made things worse.

After nearly two years of guerilla warfare, House Kurita's forces on-planet—the Thirtieth Dieron Regulars, commanded by *Tai-sa* Samuru Olwenn—believed that it had finally crushed the local resistance. With no new attacks by armed insurgents for a full month prior, Olwenn reported this to the DCMS High Command in December 2788. Thanks to its short in-system travel times (two days from jump point to planetside spaceports), New Rhodes III was assigned to serve as a major depot for supplying troops throughout the immediate area. Olwenn and his men immediately began receiving weapons and munitions shipments that they promptly stockpiled in every open space of the Xerxes City Spaceport.

To impress upon the civilian population that the Dragon now ruled New Rhodes beyond question, *Tai-sa* Olwenn planned a parade for many of the planet's civilian administrators, business leaders, and media on the Xerxes spaceport tarmac. This parade was held on the morning of 23 March 2789 to much fanfare. As the shiny troops, tanks, and 'Mechs paraded past, however, a small force of Federated Suns BattleMechs, led by Captain Conrad Warrent of the defunct Tenth Robinson Chevaliers, rose up from the river that flowed past the spaceport's southern edge.

(CONTINUED ON P. 45)

Kurita managed to hold onto its advantage in spite of these efforts, but not without costs. Reports of humiliating defeats against particularly daring cells, like Warrent's Chargers on New Rhodes, managed to leak off-world, boosting Davion morale even in the face of the Cartago and Cholame disasters.

By the close of 2792, the Combine war machine began to move again. Beginning with assaults on Avawatz, Edwards, and Rosamond, House Kurita reinforced its flank within the Marlette Combat Region, while additional troops engaged the defenders on Markesan, Kirklin, and Sodus. Since many of these worlds were reinforced during the brief lull after Cholame, it took longer for each to fall, but their defeats proved inevitable.

Grown cautious after the Davions' naval assault, and well aware of the troop strengths arrayed against them on the road to New Avalon, the Draconis Combine shifted from its "planet-hopping" strategy to more conventional assaults aimed at subjugating—or outright destroying—every world in its path. With ruthless thoroughness, the DCMS hammered its way through the FedSuns defenders all along its lines of advance. By the end of 2795, the Dragon's banner flew over the worlds of Odell, Saginaw, and Delavan, while minor worlds such as Acoma, Arcadia, Chota, and Nouveau Toulouse began dying, either as a result of direct wartime damage or the starvation and disease that followed the collapse of their local trade and infrastructure.

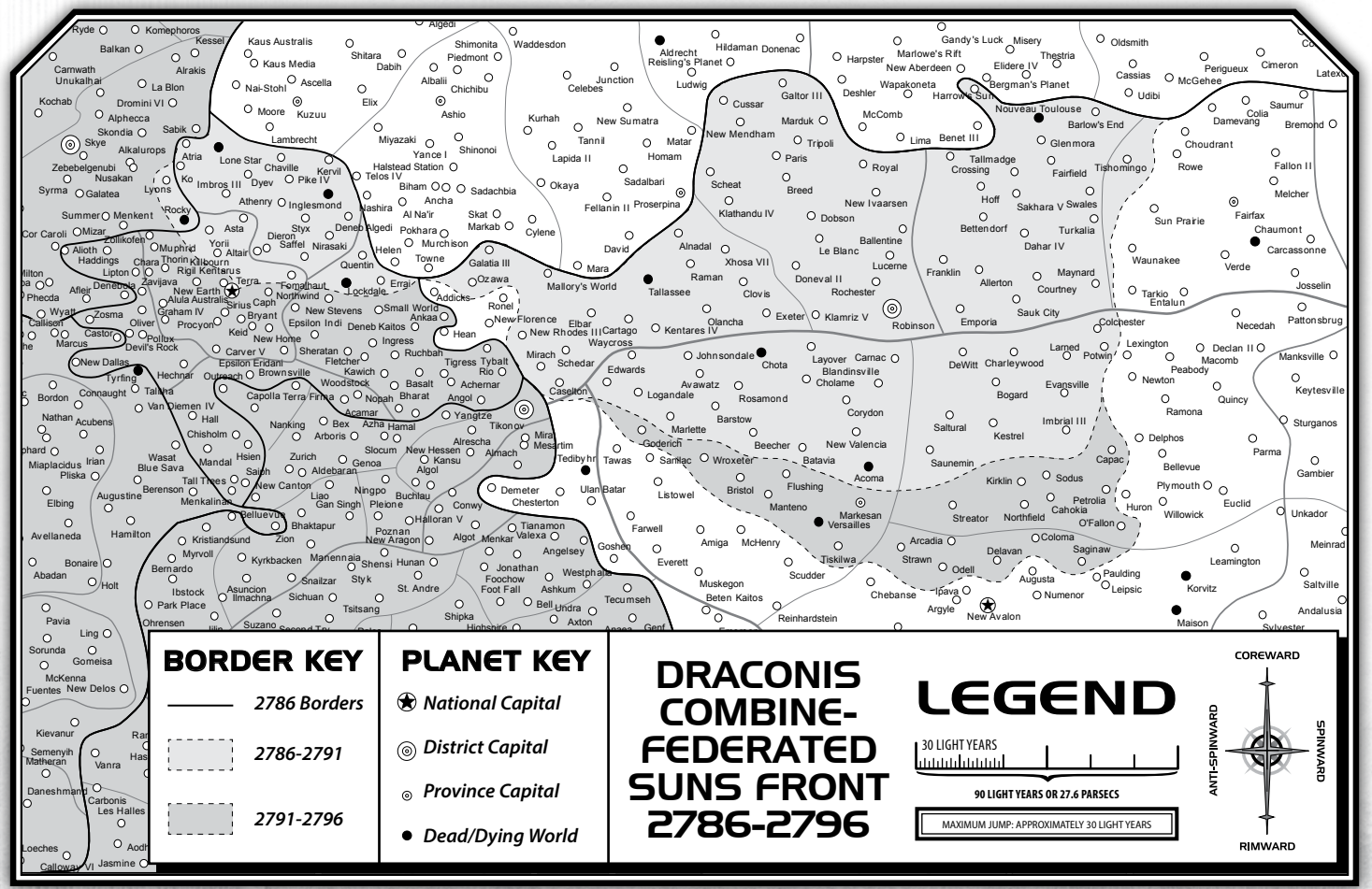
House Kurita now stood just one jump away from New Avalon—close enough that several reconnaissance raids had already been conducted against the system, sizing up House Davion's last line of defense. A Combine victory seemed assured; the Suns stood on the brink of collapse.

Fateful Decisions

As 2796 dawned, the Dragon's crosshairs were firmly locked onto New Avalon itself. With just one more surge forward, the Draconis Combine would seize the capital of Federated Suns, and decisively defeat its Davion enemy once and for all.

Commanders on both sides of the line were surprised when Coordinator Minoru Kurita chose that very moment to pause the offensive.

Over the years, many have speculated as to why the Coordinator decided to halt the Dragon's forward momentum over bitter objections from his son, Jinjiro. Some have cited Minoru's age, his general weariness of fighting and killing, and his desire to give his troops a rest period before the final strike. Others have speculated that this was yet another sign of his personal take on bushido, implying that this act was meant to give the Suns just a little extra time to prepare a noble last stand.



Whatever the Coordinator's personal motivations might have been, the fact remains that pockets of Davion resistance persisted among many of the Combine's conquests. Given some embarrassing uprisings behind the Kurita lines—such as happened on New Rhodes in 2789—it is more likely that Minoru Kurita had simply grown extra cautious with his goal now in sight. Any final assault against New Avalon, after all, could easily become a years-long siege on par with Kerensky's fight for Terra against the Usurper Amaris. At so critical a juncture, the last thing the Dragon could afford was to have its hyper-extended supply lines cut by a well-timed resurgence.

One such insurrection, in fact, was already underway on the world of Kentares IV, where elements of the Seventh Crucis Lancers plagued the Kurita forces left behind to deal with them. As other DCMS line regiments fell back to put down similar rebellions along key supply routes, it was against this pocket in particular that Minoru personally led the Sixth Sword of Light.

Little did anyone realize at the time how this decision would lead to the most dramatic turning point of the First Succession War.

NEGLECTED FRONT: LIAO TAKES ADVANTAGE

When the Federated Suns found itself assailed by the Draconis Combine, it dashed Prince John Davion's plans for his own invasion of the Capellan Confederation. As House Kurita's victories mounted, he found himself forced to move more and more troops and ships from the Capellan March in order to hold back the invaders bound for New Avalon.

News that the Confederation had been engaged by the Free Worlds League offered only a modicum of comfort for the AFFS forces stationed along the Liao border. Nevertheless, when the first years of the war saw little action across the entire region, it became easier to justify the reallocation of defensive assets to the Kurita front.

Inside the Confederation, however, the Suns' pre-war build-up on their frontier had not gone unnoticed or forgotten. Though House Liao did indeed consider the Marik offensives the greater threat, the inevitability of a Davion front never left the minds of the Capellan Chancellors.

During the reign of Chancellor Barbara Liao, however, the only significant answers to the "Davion problem" were a short campaign in 2787 against Terran Corridor worlds claimed by the Federated Suns, and the ill-fated proposal of a Confederation-Combine alliance. The military campaign, launched in early 2787, spared only a handful of CCAF task forces from the Confederation's interior. By August of that year, these troops had conquered the former Hegemony worlds of Angol, Rio, and Tybalt, when orders came down to attack the Suns-claimed worlds of Hean, New Florence, and Ronel before the DCMS could do the same. The Capellans attacked all three worlds in October 2787, taking their Davion defenders by surprise.

Although the Federated Suns' troops *were* ready for an attack, they had been expecting Kurita forces ever since the nearby world of New Rhodes came under siege just five months earlier. When the Fourth, Seventh, and Tenth Tikonov Lancers regiments struck instead, backed up respectively by the Fourth, Thirteenth, and Fifteenth Liao Lancers, the local AFFS and militia garrisons found themselves having to cope not only with superior numbers, but also the less predictable nature of Capellan hit-run-and-harass tactics. All three systems fell to House Liao by November 2787, followed by Addicks, Ankaa, and Small World by January 2788.

The acquisitions would be the limit of Capellan gains against the Suns under Barbara Liao's reign. With her task force stretched thin, and the Combine claiming all surrounding Davion worlds, the Chancellor simply wasn't ready to pick a bigger fight while she still had House Marik to contend with.

This state of affairs led the Confederation to send diplomats to Minoru Kurita in 2788. Barbara Liao hoped to establish a mutual non-aggression pact with the Combine, and a commitment to the destruction of their shared enemy—with the DCMS doing most of the fighting. Unfortunately for Liao, these overtures fell flat; Coordinator Kurita, riding high on the initial successes of his campaign, refused to accept anything less than for the Chancellor to acknowledge him as the First Lord of the Star League, and to launch all CCAF forces against the Davion front—regardless of House Liao's defensive needs versus the Free Worlds League. Unwilling and unable to meet either demand, Liao decided instead to abandon any further talks of alliance.

REBELLION ON NEW RHODES (CONTINUED)

When DCMS security forces attacked Warrent's "Chargers", the reinforced company of Davion 'Mechs jumped their way into the maze of arms and ammunition containers, some of which had been stacked nearly five stories high. In the effort to destroy these insurgents, the Kuritan troops were forced to enter the deadly maze of equipment. There—despite their best efforts—explosions caused by misplaced shots ignited several stacks of warheads and other munitions. The devastating inferno annihilated half of the spaceport hangars and filled the skies over Xerxes with a kilometers-long plume of black smoke. It also claimed over a thousand tons of supplies, as well as two companies' worth of DCMS 'Mechs and armor. At least half of Captain Warrent's Chargers escaped the fight in the confusion, rejoining the resistance cell that had planned and coordinated the entire operation.

The entire fiasco was witnessed by several local media reporters who had been forced to attend *Tai-sa* Olwenn's victory parade. Despite the Combine officials' efforts to confiscate and destroy every copy of their recordings, the video evidence of House Kurita's humiliation on New Rhodes spread across the planet, and eventually beyond.

The vids did much to buoy the AFFS' flagging morale at the time, but there was an unseen consequence to Captain Warrent's victory that would lead to one of the greatest tragedies of the war in the years to come. In response to the loss at New Rhodes, the DCMS decided to choose a new supply base for its forward commands. They would eventually settle on a pastoral world known as Kentares IV.

—From *First Succession War Battlefields*, by Marcia Barker, Ever-Free Publications, New Syrtis, 3112

HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO

As planned, Kerensky's Exodus removed the largest military force in the Inner Sphere from the stage just as the Great Houses slid inexorably toward open warfare. Naturally, the question of just *where* this army was going crossed the mind of nearly every soul it left behind.

Seeing a returning SLDF as a looming threat to their ambitions, all five Successor Lords diverted resources to trying to find out where Kerensky had fled, and what his plans might be once he got there. Indeed, the mystery would intrigue even ComStar's leadership in the centuries to come, leading to the creation of its Explorer Corps.

For most of the Great Houses, the efforts to track Kerensky amounted to heavy research and educated guesswork. Operatives from House Steiner's LIC, the Capellan Maskirovka, and the Free Worlds League's SAFE agency focused much of their effort on those left behind: close family of the departed troops, and cast-off military commands that now pledged themselves to their new liege-lords. Some even tapped into the independent operations of private exploration groups, the forerunners of groups such as Interstellar Expeditions.

But until the formation of the Explorer Corps just under two centuries later, only Houses Davion and Kurita went so far as to put together state-funded expeditions into the unknown space beyond the Periphery. Between the two realms, five serious, documented efforts were made. The first, and perhaps the most desperate, of these was the Church Expedition, launched in 2789.

The task force was centered on the *Monolith*-class JumpShip *Amber Rose*, under the command of Commodore Michael Church. It also consisted of five AFFS JumpShips, attended by several supply DropShips, fighter transports for defense, and long-range shuttles for surveillance. Their mission was to find Kerensky's Exodus fleet and implore the General for aid in what very well may have been the Suns' darkest hour. (Church's orders included a number of incentives, promised by the First Prince himself, in exchange for the SLDF's support. Exactly what those incentives were has been lost to the annals of history.)

(CONTINUED ON P. 47)

SOFT TARGETS: THE COMBINE-COMMONWEALTH FRONT

While the vast majority of House Kurita's efforts in the early half of the First Succession War were directed against the Federated Suns, the Lyran Commonwealth was not left completely unmolested. To maintain the appearance of a strong DCMS presence all along the Commonwealth's border, Coordinator Minoru authorized several incursions and troop movements to distract Lyran intelligence.

Many of these operations were intended to be little more than raids, but in the early months of the war, the Combine also committed a large portion of its naval might near the Commonwealth's Isle of Skye region. This concentration of ships was vital for numerous reasons, not the least of which were defending and securing industry-rich worlds from the Terran Hegemony's dying husk, such as the coveted world of Dieron, and acting as a potential reserve for the campaign against Davion.

The Kurita fleet deployments did not escape House Steiner's notice, but with hostilities already erupting along the Free Worlds League border, many of the naval assets facing the Combine—particularly in the Tamar Pact region—were focused on picket defense. Key exceptions to this included the ships assigned to protect Tamar, Skye, and Hesperus II, three worlds that LCAF High Command determined could not be allowed to fall, at any cost. Along with a number of other factors, this set the stage for some of the greatest naval clashes of the First Succession War.

Skondia

In February 2787, a mere two months after the Coordinator's declaration of war, a massive Combine invasion force materialized at the nadir jump station in the Skondia system. This attack group included forty-five WarShips, protecting a transport fleet of twenty JumpShips and enough DropShips to ferry six fully-supported DCMS 'Mech regiments. Leading the assault was *Tai-sho* Hiroshi Pederson from his flagship, the *Samarkand*-class carrier DCS *Galedon*. Having humiliated the LCAF's on-planet defenders just eight months prior, this assault group expected an easy fight for Skondia, the first step in what was meant to look like a determined drive toward Skye.

What they found instead was a Commonwealth naval presence nearly three hundred combat ships strong, with a WarShip complement of fifty vessels, including the *Tharkad*-class battlecruisers LCS *Impregnable* and LCS *Indomitable*. Two hundred DropShips of various classes backed up these formidable battlewagons, led by Admiral Seamus van Hatten, a competent—if untested—fleet commander.

Because a significant number of the Steiner ships were clustered close to Skondia itself, rather than the system's recharge stations, Pederson presumed that this fleet was mustered specifically to blunt his advance. Worried that the Commonwealth's military intelligence somehow knew of House Kurita's entire border strategy, he sent a courier back to Combine space to report the possible security breach.

While the Lyrans had anticipated a potential Kurita assault on Skondia ever since the raid of 2786, their response had been to reinforce the planet's ground forces with an extra two 'Mech regiments, and a reinforced picket force of only five WarShips and twenty assault and carrier DropShips for near-orbit protection. The much larger naval presence that *Tai-sho* Pederson saw in-system was actually a response to the outbreak of total war on the Commonwealth's rimward front. It was there, unbeknownst to the Draconis invaders, that the Free Worlds League had launched a series of devastating raids that included the destruction of the Bolson Shipyards a mere ten days earlier. House Steiner was desperately pulling ships from all corners of the realm to better defend its other critical industries throughout the region.

The naval battle for Skondia would become one of the largest ship-to-ship engagements between Steiner and Kurita of the entire Succession Wars. After his fleet swept aside the defenders at the nadir recharge station, Pederson ordered all ships capable of in-system

maneuvering to advance on the planet itself, with his WarShips forming a conical wedge ahead of the transport DropShips. His plan was to punch a hole through the Lyran orbital defense wide enough for his ground troops to make landfall while he still had ample capital strength to hold the enemy back.

Forced to fight a task force of nearly equal strength, Admiral van Hatten's fleet did its best to blunt the inbound attack. He detailed a third of his ships and fighters to target the enemy's ground troop transports exclusively, but try as they did, they were only able to shoot down slightly more than fifteen DropShips—accounting for scarcely more than a reinforced regiment's worth of BattleMechs and attendant support.

Key to thwarting these efforts was the Combine's larger concentration of fighter carriers, including those of the DCS *Galedon* herself. With many of the assembled Commonwealth ships built for capital-grade combat, the swarms of DCMS fighters forced many of the Steiner ships to divert more attention to them, request assistance from their own assault DropShips, or execute evasive actions in an effort to minimize the damage. Once the majority of the Combine transports hit the planetary atmosphere, their own WarShips and assault craft were free to double back and support their screening fighters.

The fight for Skondia continued for nearly four months, but the bulk of the naval action was over within the first four weeks. Of the Lyrans' initial fleet of almost three hundred DropShips and WarShips, only a third remained operational by the battle's end, while the Combine still had half of its initial strength. Among the casualties was van Hatten's flagship, the LCS *Impregnable*, which was crippled in close combat against the *Narukami*-class destroyers *Bladewind* and *Star Spirit*.

On the ground, the Steiner forces proved even more stubborn, denying the Dragon an easy victory on nearly every stage. Despite being outnumbered and outmaneuvered from the start, and with the enemy capable of calling down more effective and reliable naval support, the Sixth Lyran Guards, Fifteenth Skye Rangers, and the Twelfth Heavy Assault mercenary regiment held their ground for a solid two months. Even after the Sixth and Eighteenth Dieron Regulars finally seized the planetary capital of Platinum City, the remaining LCAF troops managed to fall back to fortifications near Passageway and forced the Combine to try and dig them out over a two-month long siege. In the end, exhaustion and eroding morale led the senior Lyran commander, Hauptmann-General Edda Hamlin, to order an organized retreat.

Skondia belonged to House Kurita, but the Lyran Commonwealth was avenging the loss elsewhere.

Steiner Strikes Back: Luthien and Dieron

Hoping to give the Dragon something to worry about, the LCAF unleashed its two most elite and unconventional regiments to strike the enemy where they could do the most damage. The Tamar Tigers—a lightweight and highly mobile 'Mech regiment originally raised as part of the provincial armies of the Tamar Pact—were sent on a deep raid aimed at Luthien itself. Meanwhile, the Stealths—formerly the Rim World Republic's Twenty-Third Light Lancers Regiment, now serving House Steiner as an elite mercenary strike force—was sent to Dieron, a world of critical strategic importance to the Combine war effort.

Both the Tamar Tigers and the Stealths were elite regiments with state-of-the-art equipment and top-notch training, but each had a different approach to warfare that made them unique. The Tigers, equipped with lighter-weight machines, favored speed and maneuvering on a level virtually no other Lyran 'Mech force could match, making them ideal for fast, hit-and-run strikes. The somewhat heavier Stealths, by comparison, relied on identifying an enemy's weak points, then focusing a direct assault against them. Their tactics worked best for ambush and breakout duties, making them hard to contain once set loose.

In March 2787, the Tamar Tigers, under the command of Colonel (Duke) Graham Kelswa, arrived at a pirate point close to the Combine's "Black Pearl," escorted by the *Potemkin*-class cruiser LCS *Nightwind*. Expecting a heavier naval presence around the Dragon's capital, *Nightwind* carried a full complement of twenty-five DropShips mixed between attack vessels and fighter carriers. Instead, they found that Luthien's immediate vicinity was protected by a solitary *Naga*-class destroyer, the DCS *Blue Lotus*, with a half-completed *Narukami II*-class destroyer in the orbital dry docks. The planetary defense included only two 'Mech regiments—the Sun Zhang Military Academy Cadre in Luthien's Imperial City, and the Third Pesht Regulars, who were concentrated at the primary factories of Luthien Armor Works.

HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO (CONTINUED)

The task force departed from Pitkin, a Davion world bordering the Outworlds Alliance, in September 2789, and crossed quietly through Alliance space before picking up the Exodus fleet's trail at an unnamed star near the Antallos system. This trail—largely in the form of debris shed by Kerensky's thousand-ship armada—led the commodore and his fleet to the distant Gutara system by the middle of 2791. On the fifth planet there, the expedition discovered a sparse population of ex-Rim Worlds refugees, who confirmed that not only had Kerensky's fleet passed through the system, they had briefly landed on their world for uncertain reasons. Unfortunately, these locals knew as little about General Kerensky's whereabouts as anyone else, and—barely three jumps beyond Gutara, the trail became confused and went cold.

After spending three months combing the many star systems within a jump of their last sighting, the Church Expedition, running low on supplies, finally admitted defeat, and made for the Outworlds Alliance on their way home.

In the centuries to follow, the Federated Suns sent two more expeditions into the Deep Periphery in hopes of finding signs of the Exodus fleet's fate, while the Draconis Combine sent two of its own. The shortage of JumpShips by the middle of the Third Succession War forced both powers to abandon these searches indefinitely. By that time, all indicators showed that the exiles had changed course roughly 130 light-years spinward of Gutara,

The fate of Kerensky and his followers would, of course, not become known to the Inner Sphere until the middle of the thirty-first century.

—From *Mysteries of the Black* by Dori Khristos, RHS Publications, Robinson, 3097

WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE?

The loss of the Steiner WarShips so soon after their victory over Dieron in 2787 is a mystery that daunted many historians and lostech hunters for centuries. By the end of the Succession War era, the best theories proposed included secret actions by ComStar, a surprise attack by a second group of Kurita WarShips not detected during the approach, or a similar ambush by a squadron or two of nuke-armed Kurita fighters lying in wait inside the Junkyard debris. Other theories suggested that the space battle drifted farther than expected, and that the damaged Commonwealth vessels somehow suffered a tragic fate while trying to save an out-of-control *Coventry*.

What is known is that post-mission debriefings showed that Bemer, Dieron's inner moon, passed between the Lyrans' WarShip and DropShip groups, blocking communications for roughly fifteen minutes during that time. By that point, the DropShips' atmospheric entry had begun, and Dieron's own rotation extended the blackout period for another thirty minutes. Knowing these natural facts, the Steiner DropShip captains and ground commanders saw no reason to raise any alarms until well after the surface assault began in earnest. It was only after four more hours had passed without any word from the WarShip battle group that the DropShip fighter-carriers were detailed to investigate.

Unfortunately, amid the radioactive debris and rocks ringing Nebulos, they found precious little evidence of what became of their battle fleet. The hardest evidence of their fate recovered at the time included several of *Coventry*'s escape pods drifting in the debris field, along with a few large hull fragments from either *Gallery* or *York*. On the cloudy, dust-enshrouded surface of Dieron's outer moon, visual reconnaissance proved nearly impossible, thanks to high levels of particulate metals and fallout from Amaris-era WMDs that had struck the lunar surface.

The fact that the Commonwealth raiders allowed themselves very little time to closely study the situation all but ensured that the trail would turn cold before the First War had ended. In their defense, however, they *were* engaged in a raid against a high-value system behind Kurita lines. Limiting their investigation to little more than a few passing scans from high lunar orbit was more a matter of tactical prudence than any kind of incompetence.

Official LCAF records ultimately listed all four WarShips as "Missing in Action, Presumed Destroyed."

—From *Great Mysteries of the Succession Wars (Book I)*, Erin Peleke, Star Group Press, 3125

While the *Nightwind* and her DropShip screen obliterated the orbiting docks and both of their defending vessels, the Tigers dropped on the heavily industrialized world below and ran roughshod over the largely undefended sites at Obuchi and Skytower City, both located on the Aichi continent—half a world away from either of the active DCMS formations. The Lyran attackers did not stay long; their mission was meant to be a straight smash-and-run operation, focused more on shock than devastation. Still, in the course of three days, Kelswa's Tigers leveled a satellite LAW 'Mech factory near Obuchi, an ammunition factory just outside of Skytower, and a food processing plant in the agro-industrial city of Galileo. Escaping before any reinforcements arrived, the Tigers' raid was the first in a series of humiliating defeats they would hand the Combine in the decades ahead, and prompted House Kurita to maintain a permanent garrison of no less than four 'Mech regiments on Luthien for the remainder of the Succession Wars.

Scarcely a month after the Luthien raid, Colonel Raymond Hempsted and his Stealths, accompanied by the heavy Fourteenth Skye Rangers regiment, arrived at Dieron. Escorted by a squadron of WarShips diverted from those amassed for the Marik front, this task force had only one objective: the destruction of the partially functional SLDF shipyards orbiting the planet and their supporting industries on the ground. Unlike Luthien, the Combine naval defense was not so anemic; given Kurita's deployments against the Federated Suns and the ongoing battle for Skondia, Dieron was especially vital to the Dragon's war fleets. To secure it, a squadron of six WarShips and another two squadrons of combat DropShips hovered close to the planet itself, spending most of their time hiding or conducting drills amid a radioactive debris field that encircled Dieron's outer moon of Nebulos. This field, known simply as the Junkyard, contained a few small asteroid chunks captured by the moon's gravity, as well as the wreckage of two orbital stations and several ships destroyed during the Amaris Crisis.

The Lyran WarShip group, centered on the *Tharkad*-class battlecruiser *Coventry*, included two *Commonwealth II*-class cruisers loaded with nuclear anti-ship missiles, and a DropShip squadron heavy with fighter-carriers likewise prepared to deliver nuclear ordnance. Unfortunately for the Kurita defenders, five of their ships—two *Essex* destroyers, two *Lola*s, and an *Aegis* cruiser—were all of much older vintage than their Steiner opponents. Their sixth ship, the *Samarkand II*-class carrier *Radstadt*, was compromised by the fact that she was in dry dock for routine maintenance at the time of the attack, and lacked most of her fighter complement.

The Commonwealth force struck fast and hard, blasting through the older destroyers and breaking the spine of the cruiser *Selene* with a volley of tactical missiles. Desperate to join the fight and avoid being shot apart in port, the *Radstadt* broke free of her moorings with only half of her crew on board, and a third of her weaponry offline. The *Coventry*, flanked by two *Mako*-class corvettes, engaged the carrier head-on, while the cruisers *Gallery* and *York* focused their missiles on the shipyards and a pair of nearby *Bastion*-class system defense platforms the Combine had been working to reactivate. *Radstadt* died in a vain effort to ram the battered *Coventry*, but not before buying enough time for the *Lola*-class destroyers *Akiko* and *Maja* to rejoin the fight. Although the two destroyers did inflict serious damage to *Coventry* and destroyed the corvettes *Anthemius* and *Heraclius*, they were sorely outmatched when the *Gallery* and *York* returned from their fire missions. Meanwhile, the *Essex*-class destroyers *Jarett* and *Sawyer* found themselves under the guns of the *Ironwood*, the *Aegis*-class cruiser that eventually managed to cripple both of them.

By the time the last of the Kurita WarShips succumbed, the battle had drifted close to Nebulos' lunar orbit. With the *Coventry* leaking atmosphere and fuel, the Lyran naval commander prepared to abandon ship, requesting the remaining WarShips to regroup so they could recover survivors. What happened next is unclear even centuries later. While the Lyran DropShips regrouped closer to Dieron to cover the Stealths' atmospheric insertion, the WarShips *Gallery*, *York*, and *Ironwood* rendezvoused near Nebulos. Along with *Coventry* herself, none of these WarShips were ever heard from again.

Operation BROKEN BLADE

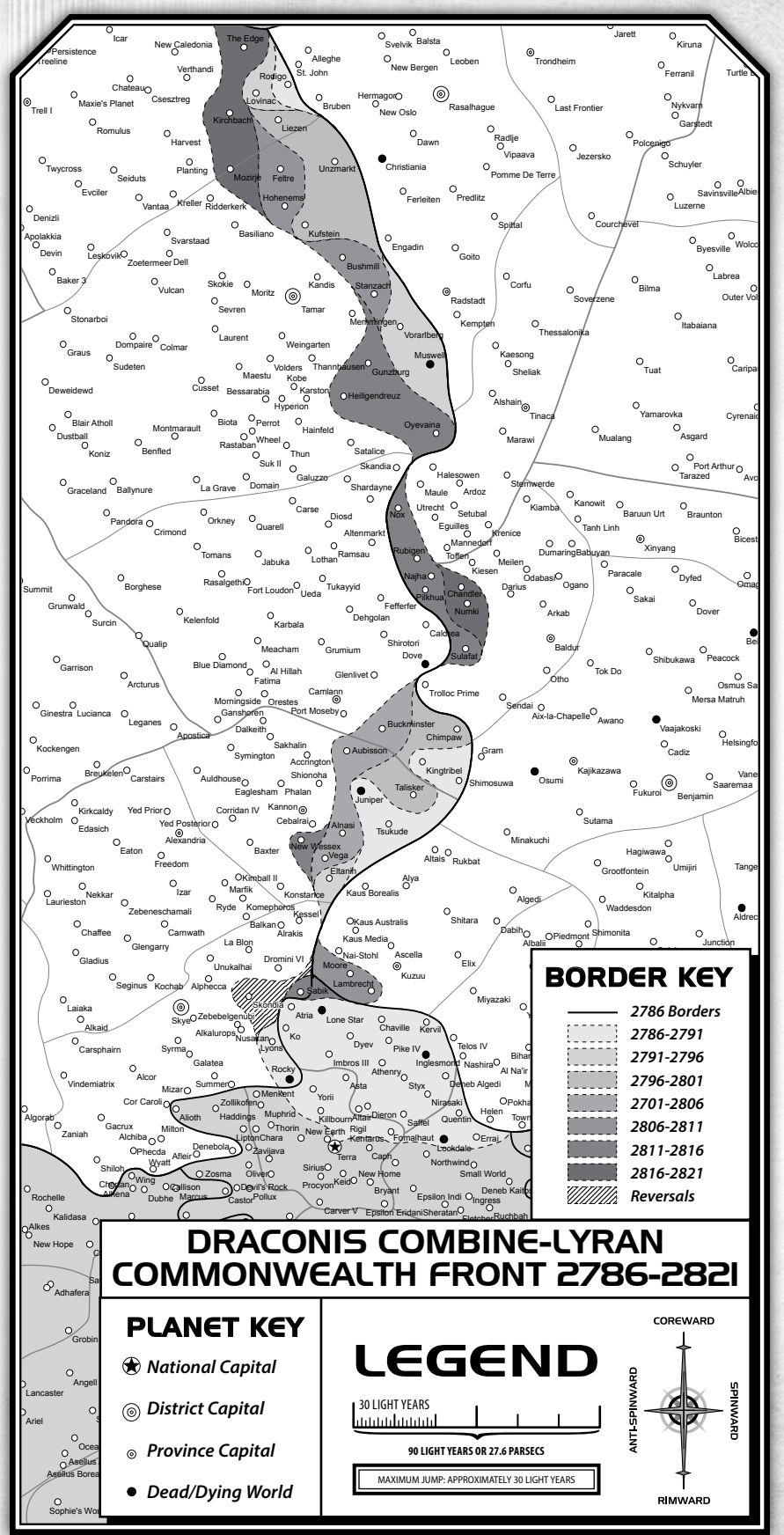
Reeling from these humiliations, House Kurita's next major move against the Commonwealth came near the end of 2787, with the launch of Operation BROKEN BLADE. Deploying the same fleet used in the Skondia assault, repaired and reinforced by a handful of additional WarShips, BROKEN BLADE hit Hesperus II with a ground assault group that included the Fifth and Eighth Sword of Light regiments, backed up by the Eighteenth Dieron Regulars (The Algedi Regulars) and the mercenary Fifty-Second Heavy Assault Regiment.

But where the Combine had anticipated a stripped-down defense, with Lyran troops redeployed to the nearest Marik border regions, they underestimated just how much the Steiners were determined to keep Hesperus safe. Indeed, within days of the Star League's collapse, the Archon commissioned massive fortifications on the planet, and moved as many of the Defiance factory's production lines underground as possible without critically undermining their 'Mech production. In addition to this, Hesperus received one of the largest naval flotillas outside of the Commonwealth's regional capitals, with a permanent ground force of four BattleMech regiments standing ready at nearly all times.

The Kurita attack plan was simple enough: an assault-scale ground raid, backed up by heavy orbit-to-surface bombardment from the fleet ships. The intention was to avenge the attacks on Luthien and Dieron, and to remind House Steiner that it, too, was vulnerable to deep raids. But the presence of a Lyran fleet including roughly thirty WarShips, fifty assault DropShips, and twenty fighter carriers, made it clear that BROKEN BLADE had gone awry from the start.

Once again, *Tai-sho* Hiroshi Pederson was tasked with handling the naval action, but his force had just over half as many WarShips and DropShips available as it did during his previous battle for Skondia. Worse, due to a rising scarcity of assault ships and fighters needed for the Davion offensive, he lacked the same ability to screen the ground transports he had enjoyed before. Despite this, Pederson attempted the same strategy that succeeded at Skondia, forming his WarShips in a conical wedge aimed at the Steiner fleet, while simultaneously protecting the landing vessels.

Admiral Luther Weisskopf, commander of the Hesperan naval defense, proved far more daunting an opponent than Pederson anticipated. Arranging his fleet into ranks with heavier cruisers—including six *Tharkad*-class WarShips and eight *Commonwealth IIs*—



in front, he forced the Combine's capital ships to engage their opposite number earlier than planned, while faster *Mako* and *Vincent* corvettes acted as a mobile reaction force to keep the smaller vessels at bay, or at least off-balance. Also, unlike Admiral van Hatten's defense of Skondia, Weisskopf's capital ships remained focused on breaking the Combine's heavier spacecraft. This tactic allowed the DCMS to land the majority of its troops on the planet below—but often quite far from their planned deployment zones.

Keeping the Kuritans bottled up in space left the ground raiders with little to no orbital artillery to speak of, a fact that was compounded by the unanticipated presence of so many fortifications, fixed defense batteries, and four regiments of predominantly heavy and assault-class BattleMechs. The Combine troops had to traverse many kilometers of mountainous terrain, only to find fewer soft targets than expected at the factory sites—but a nigh-impenetrable wall of BattleMech defenders, all fresh, ready, and waiting for them.

The First Battle of Hesperus II ended in a victory for House Steiner. Despite the Dragon's determined efforts, the worst damage inflicted against the industrial jewel in the Commonwealth's crown came when a frustrated *Tai-sho* Pederson turned a squadron of his remaining WarShips against the orbital facilities. Attrition and exhaustion outside the planetary capital city of Maria's Elegy, and in the nearby Myoo Mountains, forced the Combine ground commanders to concede defeat as well by the middle of January 2788. When the retreat order came, the DCMS had lost the entirety of the Eighteenth Dieron Regulars, as well as their mercenary support, while Pederson's fleet had been reduced to only twelve operational WarShips. Although the Lyrans still possessed enough fast capital ships to make an example of the surviving DropShips and further bleed the Draconis fleet, Admiral Weisskopf allowed the survivors to withdraw largely without further losses.

In the wake of Skondia and Hesperus II, House Kurita decided to limit its Commonwealth border actions to smaller raids and battalion-level operations—at least while the invasion of the Federated Suns was ongoing. For the next twenty years of the war, the Combine-Commonwealth front would be characterized more by small-unit battles than by epic clashes between WarShips and regiments—though these smaller-scale actions still resulted in the capture of under-defended Steiner worlds including Nox and The Edge.

OUT FROM LEFT FIELD: JEROME BLAKE'S GAMBIT

As total war finally gripped the Inner Sphere, the Great Houses received an unexpected visit from the last acknowledged official of the fallen Star League: Jerome Blake. In his capacity as the administrator of the defunct SLCOMNET, Blake had reorganized the entire planet-bound HPG communications grid throughout the Inner Sphere under a trans-national corporation he now dubbed ComStar. Starting with the Lyran Commonwealth in 2787, Blake undertook a whirlwind diplomatic tour of the former Star League member states, intent on securing their recognition of ComStar's sovereignty and neutrality in the coming conflicts.

Having spent the past seven years rebuilding the network compromised by Stefan Amaris, Blake wanted to ensure that his work would not be abused by the House Lords as they went to war. Personally familiar with the horrors of Amaris' war, and convinced that the Succession War would quickly devolve into such a conflagration across all of human space, he resolved to commit his ComStar organization to safeguarding the technology and knowledge of the Star League. Perhaps inspired by the efforts of Christian monasteries in the medieval period of Terra's Europe, he sought to cast his HPG stations as similar sanctuaries, inviolate to all the major political powers in exchange for taking no sides in the conflicts to come.

To secure this arrangement, Blake presented the former Star League Council Lords with what became known as the Communications Protocol of 2787. This treaty outlined ComStar's neutrality and the open use of its HPGs to all powers, regardless of political affiliation. It also included pledges of security and confidentiality with respect toward sensitive information, as well as the establishment of the ComStar Letter of Credit, a universal currency that would be used to fund the continued operation and maintenance of the interstellar network. Recognizing the strategic, political, and economic value of a neutral ComStar that could maintain its own infrastructure, Archon Jennifer Steiner welcomed the treaty—but pledged to sign it only if the other House Lords did the same.

In a political ploy that was equal parts daring and foolish, Blake lied.

Producing documentation that contained forged signatures, he claimed that the other four House Lords had already signed his Protocols. Satisfied, the Lyran ruler agreed to his terms and—unbeknownst to her at the time—became the first House Lord to commit to the deal. Blake would repeat this process at the capital worlds of each realm in turn. By the time he returned to Terra's Hilton Head Island in early 2788, he had won legitimate support for ComStar's neutrality from all five Successor States.

It was the last unanimous decision the House Lords would reach for centuries to come, as open war erupted on all fronts. Little did they realize the far-reaching consequences of their agreement, or that Blake's diplomacy was but the first move of a far more ambitious plan.

SEIZING TERRA

In the early morning hours of 25 June 2788, the Terran HPGs fell silent, followed immediately by the transmitters throughout ComStar's entire interstellar communications network. While the disoriented realms of the Inner Sphere demanded answers, ComStar's hyperpulse administrators held them at bay with everything from apologies for the inconvenience to claims of local network breakdowns. In all cases, these administrators assured their Successor State "consumers" that the interruption was temporary, and communications would be restored shortly.

A mere seventy-two hours later, the network came back up with a surprise announcement: ComStar had seized the entire Terran solar system, declaring the birthplace of mankind and the seat of the fallen Star League as its own protectorate. Holovids of the military takeover were included in this message, to further underscore the point. In one fell swoop, Jerome Blake took the one prize coveted by all five claimants for the title of First Lord, and also demonstrated that he commanded a formidable combination of total communications control and a powerful army to boot.

The House Lords were vociferous in their condemnation of ComStar's action, claiming that Jerome Blake had violated his own claim of neutrality in attacking the token Successor State forces still on Terra at the time. Despite their protests, no House Lord risked backing out of the Communications Protocol of 2787; having not seen where Blake's army came from, and taught in just three days how thoroughly ComStar truly controlled the interstellar network, none felt confident of their success in a direct confrontation. The fact that the Succession War was already well underway at the time only served to further dampen their willingness to invade Terra or test the resolve of the HPG administrators in their realms.

In the years and decades to come, Jerome Blake and his successor, Conrad Toyama, would continue their machinations behind the scenes, transforming a powerful Sphere-wide megacorporation into a secretive, quasi-religious order dedicated to goals as ambitious as they were inscrutable.

AFTERMATH

Just five days after taking Terra, ComStar launched another military strike on the nearby world of New Earth, where the headquarters of the former SLDF was located. Effectively a heavy raid aimed at securing the valuable data and equipment left there by Kerensky's followers, this attack inflicted minimal casualties. Rather, the Hegemony-remnant militia who occupied the sprawling complex and its fortified warehouses largely welcomed these invaders, going so far as to assist them in dismantling the facility's equipment for transport. The heavily laden DropShips departed on 11 July 2788, leaving only empty buildings behind.

It is worth noting that the original plan for New Earth was a conquest similar to Terra's, part of an extension of SILVER SHIELD to all of the Terran Hegemony worlds not already claimed by the Houses. This "third phase" of SILVER SHIELD was canceled, however,

OPERATION SILVER SHIELD

"People of the former Star League. I am Jerome Blake, Prime Administrator of ComStar. As of now, 0900 hours Terran Standard Time, military forces under my direct command have seized control of the Sol star system. ComStar is now officially in control of Terra and all former Star League facilities remaining in the system. From this time forward, I proclaim Terra and the entire Sol system as neutral under the protection of ComStar, under the terms and conditions of the Communications Protocol of 2787. As the previous broadcast has made clear, ComStar has sufficient military force to defend the homeworld of mankind from any aggressor.

"Our goals are peaceful. We seek the unity and prosperity of mankind. This action was taken to save lives in the devastating war that is unfolding. ComStar will continue to offer its communications services to all member states, as long as the Sol system and our neutrality are honored."

—Jerome Blake, 28 June 2788

Jerome Blake's declaration followed a three-day blitzkrieg dubbed Operation SILVER SHIELD. Eight SLDF Divisions, left behind by Aleksandr Kerensky under a pledge to serve Jerome Blake's ComStar, arrived on Terra masquerading as mercenary troops hired for "security reasons." Under the overall command of Lauren Hayes, most of these divisions swiftly targeted and seized the remaining ground stations of Terra's Space Defense System, where the scattered company-sized security troops left behind by the House Lords had set up shop. Most of these commands fell quickly—some even without bloodshed; the Davion unit stationed in the city of Berlin was the most notable exception, holding out against Hayes' attack force for five hours.

While Hayes' ground attack on Terra continued, secondary battlegroups escorted by heavy aerospace support secured off-world sites throughout the Terran system—including Mars and Venus, as well as the Lunar, Belter, Jovian, and Saturnian settlements. Without exception, these off-world stations and habitats conceded to ComStar's control after little more than some verbal sparring and tense negotiation. Having made numerous diplomatic and economic overtures during their time on Terra, and leveraging their high visibility during the post-Amaris reconstruction, Blake's agents quickly secured the support of civilian governments and administrative centers throughout the system.

By far the greatest resistance to SILVER SHIELD, in fact, came from two former SLDF mechanized infantry divisions—the Seventy-First and the 123rd—in the Amazonia region of Terra's South America continent. Refusing to acknowledge ComStar's authority, even after Hayes appealed to their common bonds as SLDF refugees, these divisions fought a series of running battles throughout the Amazon rainforests they now called home. Their resistance inflicted heavy losses to the smaller battle groups Hayes initially sent in after them, until the pre-dawn hours of 28 June 2788, when a combined assault by the Thirteenth Royal Infantry Division and the 251st BattleMech Division surrounded and shattered their stronghold in the city of Manaus.

In all cases, the holdouts who resisted Hayes' battlegroups and were captured or surrendered became "guests" of ComStar's ad-hoc detention centers for only the briefest amount of time while their bases and military equipment were confiscated or destroyed. These individuals would later be offered a full pardon and citizenship on Terra, or expelled to the Successor State realm of their choice. This final, magnanimous offer was designed to underscore the idea that ComStar was as fair and enlightened as it was powerful.

by the onset of open warfare so quickly after Blake's diplomatic efforts. Deciding that further overt military adventurism was simply too dangerous now that all five Houses were on war footing, Blake chose instead to shift ComStar immediately back toward a position of neutral non-aggression.

Still, the outcome of SILVER SHIELD cemented ComStar's position in the Inner Sphere and formed the foundations of what would one day become the Com Guards. In preempting the other realms' designs on Terra so early in the war, ComStar also denied the House leaders a prize that, however symbolic, could have strengthened their claim on the title of First Lord.

The success of SILVER SHIELD and ComStar's role as master of interstellar communications also helped fuel the centuries of clandestine operations for which the Order would become known. These operations—including the creation of the infamous Hidden Worlds, and the rise of the enigmatic "Master" behind the Word of Blake Jihad—would have far reaching consequences to the Inner Sphere at large.

FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE: HOUSE MARIK STRIKES

For the Free Worlds League, the official start of the Succession War came with the Lyran Commonwealth's attack on Bolan in March 2785. Almost immediately after he received word of the planet's fall, Captain-General Kenyon Marik declared that the Commonwealth had violated the rules of warfare by resorting to massed city bombardment, orbital fire, and weapons of mass destruction. Proclaiming that his League was now free to retaliate in kind, he declared war on the Lyrans. Responding to Archon Jennifer Steiner's cynical claim to the Star Lordship on New Years' Eve, he would repeat this declaration again in the first days of January 2787.

Strangely enough, the months immediately following both of Marik's declarations scarcely saw much change on the League's coreward border. While several additional regiments—both FWLM and mercenary—were moved toward the Commonwealth front along with a healthy portion of the realm's navy and aerospace forces, Kenyon's focus remained squarely on securing worlds from

the fallen Terran Hegemony. For the next eighteen months, the fighting between Houses Steiner and Marik would consist of an escalating series of raids, most designed to either test each other's border defenses, or to forestall anticipated attacks across the region.

In that time, the Captain-General's eye turned toward a much more tempting target.

A PATH TO SARNA: THE LEAGUE-CONFEDERATION FRONT

With a fair portion of the Terran state now under the League's control, and the Lyrans held at bay by a combination of his own raiding forces and—reportedly—invasions from House Kurita, Kenyon Marik turned his attention toward the Capellan Confederation. In February 2787, he ordered ten 'Mech regiments from the Marik Militia, supported by nearly four times as many conventional and aerospace groups, to "clear a route ten parsecs wide to Sarna."

In addition to serving as the capital of the Confederation's Sarna Commonality, Sarna was home to Tengo Aerospace, a state-of-the-art manufacturer of a broad range of fighters and DropShips for the CCAF, as well as the Sarna Martial Academy, and a small orbital fleet base. Between the League border and this world were several other prized targets, including Carbonis, Corey, and Wazan. More importantly, seizing Sarna would drive a wedge that would cut off nearly a third of the Confederation—including the historically significant world of Liao—from its central command on Sian. It would also place the League well within striking distance of Capella, another regional capital and industrial powerhouse.

The combined effect, Marik believed, would break Capellan morale utterly, and strategically cripple the realm. His personal read on Chancellor Barbara Liao, one of the few House Lords to express regret about dismissing Kerensky, was that such a strain would break her. The Confederation's quick surrender—especially without a long and costly campaign to seize Sian itself—would allow the Captain-General to secure his realm on one front inside of just a few years.

Initial Victories

The first wave of attacks fell on the worlds of Harsefeld, Ramen II, Second Chance, and Vanra. The flanking worlds of Second Chance and Vanra were hit by three Marik Militia regiments each, while two regiments apiece struck the others. Escorting each attack group were elements of the FWLN Second Fleet, giving each task force the firepower of at least one battleship and two destroyers, augmented by two squadrons of attack DropShips, and three wings of aerospace fighters. On Harsefeld and Ramen II, where the defenses stood at little more than local militia and paramilitary fighter groups, the League invaders seized the major spaceports, capital cities, and jump stations without much fighting at all. Although calls for help were sent out by each system, the nearest reaction forces were those of Second Chance and Vanra—planets that found themselves under siege at the very same time.

On Vanra, the defending force consisted of the First Capellan Chargers, a heavy 'Mech regiment that included some of the Confederation's most proficient and determined warriors. Despite lacking any orbital support, and outnumbered on the ground three-to-one by the Third, Seventeenth, and Twenty-first Marik Militias, these troops fiercely battled the invaders from the moment they set down.

Having spent the better part of the last twenty-five years based on Vanra, the Chargers' commander, Colonel Juliano Papadakis, made the most of his familiarity with the local geography. His air combat group hammered the incoming DropShips, and downed over two squadrons of enemy fighters, along with an *Overlord*-class transport carrying a battalion from the Seventeenth Militia. When the crippled DropShip went down in the forests nearly twenty kilometers south of the spaceport at Vanra's capital city of Utrecht, Papadakis detailed his entire Third Battalion to converge on the site. There, he knew, the dense foliage and transient river beds—many almost impossible to see from the air—would be confusing and treacherous for any Marik survivors and their possible rescuers.

As he'd hoped, the rest of the Seventeenth Militia diverted away from the capital city landing to save their comrades, weakening the capital assault force. His Free Worlds counterpart, Colonel Udel Melville of the Third Marik Militia, nevertheless remained confident that his two regiments and their support would overpower the entrenched Capellans. While Melville did indeed win the battle for Vanra, Papadakis'

FATEFUL RESOLUTION

The Free Worlds League's entry into the First Succession War—or at least the strategies and campaigns it waged in that war's early years—would likely never have happened had it not been for the events of December 2784. It was then, less than a month after Kerensky's departure, that a Sphere-spanning war seemed all but inevitable.

Though Kenyon Marik deeply resented General Kerensky, having gone so far as to complicate his efforts to liberate the Hegemony from the usurper Amaris, he also realized that the death of the Star League posed a serious political crisis for his reign. It was, after all, only under the Star League's foundational treaties that the Marik family was formally installed as the Free Worlds' ruling line. With the Star League disbanded—clearly for good—it would only be a matter of time before the people remembered that legality and the Marik Parliament would elect a new head of state.

But Kenyon was quick to capitalize on the public's concern over the Star League's collapse. In his capacity as Captain-General, he placed the Free Worlds' military on alert, authorized the full takeovers of all worlds held jointly with the SLDF, and dispatched "peacekeeping missions" into Terran Hegemony space. He also aggressively lobbied for the repeal of the Rule of 75, an old Free Worlds League secrecy law that—per his selected examples—had inadvertently impaired the realm's ability to enact several strategic and economic plans in a timely fashion.

With his obvious concern for an open government, and for a secure Free Worlds League in the face of an Inner Sphere gone to hell, Kenyon's efforts won him a groundswell of popular support. As his government colleagues would soon see, this was just a preamble for something bigger. Within weeks of Parliament's decision to the repeal of the Rule of 75, he advanced his greatest political maneuver to date: Resolution 288.

(CONTINUED ON P. 54)

FATEFUL RESOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Resolution 288 granted the Captain-General full discretionary authority over the Free Worlds League for "the duration of the crisis," with executive powers up to and including the summoning and disbandment of Parliament itself. The resolution had no precedent in the history of the Free Worlds, and was nothing less than an abdication of parliamentary authority to Marik's rule. While resistance to the law was strong, and the vote hardly unanimous, it was finally ratified on 19 December 2784. In the centuries to come, Resolution 288 would be cited by every Marik scion who stepped into the shoes of his predecessor, with each declaring "the crisis" unresolved.

In many minds, the fast-tracked acceptance of Resolution 288 was not surprising. At the time, Parliament was dominated by delegates representing smaller provincial states, many of whom were inexperienced in the machinations of the legislative machine. Most of these representatives were also easily panicked in the face of a military crisis the size of the looming Succession Wars. To these men and women, Captain-General Marik appeared the strongest, most decisive leader around—a leader supremely capable of keeping the League intact when everything else was falling apart.

With his authority over the whole of the Free Worlds cemented by popular support and legal decree, the rule of Kenyon Marik—and his descendants—was effectively absolute. This act would enable him to wage the coming war without meddling oversight from reluctant delegates and provincial lords. The legacy of House Marik would survive the fall of the Star League, and lead the realm through the Succession Wars.

—From *The Rise and Fall of House Marik*, by Ursa Wicktorja, Iron Dojo Publishing, Dieron, 3104

tactics—which included numerous feints and ambushes deep inside the urban-industrial sprawl of Utrecht—made the victory take more than week, and prove far more costly than he'd expected. In the forests south of the city, the Chargers finished off any of the DropShip's crash survivors they found, and also managed to ambush and destroy nearly another full battalion of their would-be rescuers. In the city itself, the Chargers broke up into lance- and company-sized formations that regularly tried to harass and ambush the lighter Marik Militia units, counting on the close quarters to negate any speed advantages. The tactic worked well enough to claim a battalion's worth of Militia 'Mechs before Colonel Melville finally ordered entire swaths of the city bombarded from orbit by the battleship *Agrippa*. One of the sectors targeted, as it turned out, was a natural gas refinery in the city's northeast district. The explosions and resulting fires swept through the area, eventually spreading throughout half of the city as the ongoing battle impeded all efforts to contain it.

By the end of the battle, the Marik Militias stood victorious, having utterly destroyed the First Chargers, who fought to their last 'Mech. Unfortunately, by that time, the entire city of Utrecht and the great forests to its south had been pounded and burned into ruins. After accepting the surrender from Vanra's government, Colonel Melville reformed two of his 'Mech regiments—the Third and Twenty-first Militias—using salvaged Capellan equipment and the battered survivors of the Seventeenth.

On Second Chance, the Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Thirty-eighth Marik Militias found their opposition in the form of the Twentieth Liao Lancers. Although this newly formed regiment was originally marshaled for Ramen II—and thus was also known on the rolls as the Ramen Lancers—it had been relocated to Second Chance to cover the border region after the previous garrison (the Third Tikonov Lancers) had been deployed in the former Terran Hegemony just two years before. The Twentieth's lack of combat experience, as well as its relative unfamiliarity with the local terrain, left its warriors easily rattled ay the news that they faced three times their own numbers.

Unlike Vanra, Second Chance also had a naval presence in system. As part of a regular border patrol, the Capellan navy had sent the *Du Shi Wang*-class battleship *Mica Liao* there, escorted by the *Soyal*-class cruiser *Solstice*—both part of the Sarna Commonality Squadron. When the Marik task force materialized at the nadir jump point, a nearby warning station alerted all of the Confederation's in-system forces, including the two WarShips. Despite sensor data that clearly placed the attack group at superior numbers (including the *Atreus*-class battleship *Sorunda*, and the *League II*-class destroyers *Ospina* and *Otavalo*), the *Mica Liao* and *Solstice* immediately plotted an intercept jump from their position at the zenith point.

The Capellan ships emerged close to the League's flotilla just as its escort WarShips began their in-system burn, their attack DropShips detached and in close formation. The *Solstice*, equipped with an extremely powerful mass driver cannon, opened fire from extreme range, destroying *Ospina* in a single blow, while the *Mica Liao* accelerated to engage the *Sorunda*. The Free Worlds' capital ships came about to meet the defenders head on, their attack DropShips maneuvering wide on each flank. Prioritizing the *Solstice* before she could bring her unwieldy main weapon around for another quick kill, the *Otavalo* and a full squadron of attack DropShips closed with the huge cruiser at full thrust, releasing fighters as they drew near. Aware of the mass driver's narrow firing arc and limited reloads, these vessels maneuvered as erratically as possible in their race to close the distance. Though *Solstice* would fire her driver twice more, neither shot scored a hit before *Otavalo* passed along her port side. Both ships exchanged a fierce volley of naval Gauss and autocannon fire. At nearly the same time, the attack DropShips converged on *Solstice*'s aft section. The combined damage ravaged the ship's armor, but not quite enough to decide the battle.

Meanwhile, the *Mica Liao* met the *Sorunda* and her DropShip squadron in a similar jousting contest—one for which the older *Du Shi Wang*-class battleship was ill-suited. Equipped with far more firepower than her opponent, *Sorunda* swung to port moments after firing her forward batteries, allowing the gunnery crews all along her starboard side to deliver their attacks to the port side of *Mica Liao*'s forward hull. At the same time, the *Atreus*-class battleship launched a full squadron of aerospace fighters equipped with Alamo ship-killer missiles. Unable to match the *Sorunda* gun for gun, *Mica Liao* began to roll in an effort to minimize the chance of a hull breach. Unfortunately, this merely exposed her now-ravaged side to the nuclear-armed fighters, all of which released their ordnance as they swept by. Half of these missiles missed their mark, but at least two scored direct hits that detonated deep within the ship's superstructure.

As the *Mica Liao* vanished in the blinding flash of nuclear explosions, *Solstice* found herself alone, swarmed by enemy fighters and attack DropShips, with an enemy destroyer coming about for another punishing attack. Though her captain realized that the battle was lost, he ordered his broadside and aft missile crews to switch to nuclear ordnance, determined to give the League a taste of its own medicine. Two of the *Solstice*'s nuclear missiles struck their marks, vaporizing an enemy *Intruder*-class assault DropShip and a *Vengeance*-class fighter carrier, but they would be her last kills in the fight. Less than a minute later, combined fire from the *Otavalo*, the other Marik attack ships, and their fighter screen, dealt crippling damage to the cruiser's engines. As *Solstice* began to drift, the League fleet commander demanded her immediate and unconditional surrender. The only answer from the Capellan WarShip was an explosion that ripped her apart from bow to stern, leaving no survivors.

On the ground, word of their naval force's swift defeat—less than four hours after the initial alert—further eroded the Twentieth Liao Lancers' morale. Making matters even worse, half of the regiment was on maneuvers in the planet's northern hinterlands. A debate raged between the regiment's commander, Colonel Mila Palmer, and the planetary governor over exactly where these troops should move to. The planetary government, equally aware of the disaster in space, had no faith in the green warriors who made up the Ramen Lancers, and was already ordering the locally-raised vehicular and infantry support formations attached to them to redeploy to the major port cities of Sevarias and Sweethaven. At the spaceports in both locations, the civil authority was already mustering evacuation ships for high-level government and corporate officials.

For the Lancers, the fact that the local government was fighting their efforts to rally just so they could run away safely was the last straw. Morale collapsed completely, and roughly a third of the Lancers reportedly deserted their posts without ever having seen the enemy. By the time the Free Worlds League WarShips slipped into orbit, their sensors detected several DropShips preparing for liftoff in the city of Sweethaven. Interpreting this as a possible attack, the *Sorunda*'s captain ordered an immediate bombardment of the spaceport, leveling the area in a hellish, seven-minute monsoon of capital weapons fire.

Killed in the bombardment was the majority of Second Chance's ruling elite, including the planetary governor, Duke Maynard Stott, and Security Minister Haley Fernando. Also destroyed were an entire regiment of CCAF infantry, two companies of armor, and four *Union*-class DropShips assigned to the Twentieth Lancers. Relaying his message through the *Sorunda*, the League invasion commander, General Matias Rosenkov, demanded the planet's surrender less than an hour later. A very reluctant Colonel Palmer—now effectively the ranking political or military officer on-world—agreed. Second Chance fell to the League.

Through the rest of the year, the Marik invaders seized several more Capellan worlds in a drive aimed straight at Sarna. Hassad, Shuipào, and Tsinghai all fell without a shot fired, having no significant garrisons to speak of—at least, none willing to stand up to the large FWLM assault groups that hit them. On Old Kentucky, intelligence suggested the presence of at least one CCAF 'Mech regiment, but when the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Marik Militias arrived there in May of 2787 as a vanguard, they found the major military bases had been emptied, leaving only small, conventional security forces to oppose them. The anticipated defenders, presumed to be the Eighth Liao Lancers, had evidently been moved elsewhere.

Corey and Wazan

In July 2787, the third wave of the campaign targeted the worlds of Chamdo, Corey, Phact, and Wazan. In the systems of Chamdo and Phact, the arriving Free World forces—each consisting of two battle-worn 'Mech regiments, escorted by three WarShips—faced absolutely no resistance to their advance. The local governments, evidently panicked and abandoned by the resident security forces, surrendered to the invaders with little more than desperate negotiations for leniency.

In contrast, the attack groups arriving at Corey and Wazan found a light enemy naval presence in both systems. Confederation DropShips and fighters opposed their arrival, but most of these craft fell back quickly in the face of the Marik's superior firepower.

Landing on Corey, the Nineteenth and Twentieth Marik Militias were initially unopposed, but soon found that the defending Tenth Confederation Reserve Cavalry (also known as Kincaid's Rangers, formerly the SLDF's 202nd Mechanized Infantry Division) was merely lying in wait at the spaceport near the capital city of Valasha. Backing up the CRC was an infantry-reinforced short battalion of *Catapult* 'Mechs from the factories of Hollis Incorporated, stationed near the company's headquarters in downtown Valasha. A brief battle for the spaceport erupted, but the CCAF troops quickly fell back into the city proper. Suspecting a trap, the Nineteenth Militia's commander, Colonel Solomon Gaines, requested heavy aerial reconnaissance before he dared to send in any ground troops.

After the overflights came under heavy missile fire from Hollis' *Catapult*s over the densely-packed heart of the city, Gaines requested immediate orbit-to-surface fire on that position. Mere minutes later, most of Valasha's commercial district was transformed into a field of burning craters where nothing survived. When the League 'Mechs finally entered the city, the surviving elements of the Kincaid's Rangers offered a spirited, but broken, resistance. Valasha—and, with it, Corey—fell barely a day later, but Gaines and his Twentieth Militia counterpart, Colonel Vitka Ramone, soon became concerned when after-action reports and recovery efforts underscored that many of the Reserve Cavalry 'Mechs remained unaccounted for, even after a week of combing through the rubble.

On Wazan, the Twenty-second and Thirty-seventh Marik Militias faced a somewhat similar scenario. As with the battle for Corey, the Capellans did not challenge the initial landings. The invaders did not encounter any significant resistance at the planetary capital of Rumallah; the main spaceport, and then the city itself, fell after only the briefest of clashes against local security and militia groups.

Then came confirmation of enemy 'Mechs at the nearby industrial city of Asuwayda. A reconnaissance force sent there found itself facing elements of the Eighth Liao Lancers—the very same regiment that League intelligence originally expected to find on Old Kentucky. As with the Tenth CRC on Corey, these warriors fell back in short order after a cursory fight. The senior League officer,

Colonel Daphna Hullbright of the Twenty-second Marik Militia, suspected a trap, and ran several aerial recon flights over the city and its surroundings to determine what her troops might face upon forcing their way in.

The high-altitude overflights weathered no surface-to-air fire, but easily spotted several sectors where lances of Capellan BattleMechs were present, augmented by some tanks holding many of the city's major intersections. Additional heat sources detected inside several buildings identified what were undoubtedly more 'Mechs lying in wait, and the streets were empty of civilian traffic. While this all indicated a fairly "ideal" deployment for an urban defense—one that made perfect sense for any force facing overwhelming enemy numbers—Hullbright somehow felt as if she were being baited. Furthermore, she was unwilling to deal with fortified positions and block-by-block battles for control of a settlement that had only minor strategic value in the grand scheme of the Sarna campaign.

Recalling several historic examples of Capellan death trap tactics dating back to the Age of War, Hullbright decided to order both of the Marik 'Mech regiments to take up positions outside the city, covering the major roadways in battalion-sized formations. She then launched another series of aerial overflights—only this time, the fighters were laden with incendiary ordnance, and backed up by heavy artillery. The firebombing of Asuwayda came with no preamble or calls for surrender; the League commanders did not want to tip their hand that a strike was imminent. When the Eighth Lancers 'Mechs and vehicles scrambled to get out of the kill zones they had painstakingly dug themselves into, many ran straight into the guns of the waiting Marik Militias. Yet, as dramatic as the fall of Wazan was, Hullbright and her sub-commanders came to worry that it was all just *too* easy.

Barely three weeks after the League completed its conquests of Corey and Wazan, a spate of rebel attacks began across the worlds taken earlier in the offensive. Many of these were minor uprisings, opportunistic acts that coincided with local work stoppages and protests against the provisional leaders and garrison troops sent there from the Duchy of Oriente. Others were supported by Capellan military raiders—such as the Ninth Liao Lancers, who struck at both Ramen II and Vanra to aid rebel actions against the Tenth Oriente Hussars and the First Orloff Grenadiers, respectively. But the most troublesome resistance emerged on Corey and Wazan, where initial estimates placed anywhere from one-third to one-half of the worlds' original defenders at the heart of the fighting.

With Chamdo and Phact still remarkably quiet, the invasion commanders requested aid in putting down the resistance on Corey and Wazan by September 2787. From Chamdo, the Fortieth Marik Militia moved to support the forces on Wazan, while the Third Militia moved from Phact to reinforce Corey's attackers. This left a single 'Mech regiment and its supporting forces behind to ensure control and watch for other possible Capellan insurgencies that could endanger the next wave. By late November, the reinforcements on Corey and Wazan finally put down the last of the major resistance cells, effectively destroying both the Tenth CRC and the Eighth Liao Lancers. A month later, the arrival of the Fourth Fusiliers of Oriente on Corey, and the Seventh Oriente Hussars on Wazan, provided enough relief to free the Militia for its next wave.

Only then did House Liao spring its trap.

Mere days before the Militia DropShips were to boost for their waiting JumpShips, Capellan WarShip squadrons suddenly appeared at the primary jump points in each system to swiftly destroy or capture all of the League transport vessels they found there. In response, the Marik WarShips floating in planetary orbit scrambled to meet the Capellans via in-system jumps, even as the panicked warnings from their doomed transports reported that the Confederation battle groups outnumbered them.

In the space battle for Corey, the *Atreus*-class battleship *Agrippa*, the *League II*-class destroyers *Oràn* and *Ocuri*, and the ancient *Vigilant*-class corvette *Samhain*, were shattered by a group of four *Essex*-class destroyers and two *Vincent*-class corvettes led by the *Congress*-class frigate *Tianjin*. The fight over Wazan was equally decisive, costing the Free Worlds the battleship *Ragusa* and the *Lola*-class destroyers *Minsck* and *Warsaw* when they found themselves facing a pair of *Essex* destroyers and a pair of *Lola III* destroyers, led by the *Black Lion*-class battlecruiser *Zulfiqar*. The Confederation naval losses in each action were comparatively minor: the destroyer *Ai Di* and corvette *Vladislav* were lost at Corey, while the destroyer *Khalzan* was crippled and scuttled at Wazan.

Although the League still held the planets in both systems, House Liao had effectively pinned down a total of six Marik 'Mech regiments between them, placing the bulk of the invasion's leading edge under a blockade. These regiments began to dig in for a Capellan counterattack that seemed all but assured, and word was sent back to the FWLM High Command, requesting additional naval support and instructions.

Unbeknownst to House Marik's forces, the Confederation's Maskirovka intelligence agency had already cracked their codes.

RAISING THE ANTE: LIAO'S RESPONSE

When word first came that several regiments of Marik Militia had attacked her realm, Chancellor Barbara Liao was equal parts surprised and outraged. Between news of the Lyran invasion of Bolan, and intelligence reports indicating a clear buildup of Davion troops on her border, she had every reason to believe that the first strikes against her Confederation would come from the Federated Suns, not the Free Worlds League.

Rather than hastily shifting border reserves to reinforce worlds that her Strategios were already writing off as overwhelmed, Lady Barbara bided her time. Troops, ships, and materiel were gathered at Sian from all over her realm before committing them to a counterstrike. The Chancellor's hope was to deliver retaliation so powerful that the Free Worlds League would think twice before attacking the Confederation ever again. Meanwhile, the Capellan garrisons left in the path of the advancing Marik invaders were ordered to hold the line as best as they could, and for as long as they could.

In late February 2788, the massive force at Sian comprised more than one hundred WarShips and combat DropShips, twelve aerospace fighter regiments, and eight ad-hoc 'Mech regiments raised from the ten of the CCAF's most fanatical combat commands. Chancellor Liao personally inspected this army, which was placed under the overall command of Colonel Jacen Devlin, whose initiative in planning and organizing the campaign led to the task

force now bearing his name. To the assemblage of commanders who would carry the Confederation's vengeance forward, she gave the order to proceed. Her final words, intended to emphasize the Confederation's resolve, would come to typify the conduct of the First Succession War:

"Commanders, henceforth you may consider the Ares Conventions suspended. I expect you all to act accordingly."

The New Delos Massacre

In April 2788, Task Force Devlin materialized at the fringes of the New Delos system. Using captured House Marik codes obtained by the Maskirovka, the flotilla registered on the local sensor net as a secret FWLM supply convoy. Despite the fleet's massive size, its arrival roused no immediate alarm among the local military commanders; New Delos held a strategic position as staging grounds for the Sarna invasion, and the flow of materiel bound for the League's new holdings was not all that strange. This complacency was soon dispelled when the sensor net detected the *entire* naval group moving toward the planet.

The Capellan attack on New Delos was perfectly timed. The naval defenses assigned there—including the *Soyal*-class cruisers *Kumbha* and *Mithuna*, as well as the *Chronos*, the League's only *Samarkand*-class carrier—had been moved forward, both to aid the pacification of worlds already taken in the offensive and to await additional naval assets intended to break the sieges of Corey and Wazan. This left the planet with only a light aerospace contingent for orbital protection, and scarcely more than a regiment of reserve 'Mechs on the ground in the form of the recently mustered Ninth Orloff Grenadiers. Even the local militia was in an anemic state; most of its armor and infantry battalions had been attached to the Thirty-sixth Marik Militia, which was presently on Vanra with the First Orloff.

The desperate League commanders on the ground reported the situation to their High Command, while simultaneously deploying their meager aerospace squadrons to oppose the imminent assault. In addition, the Grenadiers were dispersed to primary military sites and depots across the planet, based on the assumption that the Capellans had come to shatter the logistical links for the Sarna invasion. These defenders knew they stood no chance against the sheer size of the inbound armada; their role was simply to try and occupy the attackers long enough for out-system reinforcements to arrive.

Primed for vengeance, the Liao aerospace forces quickly and brutally overran the paltry orbital craft, securing space superiority after less than an hour's worth of combat. Colonel Devlin then ordered the vast majority of his DropShips to land along the outskirts of Nueva Havana, the planetary capital city on the continent of Mindanao. The Capellan landing pattern surrounded the city, cutting off every major roadway in and out of the area. As his troops disembarked and fanned out to close the circle, Devlin issued an ultimatum to the city and the planetary ruling government: Surrender all military and civil authority to House Liao by local sundown—a mere eight hours away—or suffer the consequences of the League's unprovoked aggression against the Confederation.

Even before the deadline elapsed, Colonel Devlin ordered his ground forces to advance while his fighters buzzed the city. At the nearby spaceport, strafing and bombing runs quickly crippled all aerospace transports on the tarmacs, commercial and military alike. With minimal security presence in the capital itself, the defenders' efforts to harass the invaders barely even slowed them down. By nightfall, the Confederation occupied New Delos' capital, ignoring all communication from the local government. When bombs started falling inside the city proper, it became grimly apparent that House Liao never had any intention of accepting the planet's surrender.

The New Delos Massacre had begun.

Over the next three days, Strike Force Devlin unleashed several combined air and ground assaults aimed primarily at civilian, industrial, and commercial targets rather than military ones. Each attack forced the meager Free Worlds League defenders to dispatch small 'Mech groups in a desperate effort to stem the slaughter—only to have each reaction force annihilated the moment it appeared. Only after several cities and towns across the heavily populated Mindanao continent were in flames did the Capellans target the main military bases and supply depots with hyper-fast squadrons of light fighters laden with incendiary and high-explosive ordnance.

Over ninety percent of the Ninth Orloff Grenadiers' 'Mechs were destroyed in the Capellan blitzkrieg, with the rest captured. The main military operations centers at Cienfuegos and Quito were set ablaze, and the supply depots at Yucatan were leveled, along with the military repair facilities in nearby South Angeles. The Capellan attackers, meanwhile, lost only seventeen BattleMechs, twenty-six aerospace fighters, and a little more than a battalion of conventional infantry during the entire operation.

But by far the worst of the damage was inflicted upon the civilian populace, especially in and around Nueva Havana. Though many managed to reach emergency shelters in time, final estimates put civilian casualties at over twenty thousand killed, with more than ten times that number wounded. The capital itself would never recover, forcing the local government to relocate elsewhere. The sheer devastation to New Delos' infrastructure would disrupt both military and commercial communications and supply chains throughout the region for months to come.

Fallout

Unfortunately for the Confederation, the overwhelming assault on New Delos and the wanton destruction and death it wrought had precisely the opposite effect as intended. Rather than cow the Free Worlds League and force its retreat from Capellan space, it inspired a rash of equally savage reprisals, intended as much to avenge the slaughter as to try and break the stalemate at Corey and Wazan.

Throughout the rest of 2788, the League sent small, fighter-heavy, naval attack groups to bombard Capellan worlds with nuclear and thermobaric missiles. In July 2788, the first of these devastated Ingersoll when a Marik flotilla led by the carrier *Chronos* firebombed ten of the planet's largest cities—most of which were little more than commercial resorts and tourist sites, located on the luxurious beachfronts of its many large islands.

New Canton was struck the following month, this time by a battle group that included two *Carrack*-class transports modified to serve as carriers, escorted by the *Atreus*-class battleships *Kanata* and *Majestic*, and the *League*-class destroyers *Andria* and *Avellino*. Once more, the aerospace-exclusive action left several cities and industrial sites in flames before the local defenders could react.

The same scene was repeated at Outreach in September, and Hall in November. Although each of these attacks did include significant damage to the resident military bases and supply depots, only the ground-based DropShip assembly yards on Ingersoll and the materiel depots on Outreach were significant to the Confederacy's war-making capability.

That the combined civilian casualties from the Free Worlds' fire bombings and invasions far exceeded those suffered at New Delos was but a footnote in the annals of the First Succession War.

Debacle at Calloway

As Marik's counterstrikes fell, the Capellan Confederation was forced to divert more ships and troops to shore up its anti-spinward border. Because the League's push toward Sarna dominated most of the fighting, the bulk of these resources were directed toward the coreward regions: the Capella, Sarna, and Tikonov Commonalities.

At Corey and Wazan, additional ships were added to the blockade forces, where—despite Chancellor Barbara's explicit sanction of extreme measures—overwhelming firepower had yet to be turned against the planets themselves. Indeed, these fleets were expressly ordered to hold off on orbital bombardment unless absolutely critical for their own self-defense. House Liao wanted those worlds back intact, and saw a potential advantage against the League as long as it could keep the enemy regiments there bottled up and out of play.

But first, of course, Marik's will to continue fighting needed to be broken. Despite the bombings that followed the success of Task Force Devlin on New Delos, Chancellor Liao looked for another, more telling candidate for her "Devlin Solution."

By the end of 2788, a suitable target had been selected: a mining and trading world known as Calloway VI. In addition to the economic damage to the League, Liao hoped that devastating a system so perilously close to the provincial capital of the Duchy of Oriente would drive a wedge between Marik's central authority and one of its more vociferous partner states. The Maskirovka was already planning suitable propaganda to go along with such a strike, including none-too-subtle suggestions that House Marik was thinning Oriente's provincial defense in the name of its Capellan conquests, all but opening up the region to deadly counterstrikes like New Delos and leaving Oriente itself high and dry.

In a decision that was more reckless than bold, Chancellor Barbara Liao herself chose to accompany this attack, at the head of her vaunted Red Lancers regiment. Also joining the operation was the Ares Titans regiment. Between these two elite formations, both of the Chancellor's sons—who served as battalion-level command officers—would join their mother in battle. Though many of Lady Barbara's advisors expressed serious alarm over her choice, their liege would not be moved. By February 2789, Task Force Devlin reformed at the world of Propus, where they linked up with the remaining ground forces bound for Calloway VI.

In March 2789, the ships of Task Force Devlin leapt into the Calloway system. Unlike the strike on New Delos, the Capellans had no captured codes to rely upon. Although plans to strike via pirate points between Calloway IV and V were considered, the transient nature of jump points inside the densely-packed solar system made such an option too dangerous for a battle group of Devlin's size. Thus, the entire fleet materialized together at the planet's zenith way station.

What did not factor into the Capellans' plans was that one of Colonel Devlin's own fleet officers—tortured by guilt over the attack on New Delos and the loss of Capellan lives that resulted from the Marik fire bombings that followed—had quietly turned against them. Alerting the Free Worlds League spies on Propus in advance of the planned raid, the traitor sealed the operation's fate, and very nearly that of House Liao itself.

Waiting at Calloway's zenith way station was the entire First Oriente Provincial Squadron, consisting of two *Atreus*-class battleships and four *League II*-class destroyers. In addition to this naval presence was a group of attack DropShips and aerospace wings attached to the ground-based defenders, which included the First Fusiliers of Oriente, the Third and Eighth Oriente Hussars, and the Stewart Dragoons' Helm Cuirassiers regiment. Nearly all of these troops had been dispatched to Calloway VI in advance of a special reaction force raised on Oriente.

Back at Oriente itself, half of the League's Third fleet stood on alert, mirroring a similar naval group parked at Holt ever since Marik intelligence agents on Propus first noticed the Capellan build-up there. Stationed in those systems as a safeguard against the possibility that their intelligence was another Capellan misdirection, these ships awaited the emergency call from any of the nearby systems, and could jump to any endangered world within thirty light-years in as little as three hours.

When Task Force Devlin arrived at Calloway, the Oriente naval squadron reacted quickly to the Capellan jump pulses. Alerting the in-system defenses at Calloway VI to the invaders' presence, they ensured that the ground and orbital defenders would be ready for them there, while also ensuring that word reached Oriente and confirmed the strike now underway.

Although severely outnumbered by Devlin's task force, the Marik squadron maneuvered straight into its midst and focused on the attackers' transport JumpShips for maximum effect. Devlin's WarShips, unready for so prepared a response, were initially slow to protect these vessels, some of which were hit even before they could detach their attendant DropShips. Heedless of their own imminent destruction, ships of the First Oriente focused their fire on the Confederation DropShips, hoping to neutralize as many fighter carriers and 'Mech transports as they could before the enemy WarShips and attack craft took them out.

The task force WarShips suffered little to no damage in the battle, but the same could not be said of the fleet's transports and ground attack groups. By the time the last of Oriente's provincial vessels was dispatched, a quarter of the Capellans' non-combat JumpShips had been destroyed, along with more than a regiment each of CCAF aerospace fighters and 'Mechs. The battle also wounded Major Barnabus Liao, the younger of the Chancellor's sons, when his *Overlord*-class DropShip suffered crippling damage.

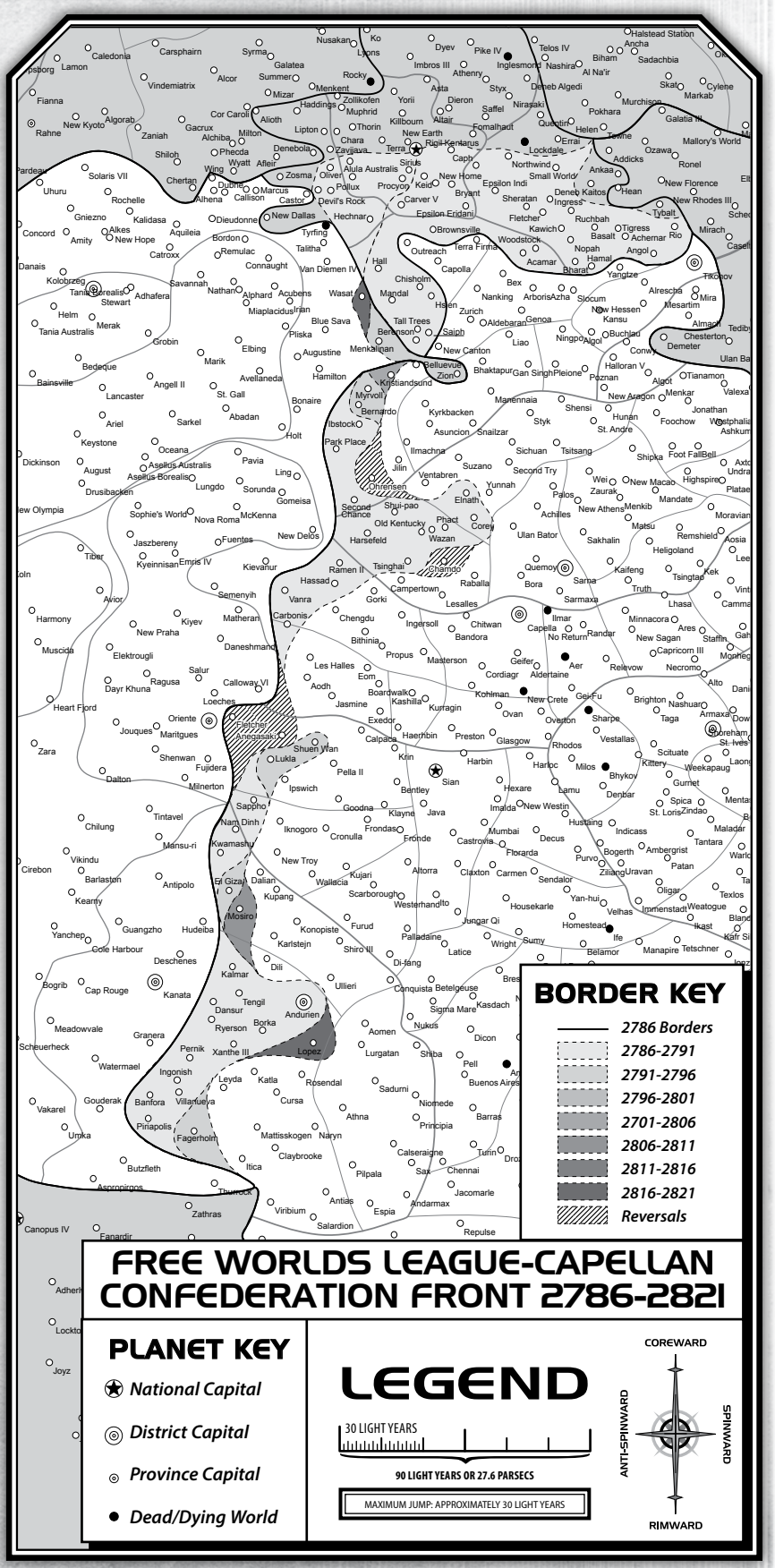
Instead of falling back, as many of her subcommanders urged, Chancellor Liao ordered Devlin to proceed with the invasion. The transit from the zenith jump point to the planet took two weeks, but just twelve hours shy of orbit, the Capellan capital ships detected a large group of enemy assault craft and fighter carrier DropShips waiting for them. As the two forces converged, swarms of Marik fighters engaged the attackers' faster, lighter-weight counterparts. In a battle for orbital supremacy that lasted for two days, seven more Confederation troop DropShips, and nearly two more regiments of fighters were shot down or crippled.

The ground battle on Calloway VI pitted the remains of Task Force Devlin's 'Mech forces—now just over five regiments in strength—against a nearly equal number of Free Worlds League units. In addition, the forewarned Mariks had spent the previous two weeks fortifying positions, laying traps, and evacuating most of the civilians from the planet's largest population centers.

But by far the most hobbling factor of the entire campaign for the Capellans came from their own ruler. Refusing to merely monitor the fighting from the command centers of her orbiting ships, Chancellor Barbara Liao insisted on taking the field personally. This forced Devlin's ground commanders to spend critical reserves ensuring the Chancellor's safety every time her Red Lancers entered a combat zone. More than once, when an enemy force broke through their lines, the Confederation invaders were forced to usher Lady Barbara back to safety when they could have deployed those same resources to blunt the League elsewhere.

With the majority of her ground forces and fighter craft lost, the Chancellor finally acknowledged defeat after ten days of inconclusive attrition on the surface of Calloway VI. Only a third of the elite Red Lancers survived to cover their leader's withdrawal, while the entirety of the Ares Titans fell to Marik guns in their own effort to fall back. Among those lost was Major Barnabus Liao, who was killed when his *Ostsol* suffered a catastrophic reactor breach in a battle against a lance of League *Orion*s.

Even the retreat from Calloway VI would prove disastrous for House Liao, as the fleet quickly learned that their transport JumpShips were no longer there. Less than a week after the Chancellor's fateful decision to advance on the planet, a large group of Marik WarShips from Oriente materialized near the zenith way station. Many appeared close enough to the parked vessels to open fire the moment their sensors cleared the after-effects of hyperspace, annihilating several JumpShips before they could even broadcast an SOS. The few Confederation WarShips and attack craft left behind to protect these transports were



likewise destroyed, their warnings to the rest of Task Force Devlin lost between enemy ECM and the electromagnetic pulses of the enemy's arrival. Of the Capellan JumpShip flotilla, only two managed to escape the slaughter when their captains ordered emergency leaps back to Confederation space.

The ships fleeing from the planet below thus found themselves racing straight toward an inbound battle group of Marik WarShips eager to finish off "the butchers of New Delos."

On the bridge of his flagship, the *Du Shi Wang*-class *Sundermann Liao*, Colonel Devlin recognized his imminent defeat. But with his Chancellor's life now on the line, he chose to engage anyway, hoping to buy Lady Barbara and her surviving heir enough time to break through the League's line and get to safety. After detailing six WarShips to Her Majesty's protection, Devlin assigned the remainder of his combat ships to an ad-hoc "rear guard" whose task would be to engage the enemy head-on.

To Devlin's credit, the high-velocity gambit largely succeeded—but at terrible cost. By the time the space battle was over and the Chancellor's ship safely away, his task force was finished. Of the thirty WarShips, fifty attack DropShips, and fifty-six transport DropShips that came to Calloway, only twelve WarShips, six attack ships, five 'Mech transports, and three fighter carriers managed to disengage long enough to regroup and jump out of the solar system. Also lost were virtually all of Devlin's aerospace fighters. Of the seven 'Mech regiments that joined the operation—the Red Lancers, the Ares Titans, First and Second Sian Dragoons, Fourth Capellan Chargers, Third CRC, and Fifth Liao Lancers—only the Red Lancers, Third Confederation Reserve Cavalry, and the Fifth Liao Lancers managed to survive with any significant strength.

Among the most significant Capellan casualties in the entire debacle were both of Chancellor's sons; in addition to Barnabus' demise on Calloway VI, Baltazar Liao was killed in the space battle when the *Calseraigne*—the *Essex*-class destroyer he'd been transferred to—was destroyed by the *Aegis*-class cruiser *Pleiades*. Colonel Devlin himself was also killed when the *Sundermann Liao* was struck by multiple fighter-launched nuclear warheads.

For House Marik, the battle at Calloway cost twelve WarShips, twenty-four assault DropShips, and roughly two regiments' worth of fighters. All of the remaining capital ships suffered significant damage, but the League would make up for some of these losses by salvaging the most promising wrecks the Capellans left behind.

[*Editor's Note: The identity and, in many cases, even the* existence *of a traitor among Task Force Devlin is a point that has been disputed for centuries. Many Capellan history texts penned before the reign of Sun-Tzu Liao—even those written by ComStar historians—make no mention of a turncoat, while Free Worlds League historians usually paint the event as a coup made possible entirely by their SAFE intelligence agency. It remains an open debate today.*]

LOSING GROUND

By the close of 2789, the war between Liao and Marik had become decidedly personal. While the Confederation blockade at Corey and Wazan blunted the invasion along the League's "Sarna Path," the escalation of atrocities from New Delos to Calloway effectively spread the fighting along the border across a wider area.

The humiliating defeat at Calloway not only cost the Confederation several regiments of its most dedicated warriors and a good portion of its fighting ships, it undermined the Chancellor herself. With both of her sons lost in the battle, the next in line to the throne was Barbara Liao's granddaughter, Ilsa, who was only six years old at the time of the Calloway Debacle. The fact that her "Devlin Solution" had failed miserably cast serious doubts on her leadership, creating a morale problem that swiftly spread throughout the Capellan ranks.

The Free Worlds League, meanwhile, had a field day. The blockade of Corey and Wazan crumbled as the Capellan navy was forced to reallocate the ships elsewhere, allowing the League to drive off or destroy the remaining vessels and cement their control over both worlds. League troops successfully invaded the worlds of Carbonis and Ohrensen next; the Tenth Atrean Dragoons and Third Orloff Grenadiers destroyed the newly formed Twelfth Tikonov Lancers on Ohrensen, while the First and Ninth Oriente Hussars—backed up by the Fourth Orloff Grenadiers—decimated the Ninth Liao Lancers and destroyed a regiment of the Always Faithful mercenary command on Carbonis.

Rumors claimed that Kenyon Marik grew so supremely confident in his ability to take any Liao planet that he resorted to throwing darts at a wall map of the Confederation to choose his next targets. In truth, he merely decided to shift his strategy away from Sarna now that he had the Capellans on the ropes.

Taunting Lady Barbara with a personal letter delivered two months after the battle for Calloway, he declared his intention to reclaim the Andurien systems. As Kenyon anticipated, Chancellor Liao and her Strategios chose to ignore this warning; after spending the last two years in a very bloody and determined campaign to slice through the Sarna Commonality, the thought of Marik changing targets to the rimward half of the border seemed ludicrous. The Captain-General would soon prove them horribly wrong.

Andurien fell first when a League fleet delivered the Fourth and Eleventh Atrean Dragoons to the planet, accompanied by four regiments of mercenary 'Mech forces (the Baldwin's Cobras Heavy Brigade, and Gladstone's Gladiators). With only the *Baron*-class destroyers *Changsha* and *Mount Song* for orbital defense—feebly supported by a pair of old *Carrack*-class heavy transports—the Confederation scarcely slowed down the Marik assault force, which included four *Atreus*-class battleships and an equal number of *League*-class destroyers, supported by the *Soyal*-class heavy cruiser *Vrishabha*. To the Capellans' credit, the *Vrishabha* was crippled in the battle, and would eventually crash on the surface of Mulhacen (one of Andurien's two moons) after her crew abandoned ship. But this single kill was little consolation to the defenders, especially when their enemy managed to capture one of the supply-laden *Carrack*s to offset their losses.

The ground battle for Andurien was equally lopsided. The Andurien Heavy Guard and an untested Twelfth Andurien Hussars regiment proved no match for the Marik invaders, who made especially effective use of heavy aerospace support and the artillery batteries of Baldwin's Cobras. In less than a week, the planet fell.

Ingonish and Ryerson followed as the League moved to secure its prize, shattering virtually all of the Confederation's defenders along a jagged line that ran from Dansur to Piriapolis. Many of these worlds, lacking little more than local Home Guard defenses, fell with a bare minimum of fighting. It seemed as though House Marik could

in fact seize any Liao world it wished. The League's brutalization of the Capellan state would not falter again until 2793, when the Third Centauri Guards, backed up by a significant battle fleet and three additional regiments of CCAF support forces, destroyed the Fourth Marik Militia during the recapture of Anegasaki.

The assault on Anegasaki crippled a vital logistical world in the League's ongoing war with the Confederation. Moreover, the shockingly potent force directed against what amounted to the center of the Capellan front gave Marik's military commanders enough pause to recommend a period of consolidation, lest this defeat herald a larger wave of enemy counterstrikes.

THE WAR OF RAIDS: HOUSE STEINER'S SUCCESSION WAR

While the Free Worlds League tore its way across Capellan space, and the Draconis Combine likewise cut a swath deep into the heart of the Federated Suns, House Steiner's Lyran Commonwealth faced a far less determined push from either realm. While this certainly spared the Lyrans from a swift (and, likely, *total*) defeat at the hands of its hostile neighbors, Archon Jennifer Steiner and many of her High Command realized that such a push would be only a matter of time. Sooner or later, the Dragon or the Eagle would tire of their current foes and turn their predatory eyes back toward Lyran space.

Although many of her generals advocated taking advantage of their enemies' distraction to launch a realm-devastating campaign of their own, the fact remained that such a gambit could cause the Commonwealth to lose as much as it might have gained. Key to this understanding was the recognition of the LCAF's own failings. House Kurita had outmaneuvered the Lyrans since before the war officially began, taking planets with such ease that it seemed almost accidental. Meanwhile, House Marik had an entire pseudo-province of worlds that stabbed deep into the Commonwealth's underbelly, protected by troops who had demonstrated a willingness to bombard themselves with nuclear ordnance if it meant denying their enemy a foothold. Even with the additional forces and ships amassed in the wake of the Star League's collapse, it was clear that any major campaign against either of these enemies would force the Lyrans to strip their defenses against the other to the bone. Although that reasoning did not appear to hamper the leadership of the Free Worlds League or the Draconis Combine, Steiner's High Command was nowhere near as confident.

Of more remote—but still significant—concern was the fact that many systems of the former Rim Worlds Republic still lay beyond the entire length of the Commonwealth's Periphery borders, creating the largest stretch of potential vectors for pirate attacks or revenge strikes by Republic hold-outs. That virtually every world on the Lyran side of the Periphery line was also a former Rim Worlds holding, still being integrated into the Commonwealth socio-political infrastructure, promised disaster if left unattended. Lady Jennifer remembered well the shock with which Stefan Amaris unveiled his secret armies and set them loose against the unsuspecting Terrans back in the 2760s. With many of Amaris' suspected baseworlds still unaccounted for, she secretly feared that another such assault could target her realm at any time, if only to avenge their fallen state.

Ultimately, Archon Steiner was unwilling to risk having her Commonwealth blindsided from one direction while the majority of its forces were committed to a costly campaign elsewhere. Instead, she directed her commanders to assume a largely defensive posture. Emphasizing industrial and strategic resources over all other concerns, the Lyran military would restrict its operations for much of the war to guarding its most valuable assets. Offensive missions—when authorized—were to be short, conservative, and focused on crippling enemy infrastructure as much as possible.

As it happened, both the Draconis Combine and the Free Worlds League engaged in similar missions to keep the Lyrans in check, but did so much more aggressively. For the first four years of the war, not a month went by during which the LCAF was not repelling an enemy strike force or WarShip squadron more intent on damaging strategic and industrial objectives than capturing them.

While some attacks—like Hornir's Keep in 2786, and Skondia in 2787—turned into world-capturing invasions, most were objective raids designed to destroy 'Mech factories and shipyards. On the Combine front, the DCMS successfully took out both the Tamar Heavy Industries' BattleMech factories on Sudeten and Argile Technologies' MechWorks on Yed Posterior in 2788. In late 2790, a group of Kuritan WarShips crashed through the Commonwealth's orbital defenses at Tamar to obliterate the Bolson-Tamar shipyards. On the League front, raiding parties armed with nuclear and chemical ordnance bombarded industrial sites and planetary enviro-support facilities on Altoona in 2786, Duantia in 2788, and Myrrdin in 2789—all as part of a years-long retaliation for House Steiner's Bolan invasion. Marik fleets also hit New Kyoto in 2787 and New Earth in 2789, destroying the Bolson Shipyards over New Kyoto and crippling the Daussault-Shimmon yards over New Earth.

Indeed, even the Federated Suns—a realm several jumps away from the nearest Lyran borders—launched raids against Commonwealth worlds. Spurred on by desperation as their own realm reeled under Combine assault (or perhaps as part of some ill-planned effort to draw House Steiner into that conflict), the AFFS launched Operation BRASS RING and struck Hesperus II in 2788. After being repelled there, BRASS RING's forces vanished until the latter months of 2789, when they hit the former Terran Hegemony worlds of Thorin and Rocky.

Of these battles, the worst took place on Rocky, where a nuclear exchange between the Lyran and FedSuns forces—possibly instigated by Rim Worlds fugitives rumored to be lurking in the planet's hinterlands—destroyed what little of the local infrastructure and life-supporting apparatus remained since the Hegemony's fall. The sudden onset of a nuclear winter began to send the last outposts of human civilization on Rocky into a death spiral. The Davion forces that escaped surfaced only one more time in Steiner-held space: New Earth, where they sacrificed their last two squadrons of fighters and four DropShips to finish off the shipyards disabled by House Marik mere months before.

By the end of 2790, House Steiner's emphasis on defense was cracking under the pressure. With offensives that often started as raids, the Draconis Combine had taken the worlds of Alnasi, Muswell, Oyevaina, Shimosuwa, Stanzach, Tsukude, and Vorarlberg. Several more strategic systems had been bombarded, such as Gunzburg,

HOLDING HESPERUS

The first three years of the Succession Wars era also saw the first three of the famous "Battles of Hesperus II." Even in this time, with all armed forces at their peak of production and strength, Defiance Industries' factory complex on Hesperus possessed the Inner Sphere's most extensive and advanced BattleMech manufacturing facilities outside of those found on Terra itself.

Recognizing this, the Lyran Commonwealth spent the years immediately following the Star League's dissolution on fortifying Hesperus, and relocating as many of the factory's facilities as possible from free-standing structures on the open plains to man-made caves set within the rocky crags of the nearby Myoo Mountain Range. What facilities could not be relocated in a timely or economical fashion—including the orbital DropShip-building support facilities, and several advanced power and computer-controlled assembly complexes—were reinforced and armed instead. Both the ground-based approaches to the factories, and the planet's multiple orbital-approach zones were laced with sensors for early detection, while weapons bunkers were established at various intervals along all of the main land routes into and out from the factory sites. Similar efforts to reinforce and protect vital 'Mech manufacturing centers were well underway on Coventry, Donegal, and Tamar, but none were as extensive as those executed on Hesperus II.

For active defense, Hesperus II received at least two veteran-rated BattleMech regiments, well-supported by infantry, armor, and aerospace fighters, with at least a squadron of combat-ready WarShips in system or within range of a single jump. Prior to the start of hostilities, only the Commonwealth's capital world of Tharkad boasted a larger garrison.

The First Battle (vs. Kurita)

The first attack against Hesperus came in December 2787, when the Draconis Combine sent a fleet of more than twenty WarShips there, escorting a ground invasion force of four BattleMech regiments and their supporting assets. The invaders hoped to make this a killing blow; their WarShips would deliver nearly apocalyptic orbital fire aimed at flattening the factories and cities, while an overwhelming ground strike would eliminate survivors and dig out anything that escaped their bombardment.

Flush with success from their recent capture of Skondia, fully committed to the war against House Davion, and believing the Lyrans would commit their strength to cover worlds much closer to their borders, the Kuritans felt assured that the Steiner defense at Hesperus would be anemic. Instead, they faced a defending fleet that included some of the Commonwealth's heaviest WarShips, led by a commander whose strategy was far more aggressive than the DCA was accustomed to facing.

Although the Kurita strike force did manage to land its troops, the Steiner space defense denied their WarShips any real hope of inflicting the terrible bombardment they had planned for. After nearly a month of brutal space combat, during which time the Combine's landing teams withered under the gauntlet of fixed positions, traps, and walls of assault-weight BattleMechs, the Kurita offensive collapsed. Though the DCA admiral did manage to destroy the ship support yards orbiting Hesperus II, more than half of his fleet was lost, and less than two regiments remained of the ground attack group.

In addition to the loss of the orbital yards, the factories on Hesperus II suffered extensive damage to one of their topside 'Mech assembly lines and a vehicle production site. Much of this came at the hands of a few elements from the Eighteenth Dieron Regulars, who managed to break through the Steiner defensive lines when an errant volley of capital laser fire scattered them.

The DCMS retreat also left behind several warriors, most of whom were captured and eventually ransomed back to the Combine. But one small group, centered on a fractured core of fourteen Kurita regulars and seven mercenaries, formed a resistance group that would plague Defiance's security troops for years after the battle. Led by Captain Connor McCreedom, the only surviving officer of the

Kufstein, Liezen, Nox, Skandia, and Yed Posterior. Even low-value planets were targeted, such as Juniper, a Kannon Shire colony barely fifteen years old when Kurita raiders hit the main settlement and its surrounding lake valley with strontium-laced nuclear ordnance.

On the League border, House Marik's forces seized not only Hornir's Keep and Radostov, but also Alhena, Dixie, and Shiloh. In addition to the punitive strikes on Altoona, Duantia, and Myrrdin, the Free Worlds had also conducted devastating border raids against Bella I, Cavanaugh II, Ford, Lipton, Loric, Milton, New Earth, New Kyoto, and Phecda—with the attackers' WarShips often getting close enough to deliver at least a passing orbital strike, whether or not the planet featured strategic bases or industries of any note.

Worst of all for the Commonwealth, the world of Hesperus II—whose factories supplied close to a third of the LCAF's BattleMech needs—had weathered three major assaults from as many attacking realms. While the Lyrans could take some modicum of pride in bleeding three House militaries while holding their greatest industrial prize, the cost in ships, troops, and supporting facilities was extreme. Spoiler raids—such as those made against Dieron and Luthien on the Combine front, and against the League-held worlds of Rochers, Thermopolis, and Wyatt—had hurt their enemies, but not enough to stave them off entirely.

By 2790, it was apparent—even to the most inept of the Lyran military leadership—that the Commonwealth could not hope to survive the Succession War on defense alone.

HOLDING HESPERUS (CONTINUED)

Fifty-Second Heavy Assault Regiment, a now destroyed ex-SLDF mercenary command, this band of dispossessed MechWarriors took refuge in the Myoo Mountains. From there, they harassed truck convoys to and from the factory complexes, secured weapons from vehicles trapped in deliberate rockslides, and even managed to cripple or destroy several tanks, hovercraft, and armed VTOLs during their three-year guerilla campaign. In the biggest kill of their campaign, McCreedom's Devils (as they had come to be known), downed a hundred-ton *Atlas* BattleMech by toppling it into a valley below.

The Second Battle (vs. Davion)

In April 2788, a second attempt to destroy Defiance Industries took place. As part of a desperate mission known as Operation BRASS RING, a naval task force from the Federated Suns escorted a transport fleet carrying a ground assault force made up mostly of fast, lighter-weight BattleMechs. The operation called for the small fleet to cover its ground troops as they attempted to rush the surface factories, snatch whatever supplies they could, and destroy whatever they couldn't. Commanding the operation was Rear Admiral Milton Hayes.

With no formal state of war existing between the Steiners and Davions, and both realms already reeling from attacks by a common enemy, it is unclear exactly how BRASS RING would have helped the Federated Suns. Worse, due to the lack of available WarShips in the face of House Kurita's assault, BRASS RING's naval strength was hopelessly outgunned by the sheer number of capital ships the Commonwealth had placed over Hesperus—even after considering the losses suffered there just one year earlier.

With only eight WarShips to his force, Hayes found himself facing a Steiner fleet nearly three times its number. Unwilling to concede defeat without an honest attempt, the Suns' commander attempted to thin the Lyrans' defense screen with a series of quick, slashing attacks against the larger cruisers. This, he hoped, would draw the heaviest enemy vessels away long enough for the fastest of his transport DropShips to punch through the weakened line. As those fast raiders did their job below, the Davion ships would keep the Steiners busy with an elaborate game of hide-and-seek between the planet, its moon, and the debris fields that included derelict hulls from the Combine's failed attack.

The plan proved only slightly successful. After more than a week of quick hit-and-run naval actions over Hesperus, the Davions lost three of their WarShips and a dozen escort DropShips to the Steiner war fleet. In the process, Hayes' ships did briefly open a window large enough to land troops, but only a single battalion of BattleMechs made it dirtside—all scattered across a swath of rocky desert seventy kilometers away from their objective. Because of this, the Lyrans on the ground had ample time to concentrate their defense against the raiders, and succeeded in shattering the entire landing force long before its warriors ever laid eyes on the Defiance factories.

The Commonwealth's losses in the Second Battle for Hesperus amounted to little more than a single destroyed Lyran cruiser, moderate damage to six more Steiner WarShips, two squadrons of fighters, and an assortment of vehicles and fixed defense emplacements on the ground. Unable to adequately pierce the enemy defense well enough to safely deliver any more ground troops, and keenly aware that he was running out of time before the inevitable arrival of enemy reinforcements, Admiral Hayes was forced to retreat.

The humiliation of this defeat burned brightly among the survivors of BRASS RING. On their journey back toward friendly space, Hayes and his task force struck at the Lyran worlds of Thorin and Rocky. On Thorin, the raiders focused their efforts on causing as much commercial and infrastructure damage as possible. But on Rocky, where they found LCAF troops embroiled in an apparent hunt for former Rim Worlds Army holdouts, the fighting swiftly escalated, resulting in a nuclear exchange that laid waste to several major cities and fatally compromised the planetary environment.

The Third Battle (vs. Marik)

The Third Battle of Hesperus II—and the last serious attempt on the Hesperan factories during the First War—came just eleven months after the Suns' defeat. In March 2789, the Free Worlds League struck with a naval blitz that lacked the heavy 'Mech support of its predecessors. Freed from the concerns of supporting a ground assault to capture supplies and equipment, this attack was meant to destroy the factories utterly with a thorough bombardment from space.

Leading this assault was Fleet Admiral Thaddeus Marik, the son of Captain-General Kenyon Marik. Having studied the limited data on the previous battles (as gleaned by Free Worlds League intelligence agents), it was his decision to eschew the ground attack. Speed and surprise, he reasoned, were utterly critical to successfully blitz a world as well defended as Hesperus; a massive group of transport DropShips and attendant JumpShips would only slow him down. More importantly, however, was the fact that a force of highly mobile jump-capable vessels would enable him to take the entire assault into the system via one of the most dangerous pirate points his navigators could reasonably calculate:

The LaGrange point between the local sun and its innermost world, Hesperus I.

HOLDING HESPERUS (CONTINUED)

Prior to the Third Battle of Hesperus II, only the Star League Defense Force had ever dared to bring such a large task force of WarShips to its objective via a non-standard arrival point so close to a solar mass. Even then, the only SLDF vessels used in such a manner were equipped with lithium-fusion batteries, allowing them to quickly leap back out if their arrival point was too unstable or too well defended. Only a few WarShips among the House Lords' navies possessed similar equipment; among the League fleet, only Marik's flagship, the *Lola III*-class destroyer *Bucharest*, featured this technology.

In choosing the inward jump point, Admiral Thaddeus Marik was confident he would catch the Lyrans completely off-guard. Not only would the enemy be unlikely to expect a heavy attack from such a drastic position, but the natural emissions from Hesperus' F-class star would help obscure his ships' arriving jump pulses and the heat signatures of their acceleration. Furthermore, the in-system approach, along the solar plane, would give the defenders far less time to react than a more traditional point of attack.

Marik's ploy did take the Lyrans by surprise, but the sheer might of the defending fleet, clustered tightly around Hesperus II, proved daunting. Worse, just days before the arrival of his task force, two additional cruisers—the *Aegis* class *Granite* and *Endeavor*—arrived at the local zenith jump point and were en route to the planet. Though older than many, these Terran-built WarShips had been renovated by the SLDF a few years before the Amaris Crisis, and possessed lithium-fusion batteries similar to those found on the *Bucharest*.

Commanding the *Granite* was Fleet Admiral Oscar F. Dewey, en route to Hesperus II to take over the naval defense from his ailing predecessor, Luther Weisskopf. When word reached him that an incoming naval attack force was nearing the planet, Dewey ordered his navigators—and those of *Endeavor*—to plot an emergency in-system jump to Hesperus II's lunar LaGrange point. The desperate leap brought both cruisers into planetary orbit just as the bulk of Marik's fleet engaged the main body of Commonwealth defenders.

Marik, having anticipated the heavy defense, detailed the *Soyal*-class cruisers *Devastator* and *Skulker* to break off and attack the factory sites while the bulk of his ships kept the Steiners occupied. The sudden appearance of *Granite* and *Endeavor* took these two outriders by surprise. The two WarShip pairs quickly squared off, raking one another with punishing broadside volleys even as their melee brought them closer and closer to the planet.

Before long, a magazine explosion on *Granite*'s port side stripped half of the venerable ship's firepower. Its opponent, *Devastator*, began to maneuver around for a final pass against the crippled flank, determined to put down the Lyran ship once and for all. In desperation, Admiral Dewey ordered his crew to ram *Devastator*. The *Granite*'s collision crippled both ships, and left their mangled hulls entangled perilously close to the planet. Unable to separate in time, they slipped into Hesperus II's gravity well, and began to disintegrate. Although the *Endeavor* managed to prevail in its own battle against the *Skulker* and came about to aid its sister ship, it arrived too late. Only a few shuttles, packed with survivors from the doomed *Granite*, were saved.

For Admiral Thaddeus Marik, the effect of Dewey's action on his entire plan was devastating. With many of his WarShips too heavily engaged or damaged by the bulk of the Commonwealth fleet, he found himself unable to muster any other ships capable of flanking the Lyrans. Worse, three squadrons of attack DropShips were detected climbing from the planetary surface, intending to join with several *Mako* corvettes already moving to close what little remained of the gap in Hesperus' orbital defense. Reluctantly, he ordered his task force to withdraw, ceding the victory to House Steiner.

THE BEST DEFENSE IS AN ANNOYING OFFENSE

To the more cautious in the LCAF High Command, the punitive raids launched against Luthien and Dieron in 2787—though successful—accomplished little more than enraging the Draconis Combine. Despite suffering a black eye, House Kurita's immediate reaction was a counterattack aimed at Hesperus II. Although that attack failed, several Steiner worlds closer to the border had not been so lucky.

Still, others noted, those counterstrikes paled in comparison to the Combine's campaign against House Davion. Clearly, the Dragon's might was deeply committed elsewhere; the DCMS could hit hard, but it could not be *everywhere*.

Likewise, though the capture of Bolan prompted a declaration of war and promise of nuclear retaliation from the Free Worlds League, Lyran intelligence confirmed that House Marik's focus remained firmly locked onto the Confederation. Steiner's enemies were not ignoring them, to be sure, but they weren't surging across the border with all their might, either. What their raids had accomplished—in addition to heavy infrastructure damage along the borders—was to put the LCAF in a continuous state of worrying when and where the next strike would come.

It was high time for the Commonwealth to respond in kind.

Inspired by the victories of the Stealths and the Tamar Tigers, Archon Jennifer Steiner authorized a broadening of the Lyran raiding strategy. On the League front was General Amanda

Lestrade, whose first major raid campaign, back in 2788, punished several Marik worlds closer to the Terran region. On the Combine's border, General of the Armies Paul Steiner kept the Tamar Tigers busy with targets from Styx to Pomme De Terre, backed up where necessary by additional LCAF forces and independent mercenary commands. Both generals were tasked with increasing the number and frequency of their strikes, with an eye toward keeping the enemy on defense more than offense.

In 2790, the Commonwealth launched its second raiding offensive on both fronts. Against the Free Worlds League, General Lestrade approved a bold, long-term, "raid-to-capture" campaign to reclaim the Bolan Thumb. Proposed by Kommandant-General Aric Hasseldorf, a junior theater commander from the Alarion Province, this plan aimed at persistently raiding the Marik-held worlds from all directions, over several years, until the FWLM defenders in the region simply crumbled from a combination of attrition, exhaustion, and strangled supply lines. This left Lestrade free to focus her energies on the League's borders nearest to her native Skye region and the recent Terran conquests. Against the Draconis Combine, General Paul Steiner chose to focus his attentions on House Kurita's holdings in the Dieron region, hoping to back up Lestrade's efforts in the defense of the heavily industrialized worlds around Skye.

Once more, the stars of this raiding offensive were the Stealths and the Tamar Tigers. Transferred to Lestrade's command, the Stealths struck at Sirius, Graham IV, and Oliver, while other LCAF regiments hit the worlds of Wyatt, Dieudonne, Bordon, and Savannah. On the Combine front, the Tigers raided Pomme De Terre, Styx, Telos IV, and Kervil, while other LCAF commands struck at Dyev and Dieron. The primary goals of these attacks were the destruction of enemy supply stations, transport assets, and any industries of military value.

Planetary conquests were a secondary goal, to be attempted only "when the opportunity arose." Such opportunities were generally determined by the ease with which the initial raids succeeded, and the level of reinforcements the LCAF High Command determined it could direct to the same target before the enemy did the same. On the League front, the worlds of Sirius, Oliver, and Dieudonne fell into this category; on the Combine front, the LCAF determined that Dyev, Kervil, and Styx were ripe for the taking. By November 2790, the Commonwealth diverted two heavy 'Mech regiments apiece to all six of these targeted systems. In an effort to further inspire her troops, and underscore Lyran resolve to its neighbors, Archon Jennifer Steiner herself chose to lead the Fourth Royal Guards in its assault on Styx.

As fate would have it, this would prove disastrous.

THE VACUUM WAR

On 17 February 2787, Free Worlds League WarShips assaulted the Lyran Commonwealth's Bolson Shipyards in the New Kyoto system. A major producer of JumpShips and freighters, the factories orbiting New Kyoto's largest moon—Wing-Chiu—were also involved in the manufacture of various WarShip support systems and periodic refits. This made them a prime target for the intense industrial raiding that characterized much of the First Succession War.

Recognizing this strategic danger, the Commonwealth had dispatched a large group of corvettes and assault DropShips to defend these facilities when the war broke out, backing them up with a reinforced regiment of heavy aerospace fighters. When the League inevitably attacked, they did so with a task force that included three mixed destroyer squadrons and two reinforced wings of aerospace fighters, centered on the *Cameron*-class battlecruiser FWLS *Rasalas*.

The battle for the Bolson Shipyards was a high-speed engagement which lasted less than fifteen minutes from the first shots fired to the last. In that sliver of time, the Lyrans lost close to a dozen WarShips and the majority of its Fifty-third Aerospace Interceptors regiment. The League task force lost most of its own fighters, seven destroyers, and the *Rasalas*. Crippled by a fighter pilot's suicide run, the great ship veered out of control directly into the heart of the Bolson yards.

The destruction of Bolson Shipyards was a severe blow to Lyran shipbuilding; that dramatic battle over New Kyoto has been memorialized (and dramatized) many times throughout history. But, in the context of the First War, it was merely a sample of an overarching strategy in which all five of the Great Houses were engaged.

Having spent the five years leading up to the war in a frenzied arms race, it was well known to all of the Successor States that the combat navies represented one of the largest and most expensive branches of their military industries. Transport navies—including both military and civilian non-combat JumpShips—were also a vital element, the backbone of the very infrastructure that enabled them to administer trade, move troops, and ensure the logistical, economic, and social integrity of their respective realms.

This made FTL shipbuilding, and all active WarShip navies, a priority target for the entirety of the First Succession War. Making matters more difficult for all participants, the need to produce FTL vessels via space-borne shipyards—a consequence of the physical engineering needs of virtually every hyperspace-capable craft since the dawn of interstellar travel—made those very yards difficult to protect. Worse still, after many state-of-the-art yards were lost or crippled during the Amaris-Kerensky Conflict, what shipbuilders remained tended to be close to the Terran Hegemony, located to take advantage of the naval trades long dominated by House Cameron. When the Star League collapsed, a large number of the Inner Sphere's JumpShip and WarShip yards were in striking distance of their enemies.

And the House Lords knew it.

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The Death of an Archon

From the borders of the Lyran Commonwealth in 2790, the stormy world of Styx was two jumps deep into Combine-occupied space. As a Terran Hegemony world, rich in radioactives and other precious metals, it was a significant industrial asset since even before the days of the Star League—one which the Dragon had long coveted. Styx's loyalty to the Hegemony persisted even after Kerensky's Exodus, so much so that local resistance kept the Draconis Combine from effectively seizing the planet until weeks after Minoru Kurita's claim to the First Lordship.

Since then, the combination of Styx's dreary climate and the determined efforts of lingering resistance groups had made it the kind of world a soldier might be sentenced to defend as a punishment. Moreover, with major industries that centered on chemical plants, mining operations, and radioactive ore processing, many of the sites such troops might be tasked to defend often represented the planet's most polluted environs. In the three years of Combine stewardship prior to the Commonwealth's 2790 offensive, a series of work stoppages and sabotage by the anti-Kurita underground had only made things worse—so much so that, when the Tamar Tigers raided the planet in the early months of 2790, they found themselves facing demoralized defenders, and local guides all too willing to tell the Lyrans where the DCMS positions were most vulnerable.

It was with these factors in mind that the LCAF High Command decided Styx was a prime candidate for invasion, despite its relative distance from Commonwealth borders. Striking here, they would easily bypass the more robust DCMS forces on the border for an objective that had a weak, under-motivated garrison, and ample local support. With Styx secured as a staging ground for deeper strikes into Combine space, House Kurita would have no choice but to draw troops from the Commonwealth's borders to eject them.

Alongside a light WarShip escort, Archon Jennifer Steiner arrived in the Styx system on 12 December 2790 at the head of an assault force that included the Fourth Royal Guards and the Second Skye Rangers BattleMech regiments. Landing virtually unopposed ten days later, the Lyrans quickly seized three of the planet's largest spaceports, at the cities of Barbados, Memphis, and the planetary capital of Sunder Falls. Of all three landings, the only significant fighting took place on the tarmac of the Sunder Falls spaceport, where a company of DCMS 'Mechs and two armor lances tried to ambush the disembarking Royal Guards.

Scarcely a week later, with over half of the known on-planet defenders defeated, the Styx planetary government surrendered itself to Steiner control. Only a few holdouts remained, centered on the industrial city of New Eslow.

New Eslow was more than just home to a massive chemical complex, however; in the days of the Star League, it was the site of several military research and development projects ostensibly for use in terraforming projects and "indigenous bio-containment ordnance." Because many of the chemical agents produced at the site were easy candidates for use in bio-chemical warfare, the Terran Hegemony had established a significant military presence at New Eslow that included fortifications designed to withstand (or, more likely, contain) any foreign contamination, in the event of a disaster. Under House Kurita's control, these facilities—badly damaged during the Amaris years—were rehabilitated with an eye toward producing stockpiles of chemical WMDs, and the base once more became an armed camp.

Concerned that an assault might disperse deadly chemical agents throughout the region, Steiner held off on attacking New Eslow with either orbital bombardment or tactical atomics. Instead, she and her troops surrounded the city, hoping to close off all avenues of escape with a wall of heavy and assault 'Mechs, while teams of infantry sought a way to enter the complex indirectly. But it soon became clear that the Combine stragglers had completely sealed the various tunnels and utility passages into their complex, creating an impregnable fortress. Booby traps apparent at virtually every major entrance, and constant threats from the holdouts to punish the Lyrans and their sympathizers all over Styx, soon convinced the Archon and her field commanders that they could not simply wait for the enemy to starve or surrender.

The decision was made to assault the New Eslow complex on the evening of 4 January 2791. Against the advice of her subcommanders, Steiner chose to "share the risk" and take part in the main attack from the helm of her *Warhammer*. The operation was intended to be a blitz—a straightforward rush through the fortified entrances from multiple directions, executed before the enemy had a chance to trigger any explosives or deploy any chemical weapons. Unfortunately for the Lyrans, the Combine troops proved far more alert than they had expected, and the entire site erupted in furious weapons fire.

In the midst of the action, the Archon rushed the stronghold's front entrance in an apparent attempt to force an opening. This effort triggered the explosive charges the enemy had rigged across the 'Mech-sized gates, setting off a chain reaction that not only demolished much of the complex itself, but also vaporized the upper half of Jennifer Steiner's BattleMech.

The Succession War had claimed its first casualty from the ranks of the House Lords themselves.

THE FIST OF DEFIANCE: STEINER'S CAMPAIGNS

News of the Archon's death had a crippling effect on the Commonwealth's offensives. As the LCAF High Command quickly succumbed to confusion, most regiments cancelled their forward advances and sought to consolidate their gains on whatever worlds they happened to be invading at the time. This robbed the Lyrans of precious momentum, especially along the borders flanking the Federation of Skye.

The month-long pause in the raiding campaign made it possible for both the Free Worlds League and the Draconis Combine to rally their local defenses. Within the span of two months, both nations managed to reclaim virtually all of the ground they had lost throughout the region. Only Dieudonne—held by the Thirteenth Lyran Guards, with support from the Fifty-Sixth Heavy Assault Regiment (a heavy armor group)—remained under the control of Steiner's invading armies, along with the Bolan Theater worlds of Danxian and Radostov.

As the Commonwealth's raiding offensive collapsed, the Estates General confirmed the realm's next Archon: Jennifer Steiner's son and commander of the Eleventh Lyran Guards, Richard Steiner. Frustrated by the ineptitude he had witnessed throughout the war, Archon Richard appointed Leutnant-General Graham Kelswa, Duke of Carse and commander of the Tamar Tigers, to head all Lyran forces on the Combine front. Although Richard's uncle, Paul Steiner, technically remained in charge of the LCAF as a whole, this shuffling of leadership positions underscored how little faith the Archon had in Paul's strategic competence.

The Lyran Commonwealth remained in defensive mode for close to a year after Jennifer Steiner's death, as the new Archon's shakeup of the LCAF reassigned forces and commanders across the realm. Acting on reports from the LIC regarding the remnants of the Rim Worlds Republic, Richard Steiner ordered the redeployment of the majority of the WarShips still posted along the Periphery frontier, intent on shoring up the naval defenses against Houses Marik and Kurita. A single squadron of corvettes, however, was detailed to strike at the sole military threat left among the unclaimed worlds of House Amaris' fallen realm: Finmark. Dubbed Operation HAIFISCHFLOSSENSUPPE ("Shark Fin Soup"), the mission called for the capture or crippling of the local jump stations and—more importantly—the still-operational Roe Weapons Systems WarShip yards orbiting the former regional capital.

General Paul Steiner advocated a complete conquest of the planet, which was making strides toward organizing a post-Republic alliance. The Archon instead chose to equip his raiding forces with strategic nuclear weapons and express instructions to neutralize any potential strategic threats to the Commonwealth "with extreme prejudice" in the event the local defenders proved too challenging. To Richard, committing more LCAF ground forces on further Periphery expansion was neither expedient nor practical. Conquering more of the broken Republic could wait, he explained, until the greater threat of the other Successor States was properly contained.

THE VACUUM WAR (CONTINUED)

In the course of the First Succession War, the destruction of naval assets and ship-building was so heavily emphasized that the combined navies of the Inner Sphere dropped from just over 900 active WarShips at the war's beginning to less than thirty at the time of the Bella Accords. More importantly, virtually every single factory, refit yard, and naval support facility capable of manufacturing and maintaining the expensive compact K-F drive cores used in WarShip construction was destroyed or crippled by hostile action or sabotage. By the end of the First War, in fact, the only shipyards still operating in the Inner Sphere were those that could build and service jump drives for the civilian and transport sectors. Of these survivors, many were damaged by deep raids, or limited by the loss of secondary manufacturers and support industries.

Meanwhile, the loss of WarShips and the rampant destruction of any enemy JumpShips capable of delivering troops to a planet left the Houses increasingly short on transports for trade and other logistical needs. For House Davion's Federated Suns, which lost many transports and WarShips in the opening years of the Combine invasion, the losses were so bad that the government was forced to seize civilian and merchant traffic from all across the realm. As the Davions increasingly diverted resources to the manufacture and repair of transports over more expensive and powerful WarShips, the resulting disruptions of trade and the loss of capital-grade support manufacturing quickly undermined local economies across the Suns.

House Steiner's Lyran Commonwealth, which began the war with the largest WarShip and mercantile fleet in the Inner Sphere, found itself so strapped for interstellar transportation that whole worlds began succumbing to starvation and environmental collapse after local transport companies found themselves similarly "pressed" into military service. Toward the end of the war, the Lyran Archon was even forced to suspend the Estates General, after these JumpShip conscriptions made it impossible for the various planetary representatives to gather effectively.

The other three Successor States fared no better. For all of their pre-war build-ups, the mighty WarShip fleets of every state evaporated amid the fires of the First Succession War. As whole fleets succumbed to the massed fleet actions of the opening years—such as Cholame, Skondia, and the Battles for Hesperus II—ships began appearing in smaller and smaller formations. With fewer capital ships working in concert, and fighter-launched nuclear ordnance an accepted tactic for both anti-ship and anti-industry raids, WarShips and JumpShips became even easier prey as the war wore on. Before long, the Houses of Kurita, Liao, and Marik quickly joined Davion and Steiner in cannibalizing their own merchant marines just to move their troops about. Meanwhile, in a preview of the fate of even the vaunted BattleMech by the 3020s, the destruction of naval yards forced the various navies to cannibalize their more damaged WarShips to keep their increasingly smaller fleets operational—a trend that would only accelerate as the First War bled into the Second.

And so it was that the age of the WarShip slid, inexorably, toward its end.

—Ivan A. Nanachek, *VoidWarriors: The Naval History of the Inner Sphere*, Nebula Press, 3122

SHARK FIN SOUP

Haifischflossensuppe.

Now, there was a galactic screw-up if ever there was one! I'm sure someone at High Command thought they were being cute when they thought up the name for the operation. I can imagine some soft-bellied, armchair-bound, court-conscious yes man laughing so hard at his own joke that his monocle pops out and drops into his brandy glass. "Get it?" he'd say to his audience. "Because those Rimmers used the shark as their symbol, and the world is called *Fin*mark! Oh, aren't we ever so clever!"

Yeah, if they'd bothered to spend some of those wits on appreciating the actual situation, maybe we'd have secured the Archon a real victory with a lot less needless bloodshed all around! Christ, I mean, the way they've been popping shipyards like zits all across the Sphere, you'd think the lot of those pfennig-pinchers would have at least *considered* taking the whole thing seriously!

Sorry, it just burns me up every time I think of it. I can still see the whole disaster—from start to blinding finish—playing out in my nightmares. Hell, I was the commo officer on duty in *Hadrian*'s CIC when it all fell apart.

There we were: four *Mako*s and a couple *Vincent-39*s, running escort for a half-dozen *Leopard CV*s and four *Fury*s full of marines. We'd jumped in straight from some marginal system called Dijonne, took their zenith jump station with only a little bit of a fight from what looked like a pirate-rigged *Achilles* that was docked there.

Per the mission orders, we next gave the folks below their "fair warning": They faced the might of the Commonwealth, and said Commonwealth wanted those shipyards of theirs in the name of "interstellar security." Command wanted us to make it real clear that we weren't taking "no" for an answer, so they topped the whole spiel off with a promise that any resistance would be met with maximum force.

We were already en route at an eager double-gee burn when the locals called back. Apparently, they were calling themselves the Finmark Free Republic now, and didn't want any trouble with their "Lyran neighbors." They made it clear they weren't happy with our coming to seize their biggest source of income, but they just didn't have the strength to take us on, and hoped we could come to some kind of diplomatic agreement rather than letting things get ugly.

Sure, some of us smelled a trap, but intel said these guys had been picked clean by Kerensky and his goons, and the yards had been totally inoperative until maybe two years ago. No way they'd have any WarShips to stop us. Long range 'scopes couldn't see anything big floating in our path except the planet itself, so we carried on.

Two days later, after several calls back and forth with the locals, Kommodore [Gustav] Sharae is confident that he's worked out these Republicans' surrender, and we're gliding into Finmark's orbit. The yards' bays are all wide open—as ordered—so we can see that no ships are present. We have two marine ships move in first, flanked by two of the *CV*s and the [*Vincent*-class] *Potsdam* and *Ulm*, because even Sharae isn't *that* naïve.

(CONTINUED ON P. 69)

For his own part, the newly-promoted General Kelswa remained active on the front lines. When the Commonwealth's raids resumed against the Draconis Combine after nearly a year's worth of reorganization, he often personally led his Tamar Tigers into thick of battle. The Combine defenders often suffered during these attacks, but their retaliations tapered off for a time as the Dragon focused more intensely on its offensive against the Federated Suns.

Along the Free Worlds League fronts, General Lestrade's forces struggled to hold the line against frequent House Marik raids into the Skye region, while Kommandant-General Hasseldorf's efforts continued to occupy the enemy in the Bolan Theater. Although the League launched few major counter-offensives against the Commonwealth during this time—having committed more troops to their assault on the Capellan Confederation—their raiding actions were effective in causing heavy damage to worlds all along the border.

RECLAIMING THE THUMB: THE BOLAN CAMPAIGN

One of the more overlooked campaigns of the First Succession War was House Steiner's campaign in the Bolan Thumb. This arc of worlds, stretching from Nockatunga to Valloire, was an artifact of a bygone era. Originally numbering just six inhabited systems, the Bolan Thumb was seized by Free Worlds League invasion forces towards the end of the Age of War. When the Terran Hegemony helped mediate the Megrez Treaty in 2531, it ended the conflict between the Lyrans and the League with the borders fixed as they were at that time. As part of the deal, House Steiner begrudgingly accepted the loss of the Thumb worlds, but only on the condition that Hegemony peacekeepers would be stationed throughout the region. Ostensibly, this was to discourage further military adventurism and ensure the well-being of the former Lyran citizens now living under foreign rule. In truth, the Commonwealth leadership hoped to reclaim these systems at some later date, preferably over the negotiating table.

During the Star League era, the Thumb worlds remained under Marik rule. During this time, additional systems were colonized within the treaty zone, some with economic and material aid by Lyran and Terran agencies. At the time of the Kerensky's Exodus, the Bolan Thumb numbered a total of fifteen inhabited systems, and—despite the Commonwealth's centuries of economic and political efforts—was recognized as an organized province of the Free Worlds League, complete with its own regional BattleMech brigade (the Bolan Defenders).

With the dissolution of the Star League, the Commonwealth saw the Thumb as a strategic threat that had to be dealt with immediately. Unfortunately, the Pyrrhic outcome of House Steiner's pre-emptive strike—Operation ELBOW JOINT—accomplished little more than providing the Free Worlds its pretext for war. The sheer damage done to Bolan in the process of its Lyran conquest effectively canceled out any hope for a swift, decisive victory against the whole of the Thumb. The Bolan Defenders regiments, locally raised and known for their fierce devotion to their homeworlds, would not be cowed by the reports of WarShips lobbing nukes from orbit; the LCAF realized their enemy would now fight with the suicidal zeal of fanatics.

League Retaliations

In the aftermath of ELBOW JOINT, the Commonwealth bore the brunt of several counter-assaults from the Free Worlds League in the Bolan region. Complicating matters was the declaration of war by the Draconis Combine, coupled with attacks along the Kurita border. House Steiner's military leaders, forced to think defensively, postponed their planned campaign in the Thumb to reconsider their strategy there. Aside from the taking of Rochers in 2787—where the Eleventh Arcturan Guards regiment was forced to kill the enraged Eleventh Bolan Defenders to the last man—the Lyrans would strike at the Thumb with little more than sporadic raiding parties until the latter half of 2790. In the same timespan, the League seized the worlds of Altoona, Duantia, Hornir's Keep,

Myrrdin, and Radostov—three of which suffered from the heavy use of chemical and nuclear weapons launched by one or both sides.

[*Editor's Note: Of key significance at this time, a Lyran raid on the League-held world of Kamenz in 2789 inflicted moderate damage to the Bolan Defenders stationed there. Unbeknownst to the LCAF, however, was that one of the Marik MechWarriors killed in that raid was Carl Marik, the eldest of Captain-General Kenyon's sons. That the League did not respond to this event with greater force is a testament to Kenyon's intense focus on the Capellan border.*]

Thus was the state of the Bolan Theater when Kommandant-General Aric Hasseldorf was assigned the task of reclaiming the Thumb worlds and containing the Marik threat while his senior border commanders focused on the Skye region. Keenly aware of the Commonwealth's attentions elsewhere, Hasseldorf proposed a long-term raiding campaign designed to wear down the League forces throughout the Thumb and weaken the Bolan Defenders' morale with a minimal use of Lyran forces or weapons of mass destruction. Backed up by mercenary commands wherever he could obtain them, his plan was little more than a randomized series of objective raids intended to keep the FWLM in a prolonged state of heightened alert, while scouts slipped onto each world to identify weak points and targets ripe for conquest.

Hasseldorf's War: Phase One

The raids began in the middle of 2790, coinciding with the mass-raiding campaigns launched elsewhere along the Marik and Kurita fronts. This allowed Hasseldorf to piggyback on the efforts of Generals Amanda Lestrade and Paul Steiner, presenting the appearance that the Bolan Thumb raids were just an extension of a realm-wide strategy. By September of 2790, Hasseldorf's scouts found the first planet ripe for conquest: Valloire. Two months later, the Fifteenth Donegal Guards and the Twentieth Skye Rangers, escorted by a pair of Commonwealth battlecruisers and a regiment of aerospace fighters, landed on Valloire to do battle with the Fourth Bolan Defenders.

As with the fighting for Rochers in 2787, the Bolan Defenders refused to surrender, even as the Lyran troops overran several of the planet's outlying bases and secured a foothold near the capital city of Casey's Promenade. Going to ground in the sprawling expanse of jungle throughout the nearby Donovian Valley, the Defenders forced the Skye Rangers to pursue them, guided by aerospace overflights that periodically bombed the valley with incendiaries. Although the invaders did bring heavier tactical weaponry to Valloire, Hasseldorf's orders were to use such devices only as a last resort. This restraint, he hoped, would underscore the Commonwealth's respect for its once and future citizens, and perhaps demonstrate to the Defenders that House Steiner *could* win back its worlds without resorting to nukes.

The battle for Valloire finally ended on 23 December 2790, when the Twentieth Skye and elements of the Fifteenth Donegal overran the last of the Defenders' hidden bunkers in the southern jungles of Katan Valley. Although sporadic resistance from armed pro-League insurrectionists would plague the Lyrans for months to come, House Marik's on-world military force was no more, and House Steiner's banner once more flew over the government buildings in Casey's Promenade.

Stall and Recovery

The death of Archon Jennifer Steiner in January of 2791 profoundly affected the morale of the whole LCAF, and hobbled the Commonwealth raiding campaigns around the Skye region. But in the Bolan Theater, General Hasseldorf worked to maintain his momentum. His raiders continued to eat away at enemy supply lines and aerospace defenses, while gauging the FWLM strength and movements throughout the Thumb. By the end of 2791, the fruits of his labors were the capture of Danxian and the liberation of Radostov. When asked for a status report by the new Archon, Richard Steiner, Hasseldorf proclaimed that the three worlds his campaign netted to date represented only the first phase of his overall strategy.

SHARK FIN SOUP (CONTINUED)

Everything seems to be going fine. The marines board without shooting, and nothing's sprung up from the moon or from the far sides of the shipyards. But then it happens: a flash so blinding that our monitors cut out for a couple seconds, and the radio squelches so loudly in my ears that I was sure I blew a drum.

A nuke! A fucking *nuke* goes off, right in the yard's main docking bay! The blast practically rips the whole rig in two, and chunks the size of fighters slam into the fighter carriers and WarShips nearby. *Potsdam* takes the damage nose-on, spins hard to port, and slams into the yard's solar array. *Ulm* just kind of tumbles to starboard; she looks fine, but we can't hail her. The DropShips are just . . . gone. The Rimmers took out practically all of our marines, four DropShips, and at least one WarShip faster than I could describe it to you.

There are orders being shouted left and right, it seems, but my ears are ringing so badly that I can't be sure what's coming over the radio, and what's coming from my skipper. It takes a few seconds before I realize the loudest *is* my skipper, screaming at me to check with the kommodore. Turns out I hardly needed to; the kommodore was screaming back from the *Constantius*, ordering all ships to cover our carriers and get away from the yards.

Then came the pleas for help. Someone on *Potsdam* was begging for help; there were internal fires raging on board, and the ship was out of control. *Ulm* is still unresponsive to hails, but we can see she's maneuvering; her commos were blown out, somehow. The radar displays come alive with markers as our remaining *CV*s launch their fighters, and we start picking up inbounds from dirtside. Some are fighters.

Some are something else entirely.

I can hear Sharae on the main channel, barking orders to *Ulm*, but I can't tell if she's receiving. She's coming about, heading toward the yards, instead of away. We're all trying to figure out why, when suddenly the CIC is filled with a tracking warning. Something's painting us. The skipper orders hard evasives, and for the next minute or two, we're all being thrown around in our gee-seats like rag dolls.

There's another flash. Maybe two. Sensors pick up rad spikes off the charts. Those Republic bastards are slinging strategics at us. Somewhere in the chaos, I hear a panicked shriek, from the *Potsdam*—then nothing. As I'm blinking the spots from my eyes, another chunk of the yards just tears away and starts to disintegrate. It takes another minute before we all realize that *Ulm*'s also gone now.

Sharae's had enough by this point. He's already ordering us to break orbit and retrieve our fighters. About an hour later, we're swinging back with "Plan B." Two can play at the nuke game, and now that Finmark's got nothing left for the Commonwealth to care about, the kommodore is ready to let these Rimmers have a taste of their own medicine.

A day later, the smoke and ash drifting in the upper atmosphere was so thick, that we could no longer see the fires of all those burning cities.

The pleas for mercy stopped coming ten hours before then.

—Leutnant Zusa Parr (ret.), from Kings and Monsters, Commonwealth Press, 2841

While the Archon acknowledged this progress, a shake-up of the ranks—and LCAF supplies—would temporarily reduce the resources originally promised for the next phase. Hardest hit were the JumpShip and WarShip assets he had obtained to support his erratic raiding campaign. Although General Hasseldorf protested the disruption, he continued to order periodic strikes against League-held worlds throughout the Thumb Theater. With the reduced transport assets, however, this meant foregoing any major conquests throughout 2792. Sensing weakness, Free Worlds League forces struck back at Alula Borealis, Gypsum, and Zdice in that year, but succeeded only in taking Alula Australis from the Eleventh Donegal Guards.

Grinding Away: Phase Two

The declining availability of transports, combined with the rapid loss of WarShip support, would continue to plague Hasseldorf's raid-to-capture campaign for the Bolan Thumb for the remainder of the decade. Eventually, even the scouting raids were affected, forcing the Lyrans to continuously readjust their timetables. Although still

THE BOLAN THUMB CAMPAIGN

The Lyran campaign for the Bolan Thumb worlds centered largely on the use of frequent, almost random raids to weaken and demoralize the Free Worlds League defenders prior to the final assaults. In the following list, the various diversionary and probing raids are omitted to underscore the major actions that shaped the Bolan Thumb campaign. For the sake of brevity, only the major BattleMech forces employed are given, rather than supplemental forces such as militia groups, aerospace support, or the regiments of infantry and armor that were typical of planetary assaults during the period.

Initial Actions

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Bolan	2785	11th and 14th Arcturan Guards, 10th Skye Rangers (LC)	6th and 10th* Bolan Defenders (FW)	LCAF**

League Retaliations

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Altoona	2786	6th Bolan Defenders (FW)	10th Skye Rangers* (LC)	FWLM**
Hornir's Keep	2786	3rd Bolan Defenders (FW)	None (LC)	FWLM
Rochers	2787	11th Arcturan Guards (LC)	11th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF**
Duantia	2788	8th Bolan Defenders (FW)	5th Lyran Guards* (LC)	FWLM**
Myrrdin	2789	4th Bolan Defenders (FW)	15th Donegal Guards (LC)	FWLM**
Radostov	2790	14th Bolan Defenders (FW)	2nd Lyran Guards (LC)	FWLM

Commonwealth Conquests (Phase I)

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Valloire	2790	15th Donegal Guards, 20th Skye Rangers (LC)	4th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF
Danxian	2791	16th Arcturan Guards (LC)	12th Bolan Defenders (FW)	LCAF
Radostov	2791	2nd Lyran Guards, 12th Heavy Assault† (LC)	14th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF

Phase I League Counterattacks

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Gypsum	2792	9th Bolan Defenders (FW)	11th Arcturan Guards (LC)	LCAF
Zdice	2792	6th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	26th Lyran Guards (LC)	LCAF
Alula Borealis	2792	12th Atrean Dragoons (FW)	11th Donegal Guards (LC)	FWLM

Commonwealth Conquests (Phase II)

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Binyang	2793	9th and 16th Donegal Guards (LC)	13th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF
Ellijay	2794	9th Lyran Regulars (LC)	32nd Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF
Loburg	2795	18th Lyran Regulars (LC)	33rd Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF
Kamenz	2796-97	8th Lyran Regulars (LC)	7th Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF
Tylarzka	2798	26th Lyran Guards (LC)	29th Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF
Marsalle	2799	16th Arcturan Guards (LC)	Planetary Militia (FW)	LCAF
Ilion	2799	14th Arcturan Guards, Iron Ravens†* (LC)	3rd Bolan Defenders* (FW)	LCAF**

successful in wearing down the League's defenders, the eventual conquests took longer and longer to complete. By 2799, Hasseldorf struggled to maintain his attack forces due to supply and transport shortages, and was forced to rely on mercenaries to keep the enemy guessing. After the capture of Ilion bogged down so badly that his field commanders were forced to resort to tactical atomics, he ordered his regimental commanders to hold off from any major offensives until further notice.

Throughout 2800, it seemed as though Hasseldorf's Bolan Thumb Campaign was finished. While the Commonwealth had successfully captured and held eleven Thumb systems since the start of the war, and seriously hampered the flow of supplies to those that remained, House Marik still claimed a sliver of worlds from Malazan to Acrux. All of these worlds were now heavily guarded by League troops, including both their original garrisons and remnants of those Bolan Defenders regiments that had fallen back to them.

THE BOLAN THUMB CAMPAIGN (CONTINUED)

Commonwealth Conquests (Phase III)

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Herzberg	2801	2nd Lyran Guards, 12th Heavy Assault Regiment† (LC)	Planetary Militia (FW)	LCAF
Myrrdin	2802	13th Lyran Regulars (LC)	Planetary Militia (FW)	LCAF
Duantia	2802	19th Lyran Regulars, 20th Skye Rangers (LC)	8th Bolan Defenders (FW)	LCAF
Malazan	2803	9th and 18th Lyran Regulars (LC)	5th Bolan Defenders*, 29th Marik Militia* (FW)	LCAF**
Finsterwalde	2803	11th Arcturan Guards, 2nd Lyran Guards*, 12th Heavy Assault Regiment† (LC)	9th Bolan Defenders*, 33rd Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF

Bella and Radostov Campaigns

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Bella I	2805	1st 30th Marik Militia (FW)	11th Donegal Guards (LC)	FWLM
Radostov	2806	1st Marik Militia, 14th Atrean Dragoons (FW)	Planetary Militia (LC)	FWLM
Bella I	2806	13th Lyran Guards, 20th Lyran Regulars (LC)	30th Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF
Marsalle	2807-08	1st and 2nd Bolan Defenders (FW)	16th Arcturan Guards (LC)	FWLM
Radostov	2808	11th Arcturan Guards, 12th Heavy Assault Regiment† (LC)	1st Marik Militia, 14th Atrean Dragoons (FW)	LCAF

Closing Actions

World	Year	Attacker	Defender	Victor
Acrux	2809-10	19th Lyran Regulars, 20th Skye Rangers (LC)	8th and 12th Bolan Defenders, 32nd Marik Militia (FW)	FWLM
Marsalle	2810-11	8th Lyran Regulars, 16th Arcturan Guards (LC)	1st and 2nd Bolan Defenders (FW)	FWLM
Poulsbo	2811	13th Atrean Dragoons* (FW)	Stealths (LC)	LCAF
Acrux	2811	9th and 16th Donegal Guards, 19th Lyran Regulars, 20th Skye Rangers (LC)	8th* and 12th* Bolan Defenders, 32nd Marik Militia (FW)	LCAF
Marsalle	2811-12	8th and 21st Lyran Regulars, 16th Arcturan Guards, 15th Donegal Guards (LC)	1st* and 2nd* Bolan Defenders (FW)	LCAF

*Regiment destroyed during the action
**Significant use of weapons of mass destruction recorded by either and/or both sides
†Affiliated mercenary command

THE LONG, LAST STAND OF THE TAMAR TIGERS

In early 2794, word reached the Lyran Intelligence Command that the heavily industrialized Combine world of Benjamin had been stripped of all defenders. To the LIC, this only made sense; according to reports from the distant Davion-Kurita front, the Dragon appeared to be in panic mode. Apparently, the backlash from a particularly brutal massacre on Kentares IV renewed the Federated Suns' resolve. The enraged Davions were now forcing their invaders back, which in turn put the DCMS on a desperate defensive. Having focused so much on the Suns for so long, it was only logical for House Kurita to funnel troops to that front or risk the collapse of their entire campaign. Benjamin, located deep behind the Combine's lines, was a reasonably secure world whose defenders could easily contribute to that effort.

Armed with this knowledge, General Graham Kelswa led his Tamar Tigers to Benjamin in 2794, determined to deliver a telling blow against the Draconis Combine.

The transit to Benjamin proceeded with textbook efficiency, despite its position five hyperspace jumps from the nearest Commonwealth-held system. Thanks to system data obtained via smugglers, the LCAF attack group—consisting of a three-corvette escort, a few squadrons of fighters, and the DropShips of the Tamar Tigers themselves—had determined the perfect non-standard point inside the Benjamin system. The attack would come as a complete surprise to the Kuritans.

Almost immediately upon arriving, General Kelswa's DropShips detached and began a high-G burn for the planet. Sensors and communications confirmed a complete absence of enemy naval presence, and the local defense chatter appeared unaware of the arriving Lyrans. Indeed, the local militia appeared virtually inert; various posts reported to one another over unsecured channels and engaged in the meaningless banter one might expect from bored comm-techs.

Two days later, just as the Tamar Tigers' ships slipped into orbit and began their descent, the Kuritans finally sprang their trap. Two *Narukami*-class destroyers, evidently lying in wait the whole time, swung out of the planet's sensor shadow on both flanks. Following each were three attendant carrier DropShips, disgorging aerospace fighters as they closed in. As the fighters swarmed Kelswa's DropShips, the destroyers and carriers tore into the two Lyran *Mako*s that accompanied them. Minutes later, frantic calls from the Tigers' JumpShip transports reported that a third *Narukami* had materialized nearby to destroy the remaining *Mako* there.

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Losing Steam: Phase Three

Officially, the third phase of General Hasseldorf's Bolan Thumb campaign began in late 2801, with the capture of Herzburg by the Second Lyran Guards and the Twelfth Heavy Assault Regiment mercenary command. Yet the Lyran forces continued to suffer from a lack of transports, and their escort fleet assets were down to a handful of corvettes and an equal number of fighter-carrier DropShips. That the League was experiencing similar exhaustion was a welcome fact, as it largely prevented any counterattacks beyond the occasional anti-shipping raid—but both sides knew this was an untenable situation.

In 2803, the Commonwealth claimed its last two major conquests in the Bolan campaign: Finsterwalde and Malazan. In the fighting for Malazan, the Free Worlds League troops managed an organized retreat, escaping to join other hold-outs on Acrux. But on Finsterwalde, the League was far more dug in, and backed up its strength with tactical chemical and nuclear weapons. The use of these weapons against the Lyran landing sites and—through a surprise fighter attack—their orbiting escort ships effectively wiped out what little remained of the naval power General Hasseldorf had left to spare. Although his troops won the day (and effectively ensured that none of the Ninth Bolan Defenders on Finsterwalde survived to be captured), he was forced to postpone plans to finalize the Thumb's capture.

This left the now-heavily fortified world of Acrux under House Marik's control. Although heavily damaged by years of continual raids and heavy combat, the collected remnants of the Bolan Defenders were now a hardened battle force, united in their determination to reclaim the worlds that Steiner had stolen from them. Unable to provide sufficient reinforcements to Hasseldorf's campaign, the LCAF High Command ordered him to minimize his raiding efforts and focus instead on holding the captured ground and establishing a shipping blockade to and from Acrux. With the system isolated from friendly supply lines by several jumps, they reasoned, the FWLM would have to relinquish its control eventually.

But while the Commonwealth formally declared its victory in the Bolan Theater—with the Archon going so far as to reward Kommandant-General Aric Hasseldorf with a promotion and a barony on his homeworld of Kaumberg—its military leadership kept a wary eye on the shifting borders of the Bolan Theater. Their concerns would prove justified just two years later, when the Free Worlds League launched what would be the first major offensive against the world of Bella I.

Too Little, Too Late

From 2805 to 2812, House Marik's efforts to reclaim the Bolan Thumb would hinge on trying to seize and control three key worlds in the area: Bella I, Radostov, and (eventually) Poulsbo. The offensives at Bella I were of critical import, the focus of an effort to restore the Thumb's base supply routes while gradually diverting Lyran attention further away from the region. Timed to take advantage of this, the Bolan Defenders on Acrux then moved to seize Radostov, as their first target in an offensive streak planned to eventually link up with the League forces moving up from Bella. Marsalle would soon follow from Radostov, forcing the LCAF to take the inward threat seriously enough to split its attention between containing the dual threats.

In 2811, as these two prongs bogged down in the face of increasingly determined Lyran counterstrikes, Captain-General Thaddeus Marik ordered an assault on Poulsbo. Hoping to establish this fringe planet as the first world of a third prong into Commonwealth space, his goal was not only to alleviate strain on his forces at Acrux, Bella, and Radostov, but also to eventually unite all three prongs together. If successful, this campaign would net the Free Worlds League nearly a third of the Commonwealth's entire Alarion Province. Because Poulsbo represented the far end of the Steiner-Marik border, and had been largely ignored to this point while the heavier fighting continued in the Bolan and Skye Theaters, Marik was confident in a swift victory.

Instead, his Thirteenth Atrean Dragoons fell prey to the unexpected presence of

the infamous Stealths regiment, backed up by heavy Lyran aerospace support. Using surprise and misdirection to shatter the Dragoons on the ground, while a contingent of LCAF fighters destroyed their JumpShips, the Commonwealth forces utterly destroyed the Poulsbo offensive. This surprise defeat at the hands of a regiment his intelligence agencies had believed to be on the other side of Lyran space convinced Captain-General Marik to abandon his plans for reclaiming the Thumb. Suspecting that House Steiner was preparing a major counter-offensive while bottling his forces up in the Bolan Theater, he sent an ominous final message to the surviving Defenders still fighting on Acrux and Marsalle: The Thumb was lost. For the last of the fanatical Bolan Defenders, all that was left now was revenge. Vowing to take as many Steiner forces down with them as possible, the League troops on both worlds fought to the last man, determined to ensure that the Commonwealth paid as dearly as possible for their victory.

By the middle of 2812, the last of the Bolan Thumb worlds had fallen to the Lyrans. Although the Free Worlds would seize Alula Borealis later that same year, and would eventually reclaim Malazan and Ilion by the end of the war, the centuries-long legacy of their Age of War conquests was gone forever.

STUMBLING ONWARD

On its other fronts, House Steiner continued to struggle throughout much of the war. The Tamar Tigers continued to be a thorn in House Kurita's side, leading the way for several successful raids against Combine shipping, industry, and strategic command centers. These strikes helped to keep the enemy mostly at bay, but the Dragon's advance was inexorable.

Realizing how much the LCAF had come to rely on the Tigers' success, House Kurita's intelligence agencies set a trap for the raiders on Benjamin, effectively taking them out of play in 2794. Without its best mobile strike force, the Commonwealth's raiding strategy along the Draconis border swiftly devolved into a series of ponderous attacks that failed almost as often as they succeeded. In addition to losing the Tigers, the Commonwealth also lost LCAF commander Graham Kelswa in that action, forcing the Archon to reinstate Paul Steiner as head of the LCAF.

By 2800, the Commonwealth's Tamar Pact had lost a dozen worlds from The Edge and St. John to Buckminster and Gram, while the Federation of Skye had lost nine systems from Aubisson and Talisker to Yorii and Imbros. In 2799, a Kurita nuclear attack on Lamar—a strategic staging world so underpopulated that most contemporary maps never even listed it—claimed the life of General Paul Steiner while he prepared to retake Skandia. Command of the LCAF, and the Commonwealth's Combine front, fell to Amanda Lestrade.

In an effort to make up for the loss of the Tigers, the LCAF moved the Stealths regiment back to the Kurita front. In addition, the LCAF authorized a broader range of acceptable raiding targets, officially permitting attacks against civilian life support and infrastructure: atmospheric processors, water purifiers, sewage treatment centers, weather containment systems, and the like. Although these facilities had been struck "by accident" in previous Lyran raids, the blessings from High Command formally justified the destruction of civilian support on enemy worlds. Reports of Combine and Free Worlds atrocities became propaganda fodder, even in those cases where Commonwealth citizens were not their victims. The message was as simple as it was desperate: This was no mere fight between petty House Lords; it was a war for nothing short of the survival of the Lyran people, against monstrous and unforgiving enemies.

From 2800 to 2810, the Lyran Commonwealth maintained a largely defensive strategy, while relying on raids to keep its enemies off guard. The Bolan Thumb campaign, itself little more than an ambitious modification of that strategy, represented the only true offensive campaign the LCAF engaged in during this period—and even that had become shaky by the close of the decade.

Frustrated by his officers' lack of effectiveness and initiative in the battlefield, Archon Richard finally decided to nationalize the Stealths. Buying the mercenaries' service

THE LONG, LAST STAND OF THE TAMAR TIGERS (CONTINUED)

In the span of less than five minutes, the Tamar Tigers found themselves stripped of their naval support and JumpShips alike, falling toward a world that was very much ready for them.

In all, three DCMS BattleMech regiments, and four times as many armor and infantry commands were stationed on Benjamin in anticipation of the Tigers' arrival. But where their trap had eliminated the enemy's means of escape, the Kuritan defenders quickly learned that Kelswa and his MechWarriors would not go down nearly so easily. Even as his DropShips raced for the open plains near the planetary capital of Deber City, Kelswa ordered his warriors to execute a combat drop, deliberately instructing them to scatter out across the landscape. Having familiarized himself with much of the surrounding terrain, the general knew that his 'Mechs could easily evade capture long enough to make it into the dense woodlands north and west of Deber City. From there, they could wage a guerilla war until rescue arrived.

Unfortunately for the Tigers, no such rescue ever came.

In the Lyran Commonwealth, early intelligence reported that the Combine managed to shoot down all of Duke Kelswa's ships before they even grounded. The few Lyran spies on Benjamin, clustered as they were in the Deber City area, failed to notice any of the Tigers' dropping 'Mechs. (Then again, these same scouts managed to miss the presence of a brigade's worth of DCMS troops lurking elsewhere on the planet.) The LCAF High Command thus had no idea that any of their raiders had survived, and the subsequent loss of all contact with their on-world spies confirmed that House Kurita had Benjamin on lockdown.

Although rumors periodically slipped out alluding to the Tigers' ongoing survival, most of these reports went ignored. Some were dismissed because they were seen as potential ISF ploys to lure more Lyran forces to their doom, and others were discounted as mere Combine propaganda. Some historians have even suggested that reports of Kelswa's survival were deliberately buried by LCAF High Command officers, either because of a rivalry with Duke Kelswa and his family, or for other purely political reasons. It was not until November 2800, a year after General Paul Steiner's death on Lamar, that credible information reached the Archon about the Tigers' continuing fight against Benjamin's defenders.

(CONTINUED ON P. 74)

THE LONG, LAST STAND OF THE TAMAR TIGERS (CONTINUED)

By then, Kelswa's warriors had defeated two elite Kurita 'Mech battalions and twice as many support forces, while simultaneously inflicting serious damage to many of Benjamin's cities and factories—at the cost of all but just over a company's worth of their own 'Mechs. Meanwhile, military transports and WarShips continued to grow scarce for the LCAF. Although plans were drawn up to try and break through the Draconis Combine's lines and rescue the few Tigers who still survived, Archon Richard Steiner reluctantly scrapped them as impractical.

In January 2801, the last of the Tamar Tigers made their final stand in a daring assault on Deber City itself. Having spent the previous month engaging in an elaborate game of cat-and-mouse with the DCMS, they had successfully convinced their enemy to spread out across much of the Castano continent, guarding cities, farmlands, fuel refineries, and other vulnerable infrastructure. At the same time, with the help of confederates among Benjamin's criminal element, the Tigers managed to slip their last fifteen 'Mechs into the heart of the capital via a series of abandoned subway and sewage tunnels.

When the Tigers finally struck, rising up from the very heart of Deber City, their initial attack plunged the entire metropolis into chaos, during which time they all but eliminated the local police and riot control forces, along with two lances of Kurita BattleMechs. The Combine troops returned to find the capital occupied by now-entrenched Lyrans, augmented by a large number of semi-organized gangs and other political dissidents. The battle to root out the last of the Tigers took the better part of a week, at the end of which Deber City was reduced to a gutted, smoking ruin.

By the time the last of the Tamar Tigers fell, the DCMS had spent more than a regiment's worth of BattleMechs, and three more of tanks and infantry, to put down the fearsome raiders. Although popular lore claimed that Duke Graham Kelswa himself was the last of the Lyran warriors to fall (to be captured and tortured to death by the DCMS, according to Combine accounts), many historians today suspect that the general who led the Tigers to so many victories had likely been killed a year before the final battle.

in perpetuity, he embarked on a plan aimed at eventually spreading the elite regiment's expertise across the Commonwealth military. As part of the deal, the Stealths received an additional reward for their service in the form of an R&R stint on Poulsbo—far from the fighting on either front. Whether this choice in locales was mere happenstance, or the result of some foresight among the Archon's command staff, the result of the crack regiment's relocation was the stunning defeat of House Marik's planned offensive into the Lyran hinterlands. With that victory came the final collapse of the League's effort to reclaim the Bolan Thumb.

In spite of these victories, the Steiner war machine continued to falter. In June 2812, the Estates-General's Speaker of the Assembly, Timothy Aths of Carse, formally disbanded the Archon's advisory council, citing the dearth of JumpShips needed to ferry representatives to and from their home worlds. The Royal Court on Tharkad became a ghost town—at least, relative to the hustle and bustle of its Star League heydays.

This, however, may have proven fortuitous for the Archon himself. In response to the humiliating defeat on Poulsbo and the loss of the Bolan Thumb, Free Worlds intelligence agents managed to turn one of Steiner's disgruntled nobles against him. Landgrave Richard Perkins was a ruler on Hegel, a Donegal Protectorate world that suffered from a massive plague epidemic dramatically exacerbated by the LCAF's impressment of commercial JumpShips vital to the region. Incensed by the Archon's continued disregard for his people's plight as the war raged on, Perkins attempted to assassinate Steiner at court, but an alert MechWarrior managed to shield the Archon from the disgruntled landgrave's attack at the last second. Given how close the two men were standing at the time—barely four meters apart, when the hand of Hauptmann David Bateman's *Griffin* slammed down between them—it is likely that, had the court been as packed as usual, the shot from Perkins' laser pistol would have killed Lord Steiner before anyone knew what had happened.

Landgrave Perkins was arrested on the spot, and gave up the Marik spies who had put him up to the assassination attempt. Although he was tried and convicted of high treason, and sentenced to death, Archon Richard Steiner—publicly citing his sympathy for the despair that had driven Perkins to attempted murder—commuted the man's sentence to life in prison.

In the meantime, the Commonwealth continued to face intense pressures on both fronts. On the Combine front, the worlds of Caldrea and Dove fell in 2812, before an onslaught of fast-moving Kurita BattleMechs. On both worlds, the desperate LCAF commanders had even employed nuclear weapons to stop the invaders, to no avail. In the case of Dove, the additional use of nuclear and chemical weapons by the DCMS devastated the planet so badly that ComStar declared it a dead world in 2815. On the Free Worlds front, another invasion of Alula Borealis in the final months of 2812 signified the start of a new phase in the war for the central League-Commonwealth border.

In response to these events, Archon Steiner finally enacted his latest plan to revitalize the Lyran military: He disbanded the Stealths, and dispersed its officers and MechWarriors across all of the LCAF's major MechWarrior academies. If the example of these elite warriors could not inspire his officers to better adapt to their enemies, then he was determined to ensure that generations of warriors to come would learn from these masters directly.

BELLA I

The conquest of the Bolan Thumb worlds was barely a year old when the next phase of the war between the Lyran Commonwealth and Free Worlds League began. Bella I, located centrally along the border between the two realms, fell to House Steiner in 2806, but stood between the League-occupied worlds of Hornir's Keep and Alula Australis (after the latter was taken in late 2812). As the First Succession War wore on, this rather unremarkable planet would become the focus of the two nations' diminishing resources—and, ultimately, the site of the war's end between Houses Marik and Steiner.

The LIC had confirmed the destruction of all known Bolan Defenders regiments during General Hasseldorf's lengthy campaign, and all evidence pointed to transport problems within the League that matched those impairing the LCAF's own mobility. For these reasons, Lyran intelligence was confident that—for the time being, at least—House Marik had indeed abandoned its efforts to reclaim the Thumb region, and that the FWLM pulled back to a vaguely straight line of worlds from Galisteo to Colfax. It was believed that a new wave of Capellan-Free Worlds fighting had drawn House Marik's attention elsewhere, or that the League had simply grown too exhausted to continue the fight.

The Regulan Hussars' sudden assault on Bella I in April 2813 put the lie to these beliefs.

A small, unremarkable planet, Bella possessed vast but shallow seas, a moderate climate, and was just fertile enough to support sustenance-level agriculture based on imported terrestrial crops and cattle. With few readily accessible minerals, heavy industry never came to Bella, but the world did become a common port of call for cross-border shipping and commercial traffic throughout the Star League era. For this reason, several large spaceport cities grew up across all four of Bella I's major landmasses, and the planet boasted state-of-the-art customs facilities at both jump point charging stations, as well as an assortment of orbital transfer stations. By 2813, fierce raiding had already destroyed the system's zenith recharge station, and the two transfer stations that remained in planetary orbit had become space-borne aerodromes for the resident garrison: the Twelfth and Fourteenth Lyran Regulars.

McGaines' Gambit

The Free Worlds League attack group—consisting of the Sixth and Eighth Regulan Hussars, and a single *Carrack*-class WarShip—materialized at the zenith jump point. Although the invasion's escort, the *Histria Azure*, was a capital ship designed mainly to haul military cargo, the Free Worlds' navy had begun to run short on dedicated combat ships. Most of the state's remaining destroyers and cruisers were defending (or raiding) worlds along the Skye half of the Lyran-League border, or were posted on the distant Capellan front.

Knowing full well that the Lyrans' advance warning sensors would detect his inbound fleet and monitor their approach, the FWLM invasion commander, Colonel Wendon McGaines, hatched a plan. Suspecting that the LCAF would try to eavesdrop on any comm chatter to determine the size of his forces, he instructed the communications officers on his 'Mech transports and the *Azure* to make twice as many "readiness checks" as necessary, using standard League channels and slightly outdated encryption protocols. In these communications, they were to use not only the code designations for his two Hussars regiments, but also for two other known FWLM formations that were not present: the Fifth and Sixth Free Worlds Guards.

The gambit worked just as McGaines hoped. The LCAF defenders immediately went into panic mode, believing that they faced four BattleMech regiments, without any WarShips or nuclear armaments of their own to neutralize a capital ship large enough to haul an entire brigade by itself. In addition to sending word to High Command of the approaching assault, the Lyrans initiated emergency evacuation protocols. As their combat forces consolidated in a defensive perimeter around the planetary capital, the nearby spaceport, and their own headquarters, all non-essential personnel, key government leaders, and support staff were sent to outbound DropShips, prepared to boost at a moment's notice.

The Commonwealth garrison commander, Colonel Petru Hamlin, planned an organized retreat, using his 'Mech forces to shield the evacuation for as long as possible against what he expected to be an overwhelming onslaught. To ensure that his escaping DropShips would be as well-protected as possible, he instructed the orbital aerospace forces to avoid an extended engagement with the incoming enemy, and preserve their numbers to act as evacuation escort.

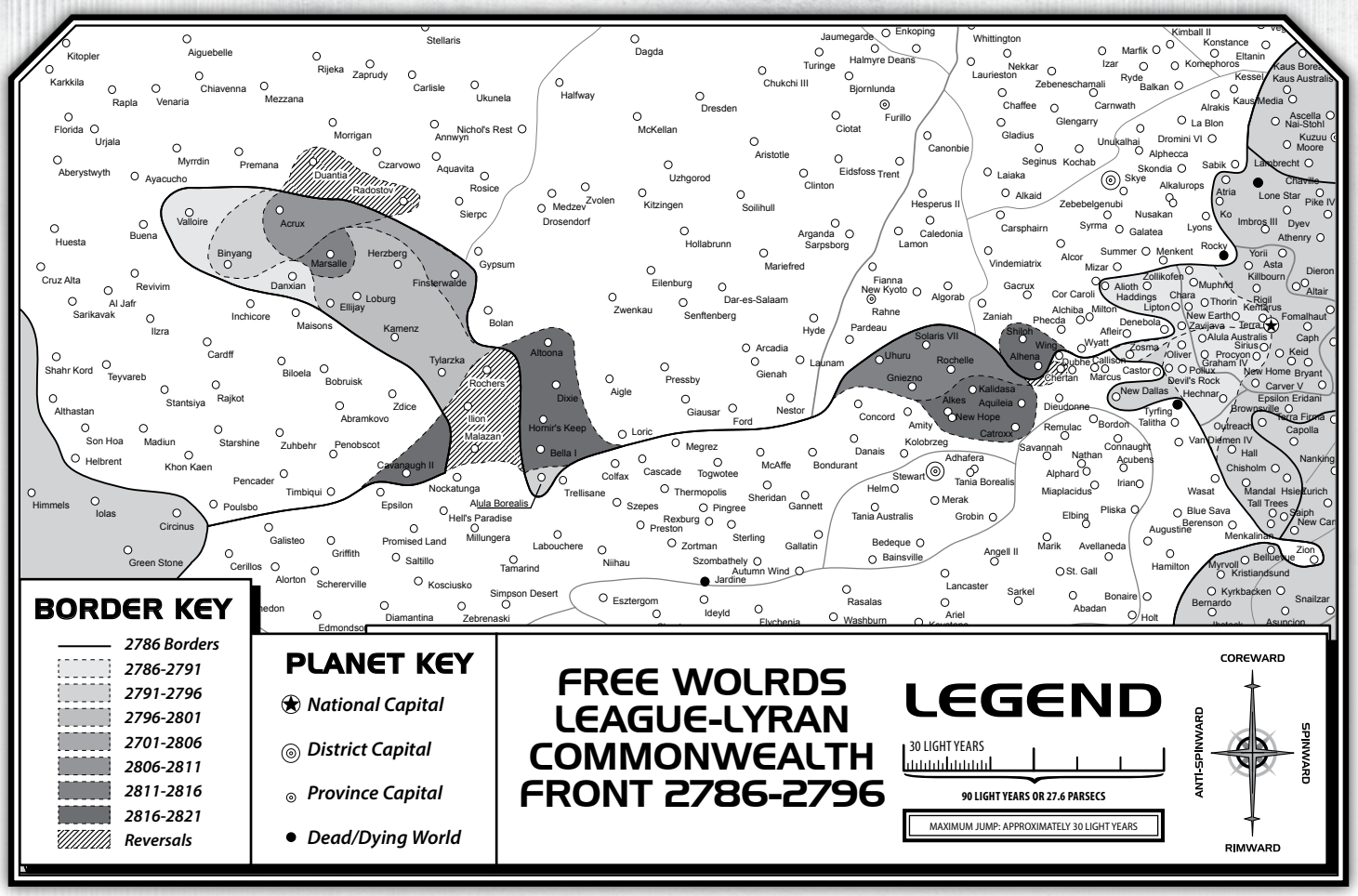
When McGaines troops landed, they were virtually unopposed. To maintain his ruse, he ordered his 'Mechs and vehicles to advance on the enemy bases with an almost reckless ferocity, while their DropShips returned to orbit and rendezvoused with the *Azure*. As battle was joined near the Commonwealth headquarters and their positions near the capital city spaceport, it seemed to Colonel Hamlin that the only reason he was not already overrun was that the second half of the League force simply hadn't dropped yet.

The brief but intense fighting near the spaceport and headquarters cost the defenders more than a battalion's worth of 'Mechs, while the League attackers sacrificed nearly as many 'Mech losses and another battalion in combat armor. When the Lyrans' morale finally broke, McGaines' warriors made a show of harrying the retreating forces while allowing as many as possible to get away. The ruse was so successful, in fact, that it was not until the Lyrans were halfway to their JumpShips at the nadir jump point that Colonel Hamlin realized he'd been had. Unfortunately for Hamlin, that final revelation came in the form of the *actual* arrival of the Fifth and Sixth Free Worlds Guards, detected and relayed to him by the still-active early warning satellites.

Humiliation Avenged

Three years later, amid news of an internal political squabble in the Free Worlds League, Commonwealth intelligence learned that the Bella I garrison was in upheaval. The Regulan Hussars, reportedly returning to their homeworlds in protest over political issues, were in the process of hastily packing up their bases, and would be gone by the end of March.

In response to this, the LCAF High Command sent the Twelfth and Fourteenth Lyran Regulars back to Bella, to reclaim the planet and avenge their previous humiliation. Colonel Hamlin would not lead this attack, however; he had been demoted in the wake of the 2813 debacle, and replaced by Colonel Raymond Hempsted, former commander of the Stealths. Appointed in 2814, Hempstead had spent the last two years training the Twelfth and Fourteenth in maneuver tactics and misdirection both through drills and through actual raids along the local border. At his side was Leutnant Colonel Marcus Steiner, the young son of Archon Richard Steiner.



Colonel Hempsted planned his attack perfectly; the new FWLM garrison—a single, reinforced regiment of BattleMechs, and three of armor—had only been on Bella I for a week when the Lyran forces struck in March 2816. Totally unfamiliar with the planet they were tasked to defend, the Marik units found themselves quickly outmaneuvered by the Commonwealth MechWarriors in and around their headquarters, then besieged by artillery and bombing barrages. With the memory of their embarrassing retreat still burning in the minds of the Lyran Regulars, their attacks were brutal and unrelenting, further rattling the outnumbered defenders.

Three weeks later, the last of the League forces surrendered. Bella I belonged to House Steiner once more—but not for long.

Once More, With Feeling

In April 2817, House Marik once again launched an assault against Bella I, this time in concert with invasions aimed at Dixie and Ilion. This time, the League attack force included three 'Mech regiments, escorted by a pair of *Carracks*—the *Histria Azure* and the carrier-converted *Pretoria Castle*. The League invaders did not bother with elaborate tricks or feints; as part of the grander regional strategy, they came to obliterate Steiner defenses on Bella, not merely drive them away.

On the ground were the same battle-hardened Twelfth and Fourteenth Lyran Regulars who fought for this world twice before, but Colonel Hempsted was no longer with them. Summoned to Tharkad by the Archon himself, Hempsted left command of the Lyran Regulars to Brevet Colonel Marcus Steiner. Bella's space defenses, in the meantime, were augmented by the *Essex*-class destroyer *Edelweiss*, which arrived just two months earlier as escort for a shipment of tactical nuclear ordnance (among other supplies). At Colonel Steiner's request, most of this ordnance was distributed among the aerospace forces based on the planet's orbital stations.

The space battle for Bella I was fierce and costly. Screening for the DropShips, the *Pretoria Castle* took point for the attack formation, with *Histria Azure* following. As the mammoth capital transports neared Bella's orbital space, the *Castle* released a full wing of aerospace fighters, which fanned out like an ephemeral cloud of multi-ton wasps ahead of their mothership. Undeterred, the *Edelweiss* angled herself directly toward the carrier and accelerated, while the orbital stations unleashed their own fighters close behind. Ignoring the damage from the FWLM fighters, *Edelweiss* opened fire with her naval autocannons as soon as they came into range. *Pretoria Castle*'s light hull armor was simply no match for such a barrage; the ship broke apart after less than two minutes of battle, while *Edelweiss* adjusted her vector to intercept *Histria Azure*.

The *Azure*'s captain, Monica Talasi, realized her ship was doomed. The enemy destroyer simply carried too much firepower and the *Carrack*-class vessel could not outmaneuver her. Seeing only one option available that could do some damage to the enemy, Talasi aimed the *Azure* directly at *Edelweiss* and ordered the engines to maximum thrust. She then relieved her helmsman and ordered all crew to the escape pods. As the two ships closed, *Edelweiss* again opened fire with her autocannons, instantly shredding the *Histria Azure*'s forward sections, before veering to port. Miraculously, *Azure* held together—if only barely, and Talasi lived just long enough to make sure her dying ship swerved with its killer.

Azure's 300,000-ton wreck almost missed the *Edelweiss*, but instead of the direct hit her captain undoubtedly prayed for, the ship merely sideswiped the Lyran destroyer. Nonetheless, given the speeds both vessels were moving, it was more than enough; the transport's impact tore away *Edelweiss*' starboard hull from stem to stern, and set off several of the ship's magazines in rapid succession. With a brief flash of light, both ships erupted, claiming the lives of all on board the destroyer, and leaving behind little more than scraps of wrecked superstructure and eight lifeboats from the *Histria Azure*.

Even with their escorts lost, the Marik aerospace fighters continued to duel with their Steiner counterparts, using their superior numbers and coordinated attacks to push back the LCAF air defense enough to cover their incoming DropShips. As the invading DropShips reached orbital space, their assault ships joined the fray, specifically targeting Bella's space borne waystations. Within fifteen minutes, the space battle for Bella I ended as the remaining Lyran fighters withdrew to ground bases, leaving the way clear for the enemy to make landfall.

The groundside battle for Bella would rage for nine months, with both Lyran and League forces spreading out across the planet's surface in a global game of cat and mouse. Colonel Steiner had learned well from Hempsted, and kept his forces dispersed and mobile, making excellent use of the local terrain and weather to keep the invaders on their toes. Battles were fought in and around industrial parks, commercial hubs, and spaceports all over Bella I, with Steiner's forces winning almost as often as they were forced to fall back. But the League invaders were equally adept at mobile warfare, and—more importantly—they possessed a superior number of aerospace fighters. Over time, even the use of tactical atomics and incendiary weapons failed to even the odds.

With no sign of reinforcements in sight by late December 2817, and his air support reduced to less than a squadron, Colonel Marcus Steiner was forced to admit defeat. Gathering the remnants of his two Lyran Regulars regiments—both now reduced below fifty percent combat effectiveness—he executed one last series of feints and maneuvers, buying enough time for the majority of his forces to board their evacuation DropShips. Thanks to the damage done to the planetary spaceports and the vessels parked there, many of these escape craft were little more than cargo ships or lighter 'Mech and vehicle transports. To deny the enemy any useful salvage, Steiner left one more surprise for the Mariks as he finally pulled the last of his forces off of Bella I: Parking entire companies of abandoned 'Mechs and vehicles near his dust off sites, he rigged each of these "ghost formations" with booby traps using some of the leftover Alamo munitions his depleted air forces had saved. These atomic booby traps would claim roughly two more companies' worth of FWLM forces by the time Steiner and his men jumped out of the system.

Aftermath

In 2820, three years after the last battle for Bella I, representatives from the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League met once more amid the ruins of the planet. By then, with both states suffering from massive economic damage and a crippled interstellar infrastructure, their diplomats were finally ready to try and talk peace. The result—three more years later—was the Bella Accords, which formally ended the Succession War between these powerful but exhausted realms.

THE SOLARIS BULGE

The Solaris Bulge was the LCAF High Command's name for the region of Free Worlds League space that had jutted into Lyran space since the Age of War. Although not nearly as dramatic an encroachment as the Bolan Thumb, the worlds of this region included some of the most well-developed systems outside of the Commonwealth's Federation of Skye and the Terran Hegemony. Solaris VII itself was a commercial and industrial powerhouse, home not only to the infamous dueling arenas that rose during the Star League era, but also numerous small weapons manufacturers, refit centers, and research facilities, and other industrial or research-rich worlds in the Bulge included Amity, Kalidasa, Rochelle, and Uhuru.

By 2815, heavy raids by both sides—often employing WarShips and weapons of mass destruction—had ravaged many of the Solaris Bulge systems, yet House Steiner still coveted these planets. Of particular interest were the worlds of Solaris VII and Kalidasa, which continued to thrive even as the rest of the Inner Sphere seemed to slide further and further into ruin. Of equal concern was the fact that the League's control over these systems granted them easy access to many of the Commonwealth's most cherished holdings, particularly the ultra-vital world of Hesperus II, located a mere two jumps from Solaris.

For these reasons, the FWLM stationed a significant naval and BattleMech presence on and around Solaris, reinforcing the entire region against House Steiner's raiding campaigns. Even as the fighting for the Bolan Thumb wound down and the fighting over Bella I began to expose the crumbling state of the Succession War's first two official combatants, the LCAF prepared a final offensive to claim the Solaris Bulge once and for all.

The campaign, dubbed Operation SPIDERWEB, was the brainchild of LCAF Hauptmann-General Ranier Hogarth, and was as simple as it was direct. Two LCAF attack groups, operating with whatever heavy naval support could be mustered, would assault the region in a pincer fashion. One pincer, spearheaded by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Donegal Guards 'Mech regiments, as well as the Twenty-Fifth Skye Rangers, would begin at Uhuru in February 2815, while the other, led by the Ninth and Sixteenth

Skye Rangers, as well as the Fourteenth Lyran Guards, would start at Wing at roughly the same time. Augmenting these attack groups were the Illician Lancers' Fourth Illician Rangers and Fifty-Ninth Strike regiments. The grand strategy called for these two pincers to work their way into the Bulge through sheer brute force—specifically targeting all local capital WarShips and other space borne military assets first, before pummeling into submission any and all enemy groundside formations found on the planets below. In this dogged fashion, the Uhuru pincer would work its way rimward and spinward, taking Concord, Amity, and Gniezno, before finally seizing and holding Alkes by the end of 2818. Meanwhile, the Wing pincer would move to capture Chertan, Aquileia, and Catroxx, before ending its offensive run at New Hope, also by the end of 2818. This would place the two attack groups in roughly the same position, thanks to the close proximity of the Alkes and New Hope systems.

Following these pincer groups would be smaller garrison forces, who would relieve and replenish the attacking formations as they proceeded, before taking up positions at their new holdings. In the meantime, LIC operatives infiltrating all conquered systems and working their way back inward toward Lyran space would pump a steady stream of propaganda and news of the LCAF victories as they happened, allowing the troops and civilians in the bypassed systems—Kalidasa, Rochelle, and Solaris—to know that the Commonwealth had them surrounded.

Remarkably, the campaign unfolded without many setbacks. At General Hogarth's steady, meticulous pace, the twin pincers struck their targets, savaging League forces, local militia, and naval defenses with more success than failure. Although the FWLM would manage to quickly reverse its losses (or, at least, deny a "clean" victory to the Lyrans) on Amity, Concord, Chertan, and Wing, SPIDERWEB successfully seized and held seven new systems by 2818. Furthermore, reports from the untouched worlds of Kalidasa, Rochelle, and Solaris confirmed what the General had hoped for: as news of LCAF victories in the neighboring systems mounted, uncertainty gripped the local populations, and their local defenders found themselves increasingly unable to quell the citizens' fears.

Rochelle and Kalidasa

In February 2819, SPIDERWEB's pincers moved as one to the world of Rochelle, where their combined might made short work of the relatively tiny force that met them. The League defenders, who'd come to expect the same plodding approach used on the surrounding worlds, had stripped troops from Rochelle to reinforce their positions on Kalidasa and Solaris, which seemed like the next likely targets. Now more desperate than ever to break the Commonwealth's advance, the reinforced garrisons on the two remaining Bulge worlds chose to launch a coordinated assault against the invasion pincers before the LCAF could be further reinforced.

As it happened, this move played into SPIDERWEB's strategy even better than General Hogarth could imagine. Up until this point, the Lyran invasions followed a well-regimented timetable, in which the pincer groups held out for the arrival of follow-on troops, and then moved on. When the invaders found that the garrisons had been stripped on Rochelle, it proved that the League had grown used to that approach, and had thus relocated their defenses elsewhere. In response, Hogarth ordered all of attack forces to pack up and move out almost immediately for Kalidasa. There, they would be reinforced by the additional troops originally slated to hold onto Rochelle. This, he felt, would provide enough strength to overcome the bulked-up FWLM defenders on Kalidasa.

What he did *not* anticipate was encountering an enemy force in space, apparently en route elsewhere.

Soon after the LCAF assault group rendezvoused at Kalidasa's zenith jump point in April 2819, the long-range sensors of its lead escort—the *Tharkad*-class cruiser *Ineffable*—detected a sizeable fleet of League DropShips already rising up from the planet. Upon extrapolating their course, the Lyrans found the enemy JumpShips, awaiting the coming transports, along with a pair of *Soyal*-class cruisers. Seizing this unique opportunity, the Commonwealth WarShips moved at once to intercept the Marik JumpShips and cruisers, bringing along as many of the invasion group's assault and carrier DropShips as they dared to spare.

The League force, having detected the attackers the moment they arrived, were already scrambling to defend themselves as the *Ineffable*, her sister ship *Chaffee*, and the rest of her formation closed on them. Neither side possessed a clear advantage in the battle. Although the Steiner fleet had a numerical edge—with two battlecruisers, two destroyers, and a dozen escort DropShips against two cruisers and a pair of corvettes—the sheer attrition of capital-grade maintenance facilities and factory sites throughout the war was telling. The WarShips on both sides suffered from unrepaired damage, years' worth of poor field maintenance, and a severe lack of munitions. Nevertheless, within ten minutes of the Lyrans' arrival at Kalidasa, the fleets of Houses Steiner and Marik were engaged in one of the last heavy naval actions of the First War.

The battle for Kalidasa's zenith jump point ended in a Steiner victory, but at great cost. The League lost all three of its WarShip escorts, along with more than half of their assembled JumpShips, with the remainder leaping out-system in panic at the loss of their escorts. The Commonwealth lost the *Ineffable* and both of the destroyers, leaving only a damaged *Chaffee* and a handful of assault DropShips to protect the rest of the attack group. Fortunately for the Lyrans, this proved more than enough to cripple the FWLM DropShips that found themselves marooned in their own system, but it would rob the ground forces an overwhelming orbital support advantage when they finally landed nine days later.

With much of their defense garrison already intercepted and neutralized in space, the remaining FWLM troops on Kalidasa stood little chance against the Lyran invaders. After only two months of fighting, the planetary government surrendered to Steiner rule.

Solaris VII

The final coup of the campaign for the Solaris Bulge was actually the cleverest part of General Hogarth's plan. Knowing that a ground war for Solaris VII itself would be chaotic in the extreme, he chose not to attack the planet directly. Indeed, when it came to the Game World, Hogarth did not want to attack the planet *at all*.

While SPIDERWEB continued its five-year campaign to secure the worlds surrounding Solaris, the Commonwealth sent propagandists to the planet and allowed the interstellar news community to do its job of covering the local fighting unfettered. The plan here was not to sow fear among the glory-hounding gladiators of Solaris VII, however; it was to demoralize the FWLM garrison, and to allow the planet's civilian government to realize how thoroughly isolated they had become from the rest of the League.

As word of Kalidasa's fall reached Solaris, a group of Lyran diplomats approached its planetary governing council with a proposition. In exchange for the world's willful acceptance of Commonwealth supremacy, a nominal cut of its planetary income (at a favorable tax rate), and the ejection of its current FWLM defense forces, the LCAF would provide for the global defense needs, while permitting it to continue operating with semi-autonomy as an "open world." As an added bonus, the diplomats informed the council rulers that the Archon himself promised to guarantee Solaris VII's political neutrality as a commercial and entertainment hub for the Inner Sphere, once the current war was over.

House Steiner's offer was not phrased as an ultimatum; there was no arrogance or malice in the diplomats who presented its proposal. If the planet's rulers chose otherwise, the LCAF would still come to Solaris VII, but in that case, a battle would surely result as the League attempted to oppose them. Such a fight, they cautioned, could easily spill over into the concentrated cities and industrial complexes that were the life blood of Solaris VII's economy. Worse, while the Lyran diplomats guaranteed that the LCAF would not to be the first to resort to weapons of mass destruction in that event, they could not say the same for Marik's troops.

The bottom line was simple: Steiner was offering Solaris VII a business partnership that would bloodlessly allow them to carry on with business as usual, under the Commonwealth's banner.

On 10 September 2819, after three months of debate and back-room deals, the rulers of Solaris VII made their final decision. Declaring their intent to accept a Lyran military presence, the Free Worlds League garrison forces would be asked to leave by 1 January 2820, the same day that Solaris would withdraw its membership in the Free Worlds' Parliament.

When the League's on-world defense commander, General Rory Magnarus, learned of the council's declaration, she was stunned, and prepared her troops to enter and seize the planetary capital of Solaris City under a declaration of martial law. But on the same day those preparations were finalized, word came that the Commonwealth was moving additional BattleMech regiments into the area from deeper inside the Federation of Skye. Faced with the possibility of an all-out Steiner assault while the nearest friendly systems lay two jumps or more away, Magnarus reluctantly canceled her plans and acquiesced to the Solaran leadership's demands.

The FWLM's evacuation was complete by the end of 2819. Less than two weeks later, the spearhead forces from General Hogarth's invasion pincers arrived in the Solaris system, tasked with establishing a Commonwealth outpost on Solaris VII's Grayland continent.

While it appeared that Operation SPIDERWEB had succeeded beyond the High Command's expectations, the Free Worlds League had one more shot to fire. In March of 2820, just two months after the apparent end of hostilities in the Solaris Bulge, a heavy raiding force materialized in the Solaris system. Emerging from hyperspace at a pirate point close to Solaris VII's orbit, the attack group consisted of two reinforced battalions of ex-SLDF mercenaries, escorted by the FWLS *Despiser*, an *Essex*-class destroyer.

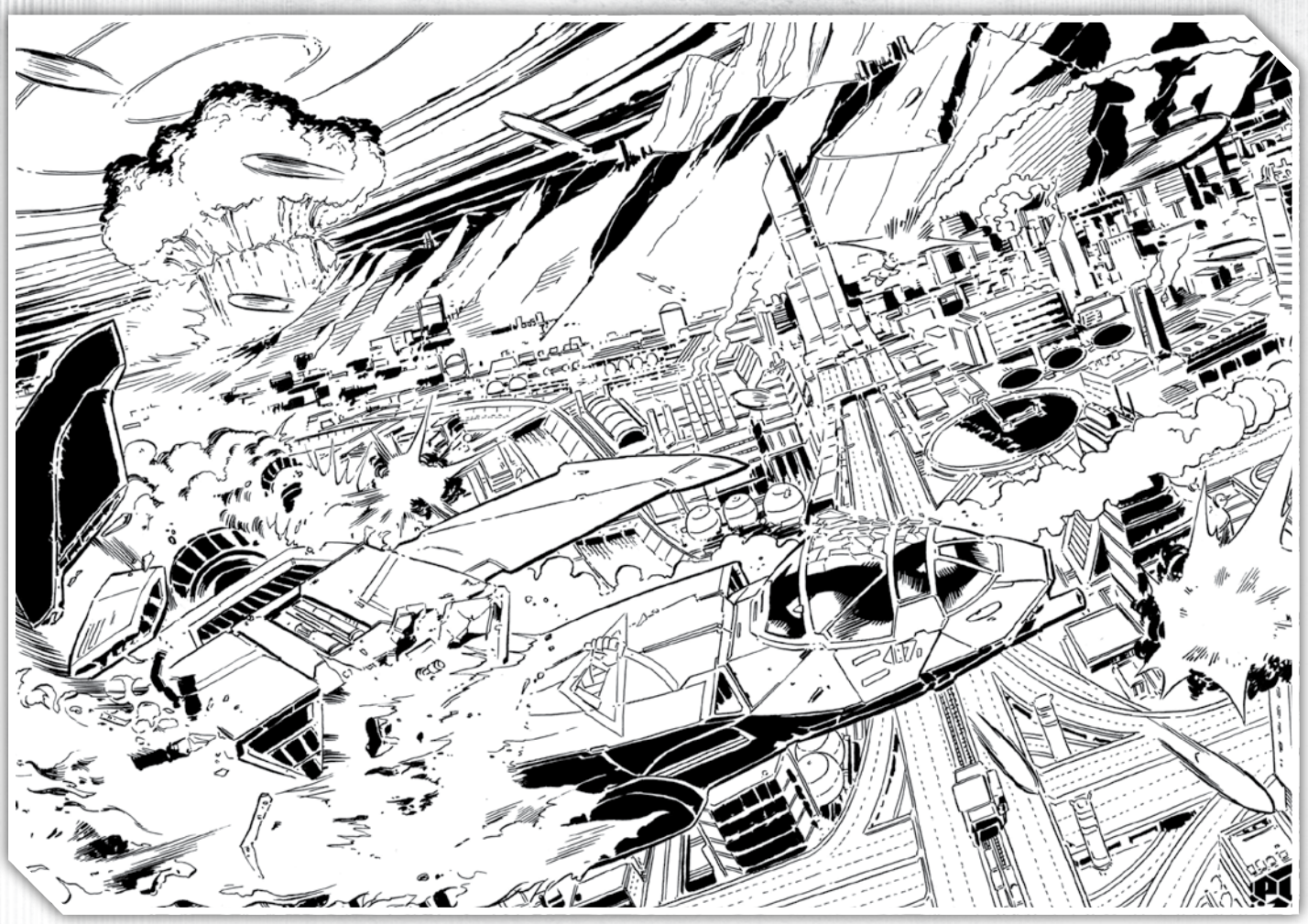
With no Lyran naval presence to ward off the raiders at the time of the attack, the mercenaries—later identified as the Red Eagles and elements of Clinton's Cutthroats—landed near the Bracken Swamps north of Solaris City. The LCAF garrison met the attackers near a major water treatment plant and eventually drove them off after a three-day firefight across the Bracken Swamps, but not before the mercenaries had effectively destroyed the treatment facility and reduced a local industrial park to ash.

The worst was yet to come. As the surviving mercenaries boosted away from Solaris VII, the *Despiser* maneuvered as if to cover their retreat. As she passed over Solaris City, however, the destroyer's captain ordered a heavy bombardment of the area. For ten minutes, capital-grade missiles and particle cannon fire rained down on the planet. The bombardment narrowly missed the northeastern fringes of Solaris City proper, but the local suburbs and several additional manufacturing sites in the vicinity were not as lucky. Thousands died under the *Despiser*'s attack, which also claimed a second freshwater treatment plant servicing the capital region.

In the aftermath of the League's revenge assault, the Commonwealth attempted to ensure the presence of at least some form of aerospace deterrent on Solaris VII, including whatever combat ships they could afford. Unfortunately for Solaris, the Succession War's attrition had already proven too costly for the LCAF to provide much of a permanent naval presence. Indeed, by the end of the war, the best air defense the local garrison could manage was little more than a few fighter squadrons and some DropShip interceptors.

For the people of Solaris VII, the League's final revenge strike became a local day of infamy. When word reached Solarans three years later that the *Despiser* had vanished in a fatal misjump, the planetary council declared the date of the hated ship's disappearance—2 April 2823—as a planetary holiday.

[*Editor's Note: In keeping with the terms of his diplomatic promises, Archon Marcus Steiner passed the Solaris Act in late 2824, legally establishing Solaris VII's neutrality under Commonwealth protection.*]



SHIFTING PRIORITIES: HOUSE LIAO FORGES ON

The 2793 destruction of the Fourth Marik Militia on Anegasaki proved a surprising success for the Capellan Confederation. Led into battle by a Twenty-First Centauri Lancers battalion equipped with an abundance of jump-capable *Grasshopper* heavy 'Mechs, the medium weight regiment brought heavier firepower to the fight and effectively negated the Fourth's mobility advantage. The victorious Capellans held Anegasaki, consolidating their might while salvaging the stockpiles of equipment and supplies located there, originally intended to support the Captain-General's "Path to Sarna" campaign.

The loss of Anegasaki so quickly and decisively flew in the face of four years' worth of League victories against House Liao's forces. Equally striking was how *fairly* the CCAF had fought there, in contrast to the massacre at New Delos and other examples of the Confederation's eagerness to make use of orbital, nuclear, and chemical bombardment. These were not the signs of a realm whose leadership remained shaken by its horrific defeat at Calloway, or the League's apparent ability to seize any world it desired until that moment. Convinced that Anegasaki signified something far worse, the FWLM leadership shifted quickly to a defensive stance, pending further analysis.

To Chancellor Barbara Liao and her Strategios, the League's pause was a welcome relief, but not one they could afford to squander on a grandiose counter-offensive. If Marik was going to fortify his borders, Liao decided to do the same, firming up defenses especially in those regions where the Free Worlds had inflicted the most damage. Additional regiments were thus sent to reinforce the Capella, Sarna, and Andurien Commonalities. From those regions, periodic border raids would test the League's defenders, looking for weak points while keeping the enemy guessing as to where the Confederation might strike next.

To bolster their chances of success, the CCAF raiders routinely carried a small amount of nuclear and/or chemical ordnance during many of these cross-border strikes. Although most of these munitions were of tactical grade, their yields were typically enough to devastate factories and military outposts in a single pass—which was about as much opportunity as some of the more suicidal missions expected to see. During one such raid, against the world of Oriente, a Capellan aerospace squadron managed to slip past the orbital defenses to deliver a nuclear attack against the Magna Fusion Products factory complex located in the southern valleys of the Navarran continent. All six Capellan fighters (and their carrier DropShip) were shot down, but not before the detonation of two Alamo-class atomic warheads leveled the factory and the defense

base nearby. Among the casualties of the attack was the Captain-General's sixteen year-old grandson, Jason Marik.

While the raids after Anegasaki seemed to hold the League at bay, Lady Barbara and her military advisors drew up plans to reclaim several key worlds along the Marik advance, specifically targeting the Andurien and Wazan salients. Unfortunately for the Confederation, these counterattack strategies were left incomplete when the Chancellor suddenly succumbed to a rare blood disorder in 2795. With both of Barbara's sons killed at Callaway, the eldest direct heir to the throne was her granddaughter, Ilsa Liao—then only twelve years of age.

QUINN'S WAR: THE CONFEDERATION-SUNS FRONT

As Ilsa was too young to serve as the Confederation's ruler, the Capellan Prefectorate chose a regent: Sandol Quinn, Prefect of the Tikonov Commonality. Although Quinn was fiercely loyal to House Liao, and determined to ensure Ilsa's eventual ascension to the Celestial Throne, the focus of his attentions tended to lean more toward his home region than the embattled Andurien and Capella Commonalities.

Given the delicate state of the League-Confederation front, where it appeared that House Marik now seemed content to play a waiting game, Quinn instead set his sights on the Federated Suns. With the Suns still reeling under House Kurita's onslaught, all evidence pointed to anemic AFFS defenses on Chesterton and its surrounding worlds.

Paradoxically, the Capellan claim to Chesterton and its nearby worlds pre-dated the formation of the Confederation itself. This claim stemmed from the fact that the worlds of the Chesterton Trade League—one of the first interstellar realms founded beyond the Terran Alliance—were formally part of Tikonov Grand Union. At the time Tikonov joined with the other states in the region to create the Capellan Confederation, however, many of the Chesterton worlds were occupied by invading forces from the nascent Federated Suns. Amid the complicated web of alliances that created the Confederation, the promise to recover these lost systems became a key goal that the leaders of the Tikonov Commonality never forgot. Thus, for centuries since (and even to this day), Capellan Chancellors have proclaimed the worlds of the so-called Chesterton Commonality as the Confederation's birthright.

To Sandol Quinn, the time to reclaim Chesterton was ripe. Although Barbara Liao's ambitions on the Davion front had waned since Kurita rebuffed her proposal for a non-aggression pact in 2788, the Draconis Combine now stood at New Avalon's very doorstep. Poised to deliver the killing stroke that would decapitate the Suns once and for all, the DCMS could scarcely be expected to worry about a few outlying worlds they had ignored in their drive to the enemy capital.

Quinn's war began in April 2795 with the invasions of Mirach and Caselton, both led by elements of the Northwind Highlanders and the Fourth Tau Ceti Rangers mercenary commands. Their supply chains broken by the Combine invasion, and their strength direct to efforts to aid worlds already under enemy occupation, AFFS and militia defenders on both worlds crumbled quickly. By August 2795, CCAF regiments moved in to secure their new holdings, freeing up the mercenaries for their next objectives: Farwell and Demeter.

Demeter fell in December 2795 to a combination of the Fourth Tau Ceti Rangers and the CCAF's Ariana Grenadiers. Although the assault damaged the Lycomb-Davion IntroTech aerospace factories outside the city of Pattersville, it also resulted in the complete destruction of the local BattleMech-armed militia, the Demeter Planetary Uniformed Guard.

The conquest of Farwell proved equally decisive for the Confederation. Once more facing weakened and demoralized Davion forces, the planetary defenses collapsed within weeks of the invaders' landfall. As CCAF reinforcements secured the world in April 2796, the Capellans moved on to Sanilac, completing their conquest of that world by June. Additional CCAF forces struck at Sonnia the following October, seizing that planet after only a month's worth of combat; the Confederation was well on its way to encircling the coveted world of Chesterton.

Over the following year, Quinn continued his campaign in this same meticulous fashion, using ex-Star League Defense Force mercenaries to hammer the remnant Davion defenses first, before rotating in CCAF troops to reinforce the assaults and hold their objectives afterward. This sound strategy secured Tawas by June 2797, when the Fifteenth Dracon mercenary group destroyed the last of the Suns' ad hoc defense outposts; and Ulan Batar by January 2798, when the Blandford's Grenadiers regiment of the Capellan Hussars successfully rooted out the last enemy insurgents in the capital city's foothills.

Further rimward, the Confederation also attacked from the St. Ives Commonality. Using a similar "leapfrogging" strategy as the Combine employed just ten years earlier, the CCAF landed troops on Carmacks, Ogilvie, and Sekulmun, as well as Salem, Branzoll, and Victoria. This created two "islands" of Capellan occupation deep inside Davion space by the end of 2797. Although their supply lines to the Confederation homelands were tenuous, these conquests forced the Suns to further dilute their already weakened border defenses at a time they could scarcely afford to pay any attention to House Liao.

By 2799, Capellan assaults in the Chesterton region seized Everett, Mirach, and Schedar; aside from Chesterton itself, every world within a single jump's radius belonged to the Confederation. Despite a surge of Davion resolve in the wake of the Kentares Massacre, House Liao's forces managed to hold onto their gains. Moreover, even with mercenaries performing much of the "heavy lifting," Sandol Quinn had fought a clean—almost gentlemanly—war to this point, in stark contrast to the wanton barbarity raging across the Inner Sphere.

It was with all this in mind that the Regent Chancellor chose not to invade Chesterton directly. According to Maskirovka intelligence, the defenders on that world were remarkably well-stocked, and heavily reinforced by survivors from the previous actions. Furthermore, Chesterton remained a largely self-sustaining world, with more than enough resources to hold out against a siege, even if the Confederation could spare the WarShips for a proper blockade. Rather than launch a massive assault, Quinn chose to send emissaries to the planetary government and its AFFS defenders.

These Capellan representatives made their pitch by stating the patently obvious: Chesterton was surrounded by the CCAF on all sides, and the Davion government remained focused on driving the Dragon away from New Avalon. Even if the Suns could send help right now, their reinforcements simply would not arrive in time to stop the slaughter that would surely take place if the locals failed to surrender and return to the Celestial Realm.

In response, the local AFFS commander, Leftenant General Thomas J King, informed Quinn's emissaries that his command included a stockpile of cobalt-laced fission weapons, which he promised to unleash "the moment the first Cappie pinko set foot on Chesterton soil." When the emissaries questioned King's sanity at even considering such extreme measures, King flippantly remarked, "I know how much your Chancellor loves surprises."

Although King never proved his possession of such a nuclear stockpile, subsequent Maskirovka investigation confirmed enough about the Suns' Chesterton defenses to reinforce the idea that a full-fledged invasion of the planet would be extremely costly. The isolated Davion troops were dug-in, well-disciplined, and fanatical in their determination since word of the Kentares atrocities reached them. Along with the fact that the CCAF had already completely cut off their means of escape—not merely by controlling all systems within jump range, but also by capturing or destroying all local hyperspace-capable vessels—the consensus was that the defenders simply had nothing left to lose.

Unwilling to commit to an offensive that would force his men to deploy weapons of mass destruction against a world he desperately wanted to take intact, Sandol Quinn ordered the CCAF regiments around Chesterton to maintain a defensive posture. The battle for Chesterton would have to wait while the Strategios considered alternative options.

CAUGHT IN THE CAPELLAN CROSSFIRE

By 2800, the Confederation remained largely stalemated along the coreward border with the Federated Suns. Although the recent conquests around Chesterton held, the coreward edge of Capellan space had continued to deteriorate amid the heavy fighting between the DCMS and AFFS. Following Barbara Liao's failed 2788 bid for a non-aggression pact with Minoru Kurita, the Strategios kept a wary eye on the region. Prior to the Kentares Massacre, sporadic, border-testing raids between Capellan and Combine recon units were common, but had begun to taper off by the mid-2890s. When pro-Davion attacks in reaction to the Kentares Massacre suddenly flashed across the Dragon's invasion corridor, however, this three-way border region once more became an active battleground.

With this new eruption of fighting, the Combine-Capellan clashes Barbara Liao feared more than a decade earlier finally came to pass.

Striking first at the world of Ronel in March 2800, the Draconis Combine's Thirty-Fifth Dieron Regulars found themselves facing off against the CCAF's Ariana Grenadiers and two regiments of sealed armor. Having only recently transferred there from Demeter, the Grenadiers had yet to fully acclimate to Ronel's higher gravity and more desolate landscape when the DCMS troops landed. During the fierce battle in the gnarled forests near the city of Lenor, the Dieron Regulars used smokescreen ordnance and incendiary artillery to confuse and disorient the Grenadiers, ultimately scattering their ranks. When subsequent air strikes wiped out half of the Capellans' armor support in minutes, the Grenadiers pulled back to rally—only to find their own numbers reduced to scarcely more than a battalion. The battle quickly devolved into a rout, with the surviving CCAF units attempting and failing to execute an orderly retreat to their DropShips under fierce fire from pursuing Kurita BattleMechs.

[*Editor's note: The Grenadiers' defeat marked the first of several battles for Ronel that would follow in the five years to come; while the CCAF listed the regiment as destroyed, enough of the survivors made it off-world to be reorganized later. In addition, close to a battalion's worth of assorted Grenadiers and supporting armor managed to survive the debacle. Either due to coercion from the victorious Combine invaders, or convinced that the Confederation had deliberately sent them to Ronel as a sacrificial lamb, these abandoned survivors quickly rebranded themselves as the Bad Dream mercenary command, and immediately accepted a contract with the DCMS.*]

Later that same year, another Dieron Regulars regiment hit the Capellan world of Rio. This time, they faced the First Chesterton Voltigeurs, one of three BattleMech regiments raised by Sandol Quinn before his installation as the Regent Chancellor. As effective as the Combine invaders were against the Confederation defenders on Ronel, the battle for Rio unfolded in the exact opposite fashion. The Voltigeurs' aerospace support managed to shoot down two of the DCMS DropShips as they entered the planetary atmosphere, plunging both craft to a fiery death south of the port city of San Lucas. On the ground, the Regulars that survived the landings found their DropShips immediately under artillery fire that forced the ship captains to boost away as soon as their 'Mechs had off-loaded. Determined to avenge their fallen comrades, the Draconis MechWarriors moved to secure San Lucas for use as a base of operations, only to find that the Capellans had mined half of the city's streets and rigged several of the taller buildings to explode and collapse as they came through. Within less than half an hour after landing on a world once known as a holovid-worthy paradise, the Dieron Regulars found themselves trapped in a flaming hell that had once been a pristine resort town.

The sudden increase in fighting along the Capellan-Combine border forced a shift in Sandol Quinn's military priorities. Although he never gave up on one day claiming Chesterton, he was determined not to hand a strategically compromised realm over to young Ilsa Liao's rule. During his final months as regent, he pulled the overextended CCAF troops from Salem, Victoria, Carmacks and Sekulmun to reinforce the borders of the St. Ives Commonality, while also firming up the borders of his own Tikonov Commonality.

The Capellan Confederation that Ilsa Liao inherited upon her ascension to Chancellor in 2801 was a stronger, more accomplished state than the one her grandmother knew at the time of her death, but it was also nearly exhausted by a combination of its recent offensives and the daily threat of an imminent resumption of hostilities from the Free Worlds League.

STROKE OF LUCK: ORIENTE ABANDONED

In January 2804, Captain-General Kenyon Marik suffered a fatal heart attack on Atreus less than a week before his seventieth birthday. His second son, Fleet Admiral Thaddeus Marik, was in the field at the time, overseeing a final assault against Lyran fortifications on Alhena. When word reached him of his father's death, it came with additional news that the Marik Parliament had called a session to discuss candidates for the next League ruler. In response, Thaddeus remained at his post just long enough to ensure that the enemy defenders were broken. Three days later—and just hours after the Commonwealth survivors boosted off-world—he boarded the first available shuttle back to his flagship *Bucharest*. Ordering the destroyer's crew to make best speed for Atreus, the admiral leapt into the void, destined to stake his claim on the throne.

During Marik's journey back to the Free Worlds' capital, his venerable WarShip's drive core burned out over the world of Rasalas, the victim of strain from a quick-charged double-jump. Though forced to switch to a conventional military JumpShip, he took the opportunity to attach a 'Mech-loaded FWLM DropShip to his entourage. Thus, when the man who would be Captain-General finally arrived on Atreus in late July, he did so with a heavy BattleMech battalion at his side.

Thaddeus Marik burst into Parliament amid its deliberations, and presented the gathered representatives with the terms and provisions of Resolution 288. Citing the fact that his father died before relinquishing his post or repealing the resolution, as well as the clear fact that the crisis which prompted the resolution had not passed, Marik proclaimed his right to assume the mantle of Captain-General as Kenyon's successor. Fierce debate between Marik's supporters and opponents ensued, as Thaddeus stood at the floor of the chamber in intense silence. When the arguments deadlocked, close to two-thirds of Parliament angrily stormed out of the building, only to face a company of FWLM assault 'Mechs standing ominously before them.

The majority of Parliament's anti-Marik delegates promptly returned to chambers with a fresh change of heart to reaffirm the state of emergency, satisfying the terms of Resolution 288. But the vote was not unanimous; Carter Allison, ruler of the Duchy of Oriente, and coadjutant administrator of several smaller provinces along the Capellan border, refused to be intimidated into submission. As he defiantly challenged the affirmation, backed up almost exclusively by MPs from the provinces under his control, Thaddeus Marik icily noted that it was, of course, Allison's decision to make.

As Captain-General, however, it was now within Thaddeus' power to withdraw all FWLM federal troops from Oriente—which he promptly did.

Objective: Oriente – Strike One

In the Capellan Confederation, word of House Marik's internal struggles offered the Strategios a rare opportunity to cripple a key member of the Free Worlds League. CCAF forces swept forth from staging grounds on Anegasaki, Ipswich, and Pella II the moment the FWLM departures were confirmed. By mid-September, the Confederation had reclaimed the worlds of Lukla, Sappho, and Shuen Wan, while Oriente's provincial defense forces scrambled to protect their capital.

In December 2804, the Confederation lunched its first major assault against Oriente, with the Tenth Liao Lancers and the Eleventh and Twenty-Fourth Sian Dragoons regiments escorted by a small fleet of WarShips and fighter-carrying DropShips. With few provincial combat-capable ships left to protect their world, the desperate defenders were forced to rely on nuclear-armed fighters, a wall of conscripted DropShips, and surface-to-orbit missile batteries as their only means of blunting the Capellans' numerical superiority. Although these defenses did inflict severe casualties on the invaders' naval assets, the CCAF nevertheless managed to drop two 'Mech regiments on the planet.

After a weeks-long battle among the industrial heartlands of Oriente's Navarre continent, it was only sheer determination and luck that allowed the provincial forces to beat back the Confederation. Convinced that their assault could easily prompt the League to set aside its internal differences and invite an overwhelming counterattack, the invasion planners outlined strict mission objectives that dictated the battle's timing and set the maximum amount of losses considered acceptable. When the planetary defenders managed to upset the Capellans' timetable and reduce their strength past these mission-directed limits, the ranking CCAF commander, Colonel Ernst Maretta, ordered a fighting retreat.

Despite their defeat, by the time the last of the Capellans departed from Oriente in early February, the cities of Lugo, Mercia, and Soria had been reduced to smoking ruin. Of the four WarShips committed to the attack, only one Liao vessel—the battered *Du Shi Wang*-class battleship *Duncan Liao*—remained operational. Among the ground forces, all three regiments suffered extensive casualties.

Objective Oriente – Strike Two

To the astonishment of Liao's Strategios, intelligence reports from within the League showed that the Captain-General remained unmoved by the assault. Despite nearly losing such an important world, the Maskirovka found no sign of additional FWLM troops moving to protect the planet. In fact, it appeared that the only real effect was a stream of orders from Duke Allison to several of his provincial commanders, requesting additional forces to cover Oriente's Confederation borders in the absence of League support.

Emboldened by this news, Chancellor Ilsa Liao approved a second assault on Oriente as soon as possible. In late April 2805, CCAF forces captured Fujidera. Barely two months later—just four months after its last attack on Oriente—the Confederation returned with a battlegroup that included the hastily refreshed Eleventh and Twenty-Fourth Sian Dragoons, reinforced with the Always Faithful mercenary command's Alpha Regiment, and a large contingent of aerospace fighters. With the *Duncan Liao* still undergoing repairs, the best naval escort the Capellans could manage this time was a quartet of *Vincent*-class corvettes.

Oriente, still recovering from the previous invasion, was effectively unable to oppose the inbound WarShips. Still, having learned from the last attack, the Confederation ship captains knew better than to draw too close to the planet's atmosphere, risking

fire from the surface launchers they now knew to be positioned around the planet's capital city of Cadiz, as well as its major military bases and spaceports. This would leave the landing ships with little cover fire as they made planetfall, but the Capellans offset this danger by setting their forces down farther away from the cities and facilities they planned to strike. Once grounded, special commando teams—traveling on board smaller, low-flying craft—were dropped closer to the objectives. These teams were part of a strategy aimed at neutralizing key points of defense ahead of the main assault, including radar sites, communications hubs, and any other fixed defenses they encountered en route.

Ernst Maretta once more acted as the invasion's overall commander, leading from a special HQ detachment in the field. As before, his focus was on the large landmass of Navarre, where the capital city was located, as well as some additional high-priority industrial targets overlooked during the previous invasion. Unfortunately, no sooner had his troops deployed than his comrades in high orbit sent word of trouble: a massive storm system was developing off the eastern Navarre coast, evidently the first blizzard of the local month-long winter season.

The incoming storm presented a serious complication to the strategy Colonel Maretta pursued this time around. For this invasion to succeed, several key pieces of enemy infrastructure needed to be disabled by his commando teams so that his aerospace forces could operate with greater impunity. With enemy communications and advanced warning systems compromised, the CCAF could isolate and secure (or destroy) three key airfields they had identified as critical to the capital valley's defense. With these taken down, his fighters would then have a better chance at attaining air aerial supremacy over the area, which they could then use to take out the surface-to-orbit missile silos covering the valley area.

But with a blizzard rolling in, the colonel knew that his commando teams could be slowed or even immobilized completely, forcing him to risk his precious air support—and, with it, covering fire for his ground units—in an area that could easily fill the skies with provincial air power. Worse, if the storm persisted over the area, it could prevent him from deploying his air power altogether, and would slow his ground forces to a crawl at a time when they needed their mobility the most. Fearing another defeat from something as mundane as falling behind schedule, Maretta called in his air power at once, tasking them with destroying the surface-to-orbit silos before his commandos could even reach their objectives.

The result was a large, costly, low-altitude air battle reminiscent of mankind's early days of flight—in the bitter, increasingly windy skies over Navarre's capital valley. To their credit, the CCAF fighters managed to eliminate approximately eighty percent of the missile silos throughout the valley area, but not without losing more than half their strength in dogfights with their Oriente counterparts. Meanwhile, Maretta ordered his 'Mech forces to advance, hoping to close the distance toward his primary targets: Oriente's capital city of Cadiz and its adjacent spaceport.

In the end, it was the weather that defeated Maretta's second assault against Oriente. Though his commandos managed to take out their assigned objectives long after they ceased to be a priority, the storm winds effectively forced his aerospace support to flee to orbit without having secured a single runway. Without air cover to help bombard the enemy strongholds around Cadiz, his BattleMechs—caught largely in the open and slowed down by a thickening blanket of driving snow—suffered horrendous damage.

The worst stroke of luck fell on the eighth day of this second battle for Oriente, when an enemy scout lance stumbled upon Maretta's command lance during a brief lull in the storm. As the winds let up and the snowfall lightened for just a few precious minutes, the quick-thinking provincials called in a massive artillery strike on Maretta's position, guiding in the incoming fire at dangerously close range. Maretta's lance was obliterated, along with two of the enemy scouts, just as the storm seemed to roar back to life more furious than before. With their commander abruptly cut down, the Capellans' morale broke and the next officer in line called for a fighting retreat.

Two days later, the Confederation invaders again left Oriente behind, but not before they had managed to demolish a significant portion of the suburbs outside Cadiz, and destroy most of the planet's remaining surface-to-orbit silos. As a parting shot, three of the Capellan corvettes executed a single low-orbit pass over the planet, lobbing capital missiles at a heavily populated portion of the Martigues continent.

The second assault on Oriente might have been another defeat for House Liao, but Duke Allison realized that the planet remained his due only to a mere twist of fate. In the twelve months since opposing the new Captain-General's ascension, his homeworld had suffered from two full-blown invasions. In that same time, not only had the Capellans reclaimed three worlds taken earlier in the war, they had also begun to seize planets elsewhere in the Duchy, while border worlds outside his province enjoyed the benefit of federal support. Millions had died while Allison and Marik played a game of political chicken—for which Allison had proven woefully unprepared.

Faced with the certainty that the next Capellan invasion would slice through the porous remains of Oriente's defenses, Duke Allison boarded the next DropShip off-world, calling in as many favors as he could to assemble a command circuit straight to Atreus.

Objective Oriente – Strike Three and Out

Allison's departure from Oriente so soon after the defeat of the CCAF's second invasion attempt did not go unnoticed by Capellan intelligence. When word reached the Strategios on Sian, the consensus was that the Duke was likely about to beg for help from the Captain-General directly. While the details of the rift between the two leaders remained murky, the danger of their reconciliation was clear enough—it would dash the Confederation's best hope of crippling a sizeable chunk of the Free Worlds League.

Recognizing that their window was about to close, the CCAF high commanders hastily drew plans for a third offensive against Oriente. To ensure its victory, they planned to strip the forces from their new conquests near the system—Fujidera and Fletcher, as well as the defenders on the reclaimed worlds of Lukla and Sappho. Together with the remaining elements of the regiments used in the latest assault, and with every WarShip available to them in the immediate vicinity (including the still-damaged battleship

Duncan Liao), they would surely overrun the provincial defenders and secure a foothold long before the FWLM could move enough troops back to stop them.

With speed of the essence, the Strategios sent the orders mobilizing their troops even before they had finished fully planning their invasion strategy. Simply put, they needed this task force to strike before Allison or any FWLM reinforcements came to Oriente, which gave them a window no greater than two months. The hasty deployment orders caught many of their own troops completely unprepared, so much so that the regiments departing from Lukla and Sappho were forced to move without their armor and infantry support assets, thanks to a dearth of transports.

Miraculously for the CCAF, aside from the shortage of supporting units, their collected forces managed to assemble at Fletcher with few serious problems. It was only then, however, that they learned what their operational chain of command would be. For her experience as one of the few surviving regimental leaders who took part in the previous invasions, the Strategios named Colonel Sascha Laurie of the Eleventh Sian Dragoons as the overall mission commander, seconded by Colonel Danladi Raziq of the Twenty-Fourth.

With no time to waste, Colonel Laurie ordered the entire battle group to jump into the Oriente system on 18 September 2805.

The third Capellan invasion of Oriente began with the destruction of two provincial DropShips and a commercial JumpShip at the planet's zenith jump point—an action that represented the total amount of naval combat seen in the task force's entire approach. During the eighteen-day in-system burn, Colonel Laurie and the other regimental commanders worked out a list of priority targets they would strike first, as well as several secondary and opportunity-based objectives. Using her knowledge of the previous invasion's outcome, Laurie identified the best vectors for the Confederation WarShips to enter orbit from and avoid what remained of the surface-based capital missile silos. As her 'Mech forces dropped, they encountered only a smattering of resistance from Oriente aerospace fighters, many of which were dispatched quickly.

The Capellan troops hit the ground running, each regiment quickly moving to secure their primary targets across the Navarre continent and encountering only modest resistance from the local defenders, whose numbers were now stretching thin. Within two days of landfall, the Confederation seized four major aerospace ports in and around the valleys where the capital of Cadiz stood. Also taken out were several power stations, and two military bases whose troops had evidently been redeployed elsewhere.

Compared to the previous two invasions, the Confederation's third assault on Oriente was unfolding like child's play—so much so that it made Colonel Laurie openly muse that the whole affair was some kind of League trap. Urging further caution as the invasion continued to encircle Cadiz, and its aerospace forces and artillery targeted and destroyed all remaining capital launch silos, Laurie quickly developed a habit of badgering her subordinates for status updates. Her continuous, increasingly paranoia-driven micromanaging soon began to wear on her officers' nerves, but none of this prevented the invaders from completely isolating the capital city by mid-November.

As the fighting for Cadiz began in earnest, the news Laurie dreaded finally came through. Relayed to her by the *Duncan Liao*, it was a frenzied distress call from the zenith jump station, where a fleet of Free Worlds League JumpShips and WarShips had just materialized. House Marik was coming to Oriente's rescue.

Tipped off by contacts among the League's merchant marine, Thaddeus Marik learned of Duke Allison's departure from Oriente at almost the same time the Capellans did. In anticipation of the duke's expected capitulation, the Captain-General sent orders diverting WarShips and FWLM regiments from the Principality of Regulus to Tintavel. Initially, Marik had planned to send these forces first to the worlds of Fujidera and Fletcher, establishing both as bases from which they would then push against the Confederation's advance.

But then word of House Liao's third assault on Oriente reached him, along with the certainty that, this time, no amount of misfortune would prevent the Capellans from overrunning the provincial defenses. Marik's response was to send the entire task force directly to Oriente, with orders to annihilate the invaders there.

The League fleet, led by *Bismarck*—one of the rapidly dwindling number of *Atreus*-class battleships left in the Free Worlds' navy—emerged at Oriente's zenith jump point to find the bulk of the invaders' transport JumpShips parked close by. With ruthless efficiency, the WarShips moved to destroy the enemy vessels before they could warn the ground-side CCAF of their arrival. Though unable to prevent the transmission of a warning, the Marik ships managed to capture two of the Confederation JumpShips, and destroyed the rest within twenty minutes of their arrival.

Detailing two *League* destroyers to escort the ground troops, the remaining WarShips of the FWLM fleet—the *Bismarck*, and the *Soyal*-class cruisers *Karka* and *Makara*—held back just long enough to recharge their drives and compute an in-system jump to Oriente's best lunar Lagrange point. Though the effort was complicated by planet's two moons, the League navigators managed to find a suitable point close enough to execute a jump long before the inbound ground forces would arrive. *Bismarck* jumped first, surprising the Capellans' orbiting ships, and maneuvering quickly to close with the *Duncan Liao*. *Karka* and *Makara* leapt in minutes afterward, prepared to lend fire support and engage outliers as necessary. As they closed to firing range, both WarShip groups launched their on-board fighters.

The Capellan WarShips enjoyed a significant numerical advantage, with the battleship *Duncan Liao* supported by four *Vincent* corvettes and a pair of *Essex* destroyers, but the League ships entered the battle in much better condition, and brought ample fighter support. By the end of the half-hour orbital firefight, all four corvettes were destroyed, the surviving destroyer had surrendered, and the *Duncan Liao* was a cloud of wreckage tumbling into Oriente's gravity well. In exchange, the Marik battle group had lost the *Makara*, and *Bismarck* had suffered crippling damage to her K-F drive system. Over a third of the FWLM fighters were also lost in the exchange, while little more than a single squadron of their Confederation opponents survived to seek refuge on the ground below.

By the time the rest of the League task force slipped into planetary orbit for the ground phase, the CCAF troops below had managed to secure Cadiz, having destroyed or driven off the remnants of its provincial defense forces. The Confederation troops now occupied the entirety of the capital city, as well as the majority of the Navarre continent's major industrial and military strongpoints. Although many of the Capellan troops were exhausted from battle and beginning to run low on consumables, battlefield salvage and spirited engineering works had enabled them to dig in and prepare for the inevitable Marik assault.

They did not have to wait long. On 18 December, under complete orbital supremacy and heavy aerospace escort, the Free Worlds League dropped four BattleMech regiments and a dozen more regiments of mixed armor and infantry on Oriente. Half of these forces moved directly on the capital city, while the rest fanned out to reclaim other key bases and airfields in the surrounding countryside. Trapped inside their captured objectives, and with no real hope of escape after the destruction of their fleet, the Capellans fought with the ferocity and desperation of cornered animals, with some of their troops even resorting to tactical atomics in an effort to hold off the inevitable.

By the first week of 2806, the last of the CCAF invasion forces on Oriente had been either destroyed or captured. Leaving a single 'Mech regiment and two more of armor and infantry to hold the system and aid with rebuilding, the Marik forces moved on from Oriente barely more than a month after the fighting ended. Over the rest of the year, these troops would not only reclaim Fujidera and Fletcher, but also the Capellan border worlds of Lukla and Sappho.

Aftermath

In the wake of this final, disastrous defeat, the CCAF's Strategios found themselves forced back into defense-only strategies on the League front. Hugely disappointed, Chancellor Ilsa Liao dismissed two of these military advisors for "gross incompetence," and ordered the majority of the Confederation's naval assets to cover the League border in the hopes of blunting or discouraging raids by House Marik.

As the Confederation fell back into a defensive stance against the League, the rest of the war along their mutual border became a slugging match of raids and small naval actions that ultimately accomplished little more than bleeding resources on both sides.

THE SUNS RESURGENT: HOUSE DAVION RALLIES

For the Federated Suns, the Succession War was a massive and incredibly demoralizing string of defeats that brought their once-proud realm to its knees in just ten short years. The Draconis Combine's onslaught had claimed roughly a hundred worlds and most of the Davion navy, while the Capellan Confederation nibbled away at the Suns' flank unchecked. With the Dragon's blade bearing down on New Avalon itself, the people had begun to succumb to despair. Their future was bleak, their great nation was doomed, and it seemed that nothing in the universe could stop it.

Mist-covered mountains
Move in and out of vision.
Real or just fog dreams?
–Haiku reportedly found upon the body of Minoru Kurita

BLOODY KENTARES

In 2796, an insurrection led by survivors of the Seventh Crucis Lancers began to endanger DCMS control over Kentares IV. At the time, Kentares housed massive stores of war materiel stockpiled there in support of the Draconis Combine's invasion of the Federated Suns. Although the system was already well behind the current front lines, the loss of the Kentares depots would have complicated the Combine's final assault against House Davion's throneworld of New Avalon.

For these reasons, Minoru Kurita, the Draconis Combine's aging Coordinator, chose to personally lead his Sixth Sword of Light BattleMech regiment back to Kentares. Arriving there in June, Minoru's forces were besieged almost immediately when insurgents struck at their landing DropShips. Ample fighter cover, the superior skills of the Sixth Sword, and support from the locally-stationed DCMS troops quickly drove back the Davion rebels, but far more of the enemy managed to escape than were destroyed.

For more than a month and a half, Minoru led the Combine forces against the Seventh Lancers and their fellow insurgents, eventually isolating them on the temperate continent of Bucholia. By early August, the DCMS encircled the Davion rebels in the Carmelite Mountain region, where only a few townships and agro centers remained to support their infrequent raids. On 9 August, Coordinator Minoru and his command company passed the town of New Snowfield, near the southern foot of the Carmelite Chain, when Minoru found himself mesmerized by the beauty of the landscape. Ordering his team to a stop, Lord Kurita made the unorthodox decision to dismount from his *BattleMaster* and, with only his command lance mates, a few guards, and a Buddhist priest to accompany him, set off on foot to the nearby meadows. The other two 'Mech lances in the company moved toward the town itself to sweep for hostiles.

From the mountains above the town, a platoon of Seventh Crucis soldiers led by Sergeant Latha Pischel monitored the event with curiosity. The elderly MechWarrior who descended from the Kurita BattleMech was unfamiliar to them, but he was clearly someone of great importance, given his entourage. As the bulk of the Combine force moved toward the town, Pischel ordered the rest of his platoon to withdraw, but remained behind himself to keep an eye on their activity through the scope of his laser rifle. As he continued quietly reporting DCMS activity near New Snowfield back to his superiors, Pischel watched as the elderly Kurita dismissed his guards, and walked into a lightly wooded grove with only the brightly robed priest at his side.

The single bolt Sergeant Pischel fired caught the ninety-one year old Coordinator of the Draconis Combine squarely in the back. With no armor protecting him—the Coordinator dismounted from

his 'Mech clad only in DCMS standard-issue coveralls—the shot instantly burned through flesh, muscle, and, most critically, the man's heart. Panic instantly erupted on the ground, with even the 'Mech forces amid the streets of New Snowfield turning to scramble toward their leader. In the confusion, Pischel managed to slip away undetected, unaware of just how important the man he'd killed truly was.

When word of Minoru Kurita's death on Kentares reached AFFS High Command amid an explosion of enemy activity and intercepted communications, the general reaction was not a sense of victory, but of dread. Despised as Minoru had been, the Davion leadership knew of Jinjiro's far more volatile nature, and feared the day when he would lead the House of Kurita. After all, it was Minoru's sense of caution that had given New Avalon its latest reprieve, for it was Minoru's idea—not Jinjiro's—to postpone invading the capital of the Federated Suns until their captured territories had been further quelled.

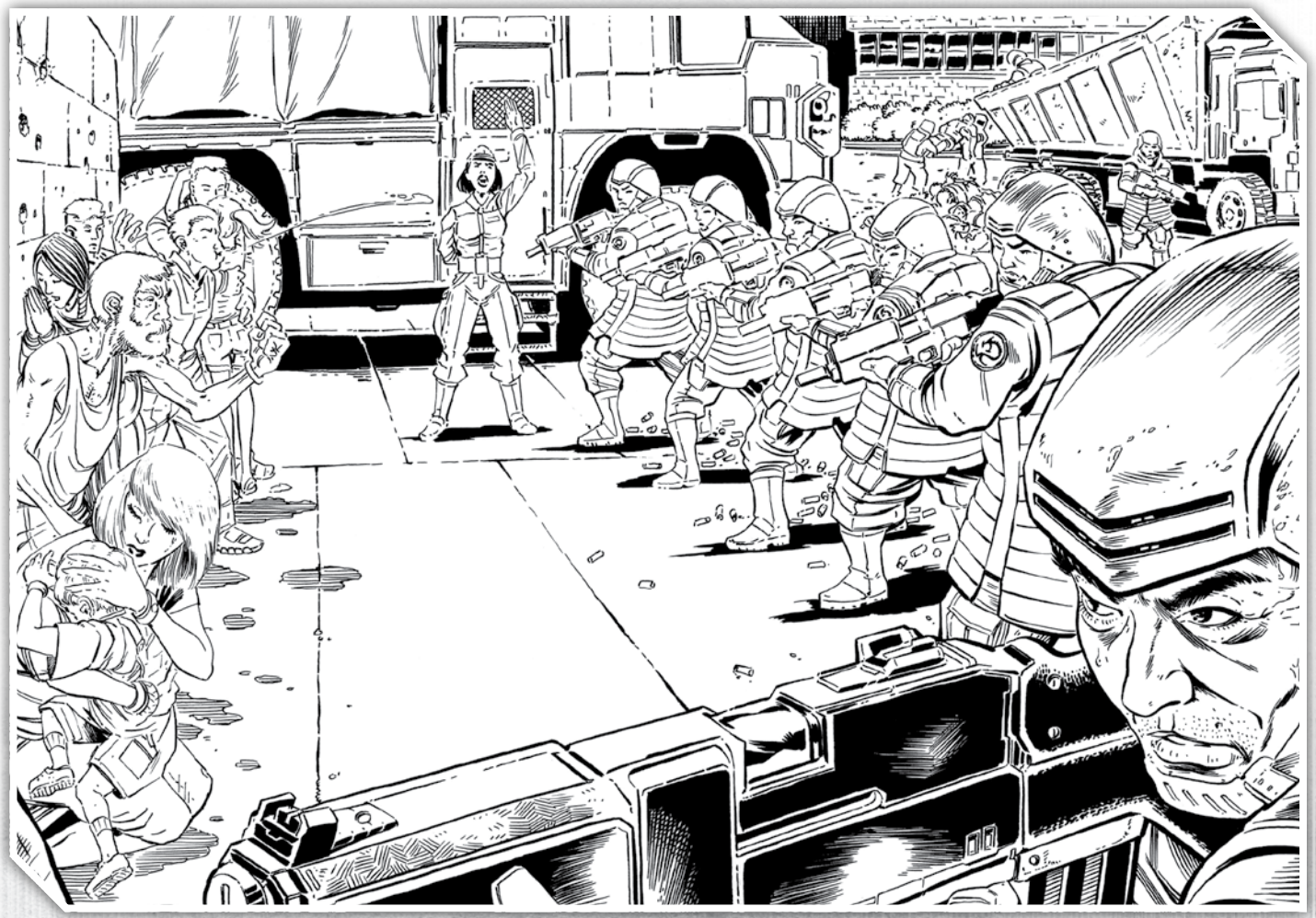
Hoping to deny Jinjiro a target for his vengeance, Prince John Davion ordered all AFFS troops left on Kentares IV to withdraw at once. By the end of August, less than two weeks before the Coordinator's heir reached the planet himself, the Suns managed to discretely evacuate all of its military forces from the Kentares via JumpShips diverted from nearby Sonnia.

What came next would make Davion regret that decision for the rest of his life.

On 11 September 2796, Jinjiro Kurita arrived on Kentares IV, gathered his officers together, and issued the most infamous order in the history of the First Succession War: "Kill them all." When one of his officers asked the new Coordinator to clarify his order, Jinjiro had his Otomo guards execute the man on the spot.

For the next five months, Combine units on Kentares dispersed across the planet to systematically kill every Davion citizen they found. Mass executions were accomplished by rounding up as many civilians as possible in the cities, then using 'Mechs and vehicles to hunt down the rest. DCMS troops also distributed caches of poisoned rations, intended to kill scavenging survivors who evaded the sweeps. Strict discipline instilled in these troops by the Combine's harsh military training protocols enabled them to carry out their atrocities for a short time without question; the people of the Suns were enemies of the Dragon who had conspired to kill their liege lord in cold blood. Honor demanded that someone be punished—the AFFS insurgents fled in cowardice, so the lives of their confederates would do.

But by the second month of the ongoing slaughter, the legendary Kuritan military discipline began to waver. No matter how deeply indoctrinated with stoicism and obedience to the



DISPROPORTIONATE OUTRAGE

Atrocity and outcry are funny things, aren't they?

Since at least the early days of mass media—and likely all the way back to the days of ancient Rome—people have always reacted upon learning of some event that claimed a lot of lives at once. When the cause is natural, like a flood, earthquake, or a comet strike, the reaction is usually one of compassion: charitable donations surge, emergency services are deluged with volunteers, blood banks are packed, and people suddenly care about others they would otherwise never see or interact with in any way. When the cause is man-made, like a war-time atrocity, a mass shooting, or an industrial disaster that could have been prevented, the reaction is less one of sympathy and more one of outrage: Politicians and community leaders line up to lay blame, protesters hit the streets, news pundits argue over who was wrong and why, and military or police spokespeople vow justice.

It says something good about mankind, to be sure, that we can still manage such empathy, even today, as we've spread ourselves farther and farther into space. But the funny part—under the ironic definition of the word—is how *inconsistent* those reactions can be, compared to the scale of the tragedy. The passing of a single beloved leader or other celebrity can bring out the tears of a thousand worlds, while the crash of a star liner would barely register in a ten o'clock newsvid. The slow, agonizing death of Beta Regulus II from a planetoid strike in 2899 riveted the people of the Lyran Commonwealth, but the rest of the Inner Sphere barely recognized the event at all.

In the First Succession War, so many billions of people died that we may never know an accurate count. Whole worlds vanished from the maps in the years after Kerensky's Exodus—some in the fires of nuclear warfare, others among the choking clouds of chemical and biological weaponry, and still others simply starved out as the supply ships stopped coming. After the horrors of the Amaris years, it almost seemed as if mankind (or, at least, the leaders of the interstellar realms that represented mankind) had grown so inured to the concept of total war that killing off their fellow man by the millions was about as tragic as burning down a single city. It was the kind of thing that was justified, when one did so in the course of a war—and a motivation for new recruits when the enemy did it.

At the time of the Kentares Massacre, the Succession War was already ten years along, and the Federated Suns was so trounced that it seemed as if they were ready to just roll over and die beneath the Combine's onslaught. As it was on every front, worlds had died from nuclear bombs and engineered bio-chemical toxins—the nastiest weapons of mass destruction the warlords of humanity had ever commissioned. Tens of billions had died or were actively dying on every front.

(CONTINUED ON P. 89)

Coordinator, the task of killing hundreds of civilians, day after day, in so personal a fashion, began to take a toll on the Combine soldiers. The cracks started in the lower ranks of the infantry who were sent into the cities and towns; some deliberately allowed groups of Kentarens to escape. Others began actively hiding their would-be victims, stashing whole families and communities in mineshafts or beneath collapsed structures while claiming to find such areas abandoned. Eventually, these acts even spread to the MechWarriors, vehicle crews, and officers. In many cases, soldiers unable to justify their role in massacres—even if they never personally pulled a trigger or swung a sword—ultimately resorted to suicide.

For Jinjiro Kurita, the thousands killed were little more than numbers; he could have easily achieved the same body counts with nuclear bombardment. To truly satisfy his need for revenge, he craved wanton bloodshed. After the first month, he began attending executions, and forbade the use of modern weapons at those he witnessed, preferring to see his victims beheaded by the sword. When confirmed reports came in of his own warriors protecting the Kentares natives, or simply refusing their orders to kill, the Coordinator dispatched his elite guards to round up such "traitors," along with anyone they protected. These dissident troops were then executed along with the Kentarens they'd tried to save.

By the time Jinjiro left Kentares IV in February 2797, an estimated fifty-two million men, women, and children—nearly all of them civilians—had died at the hands of the DCMS. Kentares IV, a previously beautiful farming world with a population of nearly fifty-eight million, had been reduced to a ghost world full of burning, blood-soaked towns, and trampled farmlands.

[*Editor's Note: The soldier whose fateful shot killed Minoru Kurita, Sergeant Latha Pischel, was among the troops evacuated from Kentares before the massacre began. In March 2797, after learning of the events that took place in the wake of Minoru's death, he committed suicide, blaming himself for the atrocity.*]

United in Rage

Across the Federated Suns, reaction to news of the Kentares Massacre was universal. An intense wave of outrage spread through the realm, boiling over into such raw fury that it seemed as if every person, from the humblest citizens and soldiers to its most powerful generals and politicians, clamored for revenge. Hate groups, particularly those that proposed locking away (or simply killing) all those of Asiatic ethnicities or Eastern faiths, found willing audiences among the general populace. The fear and despair that gripped the Suns just weeks before burned away in a flash, as a wave of anger spread across the nation at the speed of a hyperpulse signal.

Field units nearest to Combine-occupied worlds began plotting their own vengeance campaigns, not even bothering to wait for orders from the dysfunctional AFFS High Command. Unsurprisingly, the first regiments to break ranks were those closest to Kentares—including the survivors of the Seventh Crucis Lancers, the Twentieth Syrtis Fusiliers, and the Third Deneb Light Cavalry—all of which launched unauthorized assaults against the DCMS. Staging from Goderich in October 2797, these forces targeted Kuritan conquests nearest to their position, even as Capellan forces actively consolidated their own recent captures of Tawas and Sanilac. By mid-November 2797, the reckless ferocity of these "renegade" Davion actions broke the Kuritan defenses on Marlette and Logandale, returning both to the sword-and-sunburst banner of House Davion.

"Remember Kentares!" became the battle cry that rallied a realm on the verge of utter defeat.

The reactionary assaults spread further in the following months. AFFS troops landed on Bristol in November, while forces near New Avalon assaulted Odell and Delavan in December, essentially throwing themselves against the point of the Dragon's spear.

These attacks, like those launched from Goderich, were not directed by Prince John, but he and his senior officers certainly welcomed them. In fact, on 2 December, when word came that a small Davion battle group had emerged at Delavan to engage the pair of Combine destroyers posted there, the Prince was on nearby Ipava, preparing his own counter-offensive against that very world. Upon learning of the destruction of both enemy WarShips three days later, he reportedly heaved a deep sigh of relief and muttered, "Thank God for the loose cannons."

THE RISE OF PRINCE PAUL

It was Prince Davion's hope to harness the Suns' newfound fighting spirit by restoring the chain of command and launching a concerted counter-assault against the occupied worlds in the Crucis March. Unfortunately, on 9 December 2797, as he and his son Joshua worked to finalize these plans, an unknown assassin struck at the Prince's field headquarters and killed both men. The crown—and, with it, the future of the Federated Suns—fell to Joshua Davion's nineteen-year-old son, Paul Davion.

Prince Paul Davion ascended to the throne decades before even he had anticipated. Still technically enrolled in the New Avalon Military Academy, where he had only just earned the epaulets of a senior leftenant, his schooling in matters both military and political was far from complete. Nevertheless, at the very time his realm needed him, he proved to be a quick study. In the year that followed Paul's ascension, the spontaneous and uncoordinated attacks by various AFFS front-line commands raged on. Rather than condemn these regiments for poor discipline, Paul instead bestowed official approval for these assaults. In proclaiming these warriors as heroes of the realm, he not only accrued some small measure of credit for their victories for himself, but he made it known to his officers that their efforts and initiative were welcomed. Their battles would not be acts of mere vengeance; they would be victories for all brothers and sisters of the Federated Suns.

With their supply lines overextended, and rebellions erupting throughout their occupied territories as word of Kentares continued to spread, the Draconis Combine spent much of 2798 battling insurgencies even as its rank-and-file soldiers became increasingly dispirited. Against the frenzied strikes of the Suns' border units, Kuritan defenses began to crumble. The worlds of Coloma, Strawn, Arcadia, and Saginaw all fell before the AFFS, whose warriors often drove back Kurita's forces using tactics that verged on recklessness. Although the deaths of Prince John and Joshua Davion left their original plans in disarray, the Federated Suns managed to push the Dragon back as its people raged against their would-be conquerors.

At the dawn of 2799, the reactionary assaults began to slow down as supplies grew short. Bremond and Tancredi IV were reclaimed early in the year, followed by Fairfax, and Sanilac—the latter having only recently been taken by House Liao. In 2800, another Capellan-occupied world, Tawas, also fell back under Davion sway. For all of these successful actions, however, there were many defeats. All along the Combine's occupation zone, AFFS regiments, mercenary forces, and scattered WarShips had crossed the border only to be sent back in defeat. Yet even these skirmishes bled the Combine, sapping away more than just soldiers and materiel. To ensure these AFFS victories would not be easily reversed, Paul instructed his logistical commanders to ensure that the most successful forces receive priority for resupply.

Meanwhile, the Combine was suffering an ever-mounting morale crisis. The Kentares Massacre had become a stain on the hearts of many DCMS warriors, who were further shocked by the ferocity and sheer randomness of the scattered counterassaults. In many cases, Kuritan soldiers actually broke after only token resistance, laying down their arms and surrendering before the Davion advance. As word of these surrenders reached the Prince, he ordered the field commanders to treat all prisoners as humanely as possible, and to interrogate captured officers and NCOs thoroughly for any intelligence on the Combine's current disposition and resources. These reports, Paul insisted, were to come to him directly—bypassing the Military Intelligence apparatus that he was in the process of radically overhauling.

DISPROPORTIONATE OUTRAGE (CONTINUED)

And still, the people of the Federated Suns were ready to accept their fate . . . until Kentares.

How does the death of fifty-two million better motivate a people to rise up than the deaths of nearly a dozen worlds in the fires of man-made holocausts? What was so special about fifty-two million people—mostly farmers, merchants, and miners—that "Remember Kentares" remains a rallying cry even four hundred years after the fact?

The answer likely varies from case to case, but I think, when it comes to Kentares, that it all comes down to how personal the whole thing was. Thanks to recordings smuggled out by guilt-wracked members of Jinjiro's own command staff and the local ComStar hyperpulse generator staff, the universe saw an orgy of bloody slaughter. They didn't see whole cities blown apart by a single fireball, launched by weapon techs who did nothing more malicious than pushing a launch button. They didn't see titans of metal, blasting each other to high-tech scrap. They saw soldiers armed with pistols, swords, submachine guns, and flamers, as they rounded up men, women, and children—some still in bedclothes, some naked, and most looking as though they'd already been beaten up by their armed captors. And they saw the horror on these victims faces as Kurita's soldiers cut them down at point-blank range.

For those of the Federated Suns, it was only then that the victims had faces they could truly relate to. These massacre victims were no longer casualty figures from far-off worlds; they were countrymen—real people, who could just as easily been family, friends, loved ones. And their killers were monsters wrapped in the colors of an enemy state. The Combine did not murder strangers from light-years away; they'd killed the brothers and sisters of every citizen in the Suns!

The outage even echoes among the warriors of House Kurita. For the soldiers of the DCMS, these smuggled images spread the horrors of Jinjiro's bloodlust before Kurita's state-run media could spin or sanitize it. What happened on Kentares was not bushido. It was not honor. It was not even a righteous vengeance. It was senseless murder against a world of people whose only crime had been being unable to escape a madman's wrath.

For both sides, perhaps, it was a lesson in the horrors of war that had been long overdue. And it changed the course of history.

—From *Reflections on War*, by Bertram Habeas, Republic Publications, 3132

WHO KILLED THE PRINCE?

The mystery of who sent the assassin that killed Prince John Davion and his son has persisted for centuries. Even declassified ComStar documents shed little light on the subject—a fact that, among many conspiracy theorists, suggests that the nascent Order had something to do with it. Given the political and strategic situation at the time, and the fact that John was planning a counter-invasion on a world just one jump away from Combine-occupied space, the conventional wisdom has long held that the killer was an agent of House Kurita. This tends to be the most common assumption among historians, in spite of the curious lack of evidence.

However, even a cursory look at the state of the Suns—and, indeed, the Inner Sphere at large—reveals a laundry list of suspects who might have had it in for the Davion Prince. The following are merely some of the most likely candidates for who would have wanted John Davion dead, and why:

Jinjiro Kurita – The easiest and most obvious candidate, of course, is the man who ruled the Draconis Combine when the assassin struck. After all, the AFFS killed his father, and most analyses of the Kentares Massacre have posited that Jinjiro struggled to find closure in the bloodbath, only to come up wanting. Killing his father's rival, the man who led the armies of the Suns, would have been perhaps the only way for the brutal and vengeance-driven Jinjiro to even the scales.

Sandol Quinn – The next most probable culprit, naturally, is the Capellan ruler at the time of the assassination. Regent-Chancellor Quinn had just embarked on an ambitious campaign aimed at annexing the Chesterton worlds two years before the Prince's murder. The Confederation was having a relatively easy time of it, too, as the Suns continued to descend into despair under the ongoing Kurita invasion. But then Kentares happened, reigniting the AFFS' fighting spirit. By taking out the Prince, perhaps Quinn hoped to deprive the Suns of a man who could have harnessed that focus.

Jerome Blake – The suggestion that ComStar had a hand in Prince John's demise began as a fringe theory. But after the ComStar Schism of 3052, it gained a great deal of support as rumors of the Order's political meddling propagated. The "convenient" lack of any information about the assassin's identity—or even any coded messages sent or received on Ipava in the days leading up to the assassination—are often cited as evidence of Primus Blake's perfidy.

(CONTINUED ON P. 91)

The Reformation

As his military essentially moved on its own momentum—and with the Prince's blessings—Paul Davion focused the majority of his first four years in power on an ambitious effort to reform the Suns from top to bottom. From 2798 through 2801, the Prince enacted several reforms intended to resolve many of the political and strategic issues that undermined the realm's cohesion throughout the war. Although some of these changes worried the High Council members, who had enjoyed greater political and provincial power prior to Paul's Reformation, the realm was in crisis, and—strangely enough—this young, untested ruler seemed to have a plan that promised to help end it.

Key to the Reformation was Prince Paul's claim to the title of Duke of New Avalon. Established as a mark of honor to the heir of the Star League's First Lordship, the title was claimed by his grandfather, John, when he joined the other House Lords in proclaiming their right to rule the post-Amaris League. But this was no mere honorary birthright; in the days of the Star League, it accumulated several additional powers that the Cameron lords exercised throughout their reign, albeit rarely. These rarely-used powers, and the supposedly honorary nature of the title, made the Duchy of New Avalon insignificant to those who sat on the Federated Suns' High Council.

Demonstrating an astonishingly keen familiarity with Star League history, Paul recognized that many of these added powers granted the Duke of New Avalon legal abilities previously denied even to the Prince. Among them was titular ownership over roughly thirty of the Suns' planets, the ability to bestow courtesy titles, and the right to summon, dismiss, and speak first at any Federation High Council meeting. Combined with those of Prince of the Federated Suns, the additional powers afforded to the Duchy of New Avalon—Paul's birthright as a claimant to the throne of the First Lord—effectively enabled him to legally assume absolute power over the Federated Suns.

The Prince of the Federated Suns was now a true feudal monarch. With these new powers, Paul Davion set out to reorganize the AFFS into a fighting force loyal to House Davion over any single political or regional entity. Under the centralized power of a single ruler, rather than the shared reign of a Prince and a slow-moving High Council, the Suns would be more responsive to outside aggression. In 2799, Paul established fifty new nobles in the Suns' order of peerage, streamlined the military's chain of command so that it properly flowed down from the Prince as Commander-in-Chief of the AFFS, and established two new military awards to recognize exemplary warriors of the realm.

But the greatest of Prince Paul's creations was the reformation of the Suns' intelligence-gathering apparatus. Citing the inadequate capabilities of the realm's civilian information-gathering services—which were reliant on Military Intelligence for virtually all of their data needs and field support—and the provincial factionalism of the MI agency itself, Paul initiated a radical overhaul of both. The civilian intelligence agencies were replaced by a new, more autonomous civilian agency dubbed the Ministry of Intelligence, Investigations, and Operations (MIIO), which was tasked with gathering information through any means necessary, and feeding said information to the state as quickly as possible. The MIIO received abundant funding, and the Prince ordered the new ministry to reward and encourage individual initiative. The MIIO no longer needed to go through Military Intelligence for its operational or informational needs; it could field agents and gather data on its own.

Paul's investment in the MIIO proved remarkably effective. By late 2790, a year after its inception, the civilian agency had already established a network of operatives throughout much of the Suns' territory still occupied by Combine invaders. By the beginning of 2800, critical intelligence on House Kurita's activities behind the front lines was flowing back to the Prince from MIIO's agents more quickly and thoroughly than it was from those of Military Intelligence. Over the months to come, the Prince would see to it that Military Intelligence reduced its bureaucracy and internal divisiveness, using many of the same carrot-and-stick techniques that had worked so well in rehabilitating the AFFS and creating the MIIO.

THE FIRST AFFS COUNTEROFFENSIVE: BEATING BACK THE DRAGON

With greater authority, an improved intelligence network, and a military no longer burdened by its own broken morale, Prince Paul Davion returned his full attention to the war in 2801. After arriving on Logandale in February to his join forces already gathering there, the twenty-two year old First Prince of the Federated Suns led a new counteroffensive against the Draconis Combine. While his strategy was nothing terribly creative—being effectively a full frontal assault against the targeted DCMS positions—the fact that the Prince himself was entering the fray further boosted his warriors' morale.

The first target of this organized counteroffensive was, naturally, Kentares IV. By making the liberation of that world his first priority, the Prince underscored his position not merely as a leader of the Federated Suns, but a warrior who—like everyone else in the realm—sought justice for the massacre. Paul Davion was not some distant ruler who focused on preventing the fall of his capital; he was a man willing to charge into battle for those helpless citizens caught so far behind enemy lines.

At Paul's side for this campaign was his uncle, Marshal Thomas Halder-Davion. An experienced battlefield commander, Halder-Davion oversaw the majority of the ground operations while ensuring Paul's security. (The young Prince, strategic and political prodigy though he was, nevertheless had much to learn on the battlefield.) The general success of the first Davion counteroffensive, which would liberate nearly forty worlds between 2801 and 2807, is largely credited to the complementary skills of these two men, as well as a sudden eruption of hostilities between Capellan and Combine forces over several former worlds of the Terran Hegemony.

The liberation of Kentares IV itself was further aided by a surprise discovery: a small, company-sized group of AFFS survivors had failed to evacuate the world with the rest of the Seventh Crucis Lancers. Although this company, led by Captain Kieran McKinnon, was unable to prevent the Kentares Massacre, its covert operations in the midst of the tragedy saved many Kentaren lives. Since Jinjiro's departure in 2797, McKinnon's guerillas had resurfaced to harass and further demoralize the DCMS forces left to defend the now-cursed world. Between McKinnon's Raiders (as the company was known), and the Prince's assault, Kentares was reclaimed by the end of April 2801. Impressed by Captain McKinnon's effectiveness in long-term, behind-the-lines raiding, Paul Davion sent him and his Raiders onward to act as a vanguard objective-raider during future waves of the counteroffensive campaign.

The victories of the first counteroffensive further bolstered morale across the AFFS, and wore away at the DCMS' resolve. Armed with military intelligence that continued to improve with each successive wave, Davion's field commanders grew bolder, executing daring operations that netted stores of Kuritan material. Modifying a page from the Combine's invasion playbook, many planetary assaults would begin with advance strikes aimed at disabling their transport assets, taking out JumpShips, DropShips, and even WarShips when possible. Often, these shipping raids actually hit systems adjoining a target world first, to strand any reinforcements which could be called when the main forces launched their final assaults.

In an effort to blunt the Federated Suns' counterassault, several DCMS generals found themselves forced to move troops from elsewhere in the occupied territories, stripping many to minimalist defenses. Meanwhile, reports of low morale, up to and including the surrender of whole infantry and armor battalions, further enraged Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita. In an effort to reignite the spark in his men, Jinjiro resorted to the harsh disciplinarian measures used throughout the DCMS training regimen. When these efforts failed, the Coordinator ordered the torture and execution of his own officers. Still other DCMS field commanders, shamed by their failure, or by the sense of tarnished honor that came with news of Kentares, committed *seppuku*.

WHO KILLED THE PRINCE? (CONTINUED)

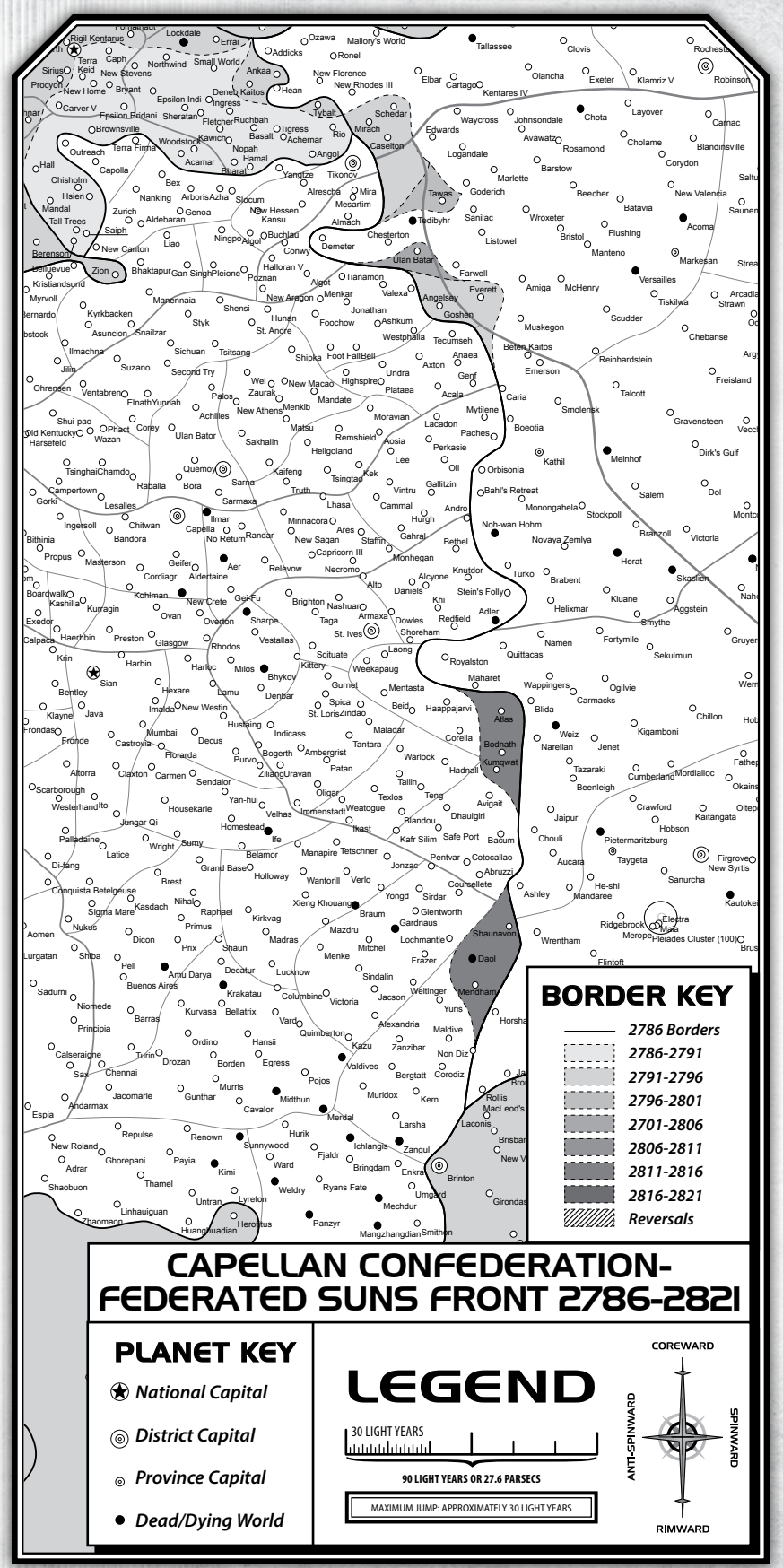
Alexander Dresari – At the time of John's assassination, Alexander Dresari was the Brevet Colonel who took effective command of the Seventh Crucis Lancers remnants that evacuated from Kentares on the Prince's orders. According to this conspiracy theory (which only gained traction during the FedCom Civil War of the 3060s), Dresari was so horrified by the massacre following the Seventh's withdrawal that he blamed John for the atrocity, and hired the assassin at great personal expense.

Paul Davion – A favorite theory for those who enjoy seeing the Davions as a family of moustache-twirling villains, this one often piggybacks on the Dresari theory by suggesting that Paul—then a young NAMA cadet—conspired with Dresari to have his father and grandfather killed. The sole "evidence" usually offered by those who suggest it comes down to the fact that Paul immediately ascended to the throne and that he subsequently awarded Dresari a ducal title as ruler of Kentares IV once that world was liberated.

Anastasia Cunningham – Countess Cunningham of Kestrel was a ranking member of the Federated Suns' High Council who had the ear of the Privy Council's Minister of Military Intelligence (the progenitor to the modern MIIO). Under this theory, the assassination of the Prince and his heir was intended to usurp Davion control over the Suns by putting Paul Davion on the throne as a puppet. Those who suggest that Cunningham masterminded Prince John's death tend to believe that her motives were more driven by patriotism than politics; a great many members of the High Council blamed the Prince for the AFFS' failure to hold back the Kuritan hordes, and the Kentares Massacre was merely the straw that broke the proverbial cameloid's back. Proponents of the so-called Cunningham Conspiracy theory often split on whether or not Paul Davion was aware of the plot, and whether he was rebelling against it when he launched his reformation, which—among other things—saw the creation of the MIIO and the radical overhaul of the Military Intelligence department.

Joshua Davion – This final theory is most favored by those obsessed with tales of Shakespearean tragedy. Though it has many subtle variations, it posits that the Prince's son, overcome with grief and shame for the events leading up to the Kentares Massacre, killed his father during an argument over the planning table, and then turned the gun on himself when he realized what he'd done. Under this theory, all witness and investigative reports of the murder-suicide were covered up, both to avoid embarrassing the Davion family, and to prevent the tragedy from undermining the Suns' newfound spirit of unity that would be so vital to pushing back the Combine invaders.

—From *Conspiracies for All Seasons (Volume XXI)*, J. M. Starling, 3142



By the end of 2807, the first Suns counteroffensive reclaimed thirty-nine worlds and pushed the Combine advance back as far as Kestrel. With supply lines straining to keep up, Prince Davion decided to give his troops time to catch their breath and consolidate gains. Remnant DCMS units scattered amongst the reclaimed worlds also needed to be hunted down, a process aided—more often than not—by locals only too eager to turn in their former occupiers. Shipping raids bled the navies of both realms white, to the point where the AFFS began imposing moratoriums on the summary destruction of simple JumpShips. Instead, naval raiding forces were to try and capture such vessels intact as often as possible, resorting to destruction only as a last resort; Kurita WarShips, however, remained under House Davion's "Kill on Sight" lists.

On both sides, a shortage of troops also made itself felt. With so many conventional forces and smaller outfits breaking ranks or simply rolling over before the Suns' campaign, Coordinator Jinjiro began ordering his military academies and training bases to release their trainees into service as much as a year ahead of schedule. For the Suns, similar crash-course training programs were enacted to fill the lower ranks and replace battlefield losses in anticipation of the next counteroffensive. Both realms also sought additional mercenary support; while Prince Davion was able to sign many new mercenary commands to his realm's employ, the Draconis Combine was actually *losing* mercenary support.

Once again, the specter of Kentares loomed; out of disgust for Jinjiro's actions, the Eridani Light Horse mercenary brigade began the process of relocating from Sendai in Combine space in June 2798. On what was later revealed to be his own initiative, the planetary administrator on Sendai responded to this by taking many of the brigade's dependents hostage, and ordering the last of the mercenaries' resident battalions—the Eighth Recon and Fiftieth Heavy Cavalry—to stay at their posts. When the Sendai administrator subsequently made good on his threat to execute the hostages, the two battalions returned to the planet and, in a week-long rampage, destroyed all of the DCMS 'Mech forces and officers present. As news of the Light Horse's experience spread, several more mercenary groups fled Combine space as quickly as they were able, some even switching sides immediately to fight for the Federated Suns.

FAR ENOUGH: THE CONFEDERATION-SUNS FRONT

In April 2808, hoping to avert a full-scale war with the now resurgent Federated Suns, Chancellor Ilsa Liao took the unprecedented step of renouncing her grandmother's claim to the First Lordship. In a peace overture to Paul Davion, she extended an offer for a "new and lasting détente" between the Capellan Confederation and the Suns, as well as her support for House Davion's claim to the throne of the fallen Cameron family.

But there was a price, of course: this peace and support for a Davion First Lordship would only be granted if the Prince "returned" the world of Chesterton to the Confederation, and acknowledge Capellan sovereignty over the contested Chesterton Worlds in perpetuity.

At the time of the offer, Prince Paul was in the midst of planning his second counteroffensive against the Draconis Combine, which still occupied large swaths of the Federated Suns' Draconis and Crucis Marches. Meanwhile, most of the Chesterton Worlds to which Ilsa referred had already been taken by the Confederation during Sandol Quinn's reign as Regent-Chancellor. For the Federated Suns, allowing the House Liao to claim Chesterton and end all conflict on that front would enable the AFFS to move additional forces to the fight against Kurita. For the Capellan Confederation, acceptance of this peace proposal would allow Liao to proclaim a victory no previous Chancellor had ever accomplished, while freeing more CCAF troops to reclaim worlds lost on the Free Worlds League front.

In a move that many in both realms would criticize and question for years to come, Prince Paul Davion not only rejected the offer in its entirety, he also dispatched the Third and Fifth Crucis Lancers regiments to assault the Capellan-captured worlds of Ulan Batar and Farwell less than a year later. This action reignited a front that had simmered since Sandol Quinn yielded the Chancellorship to Ilsa Liao. Combat would rage on the worlds around Chesterton for the better part of the next two years, even as the Suns simultaneously launched its second counteroffensive against the Combine.

WHY, INDEED?

Even ComStar's historical archives have wondered what drove Paul Davion to reject Ilsa Liao's overtures, especially in the overtly hostile manner he did so. It was, after all, one thing to snub the peace offer as a possible Capellan trick, but quite another to initiate a new round of heavy fighting on a second front when the Dragon still breathed down the FedSuns' proverbial neck. When members of the Suns' nobility and high government officials openly questioned the Prince, his reaction was often to send such individuals (or a family member) to one of the front lines.

Theories abounded. Some were reasonable suggestions; perhaps there a secret clause that Davion simply could not accept, or maybe he suspected the Confederation was behind his father's assassination. Others were a bit more far-fetched, such as one that suggested the peace proposal was a last-ditch effort by Ilsa to patch up an illicit affair between the two young rulers. Still other theories amounted to a shrugging assumption that the Suns' reversal of fortunes upon Paul's ascent to the throne gave him a "God complex" wherein he considered himself invincible and infallible.

But the answer could lie right in Paul's own words when he rejected the proposal:

"Why should we be so amazed and honored because Dame Ilsa Liao wants to make a deal that would recognize me as First Lord? The truth is self-evident; it shouldn't have to be bargained for."

At face value, the Prince's words sound like the same arrogant rhetoric that started the Succession Wars, but this assessment misses the fact that, for Paul the First Prince, there may have been far more at stake. When Paul first claimed the throne, one of his most dramatic acts was to assume the title of Duke of New Avalon. That once-honorary position, reserved for the First Lord of the Star League, had accumulated additional powers that when combined with his rights as Prince, effectively made Paul an absolute monarch. The Duchy of New Avalon became the source of Paul's wealth, allowed him to control the Suns' High Council, and the made it possible for him to end the regional divisiveness that plagued his realm and military.

In acknowledging Ilsa Liao's proposal, Paul would reveal a critical weakness to his domestic enemies: that the First Lordship was already an empty title. In the more than twenty years since Kerensky's Exodus, the Terran Hegemony had ceased to exist, and the Star League's last embers had been extinguished right along with it. There was no real chance that the Great Houses would now set aside their differences and reform the League. If Paul had accepted Liao's peace proposal, he would trade a world that had been part of the Suns since before the Confederation itself truly existed in exchange for a title that held no meaning beyond being the source of his duchy.

And if he were willing to do *that*, then others within the Suns would surely begin asking: what right had he to claim the duchy to begin with?

—From *Conspiracies for All Seasons (Volume XXI)*, J. M. Starling, 3142

THE SECOND AFFS COUNTEROFFENSIVE: SQUEEZING THE BULGE

In late 2808, the AFFS gathered to launch its second counteroffensive against what some called the "Kurita Bulge." This offensive would largely be aimed at the enemy's flanks, but also had a secondary goal of sweeping the last remaining DCMS presence out of the Crucis March. The first wave of this counteroffensive, launched in the early months of 2809, was a two-pronged assault setting out from Castleton on one side and Rowe on the other.

The Castleton drive seized Johnsondale and Olancha by the middle of 2809, and dug as far as Layover and Blandinsville by the end of the year. The Rowe drive, meanwhile, managed to take Cassias, Udibi, and Barlow's End by the close of 2809, while additional forces worked on Choudrant and Damevang. Toward the end of 2809, the AFFS launched a third prong of attacks, this one starting with the valuable breadbasket world of Kestrel.

The initial assaults of this counteroffensive proved overwhelming for the Kuritan defenders, many of whom remained unable to summon adequate reinforcements due to the loss of so many transports to Davion shipping raids. Furthermore, the DCMS morale crisis following the Kentares Massacre and the 2801-2807 counteroffensive continued to plague the defending forces. To ensure that the enemy would remain off-balance, Prince Davion also directed several smaller formations—some as small as a company, such as McKinnon's Raiders—to raid Combine supply centers deep behind enemy lines. These raids, combined with the liberation of Kestrel by early 2810, strangled the occupation forces to the point where many surrendered or retreated after only a brief skirmish or two.

The Second AFFS Counteroffensive officially ended in December 2810, by which time the last of the Draconis Combine's military forces in the Crucis March had been destroyed, captured, or driven back. As a new year dawned, the Dragon stood no closer to New Avalon than Robinson—a far cry from its position just before the massacre on Kentares.

With half of the Draconis March yet to be reclaimed, and the conflict against the Capellan Confederation still raging over the Chesterton region, Prince Paul Davion once again called for a pause in the AFFS advance, to consolidate his gains and resupply his troops.

THE THIRD AFFS COUNTEROFFENSIVE: BACK TO SQUARE ONE

The third and final major counteroffensive campaign launched by the Federated Suns against Combine-occupied space began only three months after the second. Although the Suns' news media (and many historians since) proclaimed the short respite between offensives to be a calculated strategy, the fact of the matter was that the Prince felt rushed to regain momentum before his enemies could rally.

In the opening months of 2811, several AFFS raiding parties, working in advance of the next phase of anti-Combine operations, reported that the Kuritan forces were starting to reinforce their borders. Furthermore, many of the DCMS troops they encountered appeared less prone to breaking ranks than they had been in the previous campaigns. These raiding reports confirmed what Paul Davion's MIIO had told him for the last few years; the Arm of the Dragon was finally shaking off its malaise.

On the Capellan front, the Federated Suns managed to reclaim Ulan Batar, Farwell, Demeter, and was driving the Confederation off Mirach, all worlds surrounding the coveted Chesterton system. In the course of the fighting, a nuclear exchange on the world of Tedibyhr effectively obliterated the Capellan forces there, but not without also devastating the few human settlements that remained on the marginal planet. These victories had nearly reversed the conquests made during Sandol Quinn's reign, and drove home the Prince's rejection of Chancellor Ilsa Liao's peace proposal. Amid signs that the CCAF was now fully on defensive footing—if only for the time being—Paul felt confident enough to divert some of those troops back toward House Kurita.

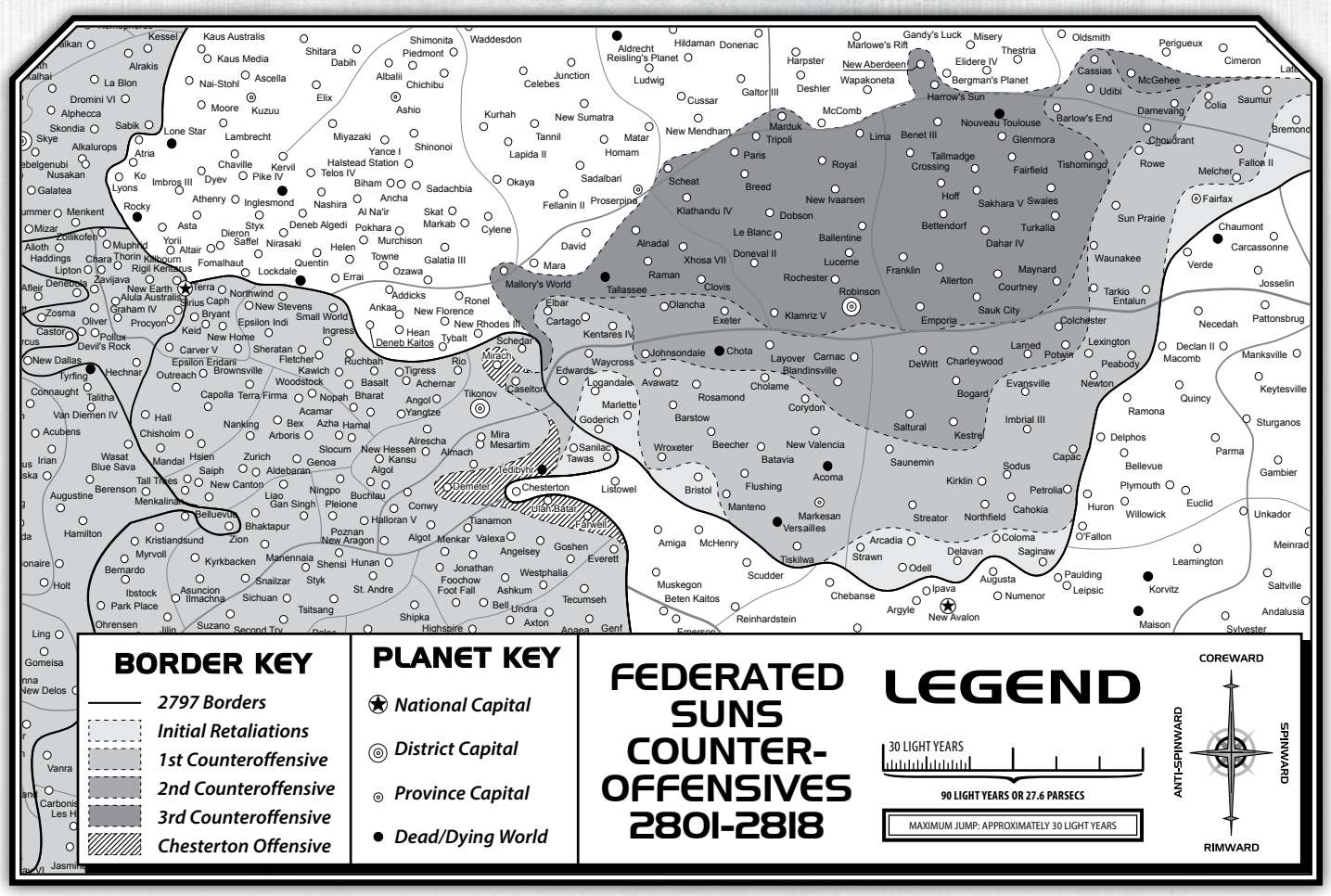
Once more, the offensive against the Combine-occupied worlds of the Draconis March began with two prongs, one on each side of the conquered territories. With few exceptions, the target systems were all pre-war holdings of the Federated Suns. With the Kuritans reclaiming their fighting spirit, the Prince was keenly aware of the dangers inherent in setting foot on their home soil. Having spent years reclaiming worlds whose native populations were only too eager to aid their AFFS liberators, it was easy to imagine Combine citizens doing the same to oppose them once the border was crossed.

The first few waves of this counteroffensive aimed to isolate a pair of key worlds in the occupied March where Prince Davion and his military commanders anticipated the strongest resistance: Robinson and Dahar IV. Given the importance both worlds held to the regional command structure prior to the war, and their central location within the remnants of the Kurita Bulge, both the MIIO and Military Intelligence agreed that both systems now served as the central hub for DCMS command and control throughout the region. The Suns' strategy was to strike at both only after eliminating the threat of immediate reinforcements.

Over the course of three years, the AFFS reclaimed almost twenty worlds from Combine control. Though the DCMS offered fierce resistance on some, such as Harrow's Sun, New Ivaarsen, and Nouveau Toulouse, other worlds fell after only token resistance. A few systems, including Dobson and Fairfield, even turned out to be completely devoid of Kurita presence by the time their Davion liberators arrived, the enemy having relocated elsewhere weeks or even months before. In these cases, the AFFS troops often spent a short while on the planet, clearing booby traps and other hazards before leaving security to a mix of infantry and armor detachments augmented by local militia and paramilitary police.

Robinson and Dahar

In March 2814, the invasions of both Robinson and Dahar IV began with the appearance of a Federated Suns naval squadron in each system. In the Robinson system, the Davion fleet included the *Starlight Raider* (a *Congress-D* frigate), and a pair of *Davion II* destroyers, supported by a squadron of six carrier DropShips. Opposing them in Robinson's orbit was the *Samarkand II*-class carrier *New Samarkand*, paired up with a single *Narukami II* destroyer, the *Shōwakusei*.



Although all five WarShips at Robinson had seen better days, they entered battle in fighting trim, save for one deficiency on *New Samarkand*: of her normal complement of seventy-two fighters, only half as many were on board when the Davion task force arrived. The remaining fighter squadrons were based on the planet below, supporting BattleMech forces based near the capital city of Bueller, the Jericho Industriplex, and the Exeter Island Maximum Security Prison.

Commanding the Federated Suns' naval group was Admiral Mateo Arrian, a veteran of the Battle of Cholame and several naval raids since then. Prior to the assault, Arrian had learned of the *New Samarkand*'s presence through scouting reports received mere days before the attack. In anticipation of facing the carrier that once served as flagship for the Combine Admiralty's Second Fleet, he chose to make a last-minute substitution in the squadrons assigned to three of his escort DropShips, replacing the aerospace squadrons with Land-Air BattleMechs.

As the two naval groups maneuvered toward each other near Robinson, Arrian ordered the carriers with the LAMs on board to drift behind his destroyers, hiding behind their mass while the dedicated fighter carriers advanced and launched their craft. In response, *New Samarkand* launched her own fighters, and angled herself for battle with *Starlight Raider*, while *Shōwakusei* attempted to engage both of the *Raider*'s destroyer escorts, *Duke Alexander* and *Sarah Davion*. As the Kurita fighters swarmed their Davion counterparts and their attached DropShips, the LAM transports accelerated to maximum thrust, emerging from the destroyers' shadow on a virtual collision course with *New Samarkand*'s aft quarter.

With the destroyers tied up, the fighters swarming one another in a desperate dogfight, and *New Samarkand* struggling against *Starlight Raider*, the LAM transports managed to close with only modest damage. At the last moment, all three DropShips released their fighter-configured 'Mechs, and veered away from the enemy carrier, which lacked sufficient anti-fighter weaponry to deal with the sudden swarm. Though dangerous given the sheer speeds of the various craft, two of the three LAM squadrons managed to execute a coordinated strafing run across the ship's length, covering the third squadron's landing directly on the *New Samarkand*'s hull.

After switching to 'Mech modes, the LAMs walked along the *Samarkand*'s metallic shell like fleas on a dog, making their way to the fighter bay doors even as capital weapons fire crisscrossed between the great WarShips, and anti-fighter weapons strained to draw a bead on them. Forcing their way through the launch bay doors, the Davion Land-Air MechWarriors entered *New Samarkand*'s cavernous flight deck with only three casualties, and proceeded to blast the monstrous vessel apart from the inside.

Almost immediately, the besieged WarShip tumbled out of control as its on-board invaders struck at fighter bays filled with stockpiled munitions. *Starlight Raider*, suffering from moderate damage, veered away from the enemy ship, lingering just closely

enough to provide intermittent fire support. Within minutes, *New Samarkand* was reduced to a dead hulk, burning from the inside out as her internal attackers fought through a blazing hell of their own creation to escape the doomed ship. Only three members of the boarding squadron managed to find their way out before the great ship exploded, taking with her one of the DCA's most experienced carrier crews.

Meanwhile, the *Raider*'s escort destroyers successfully put down the *Shōwakusei*, but not before the *Sarah Davion* was crippled by a devastating broadside. Though the fighter battle would continue for nearly a half-hour more, Admiral Arrian's task force successfully established orbital superiority. Only then did he signal the rest of the invasion force, commanded by Marshal Thomas Halder-Davion, to approach the planet.

Compared to the Robinson assault, the naval action for Dahar IV was far less exciting, but much more costly. There, the Federated Suns' attack force approached with a naval group comprised of two *Davion II*-class destroyers flanking the *Robinson*-class carrier *Marlette*. Opposing them was a single Kuritan WarShip, the *Aegis*-class cruiser *Eos*. Despite being both outnumbered and outgunned by her attackers, *Eos* maneuvered to engage them, launching nuclear-tipped capital missiles as soon as she was in range. Lacking sufficient anti-missile capabilities, *Marlette*'s escort destroyers were both crippled by *Eos*' fire, and *Marlette* herself suffered a devastating impact that disabled her port-side weapons batteries by the time her fighter squadrons managed to finish off the enemy vessel.

The ground defenses of both worlds were roughly proportionate to their naval support, with the DCMS presence far stronger on Robinson than on Dahar IV. Despite Dahar's mineral wealth and its strategic value as a military command center before the war, the planet's harsh temperatures and desolate landscape proved barely worth the trouble to defend. As a result, the Combine military presence there gradually waned in the months prior to the Davion assault that would liberate it, to the point where the planet fell after only a brief skirmish near the capital city of Drakaar.

The ground campaign for Robinson was much more hard-fought. The first AFFS landing attempts took place near the capital city of Bueller and the industrial city of Jericho, both located on the Canaan continent. As the Davion forces entered the atmosphere, they came under immediate attack by two wings of DCMS aerospace fighters. Focusing much of their effort on downing the invaders' DropShips, the Kuritan pilots scarcely paid attention to the enemy fighter cover, and many became easy prey as a result. Increasingly desperate as more FedSuns transports burned their way toward the surface, a few even resorted to suicidal kamikaze attacks, ramming their fighters into the engines and hulls of the 'Mech transports.

Although these costly tactics spent most of the Combine's air power over the two major cities, their efforts successfully cut down nearly two battalions worth of Davion BattleMechs, and one more of armored vehicles, before they could make landfall. The AFFS forces that did land successfully were scattered across the rolling hills and woodlands that made up much of the region below, and were forced to spend hours rallying for their ground battles, often under periodic strafing and bombing runs.

Jericho proved the easiest objective to take; only two 'Mech battalions from the Sixteenth Benjamin Regulars stood guard at the industriplex, augmented by a regiment of infantry, light artillery, and fixed gun emplacements. The Combine defense collapsed after two days of fighting, during which the Federated Suns force managed to establish a partial encirclement of the area before pushing their way through weak points at the city's north and southeast entry routes. Even after the last DCMS BattleMech fell, however, the fighting continued for another three days as surviving squads of Combine infantry forced the Suns' own troopers to root them out, sometimes one building at a time. Worse, in the midst of the fighting, massive chemical bombs were set off in the main complexes of the Jericho Weapons factories, located on the western side of the Rostovok River which ran through the city. The cascading explosives not only caused severe damage to the industriplex that made up so much of Jericho's land area, it poisoned the Rostovok for nearly a decade to come.

The capital city of Bueller took nearly a week to seize, thanks to the dug-in Kurita occupation forces there, estimated at more than a reinforced regiment of BattleMechs, supported by four armor battalions and two infantry regiments. Before the fighting was over, a full quarter of the city was in flames, and hundreds of civilians had been killed in the crossfire. Errant artillery fire even damaged the local ComStar HPG compound, disrupting interstellar communications through Robinson for nearly three months afterward.

But the oddest battle of Robinson's liberation took place at Exeter Island, site of the Exeter Island Maximum Security Prison, just off the west coast of the Solomon continent. According to the locals, most of the cadets from the Battle Academy of Robinson had been sent there after they were forced to dismantle their own school, brick by brick, in the early days of the occupation. When AFFS troops arrived at the island complex, however, they found a facility already in flames amid sounds of heavy weapons fire.

Fearing the worst, Marshal Halder-Davion, who chose to personally lead the prison's liberation, ordered his troops to cross the relatively shallow waters between the island and the mainland at once. Once more, Kurita aerospace fighters rose up from nearby airfields and attempted to stop the Davion troops, strafing them in the water. An AFFS squadron swooped in to help to drive them off when suddenly one of the island's anti-aircraft turrets swung about and shot down two of the Combine fighters. It soon became clear that the sounds and signs of carnage from within the prison were not the mass executions Halder-Davion feared, but a full-scale prison rebellion led by Robinson's academy cadets. Evidently, the imprisoned MechWarriors had spent years planning their escape, and were just days away from carrying out those plans when word of the Federated Suns' assault reached them. Emboldened by their captors' distraction with other on-world events, the cadets struck, effectively freeing themselves mere hours before the AFFS reached the area.

By May 2814, the worlds of Robinson and Dahar IV were back in House Davion's hands.

Liao's Last Play: The Battle for Chesterton

In May 2812, Chancellor Liao sent a massive assault force to seize Chesterton once and for all. The force included the First and Second Ariana Fusiliers, Vincent's Commandos, and Cochraine's Goliaths, along with an equal number of armor and infantry support forces. With the AFFS already stretched thin across the contested region, this battle group seemed certain to overpower the enemy defenders. In an effort to take the Suns by surprise, the CCAF and Maskirovka did their best to conceal the assault force's true objective, so much so that even rank-and-file MechWarriors on board the task force's DropShips were uncertain of their destination.

Unfortunately for the Confederation, a mole within the Maskirovka alerted the MIIO of the operation mere days before the fleet set out. By the time Liao's assault group reached Chesterton, the AFFS was ready for them.

When the Capellan fleet materialized in the Chesterton system, they found no significant Davion naval presence to oppose them, and their burn in-system passed without incident. Planetside communications traffic was low, and only a smattering of aerospace forces scrambled from bases on one of the planet's moons to oppose the incoming DropShips. So far as the attackers could tell, it appeared as though the Federated Suns had indeed been taken by surprise. If anything, their defenses on Chesterton were surprisingly light—so much so that the vanguard ships of the Ariana Fusiliers found they could land at the empty spaceport just outside the planetary capital of Chesterton City.

Only as the Capellan forces began unloading their troops did the AFFS defenders spring their trap. Emerging from prepared positions across the spaceport and city outskirts, two regiments of Crucis Lancers backed up by the Belinda's Irregulars mercenary command and several more supporting elements hammered the invaders while they were still in tight formation. The First and Second Fusiliers suffered heavy damage, losing more than two BattleMech battalions in an opening skirmish that became even more chaotic when the Lancers pushed forward.

At the industrial cities of Tristram and Swansea, where the Commandos and Goliaths were set to land, respectively, similar events unfolded as secondary Davion forces emerged from hiding to smash the off-loading 'Mechs. Despite the heavy damage, the Capellan invaders solidified their positions and held out for nearly three days before it became clear that they no longer possessed enough strength to overcome the dug-in defenders.

On the third day of the disastrous operation, with over a regiment's worth of BattleMechs and MechWarriors killed or captured, the ranking CCAF commander finally called a retreat. Of the twelve 'Mech battalions that set foot on Chesterton soil, only two came away from the debacle whole.

The failure on Chesterton cost the CCAF some of its best warriors, and further undermined the Confederation's capabilities against the Federated Suns. Although the worlds of Castleton, Farwell, Mirach, and Ulan Batar would eventually fall back under Capellan control over the next nine years, the Suns would hold onto Demeter and Chesterton. Further fighting along the Confederation-Suns front saw another half-dozen worlds lost to House Davion before the war's end in 2821.

Mission Accomplished

With the Capellan Confederation's last great drive into Federated Suns space thwarted, and the core of the Draconis March liberated, Prince Davion briefly considered one more pause in his counteroffensive campaign. In all, some twenty more of the Suns' worlds remained under DCMS occupation, but the strain on the realm's economy and infrastructure was evident everywhere he looked. The surge in morale sparked in the wake of the Kentares Massacre, and further boosted by the inspiring victories that followed, was giving way to exhaustion.

The Combine's warriors felt the same weakness. While the honor stains of Kentares still plagued the DCMS, industrial, economical, and physical exhaustion made the war increasingly difficult for its soldiers to prosecute. The Suns had already taken back some of their most important star systems; what remained under the Dragon's banner were mere consolation prizes in comparison. Worse still, the wave of officer suicides—whether from the shame of Kentares, or the shame of failing to hold their ground in the face of the resurgent Davion enemy—forced the Combine military to fill their gaps with younger and far less experienced replacements. Jinjiro Kurita even forced himself to discontinue summary executions of failing officers, and forbade those in the field whom he could not reach from doing that job for him. Even a poor commander was better than none at all.

Instead of calling a complete halt, Prince Davion instead decided to slow the pace of his counteroffensive. In the four years that followed the recapture of Robinson and Dahar IV, the AFFS advanced more cautiously than before, seizing only one or two worlds from each flank of the occupied territories per wave. Although some fierce battles did still erupt—including a heavy nuclear exchange on Klathandu IV following an orbital attack by Kuritan WarShips—the majority of the fighting was modest compared to the battles earlier in the war.

By the middle of 2818, the AFFS had finally swept the armies of House Kurita back to an approximation of their pre-war border. With the fall of Marduk, Scheat, and Tripoli, in fact, the number of worlds retaken by Paul Davion's forces matched the number seized by those of Jinjiro Kurita's entire campaign. Reconnaissance raids, however, now showed that the Arm of the Dragon was reinforcing this new border, preparing itself for the next wave of AFFS attacks.

Rather than push his luck, the First Prince ordered his army to instead fortify its conquests. Declaring his goal of driving the serpent from his realm now complete, Paul Davion decided that the time had come for the Federated Suns to begin the long, arduous task of rebuilding and repairing all that it could.

THE DAVION COUNTER-OFFENSIVES

As news of the brutal massacres on Kentares IV spread, the people and soldiers of the Federated Suns rose almost as one to beat back the Combine invaders who had come so close to destroying them. While the initial reactions were fueled mostly by raw emotion, they often lacked direction or support from the AFFS leadership. Nevertheless, in the years that followed, the Suns' recovery was nothing short of miraculous.

Initial Retaliations

2797	Marlette, Logandale
2797-98	Bristol, Odell, Delavan
2798	Coloma, Strawn, Arcadia, Saginaw
2798-99	Bremond, Tancredi IV
2799	Fairfax, *Sanilac*
2800	*Tawas*

First FedSuns Counteroffensive

2801	Kentares, Streator, Waycross, Avawatz
2801-02	Entalun, Markesan, Edwards, Rosamond
2802	Tarkio, Manteno, Wroxeter, Northfield, Cahokia, Anguilla
2802-03	Fallon II, Petrolia, Melcher
2803	Capac, Sodus, Kirklin, Colia
2803-04	Flushing, Batavia
2804	Beecher, Barstow
2804-05	Imbrial III, Peabody
2805	Newton, New Valencia
2805-06	Cartago, Elbar, Lexington
2806	Cholame, Corydon
2806-07	Saunemin, Waunakee
2807	Sun Prairie, Rowe, Evansville, *Castleton*

*Significant use of weapons of mass destruction recorded by either or both sides

Note: Worlds in italics were taken by the Capellan Confederation at this time

The Chesterton Offensive

2809	*Ulan Batar*, *Farwell*
2809-10	*Demeter*
2810	*Tedibyhr**
2810-11	*Mirach*

Second FedSuns Counteroffensive

2809	Johnsondale, Olancha, Barlow's End, Udibi, Cassias
2809-10	Layover, Blandinsville, Kestrel, Choudrant, Damevang
2810	Potwin, Colchester, Saltural, Bogard, Larned, Carnac, DeWitt, Charleywood, Exeter

Third FedSuns Counteroffensive

2811	Clovis, Doneval II, Le Blanc, Harrow's Sun
2811-12	McGehee, Tishomingo, Xhosa VII
2812	Dobson, New Ivaarsen, Swales
2812-13	Ballentine, Lucerne, Nouveau Toulouse*
2813	Maynard, Alnadal, Turkalia, Klamriz V, Rochester, Fairfield
2814	Robinson, Dahar IV
2814-15	Sakhara V, Klathandu IV*, Glenmora
2815	Breed, Royal, Tallmadge
2816	Hoff, Paris, Benet III, Mallory's World
2817	Courtney, Sauk City, Emporia, Allerton
2817-2818	Franklin, Crossing, Lima
2818	Tripoli, Scheat, Marduk

EXHAUSTION AND DECAY

With a few exceptions, the last five years of the First Succession War saw a dramatic drop in widespread fighting. The war fleets of the Great Houses had been reduced to a shadow of their former might; the means to repair or maintain them were all but lost, let alone the ability to replace such massive ships. Mercantile shipping and support transports were likewise ravaged, with most civilian ships across the Inner Sphere conscripted to aid the various war efforts. Because of this, many worlds that would otherwise have weathered the conflict intact began to starve or succumb to disease as vital resources grew short.

Further damaging the realms was the sheer volume of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons employed by all sides, many of which compromised the long-term habitability of worlds that had been marginal or nearly marginal to begin with. The disappearance of whole systems from the interstellar maps—be they from warfare or from starvation and plague—underscored the sheer extent of the damage the Succession War brought to all of humankind. Across the Inner Sphere, hundreds of billions were dead—so many that, even centuries later, the exact number cannot be estimated.

The industrial damage of the First Succession War devastated the economies of all five Houses, to say nothing of the worlds that lay beyond their spheres of influence. Worse, the sheer scale of the damage reduced the technological capabilities of the Inner Sphere. Fusion engines, Kearny-Fuchida drives, and terraforming tech that had been plentiful during the days of the Star League grew scarce. State-of-the-art weapons, armor, and equipment perfected for the Star League Defense Force—most of which had been produced exclusively on the worlds of the Terran Hegemony—was nearly irreplaceable.

By the dawn of the 2820s, the member states of the fallen League had pummeled themselves to exhaustion, and begun the industrial and technological decay that would only grow worse

in centuries yet to come. In the final years of the war, none of the major states could muster enough forces or transport assets to launch a major offensive; even raiding became sporadic. By 2821, peace treaties and cease-fires formalized the borders between some realms, while others settled into a state of tense, undeclared peace.

The Great Succession War was over.

HARD TIMES: THE DECLINE OF THE PERIPHERY

Ravaged by Kerensky after the New Vandenberg Crisis, abandoned to their fate by Amaris, and virtually forgotten by the Houses, the Periphery realms all but collapsed with the Star League that conquered them centuries before. Without the influx of Star League dollars and other material support on which they had grown reliant through generations of carefully-managed League dominance, many worlds beyond the Great Houses floundered. Key life support and logistical systems failed, reverting marginal worlds to inhospitable landscapes, and starving others into oblivion.

The Periphery combat and merchant navies were all but obliterated or captured in the course of the fighting that erupted when Amaris seized Terra. In the League's wake, the lack of transport hobbled interstellar trade in the Periphery to a degree even greater than the House Lords managed to do to themselves, while leaving whole sectors open to rampant piracy. Worse still, even communications were in shambles, as Jerome Blake's ComStar proved far less efficient in restoring the HPG network on Periphery worlds. Although his spokespeople often claimed otherwise, many felt this was a personal snub to the worlds that Blake believed instigated the Star League's collapse.

REMNANTS OF THE REPUBLIC

For reasons nearly every schoolchild knows today, the largest and most significant Periphery state affected by the collapse of the Star League was the Rim Worlds Republic. The seat of power of the Amaris family, the Republic predated the Lyran Commonwealth, and eventually spread across an arc of space so vast that it came into geographic contact with three of the Star League's founding member states, from House Kurita's Draconis Combine to the Free Worlds League. At its pinnacle, the Rim Worlds Republic controlled nearly 250 star systems—outsizing the present-day Capellan Confederation by nearly a hundred populated systems.

As it shared the longest border in Inner Sphere history with the Lyran Commonwealth, it is remarkable that the Republic did not come into major conflict with House Steiner's realm until the Reunification War. Indeed, the two realms actually enjoyed a rather cordial trading relationship before and after the Star League's formative years. Because of this, the Republic became perhaps the most industrialized and technologically advanced of the early Periphery states, boasting many arms manufacturers and shipyards that produced military equipment ranging from small arms and tanks to BattleMechs and WarShips. Only the realm's relative lack of readily accessible resources and the dearth of ideally habitable worlds in the region limited the Republic's growth in the golden days of the Star League—even then, as the reign of Stefan Amaris would reveal, the Republic found ways to establish secret colonies beyond prying eyes.

The end of the Rim Worlds Republic began the moment Stefan Amaris shot Richard Cameron. Enraged, General Aleksandr Kerensky raced across the Periphery to strike at the Rim Worlds, quickly dismantling the Republic Army and much of the industrial complex that provided Amaris with his power base. After years of SLDF occupation, Kerensky's troops in departed the Republic in 2772, destined for their final showdown with Amaris in the Terran Hegemony. Although Kerensky intended for the Republic to thrive again under a restored post-Amaris Star League, such a fate was not to be.

The Lyran Invasion

As with so many large empires throughout history, the devastation of the Rim Worlds' government and military left a power vacuum that several local warlords and would-be kings scrambled to fill. Amid reports that surviving Amaris-loyal military groups were resurfacing with an eye toward restoring a regime in his name, the Lyran Commonwealth's Archon, Robert Steiner II, ordered roughly one hundred regiments of LCAF troops into the Republic. Although he officially described this invasion as a police action in the name of the Star League, the so-called Commonwealth-Republic Conflict was likely also an effort to quell domestic unrest over the Archon's failure to more actively support Kerensky against Amaris.

Over the next few years, Commonwealth military units seized approximately one hundred Republic worlds, including the realm's most developed and wealthy systems. Many of these worlds fell easily as the disorganized and demoralized remains of the Rim Worlds Army surrendered or scattered before the LCAF, but on a few systems—such as Apollo, Bucklands, and Somerset—Republic troops offered fierce resistance. While General Kerensky did protest the Lyrans' opportunism, he was far too involved in the war to liberate Terra to do much about it.

The Lyran annexation of Republic worlds ended without completely absorbing the Periphery realm, however. Fearful of further inciting Kerensky's ire, and equally concerned about rising tensions along other borders, the Archon ordered a halt to the Commonwealth's advance that left more than 140 Rim Worlds systems unclaimed. Many of these were outlying colony planets or systems otherwise dependent on resources produced elsewhere, and thus these fringes began to decline almost immediately. But others struggled to reunify.

The First Oberon Confederation

In 2775, Republic nationalists on Oberon, Crellacor, and Sigurd forged an alliance they dubbed the Oberon Confederation—the first of the mini kingdoms that would rise from the Rim Worlds' ashes. Although this tiny state did attempt to bring others into the fold, pirate groups—many formed from remnants of shattered Rim Worlds Army or SLDF commands—had already begun to stake their claims and prey on the isolated remains of the Republic.

The Oberon Confederation survived for the next twenty years, but could not attain the industrialization, economics, and infrastructure needed to maintain its security and cohesion, and

effectively dissolved in the mid-2790s. The Confederation existed in name only after 2796, but would rise again a few generations later, when a pirate named Hendrik Grimm revived it as a bandit kingdom in the mid-2850s.

[*Editor's Note: The second Oberon Confederation would eventually be overrun in the Clan Invasion of 3048-3050. Its leaders and disarmed military served as an administrative body under Clan rule, while its member worlds enjoyed a period of relative prosperity and stability. When the Clans withdrew from the region in 3086, the Confederation formed once more just a few months later, and today still exists as the New Oberon Confederation.*]

The Circinus Federation

In 2784, the same year General Kerensky led his Exodus fleet into the unknown, another fragment of the Rim Worlds Republic formed in the distant fringes of the Inner Sphere. Centered on the world of Circinus, a Republic trade world turned into an SLDF recruitment and training center prior to the Hegemony Liberation, the Federation started as a haven for pirates who periodically raided the Free Worlds League.

Around 2785, these pirates were joined by a group of Lyran refugees fleeing the early fighting that would eventually become the Succession Wars. A partnership of sorts was forged between these refugees and the bandit groups, in which the pirates would become the refugees' protectors, while the Lyrans worked the land to provide the pirates with food, support, and other resources. Supported by piracy and other vices that its agrarian, civilian populace ultimately turned a blind eye to, the Federation would grow to encompass nine worlds in the centuries to come, several of them annexed from the remains of the fallen Republic.

[*Editor's Note: The Circinus Federation eventually clashed with newer Periphery states that would appear centuries later, but did not fall until the very end of the Word of Blake Jihad in 3081, when assault forces of the Principality of Regulus bombarded most of Circinus' planetary surface with salted strategic weaponry. It has since been confirmed that the Word of Blake's secret "Master," Thomas Marik, was present in the Circinian capital at the time of the bombing, and was killed along with a significant portion of his remaining followers.*]

The Finmark Free Republic

The short-lived state called the Finmark Free Republic was organized in 2779, when the former Republic provincial capital world of Finmark established an interstellar alliance with five of its nearest Rim Worlds neighbors. As home to one of the few semi-operational Republic industries not claimed during the Commonwealth invasion, as well as an aerospace combat academy, Finmark proved an effective core for a mini-state. Over a period of three years, the Finmark government—modeled loosely on the early Rim Worlds system—managed to stitch together a decent defense force made up largely of orphaned elements of the Rim Worlds Army, the SLDF, and fresh recruits. In all, this nascent state possessed close to two BattleMech regiments, an equal number of aerospace fighters, and supporting forces that numbered approximately two regiments in mixed armor and infantry per member world.

By the late 2780s, Finmark had extended its influence to several more ex-Rim Worlds systems as far away as Port Vail and Inner Surge. Although most of these new worlds were not formal members of the FFR, they were receiving some defensive support from Finmark, which seemed intent on rebuilding as much of its fallen province as possible. Better yet, the near-complete restoration of the Roe Weapons Factory shipyards over Finmark itself offered the tiny realm an enviable industrial base that could eventually help to build a native interstellar fleet.

However, all of this progress soon drew the attention of the Lyran Commonwealth, which could not afford to have another powerful neighbor. In a 2792 naval raid, the Commonwealth attempted to seize Finmark's shipyard, only to face a desperate resistance from the local defenders that quickly escalated. After booby traps on the shipyard factory platforms took out his boarding parties and seriously damaged two of his corvettes, the spiteful Lyran commander ordered a nuclear bombardment of the planetary surface, targeting all major settlements for destruction. With the death of its capital world and the associated political, industrial, and economic resources, the FFR collapsed over the next decade.

Other Fragments

While a great many of the worlds left to their own devices after the fall of the Rim Worlds died off (or simply fell off the map thanks to the complete disinterest of the interstellar community), several of these forgotten worlds managed to eke out an existence. Surviving as outliers, visited mainly by lostech prospectors, pirates, and adventurous deeper-space traders, many lingered on as isolated independent systems. Some would be rediscovered later in the form of reclusive mini-states and alliances that somehow completely escaped the notice of the Inner Sphere. The following describe the most notable examples.

Chainelane Isles: One of the larger planetary clusters forged from the coreward remains of the Rim Worlds Republic, the Chainelane Isles emerged at some point between the Republic's fall and the mid-to-late 2800s. It was then that the majority of these orphaned systems—developed and controlled by a diverse group of local warlords, displaced cultures, and other scattered communities of both honest and illicit nature—forged a semi-formal trading alliance. The Isles would remain a haven for rogues, merchants, and refugees alike for centuries to come. Miraculously, they would even survive the Clan Invasion and the Word of Blake Jihad more or less intact, and still exist today—albeit in a state of ongoing internal conflict.

Von Strang's World: Originally known as Erin, Von Strang's World received its current name when a local Amaris-loyalist warlord named Baron Nico von Strang seized power around 2780 and established a new government under his Barony of Strang. The Von Strang family maintained an iron-fisted rule through the centuries until the coming of the Clans, treating their underclasses as serfs and slaves while constantly filling their heads with pro-Amaris propaganda and fears of an imminent Inner Sphere invasion. Conquered first by Clan Jade Falcon in 3049, and then by Clan Hell's Horses during the Jihad, the planet actually enjoyed a period of

stability under Clan occupation. Following the Clans' abandonment of the coreward Periphery in the late 3080s, Von Strang's World has devolved into ruin and piracy.

Star's End: The world of Star's End and its asteroid fields persisted after the Republic's fall as a haven for pirates plaguing the Inner Sphere for centuries, including the notorious Belt Pirates. The hidden JumpShip yard based in the system helped keep the pirate bands viable for much of that time, but was dismantled by the Clans during their occupation. Since the Clan withdrawal of the late 3080s, Star's End and its lone habitable planet, Novo Cressidas, is home to a smattering of diverse settlements united under a loose government for mutual protection.

Rim Collection: The Rim Collection of today consists of several former Republic worlds that survived for centuries at a subsistence level after their realm's demise. Uniting in the late 3040s for mutual defense against banditry, the Collection developed a loose democratic society that has struggled to hold the realm together to this day, and combined their resources to maintain a military based primarily on mercenary hiring.

Rim Territories: Another group of former Republic worlds that reunited centuries after that nation's collapse, the Rim Territories is a bandit kingdom in the classic sense of the world. Although banded together ostensibly in the name of mutual defense and resource-pooling, the leadership of this realm (which also includes a few Rim Worlds systems once occupied by the Lyran Commonwealth) is mainly an alliance of pirate groups who run their worlds like a collection of organized crime families, with each world serving as a different band's "turf." Surprisingly, the Rim Territories has survived for decades under this arrangement, and despite the criminal nature of their leadership, the Territories' worlds are more stable than most independent Periphery worlds.

Secret Outposts of the Republic

Discovered only decades or centuries after the fact, a number of worlds (or world clusters) have turned up that evidence indicates were associated with Stefan Amaris' secret build-up prior to the launch of his coup. Only a few of these Rim Worlds outposts have ever been confirmed, and all were found in an advance state of ruin, often due to harsh environmental conditions or an outbreak of fighting between either their own survivors or the survivors and local bandits.

Records found among these ruins, which appear not only along the coreward fringes of the fallen Republic, but also in the Deep Periphery beyond Taurian space, show that there may have been as many as *thirty* such "outposts" located beyond the fringes of the original Star League's sphere of influence. Yet, to date, only four secret Rim Worlds outposts have been confirmed by deep-space explorer groups. With clear evidence that these systems served to train and equip the vast number of troops who would eventually launch the Vandenberg Uprising and overthrow the Terran Hegemony, many lostech prospectors have combed over large swaths of space in search of the others. The mystery of where these remaining outposts might be, and in what condition, persists today.

THE TAURIAN-CANOPIAN WAR (2813-2814)

The Taurian-Canopian War (also called the Magistracy-Concordat Conflict, or the Herotitus Crisis, depending on whose textbooks are consulted) was a brief dispute that erupted in mid-2813 between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus. The war is remarkable for several reasons, not the least of which that it was the only full-scale conflict between Periphery states for the entirety of the Succession Wars era.

It was also the "cleanest-fought" of the border clashes in the entire First War period. Across the four worlds where it was fought, not a single weapon of mass destruction was deployed. At the start of the conflict, both realms possessed fewer than ten BattleMech regiments each; while the Taurian Concordat did have an operational WarShip at its disposal (the *Concordat*-class TCS *Parin*), the vessel never left Flannagan's Nebula. Furthermore, while the starting and ending dates of the war span more than eight months, the vast interstellar distances between the four battle sites meant that most attack forces spent more time in transit than actually fighting. After all was said and done, in fact, the total amount of time spent in combat between both sides was just over eight standard Terran days, leading to one Canopian historian to refer to the conflict as the "200-Hour War."

The war began when the Taurian Protector of the Realm, Semyon Calderon, convinced his Privy Council to authorize a plan to expand the realm's resource base in anticipation of potential invasion from the Federated Suns. Contemporary critics of this decision openly wondered how the conquest of worlds situated between the Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus could possibly have aided the Taurians in a war against House Davion, but their concerns failed to register in the upper chambers of the government, who ultimately backed the Protector. It is surmised that Calderon's appeal to the Privy Council not only addressed his unsubstantiated war fears, but also added the promise of reclaiming worlds denied to the Concordat by borders drawn during the years of Star League oppression.

As it was, the Protector was interested in securing two worlds in particular: Herotitus and Detroit. Both worlds were self-sufficient and resource-rich, but only sparsely populated and developed. They were also located close to the rimward fringes of the Capellan Confederation, which was busy dealing with wars on both sides. Along with a third system, Spencer, these worlds had initially been settled by a mix of Canopian and Taurian colonists.

During the Star League era, competing claims on those three "free worlds" had been arbitrarily decided by a League chronically indifferent to Periphery affairs. The Magistracy of Canopus was awarded nominal control over Detroit and Herotitus, while the Taurian Concordat was awarded nominal control over Spencer. However, the imposed treaty defined "nominal control" as a kind of demilitarized protectorate status of the respective realms, which meant neither realm was allowed to post military forces more significant than paramilitary militia on these worlds, while Star League "observers" maintained watch posts in these systems—ostensibly in the name of peacekeeping, but largely to take note of

any valuable resources or industries the Territorial States might find or found there. After Kerensky left the region and the Star League entered its death throes, both the Magistracy and the Concordat quietly "upgraded" the garrisons on each world.

In June 2813, the Taurian offensive began, with Marshal Gertrude Blake-Andrews assigned to the two-world invasion's strategic command, seconded by Comptroller Augustin Shapiro.

Herotitus

Arrogance, pure and simple, undermined the Taurian invasion of Herotitus before it even began. The Concordat battle group that materialized there did so at the planet's zenith jump point, and proceeded to secure the local recharge station without even bothering to interdict its communications. Knowing through scout reports that the Canopian garrison on Herotitus lacked much in the way of BattleMechs, it is possible that Comptroller Shapiro, commander of the attack group, considered this a means of psychological warfare. By allowing the jump station to warn the planet below, the MAF troops on Herotitus would know they faced the superior might of his Second Pleiades Hussars 'Mech regiment and its supporting armor and infantry. By giving the defenders time to consider their imminent demise, Shapiro may have hoped to inspire a quick surrender rather than a protracted fight.

Instead, all he accomplished was giving the MAF defenders ample time to send word back to Canopus and prepare an effective defense. Employing aerospace assets that apparently missed the advanced scouts' notice, the Canopians swarmed and shot down the incoming Taurian DropShips as they entered the planetary atmosphere. The fierce air battle took the invaders by surprise, and many ships crashed as concerted attacks by Magistracy fighters, small craft, and low-flying DropShips hammered them to pieces. In all, barely more than two companies of Concordat BattleMech forces made landfall intact, along with half a mixed regiment of infantry and armor.

Among the casualties was Comptroller Shapiro, whose command ship was the first to penetrate the atmosphere—and thus, the first to die in the crossfire. Command of the invasion once it landed fell to its ranking officer, Subaltern Josiah Brandamas of the Nineteenth New Vandenberg BattleMech Company. With most of the Second Pleiades Hussars decorating swaths of the local landscape, Brandamas acknowledged the hopelessness of his situation and surrendered to the defenders without even deploying his remaining troops.

Detroit

The invasion of Detroit, which took place under Marshal Blake-Andrews' direct command, turned out much better for the Concordat than Herotitus—although it would have been hard to do worse. Unlike Herotitus, Detroit had no recharge station in the immediate vicinity of the arriving Taurians, and Blake-Andrews had no intention of announcing her presence to the Canopians, nor did she skimp on her aerospace escort. As a result, most of the TDF invaders—the Red Chasseurs 'Mech regiment, plus two regiments each of armor and infantry—managed to reach the planetary surface alive.

On the ground, the Taurians and Canopians chased each other around the planet's few significant military targets, most of which amounted to spaceports and mining complexes. After the MAF defenders failed to lure the invaders into a major ambush prepared near the port city of Dearborn, the campaign for Detroit (such as it was) devolved into a series of attempted traps and counter-traps that neither side proved foolish enough to blunder into. The fighting for Detroit thus ground down into quick defensive actions and probing raids until word of the truce arrived months later.

Spencer

Upon receiving word of the assault on Herotitus, Magestrix Rwannah Centrella ordered the MAF to retaliate, choosing as their first targets the free system of Spencer, and the Concordat fringe system of Portland. By hitting an actual Taurian system, Centrella hoped to drive home a warning to the Concordat: the Magistracy would not be easy prey.

The first attack, on Spencer, proved nearly as disastrous for the Canopians as had the Taurian attack on Herotitus. MAF DropShips carrying the Kossandra's Volunteers BattleMech regiment, backed by a mixed armor and infantry regiment and two squadrons of aerospace fighters, arrived via the system's zenith jump point and burned straight for the planet. Their target was the capital city of Liberty Point, the largest urbanized area on Spencer—a fact picked up in their communications chatter by signal-eavesdropping satellites floating in-system.

On the ground was Comptroller Hendras Mohandun, commander of the local militia force, which included a mixed regiment of 'Mechs and armor. Upon learning of the Canopians' objective, Mohandun directed the complete evacuation of the capital city and strategically parked the majority of his militia units among its larger buildings. Landing just outside the city, the inexperienced Volunteers stormed the capital and blundered straight into the trap. After nearly an hour of heavy fighting, the MAF invaders suffered nearly fifty percent casualties, while a mix of aerospace fighters and conventional bombers struck at their DropShips. Surrounded by Concordat forces, with the path back to their landing zone cut off, the remaining Magistracy units surrendered to avoid destruction.

Portland

On Portland, the Magistracy's First Canopian Light Horse regiment proved much more effective, although that was almost certainly due to the fact that the Concordat had no significant aerospace forces to oppose their landing. After landing near the town of Carter's Mill, the Light Horse secured the small settlement and proceeded to advance on the capital of Cooperton, which fell after a brief skirmish against local militia.

With no significant hard targets to capture on the sparsely-populated agrarian world, the Canopians were content with holding the capital area until they came under fire by guerilla insurgents. BattleMechs and armored vehicles assigned to the local militia, though far fewer in number than those of the Light Horse, managed to harass the invading MAF troops for weeks, using their superior knowledge of the terrain to spring traps and evade pursuit with ease.

After weeks of failing to decisively beat the Taurian insurgents, the Light Horse finally decided to simply plunder the capital's stores of food and basic supplies before pulling back to their DropShips. When word came down that a ceasefire was in the works, the Light Horse was only too happy to put Portland behind them and return home.

Aftermath

Though the Canopian response to the Concordat invasions of Herotitus and Detroit was far from devastating, it was fast and decisive enough to give the Taurians pause. The fact that the Magestrix was ready to retaliate within months of the first strikes, combined with news of the spectacular failure on Herotitus, quickly convinced the Taurian government to rethink its support for what became known as Semyon Calderon's war. Furthermore, the casualties and costs of prosecuting a conflict where the front lines were several jumps away from the nearest friendly border underscored the utter pointlessness of the entire affair in a way that words alone apparently could not.

In a subdued signing ceremony on Detroit in February 2814, emissaries from both realms agreed to uphold the borders established during the Star League era, while reaffirming the free worlds of Herotitus, Detroit, and Spencer as demilitarized systems. Prisoners of war taken from both sides were returned to their homelands over the following month, during which time the media outlets in both realms heaped scorn on the Protector Semyon Calderon for "playing House Lord."

The Taurian-Canopian War would be the only major war involving a Periphery state until the Canopian-Andurien War in the 3030s. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, Protector Semyon Calderon dismissed Marshal Blake-Andrews, hoping to deflect blame for the failed campaign on her. Blake-Andrews' replacement as head of the TDF was Natal Choudhoury of the Taurian Guard, who would later sum up the war with a dry quip: "[The war] was not a total loss; it can always be used as a bad example."

As for Semyon Calderon himself, the embarrassment of the disastrous conflict would haunt him for years as the Privy Council hardened against him and his people lost confidence in his leadership. The animosity would eventually lead to his resignation in 2816. In his place, the Privy Council chose Rayna Arantino, the Minister of Education at the time, to serve as Protector of the Realm—one of the very few times a non-Calderon ever held the title.

DEATH BY APATHY: THE CRUMBLING OUTWORLDS

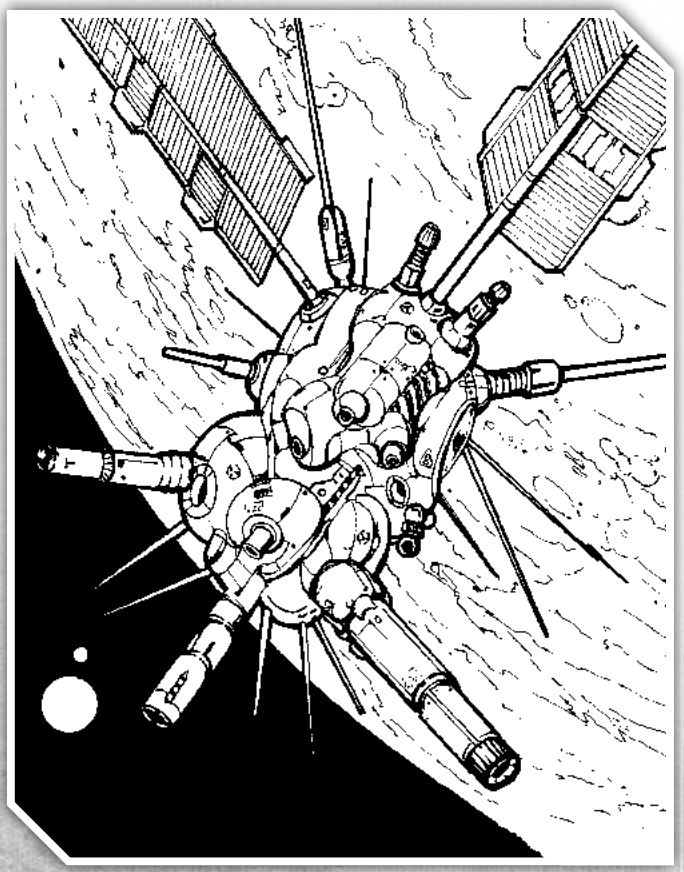
Tragic though each set of circumstances were in their own right, at least it is easy understand how the Rim Worlds Republic, the Magistracy of Canopus, and the Taurian Concordat fell on hard times when the Star League era came to its end. Less understandable is what became of the Outworlds Alliance in the wake of the League's demise. In the years leading up to the Amaris Crisis, the Alliance numbered just under 140 populated systems—over three times its pre-Reunification War size, even when accounting for the worlds quietly annexed by the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns. By the end of the First Succession War, over thirty of these worlds had perished, and another dozen or so had simply vanished from the maps—all without a single invasion launched or weapon of mass destruction detonated.

Although specific causes varied, the more general reason the Alliance lost close to a third of its worlds was, quite simply, apathy.

Since its inception, the Outworlds government lacked the centralization and authority of even the semi-dysfunctional Free Worlds League. Its many worlds were largely administered on the local level, under a loose confederacy that barely acknowledged its own representative leaders on Alpheratz. More than any other Periphery state, the people of the Alliance saw themselves as independent, disinterested in the follies of the Inner Sphere. In the age of the BattleMech, its primary mode of defense was the aerospace fighter, used to intercept bandit groups long before they made landfall. To many, these traits combined to create the impression of a backwards realm, a nation of interstellar "hillbillies," as it were.

Thus, the majority of the Inner Sphere barely took notice of affairs within the Alliance, if they thought of the realm at all. When the Succession War erupted, the Outworlds Alliance was roundly ignored by its neighbors, save for the expeditions sent through the region in a vain effort to trace Kerensky's Exodus route. Houses Kurita and Davion were simply too focused on trying to destroy one another to pay much heed to a Periphery state that never posed a credible threat to them.

Even Jerome Blake, biased as he allegedly was against the Periphery realms, saw little reason to pay attention to the Outworlds one way or the other. When his ComStar Order got around to establishing HPG compounds in the region, its efforts scarcely ventured beyond the Alliance's capital; the majority of the realm had to make do with courier ships for their interstellar communications.



With the collapse of the Star League, the investors who fueled the Alliance's remarkable population growth vanished. With them went financial support for virtually all terraforming efforts then underway in the outer half of the realm. Even when resources were located that might be vital for these worlds' survival, the Outworlds' merchants found them impossible to obtain without making the trek across the war-ravaged Inner Sphere—a challenge few cared to take on.

The end of the Star League hit the Outworlds economy particularly hard as well. Under League rule, the Alliance had adopted the Star League dollar and its local markets were sustained by the stability of that currency. When the Council Lords adjourned for the last time, the dollar lost its value practically overnight, ultimately forcing Outworlds merchants to revert to a primitive barter system in order to secure what goods and services they could. The largely insular nature of the various Alliance worlds further hastened this economic collapse, as local traders and tradesmen increasingly found dealing with even the closest neighboring systems too much hassle and expense to bother with.

And so, for want of anyone to care—even among the Alliance itself—worlds began to succumb to starvation, disease, and environmental collapse. Many of these were simply abandoned by their dwindling populations, who typically moved deeper into the Outworlds or even the fringes of the Inner Sphere. Others died out before their people could get away, their passing unnoticed until ComStar completed periodic surveys with its Safe Transit and Astrogation Project (STAP). For those poor casualties of an uncaring universe, ComStar's warning satellites near the local jump point or in LaGrange orbits close to the dead planets themselves acted as a global grave marker—a cold, metallic memorial to hundreds or thousands of lost souls.

To those who would eventually pick over these remains decades and centuries later, these worlds became known simply as the Outworlds Wastes.

OTHER ORPHANS

Beyond the four major Periphery states were a number of smaller worlds and world groups established during the Star League era. Although these mini-realms lacked the power to influence historic events in the Inner Sphere at large, their survival for centuries after the fall of the League became a testament to human determination that almost flies in the face of logic.

Illyrian Palatinate and Lothian League

If anything, the Illyrian Palatinate and the Lothian League—two minor Periphery realms located beyond the anti-spinward edge of the Free Worlds League—were remarkable in how both managed to evade the Star League's attention for virtually all of their existence. Founded by runaways from past Terran empires (the Illyrians fled a collapsing Terran Alliance, while the Lothians were Taurians fleeing the Star League), both evolved on the fringes of human space at a subsistence level, but eventually grew to trade among themselves and the nearby Free Worlds.

Theories abound as to why the Camerons ignored these miniature realms while keeping the four major Periphery realms under the SLDF's boot, but the simplest and easiest explanation lay in how little they offered in terms of strategic resources and military threat. Indeed, it was not until after the Star League's collapse that the Illyrians and Lothians even seemed to employ much of a defense force; bandit groups simply considered these realms too remote, and were more apt to hide in their space than plunder it. Even Stefan Amaris largely ignored these states (although rumors of their use in training his secret armies still crop up from time to time). The upsurge of piracy and fleeing refugees that came with the Amaris Crisis and its aftermath eventually prompted the hiring of mercenaries and other free-roving warriors for protection.

Beyond their slightly increased need for military protection, the minimal interactions between the Illyrian and Lothian states and the Star League enabled both to weather the Succession Wars with relative ease. Indeed, neither realm would face a serious danger until the thirty-first century.

Niops

At the time of the Amaris Civil War, the Niops solar system, located almost twenty-five light-years from the Free Worlds League's Romita system, was a well-stocked but isolated scientific settlement. Established in 2700 as a long-term study project on the death of a star (Niops is technically in the early stages of stellar death, and has been for more than four hundred years as of this writing), Niops was cut off when the Star League collapsed, as it lacked any JumpShips or hyperpulse generator system at the time. The scientists and their resident families would not learn of the League's fate until the tail end of the First Succession War, when refugee ships from the Capellan Confederation arrived there.

Over the centuries since, Niops evolved into a technocratic oligarchy, where the descendants of the scientific elite ruled over an unskilled labor force made up of refugees and their descendants. Though still confined to their single star system, the Niopsians eventually settled two of Niops' other marginal worlds, creating the three-world micro-empire known today as the Niops Association. When defense forces were needed, the Association's leadership eventually began hiring mercenaries, but continued to rely primarily on the system's obscurity and a stockpile of Star League-era technology to survive while the rest of the Inner Sphere descended into warfare.

Micanos

Corporate interests within the Draconis Combine founded domed mining settlements on three worlds in the Micanos system during the late 2750s. While the government of the nearby Federated Suns protested the move as a likely cover for spying into their realm (Micanos lay just two jumps away from the Suns' Periphery border world of Hivrannee), the Combine actually used the world as a penal colony for dissidents and other political prisoners.

In the early years of the Succession War, when the Combine needed as many ships as possible to maintain its assault on the Federated Suns, it quickly became impractical to support the

far-flung mining operation, regardless of how profitable Mican mineral resources were in those days. Remarkably, instead of starving out entirely, the system became a port of call for various local trading interests. Its largely well-educated and determined population, freed from their bonds as Combine prisoners, formed a workable governing system that maintained order and helped pool vital resources.

Like the Niops Association, the new micro-state that resulted—dubbed the Mica Majority by its natives—emerged as a three-world, single-star realm that would continue to thrive against all odds throughout the Succession Wars.

Novo Franklin

The world of Novo Franklin began as a haven for Outworlds Alliance refugees fleeing the Reunification War. The various groups of settlers who fled there, however, hailed from numerous Alliance worlds and ultimately held no interest in forming a unifying government, preferring instead to establish their own individual enclaves across the world, most of which maintained a subsistence-level existence.

The collapse of the Star League and the Succession Wars had little effect on this isolated world beyond driving an occasional band of new refugees, pirates, and other wanderers its way. Instead, this world declined on its own as multiple fiefdoms rose and battled one another for the centuries to come. Even today, the so-called Franklin Fiefs remain in a state of low-level internecine conflict, with many splinter groups existing at an almost pre-industrial level.

Antallos and Tortuga

The pirate havens of Antallos and Tortuga—beyond the farthest reaches of the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns, respectively—followed similar paths after the fall of the Star League despite their differing origins.

The pirates of Tortuga Prime first arose in the midst of the Reunification War, based around a core of AFFS survivors from a disastrous campaign. Through the Star League era, these pirates only grew bolder in their predations as other bandits flocked to their banner, until they formed a tiny bandit empire eventually called the Tortuga Dominions. Eventually growing into one of the largest clusters of bandit groups in the Inner Sphere, the Dominion has plagued every nearby state ever since, surviving numerous attempts to wipe them out by House Lords, Periphery states, and mercenaries alike.

Though once a pirate haven arguably as vexing to the Draconis Combine and Outworlds Alliance as the Tortuga Domains were to the Inner Sphere's entire "southeast" quadrant, Antallos began with far more lofty goals. Settled in 2764 by a collective of mercantile interests from the Draconis Combine, Federated Suns, Terran Hegemony, and Outworlds Alliance, Antallos was to be a neutral trading hub that would service all nearby realms during a hoped-for expansion into the region. Within its first few years of operation, the world thrived as such, drawing merchants from across half of the Inner Sphere even through the years of the Amaris Crisis. But when the Star League collapsed, so too did Antallos, as the merchants quickly stopped coming.

A DCMS expedition to Antallos soon after the Succession War erupted aimed to seize all high technology left behind by the Terran and Davion interests, but resulted in a massacre when the locals resisted. In their wake, what remained of the planetary governing body collapsed, replaced by city-states that battled each other for resources in the centuries to come.

The planet became a haven for regional bandits, outlaws, and refugees as the Succession Wars raged on, and remained so until the Word of Blake Jihad, when it was seized by advance forces from Clan Snow Raven.

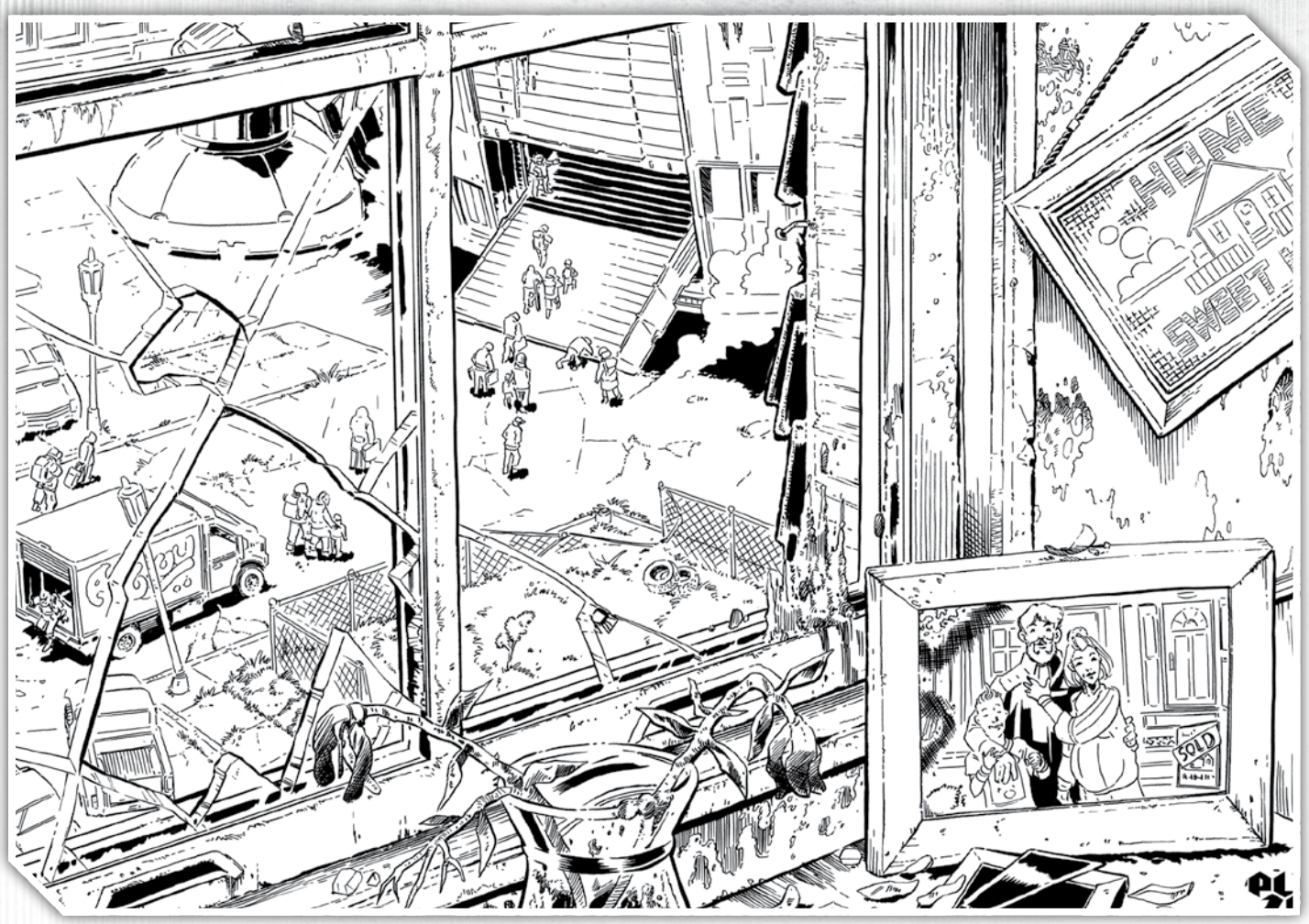
LOST WORLDS

The Succession Wars ultimately wiped approximately 800 worlds from the maps of the Inner Sphere and local Periphery states. Although the First War only directly claimed just under 150 of these planetary casualties, the damage done during that conflict contributed to the eventual demise of many more as technology continued to decline and JumpShip fleets continued to shrink.

Popular accounts often blame the loss of these worlds on the rampant use of mass-destruction weapons such as atomic and nuclear bombs, chemical weapons, and engineered biological agents. More often, however, it was isolation that made these worlds vanish—either in death, from starvation, plague, or environmental collapse; or simply abandoned by travelers who found nothing worth the expense of visiting these worlds to begin with.

In truth, even with modern technology, it takes a great deal of damage to "kill" a world such that mankind cannot survive there. Examples abound of systems throughout the Inner Sphere in which the only human settlements are a few environmentally-enclosed arcologies, either buried underground, submerged beneath toxic waves, or domed against toxic atmospheres or inhospitable weather. Some systems—such as Cholame and Gulf Breeze—have virtually no planetary habitation at all, but instead are home to space-borne colonies and orbital habitats. In these systems, and others where populations are minimal for one reason or another, "killing" the world simply means destroying the majority of the human settlements and/or the life support systems that keep them viable. For other, more populous worlds with stable ecosystems, destroying the world entails a greater spread of strategic weaponry, focused on large population centers, industries, and vital water sources. Yet even in these cases, there will always be survivors capable of scratching out a living amid the ruins and wastelands.

Ultimately, it is only a supreme act of God that can truly render a solar system completely uninhabitable by mankind. These are the most extreme of cases: an exploding star, a stray gamma burst, a planet-cracking asteroid strike. But in the grand scheme of the interstellar community, what takes an inhabited star system off the map has less to do with *how* the world has been killed, and more to do with what's left worth saving. This factor—apparently subjective to so many, yet actually grounded in cold, hard, objective data—is what truly decides whether or not a star remains on the simplified charts used by interstellar merchants and military strategists alike.



DEPOPULATION

The primary determinant in what removes a world from the lists of mankind's interstellar homelands is, naturally, population. This tends to be a flexible value, with no absolute minimum, although the conventional standard is around 10,000 living inhabitants—about the size of a single, medium-sized, suburban settlement. Systems in which the population of the primary world (or human enclave) has dropped below this number are often considered depopulated, but may still appear on charts for some other reason, such as the presence of a recharge station that allows JumpShip traffic to pass through on their way to other worlds. On the other extreme, worlds could be classified as "depopulated" on charts even when they possess hundreds of thousands of people in residence—just because the last few visitors could not locate any of these inhabitants in the wake of a disaster or other misfortune.

Dead vs. Abandoned

A depopulation event could be caused by anything from natural disaster, starvation, and disease to damage from war and/or the collapse of local government. In cases where the local inhabitants are lucky enough to have access to sufficient JumpShip and DropShip assets, a system no longer viable for human habitation could be depopulated by a mass migration or evacuation—but as transport assets grew increasingly scarce during the Succession Wars, such "abandoned" worlds were the exception rather than the norm. By 2824, of the 148 worlds that dropped off the maps, only thirty-four of them were abandoned. The remaining systems were declared "dead" by the only census-takers entrusted at the time: ComStar's Safe Transit and Astrogation Project.

The Reaper's Scorecard

ComStar began documenting the decline of the Inner Sphere practically from its inception. As part of Jerome Blake's effort to rebuild the HPG network for the Inner Sphere, he created the Safe Transit and Astrogation Project, an agency that would establish whether a populated system in the Inner Sphere merited hyperpulse service based on its population and viability. Starting in 2790, these planetary census reports were performed once every five years. Where worlds were identified as having been depopulated, the STAP would record its data and pass it along to their cartography division as a complimentary service for JumpShip captains everywhere.

THE DEATH OF WORLDS

Between the start of the First Succession War in 2786 and its stuttering conclusion in 2822, a total of 146 star systems vanished from the maps, removed by ComStar's Safe Transit and Astrogation Project. This "courtesy service" arose naturally as part of Jerome Blake's effort to reconnect the worlds of the Inner Sphere in the wake of Kerensky's Exodus, and effectively amounted to an interstellar census, displaying the worlds where enough human civilization existed to merit communication and trade.

In 2824, two more worlds would bring the final tally of fallen stars to 148.

Capellan Confederation
Worlds Depopulated: 21 (15 dead, 6 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (9), Disease (8), War (2), Other Disaster (2)

Draconis Combine
Worlds Depopulated: 22 (15 dead, 7 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (9), Disease (3), War (7), Other Disaster (3)

Federated Suns
Worlds Depopulated: 29 (24 dead, 5 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (12), Disease (8), War (7), Other Disaster (2)

Free Worlds League
Worlds Depopulated: 3 (3 dead, 0 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (1), Disease (0), War (2), Other Disaster (0)

Lyran Commonwealth
Worlds Depopulated: 7 (4 dead, 3 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (3), Disease (2), War (2), Other Disaster (0)

Outworlds Alliance
Worlds Depopulated: 30 (19 dead, 11 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (14), Disease (4), War (0), Other Disaster (12)

Rim Worlds Republic*
Worlds Depopulated: 33 (24 dead, 9 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (23), Disease (5), War (2), Other Disaster (3)

Taurian Concordat
Worlds Lost: 3 (1 dead, 2 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (1), Disease (1), War (0), Other Disaster (1)

Magistracy of Canopus
Worlds Lost: 0 (0 dead, 0 abandoned)
Depopulation Causes: Famine (0), Disease (0), War (0), Other Disaster (0)

*Not counting systems annexed by the Lyran Commonwealth prior to the Star League's collapse

Note: All world casualties are assessed against the realm whose borders encompass them as of 2822 (e.g. Rocky, though Lyran when depopulated, was located in the Draconis Combine at the war's end)

This service interfaced with local digital networks connected to the HPG grid, and generally worked automatically with a JumpShip's on-board navigational systems as part of routine software updates available to all commercial traffic. Military shipping also accessed these map updates of their own volition, a standard procedure since the Star League days, when maps required continual updates thanks to the establishment of new colonies and ports of call. In this manner, the entire map of the Inner Sphere was updated within a matter of weeks for interstellar travelers everywhere. In addition, ComStar dispatched technical ships to depopulated systems to deploy warning buoys in cases where the local world had suffered depopulation as a result of some form of bio-hazard.

For worlds found to have been depopulated—or which were in the process of depopulating—the STAP created a shorthand list, usable by the common layman. This list would record a depopulated world's position, its common name, its date of depopulation (as well as the date on which it was delisted from star maps), and the dominant cause of depopulation (simplified down to famine, disease, war, or other disaster). Over the course of the Succession Wars, space travelers of all stripes would come to refer to this layman's list as "The Reaper's Scorecard."

ODDITIES OF THE SUCCESSION WAR

The First Succession War was a conflict characterized by a few cohesive campaigns, some major battles, and a mind-boggling amount of raiding actions. As brutal as they were, the logic behind most of these events made sense against the broader backdrop of the war itself. Due to their borders, neighboring states usually battled with their nearest foes. Priority targets tended to be industries, command centers, and other vital components of infrastructure—whatever would bring about the quickest victory.

Yet some of the clashes that took place in the war seem bizarre, virtually inexplicable, even with the benefit of hundreds of years of hindsight. Why, for example, did Prince John Davion order his Operation BRASS RING in April 2788? Even at its outset, he must have known an assault aimed against House Steiner's most fortified worlds had little chance of success. And even if it had succeeded, what purpose would such an attack serve beyond creating yet another enemy in a war the Federated Suns was already losing against just one? Still, even after the failure of that attack on Hesperus, Davion sent word to the BRASS RING task force to find other objectives worth striking in Lyran space—which they would eventually do the following year, on Thorin, Rocky, and New Earth.

And why, just as diplomats on both sides neared the consensus that would ultimately result in the Bella I accords, did Captain-General Thaddeus Marik suddenly decide he needed one more victory in battle on Dieudonné? Although the world had once been rich in both minerals and foodstuffs, it suffered badly in the Amaris years, which destroyed the SLDF bases that had been there and left the world with little strategic value at the time of Marik's visit. Stranger still was the Captain-General's decision to leave his orbiting flagship and oversee operations on the ground, leaving himself open to the fateful LCAF artillery mission that would take his life while he discussed strategy with the commanders of his First Atrean Dragoons in an innocuous field tent.

Of course, such oddities were hardly the exclusive purview of Houses Davion and Marik.

INCIDENT ON HELM

Before BRASS RING, the Draconis Combine made a similarly unfathomable decision to launch a deep raid into the Free Worlds League. In 2788, a DCMS 'Mech regiment, escorted by a pair of destroyers, was dispatched to the Helm system, several jumps past the old Hegemony borders into Free Worlds space. Drawn by reports of a massive SLDF stockpile left behind in a fortified complex somewhere near the city of Freeport, this attack force was allegedly dispatched by Coordinator Minoru Kurita himself with orders to seize the stockpile. Anticipating heavy resistance and a need to penetrate the Castle Brian complex beneath the city, the Combine troops came armed with an ample supply of tactical nuclear ordnance and demolitions charges.

At the time of the raid in mid-May, the League had just redeployed its own forces to support the conquest of the Terran Hegemony, leaving a local militia of mostly armor and infantry to defend the planet. The raiders, under the command of *Tai-sho* Olav Nansen, made short work of the militia troops at the city of Freeport, driving off the small BattleMech contingent, and began their search for the stockpile. After eight hours of blasting their way into the complex bunkers, only to find nothing but empty storehouses and ancillary facilities stripped to the point of uselessness, the already-tense Nansen chose to begin torturing captive locals for information. While he was still doing so, a group of insurgents and forces managed to slip into Freeport to ambush the Kuritans, sparking a fierce urban firefight that cost the DCMS nearly a company of 'Mechs.

Enraged, and now convinced that the Free Worlds' military had already looted the facilities long before his arrival, Nansen pulled his troops out of the city and called in a nuclear strike against the site from orbit. After returning to his DropShips and boosting into space, Nansen widened the scope of this nuclear attack, targeting several major cities on the planet with the orders to continue firing until the task force's entire supply of tactical missiles was expended. The DCMS raiders returned home empty-handed, but not before killing or displacing over ninety million of Helm's inhabitants, and reducing large swaths of the planet to radioactive waste.

[*Editor's Note: Unknown to Nansen at the time, the SLDF stockpile had been hidden away by Star League engineers and, along with some SLDF aerospace bays hidden in the local asteroid belt, survived the centuries largely intact.*]

WHY, WESTPHALIA?

Compared to the DCMS strike on Helm, the Lyran-sponsored raid on Westphalia was much less destructive, but far more incomprehensible. In 2815, the Freeman's Fanatics mercenary battalion landed on the water-rich world and was engaged by the CCAF's First Chesterton Voltigeurs.

THE SCARS OF TOTAL WAR

Though two centuries have passed since the last major attack using nuclear and chemical weapons occurred, we still live with the effects of those outrages today. The number of birth defects attributed to genetic damage sustained by the infants' long-dead ancestors has only recently begun to drop off. This in no way means that the figure is small—we estimate about a million per year.

The secondary effects of the chemical and nuclear attacks on the land have also begun to drop off slightly. The constant influx of untainted plants and animals helped to dilute the effects of those tainted lifeforms, but at considerable cost. There are still large tracts of land unsuited for use, not to mention the occasional nasty surprise, such as a radioactive dumpsite or an unexploded biological weapon found buried beneath the soil.

The target sites, usually cities, are called Dead Zones if created by a nuclear weapon, Poison Pits if created by chemical weapons, and Rats' Nests if created by biological weapons. If wearing a light environmental suit, humans can usually remain safely in these places for about three hours. Any longer and the visitor risks contamination. Unfortunately, many hundreds of treasure hunters comb these cities every year, seemingly with no concern for the health risks. That has resulted in a rise in the number of radiation and chemical sicknesses, reintroducing a whole new generation of physicians to the horrifying effects of those evil weapons.

—From *Report on the Long-Term Effects of Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons Used in the First Succession War*, Commonwealth Military Press, 3025

Over the course of several weeks, the Fanatics and the Voltigeurs engaged in an island-hopping game of cat and mouse, which ultimately cost the mercenaries little more than a company's worth of 'Mechs—including a lance of heavy machines taken down by the Capellans' faster-maneuvering scouts.

Today, centuries after the Westphalia raid, the reason for such a strike remains a mystery. The Lyrans shared no common border or reason for conflict with the Capellan Confederation. Furthermore, lacking any significant military industry or technology centers, Westphalia was barely of any real strategic value; only its proximity to Davion border and the Chesterton worlds region made it worthy of a CCAF garrison.

LCAF records on the operation were lost in the fires of the First War, to the point where even Commonwealth historians remain uncertain why a mercenary force was hired to strike at such an insignificant target so far from Lyran interests. Today, the best theories suggest that Freeman's Fanatics were sent to Westphalia to pick up a high-value spy who was sent to gather data on the state of the region and somehow became trapped there. A more radical—yet still somewhat plausible—theory suggests the raid occurred as a result of some failed alliance talks between Houses Liao and Steiner, with an eye toward working together against the Free Worlds.

RANDOM REMNANTS

Early in the First Succession War, a number of battles were complicated by interference from forces other than those the combatants came to fight. Remnants of the Terran Hegemony, orphaned Rim Worlds Army survivors, and SLDF troops who failed to join Kerensky's Exodus—all of these made their presence known whenever the fighting between House Lords happened to cross their paths. While many of these would eventually turn mercenary (such as the Lexington Combat Group and Blue Star Irregulars), others fought for causes all their own to the bloody end.

What follows are just a few examples where such "random remnants" altered the flow of battle.

The Battle of Rocky

Of the many devastating battles over worlds of the former Terran Hegemony, Rocky stands out as one of the few times in the First War when Davion and Steiner forces faced each other, but also as an instance where remnant forces from Stefan Amaris' imperial army resurfaced to make matters even worse.

The LCAF took control of Rocky in 2785, only to learn soon afterward from the locals that a detachment of AEAF forces had been hiding among the ruins of the seaport city of Cavingwood since soon after the Terran liberation. Having turned to banditry since then, the former Republican troops preyed on several nearby townships. With no effective military left of their own, the people of Rocky were only too happy to point the Commonwealth forces at these insurgents. The Lyrans were still in the process of hunting the bandits when the AFFS units arrived, determined to avenge their earlier failure at Hesperus.

Deciding that the new attackers represented the greater threat, the Steiner forces abandoned their pirate hunt to engage them. As the LCAF and AFFS units turned on each other in a series of savage battles over the capital city region roughly 100 kilometers away, the Republican remnant troops struck at the Lyrans' command center. Now convinced that the insurgents were working with the Davions all along, and taken unawares by the audacity of their direct assault, the Commonwealth commander panicked. Determined to end the insurgency and teach the new invaders a lesson, he ordered a tactical nuclear strike on Cavingwood, and called in a bombing mission against the AFFS landing sites near the capital. The enemy WarShips in orbit responded in kind, lobbing nuclear-tipped capital missiles at the Commonwealth ground positions.

The nuclear escalation worsened conditions for a planet that had already suffered grievous damage during the Amaris Crisis. Between the fallout and the ash filling the skies, the planet found itself facing the beginnings of a premature ice age, with virtually no infrastructure to support its dwindling population. In all, the LCAF and AFFS each managed to evacuate around a battalion's worth of troops from Rocky, but the Republican forces were never seen again.

The Siege of Inglesmond

The Terran Hegemony world of Inglesmond survived the Amaris Crisis in fairly good shape, thanks largely to its people's reluctance to struggle against what they saw as the legitimate Hegemony authority. Although the Amaris era saw Inglesmond's citizenry grow increasingly

DEAD, LOST, OR HIDDEN?

Helpful as ComStar's STAP service was for Jumper captains, we know today that the Order's motives were not altogether altruistic. Through STAP, whole swaths of the Periphery were simply dumped off the map, reported as depopulated, usually due to famine or disease. While it is likely true that such crises were claiming their due among the locals, Blake's distaste for the Periphery—especially the denizens of the Rim Worlds Republic—is well known today. Having STAP exaggerate the state of decline on those worlds helped to justify passing them over for HPG service, while incidentally hastening their demise by causing shipping services to note their "deaths" prematurely and stop coming by.

How many Periphery folk died, one must wonder, simply because a petty comm-tech with delusions of godhood blamed them for bringing down the Star League?

And then, of course, there were the secret worlds—the ones ComStar hid by quietly fudging their data sets—sometimes going as far as changing the names a few years or so in advance, to really confuse things. Among those, we would one day learn, were the dreaded Five Worlds. Since the Jihad, many a money-grubbing merc, lostech scavenger, amateur sleuth, and would-be adventuring explorer have gone searching for the three (or two, depending on whose story you're buying) remaining worlds…only to come up empty or dead (or both).

Of course, the funny thing is, ComStar took a lot of planets off the map for perfectly legit reasons along the way, so even searching the dead lists leaves open the question as to which of these are the Hidden planets…and which are merely lost.

—From *Conspiracies for All Seasons (Volume XXI)*, J. M. Starling, 3142

THE TYRFING HOLOCAUST

Aggressors:

AFFS: Fourth Davion Guards and the Fifth Dragonlords Regiments
LCAF: Seventh Donegal Guards and the Stealths Regiments
DCMS: Eighth Sword of Light and the Black Sharks (mercenary) Regiments*
CCAF: Prefectorate Guard and Ariana Grenadiers Regiments
*formerly the Twenty-Third Amaris Dragoons

Defenders:

FWLM: Twenty-Third Marik Militia, Third and Seventh Oriente Hussars Regiments

In the time of the Star League, the world of Tyrfing served as a provincial capital for the Terran Hegemony. Settled in the mid-2300s, the heavily industrialized world was home to some three billion Hegemony citizens at the time of the Amaris coup, and possessed both a sophisticated space defense system network and no less than five of the Star League's Castles Brian. The planet was also home to some of the Hegemony's most intriguing natural vistas, including the Great Crystal Valley—a thousand-kilometer long stretch of lush, exotic woodlands nestled between two snow-capped mountain ranges rich in assorted, naturally-growing quartz-like crystal formations that likewise dot the valley itself in a riot of bright colors.

During Kerensky's campaign to liberate the Hegemony, Tyrfing was targeted for liberation by the SLDF's Fifth Army, escorted by the Twelfth Fleet. Fighting for the planet was long and bloody, and the Amaris Empire defenders were quick to deploy nuclear weapons to hold back the Star League's troops as soon as they made landfall. In an effort to stem the loss of civilian life, the League forces drove the Empire troops into the fortifications, and kept them largely contained while the bulk of their manpower worked to evacuate civilians to safe zones or off-world entirely. Only once the invasion's commander, SLDF General Solheim, felt the potential for additional collateral damage was minimize did he order a final assault on the enemy-occupied fortifications, employing orbital fire and "surgical" nuclear strikes to shatter them.

By the time the siege ended in mid-2777, the planetary infrastructure and economy lay in ruins, and severe ecological damage from the use of various nuclear and chemical weapons—combined with the uncontrolled spread of toxins from the industrial cities struck early in the campaign—rendered much of the world uninhabitable. Postwar reconstruction efforts had barely even begun by the time of Kerensky's Exodus, but that did not stop the emigration of local residents as the planet's atmosphere and weather patterns grew ever more inhospitable. Still, the world of Tyrfing was deemed significant enough for the Free Worlds League to annex it during the initial years of the Star League's collapse.

In late 2788, just three years after the start of the Succession War, the still-struggling planet came under attack once more—by not one new invader, but *all four* of the other Great Houses. Drawn in by reports of significant weapon caches left behind there by the Star League and Amaris forces (and by rumors that House Marik was making progress in reactivating the remnants of the planetary SDS network), raiding forces from the Lyran Commonwealth and Capellan Confederation arrived first in the month of July, clashing with each other and the FWLM defenders on site. In late August, the three-way war for Tyrfing was joined by a strike force from the Federated Suns, which was growing increasingly desperate to seize any potential Star League technologies they could turn against House Kurita. The Draconis Combine, either intent on thwarting the Suns' expedition, or eager to capture their own technological advantages, landed its own forces in October.

The five-way battle for Tyrfing unleashed even more of the chemical and nuclear horrors the world had suffered a mere decade before, all but annihilating the last of its major cities and Castles Brian alike. The number of skirmishes, temporary alliances, and inevitable betrayals that took place throughout the conflict is nearly impossible to determine, even thirty years later.

One of the most dramatic firefights erupted in the Great Crystal Valley, where elements from all eleven of the BattleMech regiments on-planet clashed amid the vivid landscape of what was once Tyrfing's most breathtaking nature preserve. The six-day, five-sided battle for the valley tore apart and burned away what remained of its now-poisoned woodlands, and most of the ancient and iconic crystal growths throughout the land were trampled and blasted to dust.

By the time the last of the invading ships departed, in late February 2789, Tyrfing was beyond saving. None of its major industrial cities remained intact, and the resident population was less than eight million. Although all of the participating 'Mech regiments survived to greater or lesser extent, some—such as the Confederation's Ariana Grenadiers—would need to undergo extensive repair and reorganization before they could fight again.

In stark contrast, the various supporting ground forces weren't so lucky. The rampant use of nuclear and chemical weapons, combined with toxins left over from the Amaris Crisis battles, took their heaviest toll on the various infantry units, with none of the participating forces claiming more than twelve percent of their original infantry support by the end of the fighting. Vehicular and aerospace forces fared only modestly better, but even then, only the defending Twenty-Third Marik Militia could call more than twenty percent of their original conventional support combat-ready.

In the wake of the fighting, Captain-General Kenyon Marik ordered hostile-environment salvage crews to recover whatever equipment they could from the ruins of the planet's Castles Brian, before scorching the remainder. Afterward, he reduced Tyrfing's garrison to specialized conventional troops while volunteers and government agencies attempted to bring relief to the local survivors. As of the end of the Succession War, Tyrfing's population was estimated at around five million and still falling, with the majority of the decline attributed to a series of toxic after-effects from all the fighting, and a lack of effective medical infrastructure. The system was officially quarantined by the Free Worlds government in 2824.

—Stephen Latt, *Forgotten Battles of the Succession War (Vol. 2)*, Greenbay Press, 2825

uneasy about this decision, they did not openly rebel. When General Kerensky liberated Terra, Inglesmond embraced his victory, and looked forward to the restoration of the Hegemony's glory in the wake of the Civil War. By 2782, however, it had become painfully apparent that the realm was in a terrible state, and that it was suicide to merely sit and wait for recovery while the House Lords failed to save the Star League.

Taking matters into their own hands, like several other Hegemony-loyal world governments in the Lone Star District, Inglesmond reached out to a number of neighbor worlds and shifted their local industries to wartime production. By the end of 2785, these efforts began to bear some fruit; while its upgraded orbital shipyards raced to construct new WarShips, armed forces equipped with state-of-the-art Star League equipment were helping to defend allies on Algedi, Kervil, and Styx. Unfortunately, by then, the House Lords had already set their sights on the Hegemony's rich remains, and the Draconis Combine was bearing down on those same worlds.

In the early months of 2786, Inglesmond's troops fought against the DCMS incursions. While they ultimately failed to prevent the fall of their allied systems, their resistance taught the Dragon that the people of the Hegemony still had some fight left in them. In response, a Combine raiding force struck at Inglesmond directly in 2787, destroying millions of tons of partially constructed WarShips in Inglesmond's shipyards. Recognizing the inevitability of a brutal Kurita invasion, Inglesmond's government appealed for aid from Kurita's mutual enemies—the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns—and offered their loyalty to whichever House could protect them.

Preoccupied with their own efforts elsewhere, both the Commonwealth and the Suns dispatched small "exploratory forces" to Inglesmond, ostensibly to help break what had already become a full-on siege of the planet. Their arrival only made matters worse, turning the entire affair into a four-way conflict for control over what remained of one of the Hegemony's wealthier systems. Well aware that they could not hold the planet for themselves, the Davion and Steiner forces began resorting to nuclear scorched-earth tactics, desperate to deny any advantages to the Kuritan invaders. The DCMS forces responded in kind. Inglesmond's largest cities and industrial sites were destroyed, and all planetary government and infrastructure had completely collapsed by the end of 2788.

The Combine ultimately claimed a planet shrouded by clouds of radioactive debris. Ten years later, after scavenging Inglesmond for any salvageable resources, House Kurita left all that remained in the throes of a nuclear winter. Soon afterward, ComStar's cartography service struck the world from its maps when a perfunctory search for survivors found no signs of life among the ruins.

The Scattered Lancers

In the course of the events leading up to the Star League's demise, a number of SLDF commands suffered extreme damage as they tried to stave off the inevitable. One of these was the 238th Mechanized Infantry Division (the Czech Lancers). Long plagued by Taurian-sponsored bandit attacks and terrorism, the Lancers suffered from low morale and a siege mentality when the New Vandenberg Uprising kicked off in 2765.

Stationed as close to the Federated Suns' border with the Taurian Concordat, the 238th was one of the first Divisions moved in to help contain the crisis. Savaged in the heavy fighting against surprisingly well-equipped secessionist forces, the Czech Lancers were officially disbanded by General Kerensky by 2767. While roughly a third of the division's Second Mechanized Infantry Brigade was folded into other commands, along with a regiment of BattleMechs, the remains—a little over four battalions' worth of 'Mechs and infantry—were shunted into a reserve pool.

In 2771, as Kerensky's forces prepared to embark on their final campaign to liberate Terra, a full battalion of the reserve-status Lancers went AWOL in the Periphery. Calling themselves Charon's Children, this battalion spent several years preying on the worlds of the former Rim Worlds Republic, hastening their decline before finding their way across the Inner Sphere and vanishing among the pirate domains around Tortuga Prime.

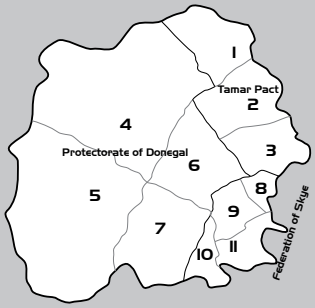
Four years later, in the wake of the Amaris Crisis and the final collapse of the Star League Council, agents of the Lyran Commonwealth approached the remaining survivors of the Lancers' reserves, hoping to woo them over to their employ. By that point, however, increasing tensions among these surviving SLDF troops had spilled over into violence, and more than a battalion's worth of Lancers MechWarriors had been imprisoned in the local stockade, placed under the guard of their fellow warriors. Hoping to maximize their recruitment, the Commonwealth's solicitors approached the prisoners first, quickly obtaining a pledge from their commander, Colonel David Cline, to join the LCAF in exchange for their freedom.

When the Lyran agents proposed to "buy" the prisoners from their former comrades, it prompted further conflict among the Lancers who weren't already locked up. The mechanized infantry contingent, under the command of Colonel Lionel Schaffer, remained devoted to Kerensky, and steadfastly refused even to consider such a deal. Others were more tempted. Those inclined to accept the offer, led by Colonel Lacey McGill, met with the solicitors in secret, to propose a deal: in exchange for the offered money, a retainer contract for her own battalion, and the loan of some LCAF 'Mechs for her plan, they would stage a prison break for the imprisoned Lancers. In this way, the Kerensky loyalists would not feel they had betrayed their ideals, the LCAF would gain a battalion of SLDF-trained warriors, and McGill would be able to lead her own battalion into mercenary service.

The Lyran solicitors accepted, but what McGill did not anticipate was how hard Schaffer's Kerensky loyalists would fight to keep Cline and his men behind bars. When McGill's warriors approached the prison complex in LCAF machines, the resulting firefight with Schaffer's security troops resulted in the deaths of over two companies of mechanized infantry and the destruction of a third company of loyalist 'Mechs. McGill's forces prevailed (albeit with some damage of their own) and managed to evacuate the facility.

In the aftermath of the whole affair, Colonel Cline's POWs went on to form the core of the LCAF's Eighth Lyran Regulars, while McGill's battalion reorganized itself as the Iron Raven Mercenary Command. Reduced to less than a battalion of mixed infantry and 'Mech forces, the few survivors of the original Czech Lancers Division limped off into history, joining with Kerensky's Exodus fleet the following year.

INNER SPHERE - 2822



Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact
1) Trellshire
2) Tamar Domains
3) Camlann Shire

Protectorate of Donegal
4) Coventry Province
5) Alarion Province
6) District of Donegal
7) Furillo Province

Federation of Skye
8) Kannon Shire
9) Virginia Shire
10) Rahneshire
11) Isle of Skye

Draconis Combine

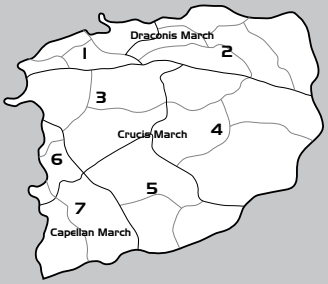
Pesht Military District
1) Kagoshima Prefecture
2) Coudoux Prefecture
3) Bjarred Prefecture
4) Pusht-i-rud Prefecture
5) Ningxia Prefecture

Galedon Military District
6) Oshika Prefecture
7) Matsuida Prefecture
8) New Samarkand Prefecture
9) Kaznejoy Prefecture

Rasalhague Military District
10) Radstadt Prefecture
11) Trondheim Prefecture
12) Tinaca Prefecture

Benjamin Military District
13) Baldur Prefecture
14) Xinyang Prefecture
15) Kajikazawa Prefecture
16) Proserpina Prefecture
17) Irurzun Prefecture

Dieron Military District
18) Kuzuu Prefecture
19) Ashio Prefecture
20) Lone Star Prefecture
21) Addicks Prefecture



Federated Suns

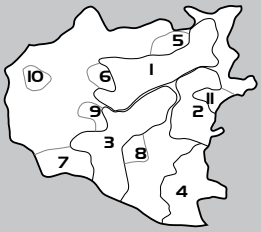
Draconis March
1) Robinson Operational Area
2) Woodbine Operational Area

Crucis March
3) Markesan Operational Area
4) Minette Operational Area
5) Chirikof Operational Area

Capellan March
6) Kathil Operational Area
7) Taygeta Operational Area

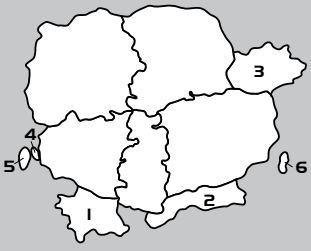
Capellan Confederation

1) Tikonov Commonality
2) Chesterton Commonality
3) Sarna Commonality
4) Capella Commonality
5) Sian Commonality
6) St Ives Commonality
7) Andurien Commonality



Free Worlds League

1) Marik Commonwealth
2) Federation of Oriente
3) Principality of Regulus
4) Duchy of Andurien
5) Stewart Confederation
6) Duchy of Graham-Marik
7) Rim Commonality
8) Regulan Free States
9) Principality of Gibson
10) Abbey District
11) Duchy of Orloff



The Periphery

1) Magistracy of Canopus
2) Taurian Concordat
3) Outworlds Alliance
4) Illyrian Palatinate
5) Lothian League
6) Tortuga Dominions

LEGEND
30 LIGHT YEARS
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 36.8 PARSECS
Region capital
District capital
National capital
MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS
Coreward
Anti-spinward
Spinward
Rimward
Map compiled by COMSTAR.
From information provided by the COMSTAR EXPLORER CORPS
and the STAR LEAGUE ARCHIVES on Terra.

TIMELINE OF THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

2779 Terra liberated from Stefan Amaris, ending Star League Civil War (a.k.a. The Amaris Crisis)

2780 Star League Council strips Aleksandr Kerensky of title of Protector; **(10 Oct)** Star League Council appoints Jerome Blake to Minister of Communications, charges him with restoration of SLCOMNET

2781 **(12 Aug)** Star League disbands, Star League Council adjourns for last time; **(Aug)** Robert Steiner II dies; Jennifer Steiner named Archon of Lyran Commonwealth

2782 Administrator Jerome Blake assumes responsibility for Terran reconstruction

2783 Court of the Star League sealed; **(Oct)** Federated Suns claims Towne

2784 **(5 Nov)** Eighty percent of SLDF undertakes Operation EXODUS, majority of remainder pledge themselves to Jerome Blake's reconstruction efforts; **(8 Nov)** Jerome Blake reestablishes First Circuit of SLCOMNET; **(19 Dec)** Marik Parliament passes Resolution 288, repeals Rule of 75

2785 Capellan Confederation begins annexing Hegemony worlds; **(Feb)** Combine and Confederation forces raid Towne simultaneously; **(Mar)** LCAF launches Operation ELBOW JOINT, conquers Bolan; Kenyon Marik declares Ares Conventions violated, declares war on Lyran Commonwealth; **(Aug)** Unmarked DCMS forces attack Bone-Norman, drawing LCAF forces to deter "bandit" threat; **(Sep)** Towne Debacle, Draconis Combine conquers Towne; **(Sep-Nov)** Draconis Combine conquers Gram and Trolloc Prime; **(Dec)** Conrad Toyama appointed Chief Administrator of Dieron HPG, suggests renaming SLCOMNET

2786 **(Jan)** SLCOMNET renamed ComStar, introduces ComStar Letter of Credit; **(Mar)** Federated Suns forces begin massing to attack Capellan Confederation; **(Mar-Apr)** FWLM invades Altoona, deploying weapons of mass destruction against LCAF troops there; **(Jun)** Draconis Combine raids Skondia; **(Jul)** FWLM captures Hornir's Keep; **(Dec)** Minoru Kurita declares himself First Lord of Star League, Draconis Combine declares war on any who oppose him; DCMS forces invade Kesai IV; Barbara Liao declares herself First Lord of Star League; **(31 Dec)** Jennifer Steiner declares herself First Lord of the Star League and declares war on Draconis Combine; First Succession War begins

2787 ComStar neutrality established by Communications Protocol of 2787; **(Jan)** Kenyon Marik declares himself First Lord of the Star League; **(Feb)** Draconis Combine seizes Skondia; Free Worlds League begins raids along Commonwealth border, destroys Bolson Shipyards at New Kyoto; Free Worlds League attacks Capellan Confederation, captures Corey and Wazan; **(Mar-April)** LCAF forces begin raiding Draconis Combine, Tamar Tigers raid Luthien; **(1 May)** Draconis Combine launches massive assault across Federated Suns' Draconis March; **(Jun-Jul)** LCAF invades Rochers, nuclear weapons deployed by both sides; **(Oct)** CCAF forces capture several Federated Suns worlds in the Terran Corridor; **(Dec)** Draconis Combine launches Operation BROKEN BLADE, the First Battle of Hesperus II; LCAF repels DCMS attack

2788 **(Jan)** DCMS forces withdraw from Hesperus II; **(Jan-Feb)** LCAF begins raiding Free Worlds League; **(Feb)** DCMS counterstrikes against Lyran border begin; Prince John Davion leads counterattack against DCMS advance; **(Mar-Apr)** Second Battle of Hesperus II, LCAF defends Hesperus II from AFFS special forces attack; **(Mar-May)** DCMS forces raid Free Worlds League in search of SLDF depots, employs nuclear weapons on Helm; FWLM invades Duantia, employs nuclear weapons to destroy LCAF garrison; **(Jun)** DCMS stops AFFS counterattack on Cartago, nearly killing Prince John Davion in battle; FedSuns begins losing ground again; **(25 Jun)** ComStar launches Operation SILVER SHIELD, briefly shuts down all HPGs in Inner Sphere, and conquers Terra; **(Jul)** ComStar raids New Earth, stripping SLDF bases there; **(Jul-Oct)** Drawn by rumors of top-secret Star League technologies on-world, raiding parties from the Lyran Commonwealth, Capellan Confederation, Federated Suns, and Draconis Combine all converge on Tyrfing, sparking a five-sided battle that continues until February 2789

2789 Mercenary Review Board formed by ComStar; **(Jan)** CCAF forces invade New Delos, massacre thousands; AFFS resistance humiliates DCMS on New Rhodes III, destroying enormous stockpiles of strategic supplies; DCMS chooses Kentares IV to replace New Rhodes III as supply base; **(Mar)** Third Battle of Hesperus II, LCAF defends Hesperus II from Free Worlds League attack; **(Apr-Aug)** Free Worlds League forces firebomb Hall, Ingersoll, New Canton, and Outreach; **(May-Sep)** FWLM invades Myrrdin, chemical and nuclear weapons deployed by both sides; **(Jul)** Free Worlds League captures Alula Australis; Carl Marik killed in action during LCAF raid on Kamenz; **(Sep-Dec)** LCAF forces repel AFFS incursions on Thorin, New Earth, and Rocky; nuclear exchange renders Rocky uninhabitable

2790 Lyran Commonwealth launches second wave of raids against Free Worlds League and Draconis Combine, hitting several worlds, including Dieudonné, Oliver, and Sirius in the League, and Dieron, Dyev, Kervil, Telos I, and Styx in the Combine; Free Worlds League captures Andurien, Ingonish, and Ryerson; **(Jan)** Federated Suns begins naval counterattack against DCMS advance; **(Feb)** Capellan Task Force Devlin attacks Calloway VI, but is repelled by FWLM; both sons of Barbara Liao are killed in action at Calloway; **(9 Mar-18 Apr)** Battle of Cholame, largest naval action between FedSuns and Draconis fleets, destroys 75 percent of

Davion combat fleet and equal number of Kurita ships; **(Jul-Aug)** LCAF campaign to capture Bolan Thumb worlds begins with attack on Valloire; FWLM forces seizes Radostov in response

2791 ComStar Archives Branch and Sol Administrative Branch created by ComStar; Ward Marik assassinated; LCAF forces capture Danxian and recapture Radostov; **(4 Jan)** Archon Jennifer Steiner killed in action on Styx, Richard Steiner becomes Archon of Lyran Commonwealth; Graham Kelswa assigned to command Lyran-Combine front

2792 FWLM forces raid Gypsum and Zdice, and capture Alula Borealis; **(Dec)** LCAF initiates Operation HAIFISCHFLOSSENSUPPE: naval force raids Finmark; Roe Weapons Systems naval yard destroyed by remnant RWR elements; Finmark bombarded with strategic weapons

2793 CCAF forces capture Anegasaki, destroy Fourth Marik Militia; LCAF forces capture Binyang

2794 Lyran Commonwealth launches third major raiding campaign against Draconis Combine; Jason Marik killed in action during CCAF atomic raid on Oriente; **(Apr-Jul)** LCAF forces capture Ellijay, raid Loburg and Kamenz; **(May)** LCAF forces attack Asuncion, destroy Kallon Industries factories there; **(Dec)** Tamar Tigers trapped on Benjamin by DCMS, but continue to struggle for six years; Paul Steiner resumes command of Lyran-Combine border operations

2795 **(Sep-Nov)** LCAF captures Loburg, raids Kamenz and Tylarzka; **(18 Nov)** Barbara Liao dies, Prefect Sandol Quinn becomes Chancellor-Regent of Capellan Confederation; **(Nov-Dec)** CCAF forces begin concerted series of attacks to capture Chesterton worlds from Federated Suns, starting with Mirach and Castleton

2796 DCMS advances to within one jump from New Avalon; LCAF invades Kamenz, raids Tylarzka, Marsalle, and Ilion; **(Apr)** CCAF conquests in Terran Corridor continue

Federated Suns off from Terra; **(Jun)** Minoru Kurita leads Sixth Sword of Light to pacify Kentares; **(9 Aug)** Minoru Kurita assassinated on Kentares IV; Jinjiro Kurita named Coordinator; **(28 Aug)** AFFS retreats from Kentares IV; **(11 Sep)** Jinjiro Kurita arrives on Kentares, orders Kentares Massacre; 52 million FedSuns civilians killed over next five months

2797 **(Jan)** LCAF completes capture of Kamenz; **(15 Feb)** Jinjiro Kurita leaves Kentares IV, Kentares Massacre ends; **(Oct-Nov)** Enraged AFFS forces begin long series of unsanctioned attacks against Combine occupiers in response to Kentares Massacre, starting with Marlette and Logandale; **(Nov-Dec)** Additional uncoordinated AFFS attacks begin on Bristol, Odell, and Delavan; **(9 Dec)** John Davion and son assassinated on Ipava; Paul Davion named Prince of Federated Suns

2798 Paul Davion initiates FedSuns Reformation; Ministry of Information and Operations formed; Uncoordinated AFFS retaliations formally approved; **(Feb-Oct)** AFFS forces retake Arcadia, Coloma, Saginaw, and Strawn; **(Mar-Jun)** LCAF captures Tylarzka; **(Nov-Dec)** Uncoordinated AFFS forces attack Bremond and Tancredi IV

2799 LCAF captures Marsalle and Ilion, heavy damage to life support systems on Ilion prompts eventual evacuation of planet; **(Mar-Sep)** Ongoing AFFS retaliatory assaults retake Fairfax from DCMS, and Sanilac from CCAF; **(Nov)** Draconis Combine raids Lamar, uses nuclear weapons to render planet inhabitable, LCAF commander Paul Steiner killed on Lamar, replaced by Amanda Lestrade; Lyran Commonwealth scales back raiding campaigns

2800 **(Apr-May)** DCMS captures Ronel, shatters CCAF defenders; **(Jul-Sep)** AFFS retakes Tawas from CCAF; **(Sep-Oct)** DCMS invades Rio, but is defeated by CCAF forces; **(Nov)** Credible intelligence of Tamar Tigers' continued survival on Benjamin reaches Archon Richard Steiner

2801 **(Jan)** Last survivors of the Tamar Tigers are destroyed on Benjamin; **(Feb)** FedSuns Reformation concludes; **(Mar-Nov)** First coordinated AFFS counterattack campaign against Combine begins: Kentares IV is struck in first wave, followed by Streator, Waycross, and Avawatz; **(Apr-Jul)** LCAF captures Herzberg, raids Malazan, Finsterwalde, and Marsalle; **(19 Apr)** Sandol Quinn steps down as Regent-Chancellor; Ilsa Liao named Chancellor of Capellan Confederation; **(Oct-Dec)** Second wave of first AFFS counterattack campaign launches against Edwards, Entalun, Markesan, and Rosamond

2802 AFFS counteroffensive against DCMS invasion continues with three more waves, reclaiming thirteen worlds, including Entalun, Markesan, Tarkio, Cahokia, and Fallon II; **(Mar)** ComStar claims profit for first time since its formation

2803 AFFS counteroffensive against DCMS reclaims Capac, Colia, Kirklin, and Sodus; assaults on Batavia and Flushing begin

2804 **(19 Jan)** Kenyon Marik dies; **(Feb-Dec)** AFFS reclaims Barstow and Beecher, begins assaults on Imbrial III and Peabody; **(Jul)** Thaddeus Marik cites Resolution 288, claims title of Captain-General of Free Worlds League; Duke Carter Allison of Oriente opposes Thaddeus Marik; FWLM forces withdrawn from Oriente's defense; **(Aug-Sep)** CCAF reclaims Lukla, Sappho, and Shuen Wan; **(Dec-Feb 2805)** First CCAF invasion of Oriente, ends after three months in CCAF withdrawal

2805 **(Mar-May)** FWLM captures Bella I; **(late Apr)** CCAF seizes Fujidera; **(Apr-Dec)** AFFS recaptures New Valencia and Newton, begins attacks on Cartago, Elbar, and Lexington; **(Jun-Jul)** Second CCAF invasion of Oriente; **(Jul)** CCAF captures Fletcher; **(Aug)** Duke Allison arrives on Atreus, reaffirms Resolution 288; **(18 Sep)** Third CCAF invasion of Oriente begins; **(Nov-Dec)** FWLM forces arrive in Oriente system, defeat CCAF naval group, and engage stranded CCAF ground forces

2806 **(7 Jan)** FWLM defeats CCAF on Oriente; **(Feb-May)** FWLM captures Radostov; AFFS recaptures Cholame and Corydon; **(Mar-Dec)** FWLM recaptures Fujidera, Fletcher, Lukla, and Sappho; **(Apr-Jun)** LCAF reclaims Bella I; **(Nov-Dec)** AFFS begins to reclaim Saunemin and Waunakee from DCMS

2807 **(Jan-Jul)** First AFFS Counteroffensive campaign ends with reclamation of Castleton from CCAF, and Evansville, Rowe, and Sun Prairie from DCMS; **(Dec)** FWLM invades Marsalle

2808 **(Feb)** FWLM forces completes conquest of Marsalle; **(Apr)** Ilsa Liao renounces claim to First Lordship, offers peace and recognition of title to Paul Davion in exchange for Chesterton; **(May-Jul)** LCAF retakes Radostov; **(Jun-Aug)** AFFS' Third and Fifth Crucis Lancers begin to attack Capellan worlds near Chesterton in response to Liao peace offer

2809 **(Jan-Mar)** Second Federated Suns counter-offensive begins, targeting remaining DCMS-occupied worlds in Crucis March; **(Mar)** AFFS reclaims Farwell and Ulan Batar from CCAF; **(Oct-Dec)** AFFS begins recapture of Blandinsville, Choudrant, Damevang, Kestrel, and Layover from DCMS; **(Nov)** LCAF begins assault on Acrux; **(Dec)** AFFS begins recapture of Demeter from CCAF

2810 **(Jan)** LCAF repulsed from Acrux after three-month battle; **(Feb-Apr)** AFFS recaptures Demeter from CCAF, begins third wave of Second Counteroffensive against DCMS on nine worlds, including Colchester, DeWitt, and Exeter; **(May)** LCAF captures Alula Borealis; **(Jun)** AFFS retakes Tedibyhr from CCAF, but nuclear exchanges render most remnant population centers uninhabited; **(Dec)** LCAF assaults Marsalle; AFFS begins recapture of Mirach from CCAF

2811 Third Federated Suns counter-offensive begins, targeting Clovis, Doneval II, Harrow's Sun, and Le Blanc; **(Feb)** FWLM repels LCAF assault on Marsalle; **(Mar)** Free Worlds League offensive on Poulsbo fails; AFFS recaptures Mirach from CCAF, but suspends further anti-Capellan operations to focus on DCMS border zones; **(Mar-Apr)** Capellan operatives attempt to seize HPG station on Nanking; **(May)** LCAF forces capture Acrux, completing annexation of the former Bolan Thumb; ComStar begins formation of ROM; **(Nov)** LCAF launches another assault on Marsalle; **(Nov-Dec)** AFFS begins assaults on McGehee, Tishomingo, and Zhosa VII

2812 DCMS forces capture Caldrea and attack Dove; extensive NBC weapon use on Dove renders world uninhabitable; **(Feb)** LCAS captures Marsalle; **(Apr-Sep)** AFFS retakes Dobson, New Ivaarsen, and Swales from DCMS; **(May)** CCAF forces attack Chesterton, but are repelled by AFFS; **(Jun)** Lyran Estates-General disbanded due to lack of transports; **(3 Aug)** Landgrave Richard Perkins of Hegel attempts to assassinate Archon Richard Steiner with aid from Free Worlds League spies; **(Nov-Dec)** Free Worlds League captures Alula Borealis; Federated Suns begins assaults on Ballentine, Lucerne, and Nouveau Toulouse

2813 **(Mar-Dec)** AFFS seizes six worlds from DCMS control, including Alnadal, Fairfield, and Rochester; **(Apr)** FWLM forces assault Bella I, beginning series of League-Commonwealth battles centered on this world; **(Jun)** Taurian-Canopian War begins; **(Jul-Sep)** CCAF recaptures Mirach from AFFS

2814 **(Feb)** Taurian-Canopian War ends; **(Mar-May)** AFFS recaptures Dahar IV and Robinson from DCMS; **(May-Jun)** CCAF retakes Farwell from AFFS; **(Nov-Dec)** Federated Suns begins assaults on Glenmora, Klathandu IV, and Sakhara V

2815 Nicholas Kerensky names himself the first ilKhan of the Clans; **(Mar-Oct)** AFFS reclaims Breed, Royal, and Tallmadge from DCMS

2816 **(Feb-Nov)** AFFS claims Benet III, Hoff, Mallory's World, and Paris from DCMS; **(Mar)** LCAF forces retake Bella I; **(Jul-Sep)** CCAF captures Castleton from AFFS

2817 **(Mar-Sep)** Federated Suns seizes Allerton, Courtney, Emporia, and Sauk City; **(Apr-Dec)** FWLM forces invade Bella I again, conquer world after nine-month battle; **(Nov-Dec)** AFFS begins invasions of Crossing, Franklin, and Lima

2818 Capellan Science Foundation founded; **(Apr-Jun)** AFFS forces Draconis Combine back to its pre-war Draconis March borders with capture of Marduk, Scheat, and Tripoli; Third Federated Suns Counteroffensive ends

2819 ComStar Order formed, Conrad Toyama named Prime Administrator of ComStar, Jerome Blake dies, ROM purge initiated; DCMS begins raiding campaign against Lyran Commonwealth, hitting Alexandria, Kessel, and Tamar; **(Feb)** LCAF captures Rochelle; **(Apr-Jun)** LCAF takes Kalidasa; **(10 Sep)** Solaris secedes from Free Worlds League, accepts Lyran rule

2820 Conrad Toyama visits House leaders and raises HPG rates; Lyran Commonwealth and Free Worlds League open peace talks on Bella I; **(Jan)** LCAF establishes garrison on Solaris VII; **(Mar)** Free Worlds League raids Solaris VII

2821 **(Feb)** CCAF captures Ulan Batar; **(Mar)** DCMS forces attack Otho, destroy Fifty-Fourth Lyran Guard, prompts halt to third LCAF raiding campaign against Combine; **(Apr)** Thaddeus Marik killed in battle on Dieudonné; Charles Marik named Captain-General after Jeannette Marik refuses the post; Jeannette Marik joins ComStar; **(16 May)** Peace Accord of Bella I signed; **(24 Sep)** Capellan Confederation and Federated Suns negotiate ceasefire; First Succession War ends

FORCES OF THE SUCCESSION WARS

"The great armies, accumulated to provide security and preserve the peace, carried the nations to war by their own weight."
—A. J .P Taylor, The First World War - An Illustrated History, 1963

"Too long have we been forced to denude our strength, and now we stand on the brink of disaster. If we are to persevere we must have troops and ships, 'Mechs and planes."
—Kenyon Marik, *Parliamentary address after the Amaris Coup*, 2767

PREPARING FOR ARMAGEDDON

One of the founding principles of the Star League was a shift away from national armies and toward a central military force—the SLDF—to provide defense, security and disaster relief. The vast destruction of the Age of War made this approach more attractive to the Great Houses, who were willing to sacrifice their own strength in order to build a better universe (or at least to counter their rivals' abilities). Some did so willingly. Others, notably House Kurita, less so. By the mid-twenty-eighth century, as rivalries flared up once more, the Houses viewed the cap on troop numbers mandated by the Star League Accords as oppressive, and each sought ways to circumvent its restrictions.

The death of Simon Cameron on New Silesia and the installation of his son, Richard, as First Lord and General Aleksandr Kerensky as Regent, caused a power shift of titanic proportions. Where previously the Camerons had served as a dampening rod on the ambitions and antagonisms of the High Council, now the five Great Houses were largely unchecked. Kerensky *could* have stopped their games, but his role as Commanding General of the SLDF proved to be a major distraction—just as the Council had hoped.

One of their first moves was to abrogate the force-strength provisions mandated by the Star League. On its own, this would have been a worrying development, though there was little chance of the house militaries rivaling the SLDF in size. However, the political ramifications were far-reaching—having successfully tested the boundaries of their power, the House Lords saw no reason to show further restraint. Under the pretense of "bolstering internal security in these uncertain times" they called for a new tax to fund this expansion. Officially, the tax was to apply to all member states of the Star League—the six Great Houses and the Periphery realms. But tax breaks and accounting practices set off this levy against production contracts for the SLDF (principally within the five Great Houses), meaning the burden was exclusively shouldered by the Periphery States. In some cases, the Great Houses even received rebates from the Star League. With this action, the High Council sowed the seeds of resentment and rebellion that would bring down the Star League.

The move was not entirely unopposed; the Periphery states protested venomously, but were ignored or else defeated in the Star League's courts. A more serious threat emerged in the form of the new First Lord, who reached his majority in 2762. Spurred on by Stefan Amaris, Richard planned to order the disbanding of all House militaries via Executive Order 156. Kerensky opposed the order, believing it went against the Star League Accords, though he privately agreed that the Great Houses needed to be brought back in line. Richard went against the General's reservations and presented Executive Order 156 to the High Council in February 2762. The Council refused to heed the order, and when even Kerensky opposed it—as he had already told the First Lord he would—Richard had little choice but to back down. The encounter forced a rift between the First Lord and his Commanding General, exactly as Amaris planned.

RABBITS OUT OF HATS

The growth of the Great House militaries between the death of Simon Cameron on New Silesia and the outbreak of the First Succession War is nothing short of phenomenal. By the outbreak of the Periphery Rebellion, most of the House forces had doubled in size since Simon's death, and by 2786 they doubled again. Some theorists suggest growth on this scale could only have been done with significant pre-planning—indicating that the Great Houses were actively gearing up for full-scale war as early as 2750, amid the closing years of the Third Hidden War. Despite their militaristic and aggressive policies, there was no evidence that they envisaged a situation where the SLDF wouldn't act as policeman and keep them in check. That realization came slowly, and even as late as 2784 the threat of SLDF intervention was a very real one; in fact, the Draconis Combine feared the first stages of Operation EXODUS were just such a move.

So, how did they do it?

Production Capacity

The advent of the Star League mandated a reduction in the size of each Great House's standing armies, but it did not impinge on their military production. In fact, the early years of the Star League actually escalated it, as the Reunification War spurred increased manufacture to at first support the war effort, and later to expand the SLDF. Throughout the two centuries of the Star League, these factories continued to churn out BattleMechs, fighters, tanks, DropShips and other war materiel. Some were native designs, while other configurations were licensed from the Hegemony. A portion of this construction went to the Great House forces, replacing their losses and upgrading their capabilities, but the vast majority went to the SLDF.

With the removal of size limitations on House armed forces, these production capacities were expanded and a larger proportion shunted into the Member States' armies. With negligible losses at that time, this trend led to a dramatic growth in each House's forces.

The outbreak of hostilities between the SLDF and Amaris provided another unexpected boost. With the Houses standing aloof from the conflict, much of the production that had gone to supporting the vast SLDF logistics train was withheld from both Kerensky and Amaris. Though an illegal act, neither was in a position to bring the Star League's legal system to bear. Some materiel did continue to flow to the combatants (particularly from pro-SLDF John Davion, in stark contrast with Kerensky-hating Kenyon Marik's total embargo), but a large amount remained within the Member States.

Contrary to the widespread belief that Inner Sphere manufacturing was crushed early in the First Succession War, significant quantities of materiel continued to bolster the Great House militaries throughout the first half of the conflict, allowing them to both make good their losses and to raise new units; new formations such as the An Ting Legion came online as late as 2820. However, such large-scale deployment became rare by the end of the First Succession War, as the destruction of infrastructure impeded the Houses' ability to recover their losses—a situation that worsened severely in the Second Succession War.

Flouting Convention

The Star League Accords placed strict limits on the size of each of Great House's military, but there were a plethora of legal loopholes that could be used to circumvent the restrictions. Only the numbers of active units were limited, so some quantities of equipment could be retained as reserve or spares. Similarly, demobilized troops could be retained in near-fighting condition through reserve duty and non-governmental service (police forces, unofficial paramilitary forces, etc). The removal of the force-size limitations legitimized this sleight of hand, and much of the initial growth in the Great Houses' forces was in fact recognition of reality, rather than true expansion (though that soon followed).

Subscription, Recruitments Drives And Conscriptions

Even as the Great Houses squeezed the Periphery states until they revolted, there was a finite limit to the amount of money that they could push into military expansion. The Periphery Rebellion and the Amaris Coup cut off the two cash cows for the Great Houses, Periphery taxation and sales to the Star League. Though greater production assets were available to them, the Member States were forced to cast around for additional sources of income to fund their military expansion. Raising taxes was one option, but as the Periphery demonstrated, this tactic could only be pushed so far before causing civil unrest. Instead, as with many wars in the past, the Houses called on another currency: patriotism.

Starting with the Lyran Commonwealth in 2765, and by 2770 encompassing all the Great Houses, the sale of war bonds played on the nationalism within the borders of each House. By extracting a "voluntary contribution" (so voluntary in the Capellan Confederation that non-purchase of a bond was grounds for a Maskirovka investigation), the Houses achieved what they couldn't do through forced taxes. Other, more direct sponsorship took place—individual worlds might raise funds to purchase a 'Mech or armor regiment for their favorite unit, or a business could sponsor a battalion. Even the ultra-rich got in on the act, in return for naming rights and lucrative commercial contracts.

Patriotism also encouraged young men and women to join the military and serve their nation. Recruitment started off slowly in most houses (the Draconis Combine seeing the greatest initial uptake) but increased significantly after Amaris killed Richard Cameron and open hostilities between the SLDF and Rim Worlds forces erupted, particularly on border worlds.

However, as the very real prospect of war between the Houses began to emerge in the early 2780s, and particularly after Operation EXODUS in 2784, even this wave of enlistment was deemed insufficient and all of the houses introduced some level of conscription. Conscripts mostly filled out less-glamorous infantry regiments, but were also included in a few armor units. Border worlds were particular targets for conscription, but by 2786, most worlds were impacted. Conscription methods varied widely across the Great Houses; in the Lyran Commonwealth non-military service or a fee could offset conscription, while in the Capellan Confederation, the high and low were placed side-by-side in Home Guard units.

Cannibalization Of The SLDF—House Units And Mercenaries

The vast majority of the SLDF left the Inner Sphere with Kerensky, as did some of the surviving Rim Worlds troops, but the SLDF's trust in the General's vision was not unanimous. Some chose to stay and support what remained of the League—the nascent ComStar. These troops became the progenitors of the Com Guards, though their existence remained a closely-guarded secret until the aftermath of the Fourth Succession War, and even today is not widely known. Others were seduced by the Great Houses, or struck out on their own as mercenaries.

Attempts by the Great Houses to recruit entire regular SLDF units, and the trickle of resulting defections, became a torrent once the bulk of the surviving SLDF departed with Kerensky. More than 100 SLDF or Rim Worlds regiments eventually remained in the Inner Sphere in some form. Approximately half joined a Successor State military, some as cohesive brigades, others as independent units; the remainder entered mercenary service.

Despite attempts by the SLDF to restrict the mercenary trade, soldiers of fortune were a reality during the Star League era, and their numbers grew during the Amaris Coup. After Kerensky's Exodus, the mercenary trade was suddenly bolstered by more than fifty SLDF and Rim Worlds regiments, and exploded from a small nuisance to a major force in the Inner Sphere almost overnight. Many of those commands would perish in the conflicts that followed, but others, such as the Eridani Light Horse, the Lexington Combat Group and the Blue Star Irregulars, survived into modern times.

ARMIES OF THE GREAT HOUSES, 2750-2786

Realm	'Mech Regiments* (2750 / 2784 / 2786)
Capellan Confederation	42 / 96 / 121 (incl. 15 ex-SLDF)
Draconis Combine	55 / 139 / 147 (incl. 9 ex-SLDF)
Federated Suns	53 / 139 / 143 (incl. 11 ex-SLDF)
Free Worlds League	61 / 106 / 119 (incl. 5 ex-SLDF)
Lyran Commonwealth	52 / 104 / 122 (incl. 11 ex-SLDF)

*Approximate numbers, based on regimental strength averages of 120 BattleMechs, discounting supporting elements.

HOUSE LIAO

The smallest military among the Great Houses at the time of Simon Cameron's death, the Capellan Confederation's crash re-armament program caused the CCAF to double in size between 2750 and the onset of the Amaris Coup. Fully fifty regiments were added to the Liao forces in those first fifteen years, as the Great Houses exploited the weakness at the heart of the Star League government to line their own pockets at the expense of the Periphery states. CCAF expansion after the Coup and before the outbreak of the First Succession War was more modest, totaling a further twenty-nine regiments, plus another fifteen recruited from the SLDF. Not all of these troops were high quality—many were Reserve or Home Guard units—but as war loomed, the odds looked favorable for the Liao troops. Further manufacturing during the First Succession War elevated the CCAF to an all-time-high of 129 regiments in 2799, though its strength would only dwindle from there.

HOUSE KURITA

As with all the Great Houses, the DCMS grew dramatically in the years before the Amaris Coup, gaining sixty regiments scattered throughout its formations. Much of the Combine's post-Coup development focused on its border with the Terran Hegemony, as the Dieron Regulars gained ten regiments (the Sixth through Fifteenth). As the League collapsed and Hegemony worlds were gobbled up on the eve of the First Succession War, an amazing twenty-six more Dieron Regular regiments were raised, plus five more after the outbreak of hostilities. Surprisingly, the Combine fielded five new regiments in the last years of the war: the An Ting Legion. By 2784, the DCMS had almost tripled in size from its 2750 strength; with the addition of ten SLDF regiments, the Combine was the pre-eminent military power in the Inner Sphere, something its neighbors would soon rue.

HOUSE DAVION

Unlike most of the great Houses, who chose to bolster their existing formations, much of House Davion's expansion focused creating on wholly new units. Troops that would later become mainstays of the Federated Suns—the Crucis Lancers and the Deneb Light Cavalry—emerged during this era, along with a number of independent units and many training cadres. The AFFS' initial expansion matched that of the DCMS, but the honorable First Prince John initially refrained from seizing Hegemony worlds and lagged behind the more militaristic Combine. John was not reticent in enticing SLDF troops into his service, however—the Federated Suns would eventually hire eleven SLDF regiments.

HOUSE MARIK

House Marik was slow to respond to the wealth suddenly available to the High Council during the years before the Amaris Coup. Though House Marik grew rich, the League's internal bureaucracy hampered the expansion of the FWLM. As a result, the FWLM raised only half as many units during this exploitative era as its neighbors. They did, however, sell significant quantities of war materiel to the other states, the lure of profit overriding military necessity. Only with the very real threat of war looming in the 2770s and early 2780s were those resources applied to bolster the FWLM, causing it to double in size by the time of the Exodus. Animosity hampered further expansion of the FWLM; Kenyon Marik's antipathy toward the SLDF and Kerensky made him reticent to hire any of the Star League forces who remained, though eventually he was persuaded to absorb five ex-SLDF regiments.

HOUSE STEINER

Like the Free Worlds League, the Lyran Commonwealth reaped massive profits by selling materiel to their neighbors before the Amaris Coup, though doing so limited their own expansion. Most of the LCAF's initial growth came among formations facing the Draconis Combine, with whom they'd sparred in the 2740s. The Commonwealth received a massive boost from the annexation after General Kerensky ravaged the Rim Worlds Republic and launched Operation LIBERATION. Massed manufacturing and training saw a major growth in forces such as the Lyran Guards and the Donegal Guards. Expansion of other formations was more modest, though the Commonwealth's retention of manufacturing capacity during the First Succession War allowed House Steiner to field a plethora of new units during the conflict, including half a dozen Lyran Regular regiments, the Second Donegal Regulars, and others. The Commonwealth's strong economy gave it success in hiring on former SLDF troops, with eleven regiments joining the LCAF on the eve of war.

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EYE OF THE STORM (2821-2830)

"I could not help feeling that it were better to perish than sign such a humiliating peace."
—Paul von Hindenburg (attributed), regarding the Treaty of Versailles, 1919

"If they sign a lasting treaty then Blake's Vision will be for naught. Their efforts must be stymied, and any provisions must be so onerous that renewed warfare and death are preferable."
—Primus Conrad Toyama, *Private diaries*, 2823

The First Succession War was the most devastating conflict fought by humanity. Tens of billions died, both as a direct result of military action and from its economic and political side-effects. Early interstellar wars targeted people and, to a lesser extent, industry, but after the establishment of the Ares Conventions in 2412 civilian populations were largely spared the direct consequences of war. Not so in the First Succession War.

The Star League itself had occasionally abrogated the Ares Conventions—notably in the Reunification War—but despite advocating a total-war policy, the League steered clear of targeting civilian populations. The civil war against Amaris was another matter, however, with countless atrocities perpetrated by Rim Worlds forces (and allegedly some of the SLDF in the Rim Worlds Republic). Both sides employed strategic weapons, though the Amaris' forces did so much more indiscriminately than did Kerensky's troops.

Whether the Amaris Civil War, which lasted more than a decade, played a direct role in what followed is hard to judge. But it is clear that, when the First Succession War erupted, all of the Great Houses were willing to follow the SLDF's lead and use all of the weapons at their disposal. Furthermore, they would strike not only at the enemy military, but at the population and infrastructure that allowed their rivals to fight. It was a war fought not for conquest, but to eliminate their rivals.

PEACE OVERTURES

"Why should we be so amazed and honored because Dame Ilsa Liao wants to make a deal that would recognize me as First Lord? The truth is self-evident and shouldn't have to be bargained for."

—Prince Paul's remarks concerning Chancellor Liao's offer to recognize him as First Lord in exchange for certain worlds, *quoted from Political Memoirs, by Duke Gregory Simons, Toledo Press, New Avalon*, 2999

By the 2820s, all of the Successor States were exhausted and finding offensive operations difficult to mount. The conflict ground to a halt, and back-channel negotiations began to hint at the prospect of peace.

STEINER-MARIK

On 16 May 2821, the Free Worlds League and the Lyran Commonwealth signed the Peace Accord of Bella I. This followed seven months of delicate negotiation, at first via third parties and then with face-to-face discussions. Notable for its lack of pomp, the signing of the accords led to sighs of relief on both sides of the border, though difficulties over specific details and provisions marred relations between the two powers during the inter-war years. The signing of the accords served as a catalyst for other Successor States to sue for peace. With the exception of the Draconis Combine—whose mutual antipathy with their neighbors precluded any formal peace—soon brought the First Succession War to a close.

LIAO-DAVION

Dame Ilsa's attempts to secure peace with the Federated Suns in 2808 fell on deaf ears, but by the early 2820s, much of the fight had gone out of the Liao-Davion front and both sides sought time to lick their wounds. When back-channel negotiations conducted by Minister Dimitri Rogozin of Tikonov hinted at the opportunity for an armistice between the two nations, the Federated Suns responded favorably. After the Steiner-Marik truce in May 2821, a formal agreement was put in place between the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns on 24 September 2821, bringing that front of the First Succession War to an end. Even so, relations between the two states remained frosty and POW repatriation negotiations became a protracted affair. Ilsa Liao insisted on financial reparations from the Federated Suns, which the Davions were unwilling to provide until the Capellans began war crimes proceedings and executed numerous high-ranking AFFS officers on Christmas Day 2822. Prince Paul reluctantly agreed to the Liao terms on 30 January 2823, but Ilsa's harsh actions set the stage for the return to war that would follow after a scant five years later.

MARIK-LIAO

With the Lyran border secured—and with Charles Marik now Captain-General following Thaddeus' death—the Free Words League offered peace to the Capellan Confederation, dispatching Duke Jonathan Humphreys of Andurien to negotiate with the Liaos. Expecting a difficult process, the duke instead found the Chancellor receptive to the League's overtures, and by the end of November the two had laid down the details of a formal armistice. The document ratified existing boundaries (including the restoration of the Duke's own world to the Free Worlds League) and allowed for a comprehensive prisoner exchange.

HOUSE KURITA

"What is it the Christians say? 'And the lion shall lay down with the lamb'? Not so the Dragon. There will be no peace, no treaties. We are predators. They are prey."

—Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita (alleged)

The Draconis Combine refused to formally negotiate with either the Federated Suns or the Lyran Commonwealth, but the DCMS was exhausted by the decades of fighting and both fronts drifted into an uneasy cessation of hostilities. By 2821, fighting in both arenas had died down and an unofficial cease-fire existed between the Draconis Combine, the Commonwealth, and the Federated Suns. Raids still took place, but usually involved a 'Mech company or battalion, charged with either destruction or seizure of resources rather than full-scale invasion. The commencement of the Chain Gang missions against the Suns and Commonwealth in 2825 further underscored the lack of a true peace. As the DCMS sought to rebuild, the Coordinator's mental health began to fail; by the mid-2820s he was rarely lucid, leaving the Combine rudderless. Further challenged by the raids of the Minnesota Tribe in 2825, the Combine struggled to develop a coherent reconstruction strategy; it would take the resumption of war in 2830 to focus their planning.

"WINNERS" AND LOSERS: THE BUTCHER'S BILL

Most conflicts are evaluated in terms of winners and losers. In the case of the First Succession War, there were no winners, though some clearly lost more than others. Every Successor State lost millions of troops and billions of their civilian population. Their economies were ruined and their ability to wage war drastically curtailed, but none were categorically out of the fight.

STEINER

The Lyran Commonwealth's war was a mixed bag. It lost many worlds, including several important planets such as Nox, Juniper, and Alula Australis, and gained a few, for a net loss of eight worlds. But the Commonwealth managed to survive the onslaughts of two determined foes, an achievement that might not have been expected of the LCAF prior to the war. More significant was the economic collapse within the Commonwealth. As a nation of merchants and bankers, the destruction of industry and the collapse of international trade was a body-blow as damaging as the military losses.

The First Succession War cost the LCAF a dozen regiments, while the remaining 110 regiments suffered heavy casualties. Most of the Commonwealth navy was destroyed, with only one capital ship—the battlecruiser LCS *Invincible*—remaining. Industry, the lifeblood of the Commonwealth, was in even worse shape. Many industrial centers had been razed, or seen their supply chains disrupted. Most shipyards were lost or crippled, and JumpShip manufacturing had all but ceased.

Many worlds were forced to find new sources of food and resources to replace those destroyed or captured in the war, and their quest for the most basic supplies complicated efforts to rebuild core infrastructure. The Federation of Skye and the Tamar Pact raced to repair their industries, but the systematic collapse of the Commonwealth's economy and supply network hampered their efforts to rebuild. Rebuilding projections of five years began to stretch out, exacerbated by low-level enemy action. Only the Protectorate of Donegal survived the war mostly intact, with much of its industry and many worlds avoiding direct combat. However, the failure of the Commonwealth's freighter network meant few worlds, even in the Protectorate, were untouched by war.

DAVION

On paper, the Federated Suns should have done well in the First Succession War, with their well-trained military and experienced leadership. Instead, they came within a hair's breadth of being annihilated by the Draconis Combine; it could be said that only the brutality of House Kurita itself saved House Davion. The war showed that the AFFS, though well-equipped and trained, was a paper tiger. Political divisions and structural weaknesses almost cost the Davions dearly, providing a lesson they would need to learn for the next round. That the Federated Suns were able to damage the Capellan Confederation speaks more to the paucity of the CCAF's performance than the skills of the Davion troops. Their net loss of ten worlds belied the massive defeats prior to the Kentares Massacre.

The depredations of the war shattered the Federated Suns' economy, and the scale and brutality of enemy action left many worlds struggling to survive. Basic necessities were in short supply. Water and power facilities had been hard-hit on worlds targeted by the DCMS, which made supporting the Suns population—let alone rebuilding the nation's industry and war-making capability—a challenge. Most of the Davion ship-building facilities were crippled or destroyed, further hampering efforts to rebuild broken worlds. The war was over, but people continued to die on the most battered worlds from starvation, disease, radiation poisoning, and the like, driving the civilian death toll of the conflict to more than a billion.

KURITA

Looking at worlds taken, the Draconis Combine came out ahead, gaining worlds on both its active fronts as well as from the Terran Hegemony, though they also lost worlds to the Lyran Commonwealth. All told, the Combine captured 75 worlds and lost just six worlds—but the cost for them was high and many of the worlds they captured were shattered ruins, able to contribute little to the nation. More importantly, the Combine had the Federated Suns on the ropes but failed to deliver a knock-out blow as the reprisals for the assassination of Minoru Kurita on Kentares lead to a reversal of fortunes along the front.

Jinjiro's punishment of the political and military leadership of the Combine, whom the Coordinator felt had failed their nation, was surprisingly restrained. Some were executed, but demotion or exile to a prison camp was more often the extent of the punishment. A few officers were promoted and set to training the new generations of DCMS troops.

A national census revealed the scale of the war's damage to the Combine, and found it was particularly extensive in the border regions. The census also consolidated the Coordinator's hold over his people, including millions of new citizens brought into the Combine on worlds captured from the Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns, and absorbed from the Terran Hegemony.

The conflict destroyed many factories, but those in the heart of the realm, notably in the Pesht Military District, remained intact and functional. The major limitation on their operation was the supply of parts from subcontractors. Some industries relocated from the border regions of the Dieron and Benjamin Military Districts into the interior of the Combine, though such efforts were costly and time-consuming. Civilian infrastructure was equally hard-hit, but the absence of materials to rebuild water purification plants or vessels for interstellar commerce meant many of the "rebuilding projects" were little more than an exhortation to national effort.

MARIK

The Free Worlds League was the only other realm to make significant gains, taking worlds from both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Capellan Confederation. They did, however, lose the worlds of the Bolan Thumb; while not a major economic or strategic blow—in fact, the loss helped strengthen the FWL's borders—the Thumb's removal was a major political blow. The League's massive gains on the Liao front were offset by the losses to Steiner, leaving a net gain of twenty-two worlds. Furthermore, the bitterness of the conflict hurt the League's intelligence-gathering capabilities, forcing them to make decisions that would come back to haunt them in the Second Succession War.

Parliament sought to instigate a massive reconstruction program across the League's industry and civil infrastructure. But Captain-General Charles Marik, wary that the Bella Accords were merely a lull rather than a cessation of hostilities, insisted on the repair and resupply of front-line troops. His decision was not popular, but together with technical efforts to adapt combat designs to accept locally-produced parts, Charles' policies brought significant success in rebuilding the FWLM.

The Captain-General was less fortunate in rebuilding the League's intelligence services. Most agents operating on foreign soil were slain during the conflict, and efforts to reestablish the Marik intelligence-gathering networks were slow and difficult. Realizing the difficult position this placed him in, Charles sought out a new source of foreign intelligence: ComStar.

LIAO

Without a doubt, House Liao suffered the greatest losses of the First Succession War. The Confederation lost worlds on both borders, though it made significant gains in the former Terran Hegemony and managed to prevent any devastating breakthroughs such the one that nearly felled the Federated Suns. This resistance came at a cost. The CCAF, never the largest of the Great House militaries, was brutalized and would need to radically reform its tactics to survive (it ultimately would, in the form of the Jade Castle during the reign of Laurelli Liao). That the Confederation gained more worlds from House Davion than it lost was the only salve on their pride, with almost forty worlds lost to House Marik to total a net loss of thirty-five worlds.

Ilsa Liao used the armistice negotiations with the Federated Suns to bolster her realm, gaining both political cachet and much-needed resources as her price for large-scale POW exchanges. The crash rebuilding process instigated by the Strategios consumed not only the spoils of war but also much of the remaining Liao assets, leaving little for rebuilding civil infrastructure or the decimated merchant fleet of the Confederation. Despite these efforts to alleviate the CCAF's materiel shortfalls, Ilsa's inter-war program did little to revise the military's tactical doctrines and strategic thinking, leaving it in a perilous position with the looming resumption of hostilities. The Chancellor believed only an aggressive policy could save the Confederation, a mindset that would have devastating—and, for Ilsa, fatal—consequences.

OTHERS

The Great Houses weren't the only losers of the First Succession War. The remaining Periphery states—the Magistracy of Canopus, the Taurian Concordat and the Outworlds Alliance—weren't targeted directly by the war, but they did feel the consequences. Most significantly was the collapse of trade; the Periphery states wanted independence, but after two centuries their economies were inextricably linked to those of the six Great Houses. The war between Amaris and Kerensky strained this trade with the Periphery (which was already curtailed by the Periphery Uprising) but the onset of the Succession Wars brought it to a dead stop. The Great Houses turned their economic power toward supporting their war efforts rather than trading with their neighbors. While some independent merchants continued to trade with the Periphery realms, it was a drop in the ocean. More importantly, key products such as medicines and industrial components imported from the Great Houses were suddenly in short supply. As a consequence, worlds died for want of a widget or a SL$5 anti-viral previously commonly available. The fates of Bossangoa and Guldra were far from unusual.

Little-acknowledged by the main players, another faction weighed the pros and cons of the war. ComStar began the conflict as a neutral communications agency—albeit one with teeth in the form of "mercenaries" hired to seize Terra. But by the war's end the last remnant of the Star League bureaucracy had metamorphosed into an ambitious and secretive organization. It was not yet a theocratic state—that would not occur until the reign of Raymond Karpov—but by the 2820s it was taking an active if covert role in interstellar affairs. So much of Blake's legacy has been obscured by Conrad Toyama's ambition that is difficult to determine the origin of ComStar's interventionist policies, but it is clear that then-Prime Administrator Toyama was displeased by the winding down of the conflict in the 2820s. Under Toyama, ComStar undertook an active policy of provocation to reheat the war once more.

Officially, the First Succession War ended in 2821 and the Second Succession War began in 2830, but the intervening years were far from peaceful.

STAR LEAGUE EXCHANGES AND MINTS

***Broker's Haven, El Giza*:** Printed FWL and CC currency. Destroyed in First Succession War.
Commerce City, Epsilon Eridani: Printed CC currency. Destroyed in the Amaris Coup.
Currency, Narellan: Printed CC and FS currency. Destroyed in First Succession War.
Monetary Gain, Talitha: Printed FWL currency. Destroyed in the Amaris Coup.
Moniesville, Preston: Printed LC and FWL currency. Destroyed in First Succession War
Profitica, Stanzach: Printed DC and LC currency. Destroyed in First Succession War.
Prosperity, Ozawa: Printed FS currency. Destroyed in First Succession War.
Success, Lambrecht: Printed DC currency. Ransacked during the Amaris Coup.
The Exchange, Deshler: Printed FS and DC currency. Destroyed in Second Succession War.
Trader's City, Zollikofen: Printed LC currency. Destroyed in First Succession War.

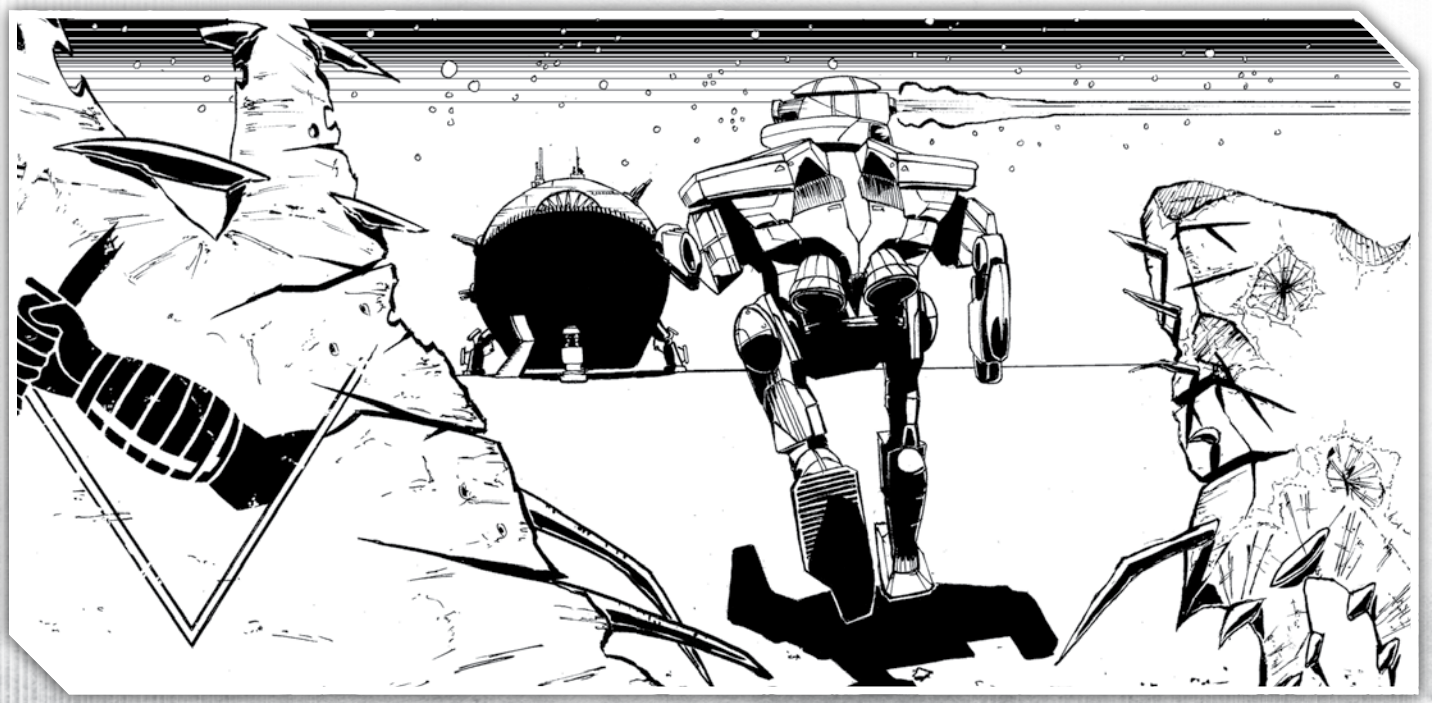
A Farewell to Arms

The weapons of the First Succession War were those of the Star League: Extended Range PPCs, pulse lasers, Streak missiles and the like. 'Mechs, tanks and fighters used advanced armor composites and structural components, making them lighter and faster than their cousins of the Age of War or the later Succession Wars. However, producing such advanced components required sophisticated industrial capabilities, and with the targeting of infrastructure in the First Succession War, that soon became a problem.

The collapse of the Inner Sphere's technology base began slowly, even before many production facilities were reduced to smoking ruins. The collapse in trade caused shortages of key materials necessary to the production of war materiel even before the outbreak of general war, but reserves built up during the Amaris crisis allowed the Great Houses to continue large-scale production right up to the eve of the First Succession War. The main exception was super-massive consumers such as WarShip production; the shortage of rare materials such as gallium arsenide halted the production of these behemoths even before Kerensky's departure. As a consequence, while ground forces grew significantly, there was little expansion of naval forces. This also meant that the massive naval losses of the First Succession War could not be made good, or fielded with downgraded technologies.

For the ground forces, the first sign of the technological plight was the increasing scarcity of advanced munitions. War stockpiles were consumed within the first few years of the conflict, and munitions factories struggled to keep up with the demand even before they themselves became targets of the war. Units often had to make do with locally-produced dumb munitions in lieu of their smart rounds, which were often funneled to premier units. But by the mid-2790s even these elite formations were deprived of advanced rounds, the munitions factories which made them either reduced to cinders or lacking key components or materials.

Similarly, replacement armor and weapons became increasingly scarce, and field repairs often required the replacement of an advanced system with a less sophisticated but more readily available version. "FrankenMechs" became the order of the day, often employing jury-rigged systems and "field downgrades" to remain operational.



New vehicle production suffered similar issues; the production lines might be able to physically assemble Star League-spec *Warhammers* but lacked the ER PPCs, armor composites and electronics to do so. Instead, there was a gradual downgrading of specifications—standard autocannons replaced Ultra versions, ER lasers were dropped in favor of regular versions and so forth. Few low-tech designs appeared instantly; instead, designs like the MAD-3R *Marauder* emerged slowly from the Star League-era "Lostech" versions.

Despite this, the designs and configurations of the Star League remained the principal versions of 'Mechs, tanks and fighters in use through the end of the First Succession War in the early twenty-ninth Century. It would take the brutality of the Second Succession War—and the long slog of the Third—to degrade battle technology to its nadir before the slow climb back that began in the early thirty-first century.

While advanced equipment became increasingly scarce, the first two decades of the First Succession War saw sufficient production to still allow the raising of new units. These formations, such as the Sixteenth Lyran Regulars, were generally less well equipped than their pre-war siblings. It wasn't until near the end of the First Succession War—and more notably during the Second Succession War—that production fell so low that the Great Houses struggled to even maintain existing equipment and formations.

Taking a Breath

The era of peace that followed the Succession War came to an end in the late 2820s, incidentally transforming the Succession War into the "First" Succession War in the process. As with the First Succession War (or Terra's World Wars), the dates of the conflict varied significantly depending on the participants; some border conflicts, such as that between the Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine, re-ignited in 2825, while others, such as the Federated Suns-Capellan Confederation conflict, resumed in 2828. The Free Worlds League did not become embroiled in the general conflict until 2830; as such, this is the date most historians use to date the start of the Second Succession War. Some historians suggest that the First Succession War never truly ended, and that the period from 2821 to 2825 was instead merely a period of retrenchment and re-arming before the conflict heated up again. They instead suggest that the "Great Succession War" ran from 2787 to 2863. However, the two phases of the conflict bore markedly different characteristics, reinforcing the

SHIPBUILDING CASUALTIES OF THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

Capellan Confederation
- Delhi WarShips (Capella) – Destroyed
- Delhi WarShips (Carver IV) – Destroyed
- Krester's Ship Construction (Keid) – Destroyed
- Krester's Ship Construction (Terra Firma) – Destroyed
- Rashpur-Owens Inc. (Capella) – Damaged
- Thompson Shipyards (Keid) – Destroyed

Draconis Combine
- Izumi JumpShips (Altair) – Destroyed
- Krester's Ship Construction (Yorii) – Destroyed
- LTV Aerospace (Inglesmond) – Destroyed
- Stellar Trek (Chatham) – Survived
- Stellar Trek (Dieron) – Destroyed

Federated Suns
- Federated-Boeing (Galax) – Crippled
- McKenna's Shipyards (Kathil) – Crippled
- Universal Air (Delavan) – Damaged

Free Worlds League
- Bowie Industries (Wasat) – Destroyed
- DeKirk Aerospace (Graham IV) – Destroyed
- Di Tron Heavy Industries (Sirius) – Destroyed
- Irian Naval Systems (Clipperton [Regulan]) – Crippled
- Mitchell Vehicles Interstellar (Graham IV) – Ground Facilities Destroyed
- SelaSys Inc. (Loyalty [Graham-Marik]) – Damaged
- Technicron Manufacturing (Tamarind [Tamarind]) – Destroyed

Lyran Commonwealth
- Boeing Interstellar (New Earth) – Destroyed
- Bolson Shipyards (New Kyoto) – Destroyed
- Bolson-Tamar Shipyards (Tamar) – Destroyed
- Daussault-Shimmon Enterprises (New Earth) – Destroyed
- Di Tron Heavy Industries (New Earth) – Destroyed
- Di Tron Heavy Industries (Zebebelgenubi) – Destroyed
- Krester's Ship Construction (Thorin) – Destroyed

ComStar
- Blue Nose Clipperships (Mars) – Decommissioned
- Boeing Interstellar (Terra) – Decommissioned
- Di Tron Heavy Industries (Terra) – Decommissioned
- Krester's Ship Construction (Terra) – Decommissioned

Periphery
- Athena Corporation (Canopus [Canopus]) – Destroyed
- Concordat Aerospace Limited (Taurus [Taurian]) – Destroyed
- Roe Weapon Systems (Finmark [Rim Worlds]) – Destroyed
- United Outworlders Corporation (Ramora [Outworlds]) – Decommissioned

FORLORN HOPE

The flight of the SLDF to distant stars was intended to keep them aloof from the conflicts shortly to wrack the Inner Sphere, preserving the soul of the Star League as a beacon in the darkness. But no sooner had the Exodus Fleet departed then cracks began to appear in the unified front of the troops, leading to the *Prinz Eugen* revolt and its bloody suppression. In the wake of that disaster, Kerensky issued General Order 137, better known as the Hidden Hope Doctrine, enshrining the need for the SLDF's self-imposed Exile.

Return to the Inner Sphere is impossible for us. Our heritage and our convictions are different from those we left behind. The greed of the five Great Houses and the Council Lords is a disease that can only be burned away by the passing of decades, even centuries. And though the fighting may seem to slow, or even cease, it will erupt again as long as there are powerful men to covet one another's wealth. We shall live apart, conserving all the good of the Star League and ridding ourselves of the bad, so that when we return — and return we shall — our shining moral character will be as much our shield as our BattleMechs and fighters.

—General Order 137

Even to this day, many of the Clans hold the Hidden Hope Doctrine in near reverence, it having taken literal form in the Second Exodus of Nicholas Kerensky and his followers to Strana Mechty in the wake of his father's death. The Exodus Civil War (2801-2822) ran parallel to the latter years of the First Succession War, and mirrored its ferocity and devastation. While the factions of the Inner Sphere pulled back from the brink of total annihilation, much of the SLDF in the Pentagon did not. In many regards, the Pentagon wars were even more brutal than the Succession War, with the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons compounded by ethnic cleansing and other war crimes. In the Inner Sphere, the Great Houses were bloodied by the conflict but remained in control of functioning states. In Clan space, little remained of society. The survivors were malleable clay in Nicholas Kerensky's hands when he launched Operation KLONDIKE in 2821, unleashing the Clans he had forged from the troops who had accompanied him on the Second Exodus.

The annihilation of Clan Wolverine, beginning in 2823, was the first major political event within the Clans and the only one—until late in the thirtieth century, at least—to possibly have had any impact on the Inner Sphere. The Minnesota Tribe incident is popularly linked to survivors of the Wolverines, though even today there is no definitive connection. Even more significantly to the Clans were the events of 2834. A dispute with Clan Widowmaker evolved into a Trial of Refusal, and while refereeing the contest, ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky was killed. The Clans were now deprived of Kerensky's vision and authority, metamorphosing over the next "golden century" into the factionalized, militaristic society that returned to the Inner Sphere in 3050.

—*A Pocket History of the Inner Sphere*, Terra Press, 3122

idea of two distinct conflicts—just as the low-tempo (and extremely long) Third Succession War is distinguished from the Second despite the absence of a formal cessation of hostilities and a very brief (three-year) inter-war period.

THE WINDS OF WAR (2825-2830)

Unlike the First Succession War, the path to the Second wasn't clearly defined. Instead, a series of localized brush-fire wars escalated, and eventually led to a resumption of general warfare. Even in the quietest inter-war years, espionage and special-forces actions were the order of the day, as each Successor State sought to ascertain the status of their rivals and prevent any rebuilding before the inevitable resumption of hostilities.

Having suffered years of external attack—and, in many cases, damage at the hands of their own counter-intelligence operations—none of the Successor States' intelligence agencies operated at peak efficiency, and high-profile successes were few and far between. One of the most notable occurred within the Lyran Commonwealth, when the ISF succeeded in placing agents within the Duke of Tamar's staff. This gave them access to data regarding the military and economic situation within the Tamar Pact and across the Commonwealth. The leaks only ended when another agent, a member of the Free Worlds League's SAFE, killed the ISF operatives, mistakenly believing they were LIC Molehunters.

Better known, though less damaging overall, were the Draconis Combine's so-called "Chain Gang" missions of 2825 and 2826 that targeted both the Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns. Conceiving of a way to utilize undesirable elements of his population—convicts, political prisoners and other outcasts—Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita ordered them to be given rudimentary training and equipment and then unleashed at targets in the neighboring realms. Most "Chain Gang" units were lance- or company-sized, included members jacked up on combat drugs, and inflicted minimal damage. Others were larger and more effective, and required the redeployment of LCAF line units to counter them. In the eyes of the Coordinator and the DCMS, the chaos the attacks sowed more than made up for their limited military value. Lyran counter-blows soon followed, with LCAF troops hitting back at several targets within the Combine with surprisingly effective assault operations. Further Combine actions were expected, but fate intervened to distract the Kurita forces.

The Minnesota Tribe

On 9 October 2825, the world of Svelvik on the Periphery border of the Draconis Combine came under attack by a regimental-sized unit. The attackers were skilled and well-versed in Star League tactics, their 'Mechs apparently painted in Regular Army colors and equipped with technologies already becoming scarce in the Inner Sphere. No identifiers linked them to Kerensky's forces—though the Coordinator believed they were precursors of Kerensky's return. The units bore an insignia that corresponded to the Terran district of Minnesota in North America, leading to the mysterious combatants being dubbed the "Minnesota Tribe." These mysterious assailants took supplies and left, departing into uncharted systems along with a fleet of cargo vessels and military craft.

The Tribe disappeared for months, but then re-appeared on 17 December 2825 to strike at Trondheim, smashing the Twentieth Rasalhague Regulars and again taking what they wanted before disappearing into the void between stars. The Tribe refused any attempt at contact, going so far as to commit suicide rather than be captured. This security procedure further inflamed fears that the Tribe were vanguards of Kerensky's returning army, prompting the Coordinator to flood the region with troops to deal with the incursions. A third attack by the Tribe against on Jarrett on 19 August 2826 further demonstrated the skill of the invaders and the weakness of the Combine position. The raiders' aerospace forces handily defeated

the DCMS, pinning them in place and interdicting transport links long enough for the Tribe to scour local storehouses and move on.

The final encounter with the Tribe took place on 9 March 2827 when they again defeated defending forces and raided storage facilities on Richmond. Additionally, the Tribe liberated secret prisons and slave camps established by the Combine, spiriting their occupants away to an unknown destination. This was the last time the tribe was sighted in the Inner Sphere, though ComStar survey vessels followed the unit's trail through the Periphery until all traces disappeared near Valentina.

Officially.

Unconfirmed rumors during the Jihad claimed that ComStar had in fact made contact with the invaders and offered them sanctuary, with the Minnesota Tribe becoming the core of what would later become the Word of Blake. These rumors also identified the raiders as remnants of Clan Wolverine, fleeing from the oppression of Nicholas Kerensky's new regime. The claims fit neatly with facts known from the Clan Homeworlds about the Not-Named Clan and proved to be a political bombshell, spurring the Ghost Bears into aiding the Allied campaign against the Word of Blake.

With the benefit of years of hindsight, and without any further evidence to support that claim, the fit may have been too neat, and too accurately punched the Clans' buttons to move them to action. Whether there is any truth to the rumors, or whether they are a fabrication of Anastasius Focht, Chandrasekhar Kurita or Devlin Stone may never be known. Even now, more than three hundred years later, the Minnesota Tribe remain an enigma that grips the populace of the Inner Sphere.

Chahar Profit

The LCAF reprisals after the "Chain Gang" missions drew only limited response from the DCMS, but a further incident in late 2826 threatened to fully ignite tensions. On 30 December, a commercial JumpShip, the *Chahar Profit*, made an erroneous jump to Darius and was captured by the DCMS. The event is often cited as a mis-jump, but conflicting reports attribute it to everything from computer error that transposed jump coordinates to an attempt to rescue a Lyran intelligence cell. The LCAF immediately began planning the vessel's recovery, leading to a lightning raid by the hastily-reformed Stealths in late February 2827 to recover the vessel, its crew and cargo. The assault was a stunning success, with only two 'Mechs lost (and their pilots recovered). Though still distracted by the Minnesota Tribe, the successful Lyran operation challenged the honor of the DCMS. With a subsequent series of reprisals finding little success, the Combine began plotting a more serious assault on their Lyran foes. To the LCAF, the raid showed the value of maneuverable forces and reinforced the idea that the LCAF could hold their own against the militaristic Combine.

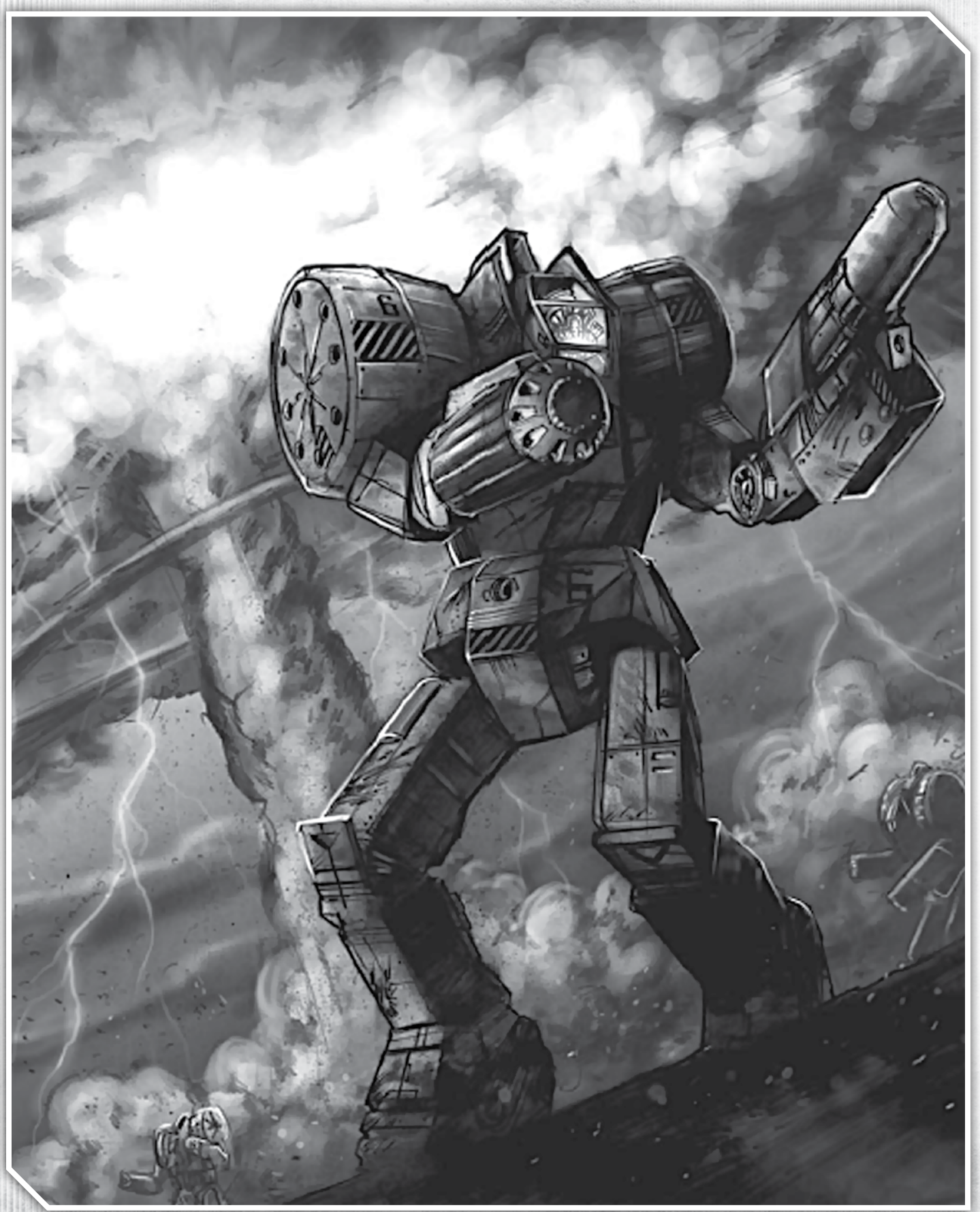
The Davion front had no incident comparable to the *Chahar Profit* affair to crystallize House Kurita's attention, but the Combine's plan for a resumption of hostilities did include the Federated Suns. Jinjiro's focus on the Lyran front in the late 2820s nonetheless the Davions a chance to prepare for the inevitable return to war. When it did occur in 2830, the result was not as the Combine expected.

Getting Your Revenge in First

Though they kept a close eye on the Dragon, House Davion's main focus in the inter-war years was their other neighbor, the Capellan Confederation. Paul Davion did not want to rush into a new war, but knew that delivering a decisive blow to House Liao would be essential if the AFFS hoped to then counter the Combine threat. He planned a major assault against Liao—Operation DAO—designed to secure the long-contested Chesterton worlds. He knew that Ilsa Liao would seek to recover the strategic planets, whose absence from the Confederation remained a stain on Capellan honor, and planned to blunt her response.

The Chancellor struck first, beginning by launching a series of diversionary attacks along the border to distract the AFFS and to draw troops away from the real target. The CCAF campaign to crush the Demeter-Chesterton salient began in May 2828; never one to watch from the rear, Ilsa took direct command of the assault on Orbisonia, leading the Red Lancers and Prefectorate Guard to pin several Davion units in place. Unfortunately for the Chancellor, her hard-won gains on the world soon turned to ashes—Orbisonia had been selected as a staging point for AFFS forces, and her assault ran headlong into the AFFS' planned counter-blow. On 24 June, the Chancellor perished leading a rearguard action and preventing a Capellan rout. Laurelli Liao, commanding the assault on Kathil, became the new Chancellor and immediately called off the CCAF assaults. Her mother's gambit had failed, and Laurelli needed time to reflect on the disaster and make new plans to meet the Davion and Marik juggernauts. Fortunately for the new Chancellor, the Free Worlds League was content with staging only the occasional raid, though Paul Davion followed up his victories in Operation DAO with two more campaigns: Operation SUN, directed at Tikonov; and Operation RAIN, against the Valexa-Axton region.

Assuming the Captain-Generalcy upon the death of his father, Thaddeus, in 2821, Charles Marik sought to remain aloof from the new conflicts emerging across the Inner Sphere. But when prisoner exchange talks with the Lyran Commonwealth faltered (thanks to ComStar interference), House Marik's return to the conflict became inevitable. His intelligence service, SAFE, remained in shambles, and failed to provide notice of the Confederation's weakness during the abortive attack against House Davion. When the situation and SAFE's failure became known to the Captain-General, he began casting around for new sources of information. One immediately landed in his lap: his sister Jeanette was a ComStar adept and in June 2830 agreed to provide Charles with intelligence information. This was the final move in Conrad Toyama's plan to ignite a new war, effectively drawing House Marik back into the conflict and building the Free Worlds' dependence on ComStar's intelligence. The resulting Second Succession War would be devastating for the Inner Sphere—and tragic for House Marik.



PERSONALITIES OF THE FIRST SUCCESSION WAR (2784-2821)

MINORU KURITA

Rank/Position: Coordinator of the Draconis Combine (served 2766 – 2796)
Lived: 30 April 2705 – 14 September 2796

The Minoru Kurita who led his realm into the Succession Wars was not quite the same man as the one who oversaw the final days of the Star League. Though he never abandoned his claim to the First Lord's throne, or his House's right to wage war for that very prize, the departure of Kerensky's Exodus fleet seemed to affect him on a profound but subtle level. In the years that followed, the Coordinator grew increasingly weary and pensive.

The first, and perhaps most outwardly apparent, sign of Minoru's shifting attitudes came in the years leading up to the First Succession War. The Coordinator debated which of his realm's enemies to test, eventually opting to attack the Federated Suns despite the Lyran Commonwealth's obvious weakness. This decision, though rooted in honorable Combine traditions, nonetheless demonstrated an indecisiveness few would have expected of the Coordinator who was the first to lay claim to the title of First Lord. That he left the major planning for that war against House Davion to his son, Jinjiro, only further underscored what many scholars have come to see as Minoru's growing exhaustion with the burdens of leadership.

By the mid-2790s, the aging Coordinator of the Draconis Combine was no longer the ambitious warlord he once was. With his armies a mere one jump from topping the Federated Suns, it was his counsel to Jinjiro that stayed the Dragon's killing blow. With this fateful decision, he unknowingly set the stage for both his last moments on the otherwise unremarkable world of Kentares IV, and the undoing of all that he and his heir had accomplished since the death of the Star League.

JINJIRO KURITA

Rank/Position: Warlord of Galedon (2777-2796); Coordinator of the Draconis Combine (served 2976-2837)
Lived: 15 September 2747 – 11 April 2841

Due to his response to his father's death—the Kentares Massacre—and his own final years, Jinjiro is often characterized as a madman whose psychopathic tendencies wrought carnage on the Inner Sphere. The reality is much more nuanced; he was a skilled warrior and commander who rose to lead the Galedon Military district and whose operational planning led to the Combine's decisive successes of the early First Succession War.

Born on Luthien to Heaven's Gate, Minoru's favorite concubine, Jinjiro spent the first decade of his life in political limbo and as the focus of numerous schemes. His mother's plotting eventually persuaded Minoru to recognize Jinjiro as his son and heir, but at the cost of her life; Minoru's wife, Yvonne Toshi-Kurita, who was six months pregnant with Zabu Kurita, pushed the courtesan from the palace walls. Kuritan legend has it that Heaven's Gate died in her son's arms, her murder coloring Jinjiro's actions in the Succession Wars.

After his mother's death, Jinjiro threw himself into his new life, seeking to excel and prevent his half-brother from eclipsing Jinjiro's more tenuous position. Jinjiro finished at the top of his class at the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy and earned a place in the Galedon Regulars. He could have frozen Zabu out of his life, but instead became the perfect big brother. Jinjiro's military skill—and his brother's academic bent—solidified Jinjiro's place as heir-designate. In 2777, Jinjiro was confirmed as Warlord of Galedon, one of the youngest to serve in the role. His military skill and inspirational leadership made it clear that nepotism wasn't a primary factor in his appointment, though those who suggested it was soon witnessed Jinjiro's legendary temper.

At the outbreak of the First Succession War, Jinjiro persuaded his father to ignore the weak Lyran Commonwealth and instead focus the Combine's efforts on the Federated Suns. Initially staged under the cover of heightened military activity in the wake of Kerensky's Exodus, Jinjiro's planning was meticulous, and the offensive came within a hair's breadth of annihilating House Davion. The turning point came in 2796 on the world of Kentares, when Coordinator Minoru Kurita was killed by a lone sniper while personally overseeing operations against the Seventh Crucis Lancers. Jinjiro's response after arriving on-world two weeks later became the single bloodiest atrocity in the history of humanity: the Kentares Massacre. More than fifty million Davion citizens were murdered in a five-month wave of carnage—along with no few DCMS officers who had failed to protect the former Coordinator, showed insufficient spine to promptly inform his heir of the incident, or later attempted to protect Davion civilians during the rampage.

The new Coordinator's skill failed him in the years that followed; though still showing flashes of genius, his tactics became increasingly brutal—and unsuccessful. As the DCMS faltered and lost ground, even the unstable Coordinator realized that some of his nation's traditions—refusing to retreat and committing *seppuku* to atone for dishonor—would have to be put aside for the good of the Combine. Ironically, around the same time, gladiatorial blood sports became a staple of Combine entertainments.

By the mid-2820s, Lord Jinjiro was teetering on the brink of madness, his periods of lucidity increasingly scarce. The Coordinator knew that stepping aside in favor of his intellectual half-brother would be a disaster for the Combine. Even as the First Succession War drew to a close, Jinjiro retained an iron grip on the Combine and sought to strengthen the DCMS.

Ultimately, madness consumed the Coordinator, and his fears about Zabu succeeding him would be assuaged by direct action on the part of the DCMS. Jinjiro would outlive his brother, but the last half-decade of his life was lost to insanity.

BARBARA LIAO

Rank/Position: Duchess of Sian, Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation (served 2760-2795)
Lived: 1 May 2731 – 18 November 2795

Barbara Liao proved to be a pragmatic leader for the Confederation, not rushing to war, but willing to take action where it was warranted. The border conflict between the Confederation and the Federated Suns after the Demeter incident in Barbara's earliest days shaped her outlook toward the Star League. When Amaris launched his coup, she was unwilling to side with either the Emperor or Kerensky. But in the face of popular support for the General's counter-offensive, she softened her stance and allowed the SLDF to operate in the Confederation—though she stopped short of offering direct support.

In her later years, Barbara came to regret this, believing that had Kerensky been aided fully in his efforts against Amaris, the war would have been over sooner and the Star League would have survived. Though she was lukewarm to the League after its refusal to aid the Confederation against House Davion, she saw it as preferable to the horrors of the Succession War that followed. That she had been complicit in Kerensky's removal preyed on her until the end of her days, a mistake of criminal proportions that she could never undo.

Nonetheless, when war erupted Barbara showed herself willing to use every weapon in her arsenal. Initial gains against the Federated Suns were balanced by significant losses to House Marik, so when she launched her counterblow in 2789, it was to be decisive. New Delos saw a massive Capellan invasion that was more interested in killing and destroying than capturing territory. Her "Devlin Solution" suspended the Ares Conventions and allowed indiscriminate targeting of civilians and unfettered use of strategic weapons. It shocked the enemy, but provoked an equally bloody reprisal.

Barbara's sons died in the debacle at Calloway VI; her sole heir was her granddaughter Ilsa, born the year before Kerensky's Exodus. When Barbara died of a rare blood disorder in 2795, Ilsa was too young to succeed her, and so the Prefect of the Tikonov Commonality—Sandol Quinn—was chosen to act as the Confederation's Chancellor-Regent.

SANDOL QUINN

Rank/Position: Duke of Sirius ; Prefect of Tikonov; Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation (served 2795-2801)
Lived: 4 November 2749 – 13 February 2831

Ambitious, determined, and a descendant of the rulers of the Sarna Supremacy, Sandol Quinn knew he had only a few years to make his mark. Though installed as Chancellor-Regent, it was understood he was merely the caretaker of the post until Ilsa Liao came of age. He set about strengthening the CCAF and rebuilding the Confederation's pride after a series of military reversals, spending much of his tenure at the front, commanding operations against both House Marik and House Davion. The latter, distracted by activity along the Combine front, became the main victims of House Liao's lightning assaults. The Chancellor was quick to lavish praise on his valiant troops; his presence and willingness to reward victory and determination buoyed the spirits of the CCAF, though it also encouraged them to undertake foolhardy and often desperate action to win the Chancellor's praise.

Quinn's relationship with Ilsa Liao was complex. He quickly learned not to treat Ilsa as a child, finding her precocious and able to grasp both Capellan politics and those of the wider Inner Sphere. But he found her disinterested in military campaigns against the Confederation's foes. She rarely joined him at the front, an arrangement that suited them both; Sandol could bask in the glory of the CCAF's successes, while the teenage Ilsa established her own power base on Sian.

There are suggestions that Quinn considered remaining in office after Ilsa achieved her majority in 2801 in the hopes of establishing House Quinn as rulers of the Confederation. It was clear, however, that both the Prefectorate and the House of Scions wanted a return to Liao rule, and Quinn resigned his office on 19 April 2801. He continued as Strategic Military Director and advisor to the Chancellor, serving not only Ilsa but also, briefly, her daughter Laurelli.

ILSA LIAO

Rank/Position: Duchess of Sian, Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation (served 2801-2828)
Lived: 19 April 2783 – 23 June 2828

Ilsa Liao was only six when her father Baltazar died in the debacle at Calloway VI, and became heir to the Confederation six years later, when her grandmother passed away. With Sandol Quinn serving as Chancellor-Regent, Ilsa threw herself into the intricacies of government, learning to navigate the murky politics of the Sian court. As a child she showed little interest in combat, though she did learn to pilot a BattleMech, and served two months with the Red Lancers when she was sixteen (including the daring raid on Mirach). Instead, she preferred to delegate military matters to Quinn, who would later serve as Strategic Military Director during her reign. She was, however, deeply aware of the political implications of military action, and took a keen interest in the actions and reactions of the neighboring Great Houses.

After becoming Chancellor in 2801 she took a more hands-on approach to military operations, touring front-line units and even occasionally taking part in engagements. Like Quinn before her, she came to appreciate the impact her presence had on her troops, and when it came time to retake the Chesterton Worlds, she opted to lead from the front. It would be a fatal decision; Ilsa died fighting a rearguard action on Orbisonia in the opening salvos of the Second Succession War, the first Chancellor to perish in combat.

KENYON MARIK

Rank/Position: Duke of Atreus, Thirty-fourth Captain-General of the Free Worlds League (served 2763-2804)
Lived: 21 April 2734 – 19 January 2804

Kenyon Marik's relationship with the SLDF was a stormy one—he briefly served on Kerensky's staff, but was dismissed after taking brutal action during a civilian protest. This action, which occurred during Kerensky's regency for Richard Cameron, colored the relationship between the two men until the Exodus; Marik refused to help the SLDF against Amaris, going as far as to attempt military action against intruding SLDF vessels. After the Liberation of Terra, Kenyon took vindictive pleasure in stripping Kerensky of his office. When the SLDF sided with the General and began to maneuver toward Exodus, the Captain-General feared the SLDF would strike at the League on their way. Instead, he breathed a sigh of relief when they headed into the Draconis Combine.

The factionalized nature of FWL politics hampered Kenyon's ability to prepare for the coming war. Only after Kerensky's forces left the Inner Sphere in late 2784 did Parliament agree to Marik's request for extraordinary powers in the form of Resolution 288. Intended as a short-term consolidation of power to allow the Captain-General to prosecute the looming conflict, it instead become a cornerstone of Free Worlds politics until the late thirty-first century.

Kenyon proved to be a skilled military commander, insightful and deadly in equal measure. He refused to squander resources, instead opting to take precise but devastating action. This led to considerable success in occupying worlds of the Terran Hegemony and against the Capellan Confederation, but was less successful against House Steiner. When clashes with the Lyran military did not go in the FWLM's favor, Kenyon ordered the targeting of Commonwealth industry. His brutal tit-for-tat exchanges with Barbara Liao and Sandol Quinn—including the infamous order to "clear a route ten parsecs wide to Sarna"—typified the First Succession War.

The conflict had grave personal consequences for Kenyon. Two of his sons perished in battle, while his grandson Ward was assassinated, leaving Thaddeus Marik to ascend to the Captain-Generalcy when Kenyon suffered a stroke on 11 January 2804 and died eight days later.

THADDEUS MARIK

Rank/Position: Captain-General of the Free Worlds League (served 2804-2821)
Lived: 7 May 2755 – 7 January 2821

Kenyon's second son eschewed the BattleMech training of his siblings, instead attending flight school, where he became an accomplished fighter pilot and rose rapidly through the ranks. A landing accident while serving on the FWLS *Hector* in 2779 ended Thaddeus' piloting career, and he transferred to naval command, heading up the Ionia battle group in the early days of the First Succession War. In 2789, he was elevated to the post of Fleet Admiral commanding naval forces on the Lyran border, becoming the mainstay of the defenses against Steiner aggression. He narrowly avoided death in the disastrous assault on Hesperus in 2795, but continued to lead from the front, even accompanying assault troops as they struck at Steiner worlds. It was during one such assault in 2804 that Thaddeus learned of his father's passing, but rather than immediately head back to Atreus, he opted to see the campaign through.

This dedication nearly cost Thaddeus dearly, as Parliament sought to revoke Resolution 288 and claw back the powers they ceded to the Captain-General two decades earlier; only a show of force secured his position. Political in-fighting with provincial lords such as Carter Allison and the resulting military brinkmanship left the FWLM defenses of Oriente deliberately degraded, allowing Liao forces to assault the planet until Duke Allison capitulated.

Unlike his father's measured, focused brutality, Thaddeus opted for a high tempo of operations on a broader front, winning many engagements but at the cost of much of the League's war materiel. By the early 2820s, with exhaustion setting in, Thaddeus ordered his diplomatic corps to negotiate an armistice with the Steiners. However, the Captain-General insisted on securing one final factory, and personally led an assault to retake Deiudonné. He died in an artillery strike while discussing strategy with several field commanders, falling scant weeks before the end of the First Succession War.

JENNIFER STEINER

Rank/Position: Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth (served 2781 – 2791)
Lived: 18 February 2725 – 4 January 2791

Despite effectively starting the First Succession War with the invasion of Bolan, Jennifer Steiner was a reluctant wartime Archon. She inherited the throne from her brother Robert, who disappointed many Commonwealth citizens with his inaction in the face of Amaris' betrayal, reluctance to support Kerensky's war against the Usurper, and self-serving grab for the Rim Worlds Republic's most developed systems. Indeed, the last years of Robert Steiner's reign were so unpopular that when he passed away from fatal pneumonia, many Lyran citizens viewed his death as divine retribution for his role in disbanding and destroying the Star League.

Well into her fifties when she became Archon, Jennifer had long since grown cynical about the state of the Inner Sphere and its rulers. While she shared popular dismay at the Star League's collapse, she also believed its failure after the coup was inevitable, as none of the House Lords could be trusted to lead the League's remains. Thus, her first focus upon claiming the Lyran throne was to accelerate all efforts to build up the LCAF—including efforts to recruit as many SLDF commands as possible.

In addition to her realm's natural enemies in the Draconis Combine and Free Worlds League, Jennifer feared the potential threat of a resurgent and vengeful Rim Worlds Republic, and felt that the only option was to prepare for a war on every side. This concern, echoed by many of her generals, led to the LCAF's over-emphasis on static defense in the years leading up to the start of the First Succession War (and beyond). Ironically, this strategy merely opened the Commonwealth up to attacks from the highly mobile raiding parties unleashed by Houses Kurita and Marik.

Continually frustrated by her military's lack of battlefield prowess, Archon Jennifer spent most of her wartime rule struggling to inspire greater creativity and motivation in her officer corps. Unfortunately, the LCAF's lack of practical combat experience and overabundance of so-called "social generals" undermined most of these efforts. Worse yet, the same military weaknesses found throughout the Lyran military applied to the Archon herself—as evidenced by the tactical blunder that took her life during the battle for Styx.

RICHARD STEINER

Rank/Position: Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth (served 2781 – 2823)
Lived: 3 July 2769 – 14 June 2823

Richard Steiner was born amid the Amaris Crisis, in the same year that Aleksandr Kerensky and the SLDF completed their conquest of the Rim Worlds Republic, and spent his youth hearing of the war between Kerensky and Amaris. Although he was only twelve years old when the Star League disbanded, the enormity of the event was not lost on him. He began his military training as a tank commander under the certainty of war between the Great Houses.

Growing up in the dawn of the Succession Wars, and receiving greater access than most of his fellow LCAF officers to the classified reports detailing the horrors being inflicted across the Inner Sphere, Richard lost what little taste he had for court politics and the lifestyles of the Commonwealth's high society. With the severity of a warrior facing the Ragnarök, he embraced the austerity of military life, and distanced himself from the sycophants and social generals who infested the LCAF at every level. This dedication to military service earned him command of the Eleventh Lyran Guards—a reinforced armor regiment—by the time he was just twenty years old.

When his mother's death just two years later placed Richard on the Archon's throne, years of frustration with the LCAF's widespread ineptitude prompted him to order a shakeup in the chain of command. Shuffling more competent strategic commanders into positions to direct the Commonwealth's front lines, he isolated Paul Steiner—his uncle and General of the Armies at the time—from the decision-making process, turning instead to Generals Graham Kelswa and Amanda Lestrade. He also moved quickly to cripple any potential threat from the ruins of the Rim Worlds Republic, ordering a decisive, devastating strike against the shipyard world of Finmark and using LIC operatives and other commando units to neutralize any local warlords seeking to reunify the fallen realm.

In the latter stages of the First Succession War, Richard Steiner kept the Commonwealth largely on a defensive footing, but continued his fight to improve the LCAF by first nationalizing and then dispersing one of his best raiding forces—the Stealths—among the various state academies. With his realm teetering on the brink of exhaustion, he welcomed Captain-General Thaddeus Marik's peace initiative, though he knew any cease-fire would be fleeting at best. To Richard, winning the Succession Wars was impossible; he could only hope to ensure that his realm survived them.

As an unsteady peace settled across the Inner Sphere, Archon Richard turned his full attention to revitalizing the Commonwealth, including the creation of the temporary Archonettes intended to improve coordination for regional reconstruction projects. He would not live to see the fruits of these efforts, however. In June of 2823, little more than two years after the signing of the Bella Accords, Richard Steiner died of natural causes, leaving the Lyran recovery to his son, Marcus.

JOHN DAVION

Rank/Position: First Prince of the Federated Suns (served 2745 – 2797)
Lived: 8 November 2719 – 9 December 2797

Although relations between the Federated Suns and the Terran Hegemony were still strained when he came to power in 2745 (the result of the SLDF's slow response to the War of Davion Succession some twenty years earlier), First Prince John Davion nevertheless saw the Star League as a powerful ally and maintained a cordial relationship with its leadership. In fact, both General Aleksandr Kerensky and First Lord Richard Cameron regarded John as a man of such integrity that the general called him "the best and noblest of all the Lords", and the young First Lord referred to him as "a light of hope against the dark depravity" of the other Houses.

[*Editor's Note: Several contested reports even contend that Richard Cameron wished to install John Davion as his heir—and later, as regent for his daughter, Amanda—in the event that something should happen to him. These reports were often cited to bolster the Davion claim on the First Lordship, even though it remains broadly accepted that Richard was thoroughly under Stefan Amaris' influence at the time, and would thus have been unlikely to name any non-Cameron other than the Usurper to such honors.*]

There is some substance to the legend of Prince John's integrity. He openly refused to support Stefan Amaris in his war against General Kerensky, stating simply to the Usurper, "I do not recognize your right to the throne." Though he failed to offer much more support to Kerensky, his reasoning for doing so was his focus on marshalling the AFFS to defend the Federated Suns against possible attacks from Amaris' armies.

After the Star League's inevitable collapse, John resisted the temptation to invade the Terran Hegemony wholesale, and instead tried to absorb Hegemony worlds through more peaceful means. Unfortunately, this strategy limited the Federated Suns' gains in the Terran corridor, slowing its expansion into the region long enough for Barbara Liao and her Capellan Confederation to annex most of the systems between the Suns and Terra. It is perhaps because of this annexation that John Davion prepared his military for an overwhelming assault against the Confederation, even as House Kurita massed troops along the Suns border—a critical error that would nearly cost him his realm.

Overwhelmed by the Combine's assault, and struggling against divisiveness within his own military and government, Prince John found himself nearly powerless before the DCMS juggernaut. In a cruel twist of fate, it would take the savagery of the Kentares Massacre to turn his luck around and spare New Avalon from House Kurita's killing blow. An assassin denied John his final vindication, however, and left the survival of the Suns to his grandson, Paul.

PAUL DAVION

Rank/Position: First Prince of the Federated Suns, Duke of New Avalon (served 2797 – 2842)
Lived: 12 September 2778 – 4 July 2842

Paul Davion was only nineteen years of age when fate thrust him into the most critical moment in Federated Suns history. Months after the Kentares Massacre, the realm he inherited still teetered at the edge of ruin. While the atrocity on Kentares had renewed the AFFS' fighting spirit, a concerted plan to focus that energy toward driving back the Draconis Combine's invading hordes died with Paul's father and grandfather on Ipava.

At the time of his ascension, Paul was a novice in battlefield tactics, and his military training was incomplete. But his keen mind for politics and history, as well as an appreciation of the bigger picture, led him to insights that would revolutionize the Federated Suns and cement House Davion's power in the troubled times still to come. Among his first acts was the retroactive sanction of the reactionary attacks all along the Combine front, essentially lauding the "initiative" of his more impulsive generals, and thus claiming some credit for their victories. This enabled him to reap the rewards of his field commanders' successes, while turning his own focus toward addressing the political, regional, and intelligence weaknesses that had so undermined the Suns in the face of its ancient enemies.

Before leading the counterassaults that ultimately drove the Combine invaders back to the Suns' pre-war borders, Paul's most significant action was his assumption of the title of Duke of New Avalon. This formerly ceremonial title, augmented with powers bestowed upon it for use by the First Lord of the Star League, essentially granted him the legal rights to reform the Federated Suns without having to submit his plans to High Council review. In the early years of his reign, Paul streamlined the AFFS chains of command, eliminated provincial divisions, and created the MIIO organization that would revolutionize the realm's intelligence-gathering capabilities.

With his reformations and the assistance of a cadre of competent and loyal field commanders, Paul Davion ensured the survival of the Federated Suns against Houses Liao and Kurita. Although some of his actions during the First Succession War—such as his harsh rejection of Ilsa Liao's peace offer—were seen by a few as missteps, Paul would eventually go down in history as one of the Suns' greatest First Princes.

FIRST SUCCESSION WAR DEPLOYMENT TABLE

The following table lists the movements and assignments made by each BattleMech unit involved in the First Succession War and its status at the end of the war. The table is divided into seven sections, each related to one of the major military powers involved in the war: the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns (AFFS), Confederation Armed Forces (CCAF), Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery (DCMS), Free Worlds League Military (FWLM) and Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces (LCAF). The sixth section lists the forces of the Major Periphery States and the final section refers to notable mercenary units unemployed at the outbreak of the war; employed mercenary units are listed along with their employer's regular units.

The Weight (Wt.) column lists the combat command's overall asset weight, used in *Inner Sphere at War* game play (see *Converting ISW Combat Commands to other systems*, p. 166). Dagger (†) notations indicated a combat command comprised of ex-SLDF forces.

Other status is listed in [brackets]. If a combat command lists [NF] as its (2684) Strength, it was not yet formed at the start of the war; [D] as its (2821) Strength means the unit effectively lost its ability to function in combat and was not reconstituted; [DB] indicates the unit was disbanded.

ARMED FORCES OF THE FEDERATED SUNS (AFFS)

			(2786)		(2821)	
Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	Strength	Post	Strength	Post
1st Arcadian Cuirassiers	V/R	M	100%	Galatia III	41%	Galatia III
2nd Arcadian Cuirassiers	R/R	M	100%	Addicks	52%	Alnadal
Argyle Lancers†	R/Q	M	100%	Argyle	45%	Argyle
1st Avalon Borderers	G/Q	M	100%	New Avalon	55%	New Avalon
2nd Avalon Borderers†	R/Q	L	100%	Numenor	32%	Barlow's End
3rd Avalon Borderers†	V/Q	H	100%	Delavan	[D]	—
4th Avalon Borderers†	R/Q	M	100%	Odell	42%	Royal
1st Avalon Hussars	E/F	A	133%	Marduk	82%	Breed
2nd Avalon Hussars	E/F	M	133%	Nouveau Toulouse	81%	New Ivaarsen
4th Avalon Hussars	E/F	A	133%	Colia	85%	Colia
8th Avalon Hussars	V/F	A	133%	Anguilla	68%	Anguilla
9th Avalon Hussars	V/F	M	133%	Cohay	80%	Cohay
11th Avalon Hussars	V/F	L	133%	Tallassee	64%	Robinson
12th Avalon Hussars	V/F	M	133%	New Avalon	62%	New Avalon
13th Avalon Hussars	R/F	M	133%	Xhosa VII	[D]	—
14th Avalon Hussars	V/F	L	133%	Klathandu IV	73%	Breed
16th Avalon Hussars	V/F	L	133%	Crossing	[D]	—
17th Avalon Hussars	R/F	M	133%	Turko	65%	Turko
20th Avalon Hussars	E/R	L	133%	Quittacas	83%	Quittacas
22nd Avalon Hussars	R/R	H	133%	Narellan	70%	Bodnath
23rd Avalon Hussars	R/R	M	133%	Ashley	62%	Ashley
26th Avalon Hussars	R/R	M	133%	Robsart	80%	Mendham
27th Avalon Hussars	R/R	H	133%	Kathil	80%	Kathil
28th Avalon Hussars	R/R	A	133%	Tedibyhr	[D]	—
33rd Avalon Hussars	R/R	M	133%	Rowe	72%	New Aberdeen
34th Avalon Hussars	R/R	L	133%	Damevang	91%	Damevang
35th Avalon Hussars	R/R	L	133%	Kennard	76%	Kennard
36th Avalon Hussars	G/R	M	100%	Defiance	30%	Defiance
38th Avalon Hussars	G/R	M	133%	Inner End	[D]	—
39th Avalon Hussars	R/R	A	133%	Kentwood	66%	Kentwood
41st Avalon Hussars†	R/R	M	133%	Elbar	70%	Alnadal
42nd Avalon Hussars†	R/F	H	133%	New Mendham	[D]	—
45th Avalon Hussars	R/R	M	133%	Tallmadge	[D]	—
56th Avalon Hussars	G/R	H	133%	Towne	[D]	—
1st Albion	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	36%	Markesan
2nd Albion	G/R	L	[NF]	—	65%	New Avalon
1st NAMA	R/Q	L	[NF]	—	44%	Crossing
2nd NAMA	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	56%	New Aberdeen
3rd NAMA	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	54%	New Avalon
1st Sakhara	G/R	L	[NF]	—	60%	Crossing
2nd Sakhara	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	43%	Xhosa VII
3rd Sakhara	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	39%	Bremond
4th Sakhara	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	50%	Crossing
5th Sakhara	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	[D:2794]	—
6th Sakhara	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	67%	Boeotia

			(2786)		(2821)	
Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	Strength	Post	Strength	Post
1st Ceti Hussars	R/R	L	100%	Panpour	35%	Panpour
2nd Ceti Hussars†	R/R	L	100%	Enchi	25%	Franklin
3rd Ceti Hussars†	V/R	L	100%	Cumberland	39%	Logandale
1st Clovis Guards	R/Q	L	100%	Clovis	[D]	—
Chesterton CMM	G/Q	M	100%	Chesterton	30%	Chesterton
Kathil CMM	R/R	M	100%	Kathil	44%	Kathil
New Syrtis CMM	V/Q	H	100%	New Syrtis	50%	New Syrtis
Royalston CMM	G/R	M	100%	Royalston	42%	Royalston
Anjin Muerto CrMM	R/R	M	100%	Giverny	51%	Giverny
Bastian CrMM	G/Q	L	100%	Susulatna	21%	Susulatna
Broken Wheel CrMM	R/R	L	100%	Lackland	53%	Lackland
Islamabad CrMM	R/R	L	100%	Cohagen	41%	Cohagen
Kestrel CrMM	R/F	M	100%	Kestrel	32%	Markesan
Malagrotta CrMM	R/R	L	100%	Malagrotta	46%	Malagrotta
Marlette CrMM	R/R	L	100%	New Valencia	[D]	—
New Avalon CrMM	V/F	H	100%	New Avalon	33%	New Avalon
Point Barrow CrMM	G/R	M	100%	Point Barrow	50%	Point Barrow
Tsamma CrMM	G/R	L	100%	Ulysses	49%	Ulysses
1st Crucis Lancers†	V/R	L	100%	Markesan	33%	Waycross
2nd Crucis Lancers†	V/R	H	100%	Kestrel	44%	Elbar
3rd Crucis Lancers	R/Q	M	100%	Marlette	54%	Listowel
4th Crucis Lancers	R/Q	L	100%	Point Barrow	43%	Chesterton
5th Crucis Lancers	G/Q	M	100%	Remagen	34%	Goderich
6th Crucis Lancers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	46%	Choudrant
7th Crucis Lancers†	G/Q	H	100%	Broken Wheel	36%	Doneval II
8th Crucis Lancers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	56%	Markesan
1st Davion Guards	E/F	M	100%	New Avalon	39%	Breed
2nd Davion Guards	E/F	H	100%	Royalston	24%	Royalston
3rd Davion Guards	R/F	M	100%	Tancredi IV	52%	Tancredi IV
4th Davion Guards	V/F	L	100%	Galtor III	52%	Royal
5th Davion Guards	V/F	M	100%	Smolensk	57%	New Avalon
Davion Assault Guards	E/F	A	100%	Rollis	40%	Rollis
Davion Heavy Guards	E/F	H	100%	Robinson	41%	Markesan
Davion Light Guards	V/F	L	100%	Ulvskollen	44%	Frankson
3rd Deneb Light Cavalry	G/R	L	100%	Ozawa	49%	Chesterton
4th Deneb Light Cavalry†	R/R	M	100%	Ronel	36%	Robinson
5th Deneb Light Cavalry†	R/R	M	100%	New Florence	47%	Edwards
8th Deneb Light Cavalry†	R/R	L	100%	Hean	35%	Franklin
9th Deneb Light Cavalry	G/Q	L	100%	Deneb Kaitos	39%	Cartago
Clovis DMM	G/Q	M	100%	Alnadal	[D]	—
Dahar DMM	R/R	M	100%	Harrow's Sun	[D]	—
Fairfax DMM	V/R	M	100%	Junior	52%	Tishomingo
Kilbourne DMM	R/R	M	100%	Delos IV	42%	Delos IV
Robinson DMM	R/R	M	100%	Alnadal	[D]	—
Woodbine DMM	R/R	M	100%	Junior	35%	Junior

DEPLOYMENT TABLE

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
1st Dragonlords	V/F	A	100%	Hyalite	36%	Hyalite
2nd Dragonlords	R/R	M	100%	Montour	46%	Montour
3rd Dragonlords	V/R	M	100%	Warren	35%	Warren
4th Dragonlords	R/R	L	100%	Brockway	50%	Brockway
5th Dragonlords	R/F	M	100%	Talcott	40%	Muskegon
3rd Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	A	100%	Robinson	[D]	—
4th Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	M	100%	Sakhara V	[D]	—
5th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	L	100%	Fairfax	28%	Fairfax
7th Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	M	100%	Royal	[D]	—
8th Robinson Chevaliers	R/Q	M	100%	Mayetta	33%	Harrow's Sun
9th Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	A	100%	Cartago	[D]	—
10th Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	L	100%	Schedar	[D]	—
13th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	M	100%	Dobson	[D]	—
14th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	M	100%	Haynesville	42%	Choudrant
15th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	L	100%	Barlow's End	[D]	—
17th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	L	100%	Pitkin	51%	Pitkin
21st Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	A	100%	Hazelhurst	31%	Saumur
22nd Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	L	100%	Stratford	40%	Colia
23rd Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	H	100%	Altoona (FS)	39%	Damevang
25th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	H	100%	Mallory's World	[D]	—
26th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	H	100%	Cussar	[D]	—
27th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	A	100%	Breed	[D]	—
28th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	M	100%	Harrow's Sun	[D]	—
31st Robinson Chevaliers	V/R	L	100%	Choudrant	[D]	—
32nd Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	M	100%	New Ivaarsen	[D]	—
34th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	M	100%	Saumur	[D]	—
35th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	L	100%	Woodbine	20%	Woodbine
36th Robinson Chevaliers	R/R	L	100%	Farnsworth	49%	Saumur
37th Robinson Chevaliers	G/R	L	100%	Marduk	[D]	—
1st Robinson Rangers	R/R	M	100%	Robinson	[D]	—
2nd Robinson Rangers	R/Q	L	100%	Robinson	[D]	—
1st Syrtis Fusiliers	E/R	A	100%	New Syrtis	17%	New Syrtis
2nd Syrtis Fusiliers	V/R	H	100%	Horsham	51%	Horsham
3rd Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	M	100%	Brusett	[D]	—
4th Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	H	100%	Anaheim	44%	Royal
5th Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	H	100%	Aucara	31%	Aucara
6th Syrtis Fusiliers	E/Q	M	100%	New Syrtis	46%	Shaunavon
7th Syrtis Fusiliers	V/R	A	100%	Monongahela	37%	Monongahela
8th Syrtis Fusiliers	V/R	L	100%	Chesterton	45%	New Ivaarsen
9th Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	M	100%	Firgrove	42%	Elbar
10th Syrtis Fusiliers	V/R	M	100%	Wernke	47%	Glenmora
11th Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	M	100%	Namen	48%	Namen
12th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Ulan Batar	26%	Amiga
13th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Caria	58%	Caria
14th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Electra	28%	Mendham
15th Syrtis Fusiliers	R/R	M	100%	Maharet	39%	Maharet
16th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Blida	35%	Atlas
17th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Wappingers	54%	Barlow's End
18th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Merlin	39%	Merlin
19th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Taygeta	[D]	—
20th Syrtis Fusiliers	G/Q	M	100%	Salem	42%	Cartago
1st Syrtis Hussars	G/Q	M	100%	New Syrtis	[D]	—
7th Tancredi Loyalists	E/F	M	100%	Tancredi IV	41%	Tancredi IV
10th Tancredi Loyalists	V/F	L	100%	Crofton	36%	Crofton
11th Tancredi Loyalists	R/F	M	100%	New Valencia	[D]	—
13th Tancredi Loyalists	R/F	M	100%	Sturgis	39%	Sturgis
Mercenary Combat Commands (AFFS)						
Belinda's Irregulars†	R/R	M	[NF]	—	47%	Tawas
Blue Star Irregulars†						
1894th Light Horse†	E/R	M	66%	Muskegon	43%	Muskegon
21st Rim Worlds†	R/Q	H	100%	Farwell	41%	Klathandu IV
Avatars of Painful Death	V/R	L	66%	Beten Kaitos	28%	Beten Kaitos
Fighting Urukhai						
8th Striker	E/R	M	[NF]	—	60%	Crossing
Bar Hounds	R/R	L	[NF]	—	54%	Klathandu IV
Sluggers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	60%	Robinson
Hsien Hotheads	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	40%	Tallmadge
The Lazy Eights (Btn.)†	R/Q	M	100%	Orbisonia	51%	Orbisonia
Lexington Combat Group†						
180th Dragoon†	R/R	H	100%	Tazaraki	27%	Kumqwat
241st Battle†	V/R	M	100%	Jaipur	52%	Jaipur
32nd Recon†	V/R	L	100%	Beenleigh	42%	Beenleigh
Longhorns†	R/R	L	100%	Halesowen	[D]	—
Redfield's Renegades	R/Q	H	100%	Chouli	49%	Chouli
Screaming Eagles†						
Bald Eagles†	V/R	H	100%	Tawas	30%	Tedibyhr
Golden Eagles†	R/R	H	100%	Edwards	38%	Tedibyhr
Night Eagles†	R/R	L	100%	Logandale	45%	Robinson
Snow Eagles†	V/R	M	100%	Goderich	34%	Robinson
Storm Eagles†	R/R	M	100%	Waycross	33%	Robinson
Simpson's Samurai (Btn.)†	R/Q	L	100%	Bahl's Retreat	26%	Bahl's Retreat
Tyson's Troublemakers†	R/Q	A	100%	Goshen	[D]	—

CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION ARMED FORCES (CCAF)

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
1st Andurien Hussars	V/F	M	100%	El Giza	26%	Calseraigne
2nd Andurien Hussars	V/R	L	100%	Banfora	45%	Rosendal
3rd Andurien Hussars	G/Q	A	100%	Viribium	30%	Viribium
4th Andurien Hussars	G/F	M	100%	Pernik	46%	Calseraigne
5th Andurien Hussars	R/R	H	100%	Kalmar (CC)	[D]	—
6th Andurien Hussars	R/R	L	100%	Fagerholm	[D]	—
7th Andurien Hussars	G/Q	M	100%	Andurien	38%	Calseraigne
8th Andurien Hussars†	V/Q	M	100%	Itica	46%	Itica
9th Andurien Hussars†	R/Q	L	100%	Mosiro	36%	Konopiste
10th Andurien Hussars	G/Q	M	100%	Piriapolis	39%	Leyda
11th Andurien Hussars	G/Q	L	100%	Tengil	47%	Dili
12th Andurien Hussars	G/Q	M	100%	Andurien	[D]	—
1st Capellan Chargers	V/F	M	100%	Vanra	[D]	—
2nd Capellan Chargers	R/R	M	100%	Les Halles	[D]	—
3rd Capellan Chargers	R/R	L	100%	Cammal	[D]	—
4th Capellan Chargers	R/F	L	100%	Aer	[D]	—
5th Capellan Chargers	G/R	H	[NF]	—	[D:2812]	—
6th Capellan Chargers	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	[D:2817]	—
Andurien Heavy Guard	V/R	M	100%	Andurien	[D]	—
Ares Titans	V/R	A	100%	Ares	[D]	—
Blandford's Grenadiers	E/F	H	100%	Sarna	36%	Sarna
Chesterton Guardians	V/F	M	100%	Conwy	35%	Schedar
Gryff's Hussars	V/F	L	100%	St. Ives	30%	St. Ives
Marshals of Tikonov	V/R	A	100%	Tikonov	48%	Tikonov
Prefectorate Guard	R/F	M	100%	Capella	51%	Capella
Red Lancers	E/F	H	100%	Sian	43%	Propus
1st Ariana Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Mira	35%	Sonnia
2nd Ariana Fusiliers	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	70%	Tikonov
Ariana Grenadiers	R/F	M	100%	Almach	51%	Oli
Chesterton Cuirassiers	V/F	L	100%	New Aragon	52%	Ulan Batar
3rd Chesterton Cavalry	R/F	M	100%	Algot	33%	Everett
8th Chesterton Cavalry	R/R	M	100%	Mesartim	24%	Sonnia
1st Chesterton Voltigeurs	G/R	L	[NF]	—	53%	Rio
2nd Chesterton Voltigeurs	G/R	L	[NF]	—	69%	Tikonov
3rd Chesterton Voltigeurs	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	69%	Tikonov
Shadrack's Shadowhawks	G/Q	M	100%	Capolla	39%	Keid
Tristram's Avengers	R/Q	A	100%	Conwy	63%	Rio
1st Confederation Reserve Cavalry	R/R	L	100%	Westphalia	44%	Goshen
2nd Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/R	M	100%	Sakhalin (CC)	53%	Mesartim
3rd Confederation Reserve Cavalry	R/F	L	100%	Propus	31%	Propus
4th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	R/R	L	100%	Ambergrist	42%	Avigait
5th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/R	H	100%	Repulse	50%	Lurgatan
6th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/F	A	100%	Merdal	27%	Non Diz
7th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	R/R	L	100%	Mattisskogen	61%	Mattisskogen
8th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/Q	L	100%	Necromo	52%	Andro
9th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/Q	L	100%	Necromo	35%	Gallitzin
10th Confederation Reserve Cavalry†	R/Q	L	100%	Corey	[D]	—
11th Confederation Reserve Cavalry	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	52%	Oli

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
Justine's Grenadiers	G/R	M	[NF]	—	96%	Kwamashu
1st Liao Guards	V/F	M	100%	Liao	[D]	—
2nd Liao Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Sian	42%	Sian
3rd Liao Guards	G/R	M	100%	Outreach	49%	Berenson
4th Liao Guards	R/R	M	100%	Snailzar	41%	Suzano
5th Liao Guards	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	74%	Capella
6th Liao Guards	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	77%	Ulan Bator
1st 'Sarna' Lancers	R/F	M	100%	Bora	39%	Chamdo
2nd 'Glasgow' Lancers	R/R	L	100%	Glasgow	35%	Sarna
3rd 'Mira' Lancers	G/R	H	100%	Anaea	40%	Anaea
4th 'St. Andre' Lancers	G/F	H	100%	St. Andre	34%	Small World
5th 'Demeter' Lancers	R/F	H	100%	Angelsey	[D]	—
6th 'Zion' Lancers	R/R	H	100%	Zion	32%	Caph
7th 'Asuncion' Lancers	G/R	M	100%	Asuncion	52%	Asuncion
8th 'Old Kentucky' Lancers	R/R	M	100%	Wazan		DESTROYED
9th 'Hassad' Lancers	R/Q	M	100%	Hassad	34%	Bithinia
10th 'Jasmine' Lancers	G/R	M	100%	Jasmine	30%	Jasmine
11th 'Paches' Lancers	G/Q	L	100%	Paches	36%	Paches
12th 'Lee' Lancers	V/R	L	100%	Lee	42%	Genf
13th 'Jonathan' Lancers	G/Q	L	100%	Bell (CC)	[D]	—
14th 'Zurich' Lancers	V/R	L	100%	Zurich	22%	Wasat
15th 'Styk' Lancers	G/F	M	100%	Bex	37%	New Stevens
16th 'Valexa' Lancers	G/R	L	100%	Valexa	31%	Conwy
17th 'Chengdu' Lancers†	V/Q	L	100%	Chengdu	27%	Chengdu
18th 'Belluevue' Lancers	G/Q	M	100%	Belluevue	35%	Belluevue
19th 'Lacadon' Lancers†	R/Q	L	100%	Lacadon	42%	Lacadon
20th 'Ramen II' Lancers	G/Q	L	100%	Second Chance	[D]	—
Capellan Cuirassiers	E/F	M	100%	Capricorn III	42%	Raballa
1st Centauri Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Kumqwat	50%	Teng
2nd Centauri Guards	R/Q	L	100%	Hadnall	33%	Hadnall
3rd Centauri Guards	R/R	M	100%	Bacum	36%	Cotocallao
1st Redfield Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Bethel	38%	Bethel
2nd Redfield Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Redfield	41%	Redfield
St Ives Cheveau Legers	R/R	M	100%	Hurgh	43%	Hurgh
1st St Ives Lancers	E/F	M	100%	Atlas	47%	Corella
2nd St Ives Lancers	V/R	H	100%	Knutdor	41%	Knutdor
3rd St Ives Lancers	R/R	L	100%	St. Ives	39%	St. Ives
4th St Ives Lancers	G/Q	M	100%	St. Ives	48%	St. Ives
5th St Ives Lancers	R/R	M	100%	Laong	33%	Laong
6th St Ives Lancers†	R/R	A	100%	Kittery	35%	Shoreham
7th St Ives Lancers†	R/R	M	100%	Spica	44%	Helixmar
Sharpe Rifles	G/R	M	100%	Sharpe	43%	Stein's Folly
6th Teng Hussars	V/Q	M	100%	Beid	46%	Haappajarvi
7th Teng Hussars	G/R	H	100%	Teng	44%	Bacum
1st Sian Dragoons	V/F	L	100%	Lukla	[D]	—
2nd Sian Dragoons	E/F	M	100%	Ipswich	[D]	—
3rd Sian Dragoons	V/R	M	100%	Aquagea	50%	Aquagea
4th Sian Dragoons	G/Q	A	100%	Vard	32%	Lochmantle
5th Sian Dragoons	R/R	H	100%	Holloway	27%	Aomen
6th Sian Dragoons	R/R	H	100%	Smithon	23%	Smithon
7th Sian Dragoons	G/R	M	100%	Itrom	31%	Itrom
8th Sian Dragoons	R/R	M	100%	Kern	48%	Kern
9th Sian Dragoons	R/Q	A	100%	Buenos Aires	41%	Katla
10th Sian Dragoons	G/R	M	100%	Payia	31%	Payia
11th Sian Dragoons	V/R	H	100%	Sian	30%	Calpaca
12th Sian Dragoons	R/R	A	100%	Zanzibar	[D]	—
13th Sian Dragoons	G/Q	H	100%	Yuris	37%	Yuris
14th Sian Dragoons	R/R	L	100%	Mendham	26%	Frazer
15th Sian Dragoons	G/R	M	100%	Lyreton	44%	Lyreton
16th Sian Dragoons	G/Q	L	100%	Arn	53%	Arn
17th Sian Dragoons†	G/F	H	100%	New Troy	43%	New Troy
18th Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	M	100%	Preston (CC)	41%	Lesalles
19th Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	M	100%	Harbin	27%	Dalian
20th Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	L	100%	Hexare	53%	Pella II
21st Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	H	100%	Bentley	36%	Ipswich
22nd Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	L	100%	Java	31%	Iknogoro
23rd Sian Dragoons†	R/Q	H	100%	Harbin	52%	Harbin
24th Sian Dragoons†	V/Q	M	[NF]	—	40%	Anegasaki
25th Sian Dragoons	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	43%	Anegasaki
26th Sian Dragoons	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	61%	Abruzzi
27th Sian Dragoons	G/R	L	[NF]	—	61%	Victoria
1st Tikonov Lancers	R/F	H	100%	Tikonov	46%	Mirach
2nd Tikonov Lancers	R/F	M	100%	Kristiandsund	[D]	—
3rd Tikonov Lancers	V/Q	H	100%	Second Chance	51%	Hall
4th Tikonov Lancers	R/Q	A	100%	Alrescha	[D]	—
5th Tikonov Lancers	R/R	L	100%	Ibstock	[D]	—
6th Tikonov Lancers	G/R	M	100%	Myrvoll	41%	Ohrensen
7th Tikonov Lancers	G/R	H	100%	New Hessen	38%	Basalt
8th Tikonov Lancers	G/Q	L	100%	Jilin	44%	Ventabren
9th Tikonov Lancers†	V/Q	L	100%	Terra Firma	45%	Mirach
10th Tikonov Lancers†	R/Q	L	100%	Belluevue	34%	Schedar
11th Tikonov Lancers†	R/Q	M	100%	Yangtze	27%	Mirach
12th Tikonov Lancers	G/Q	M	100%	Ohrensen	[D]	—
13th Tikonov Lancers	G/Q	L	100%	Arboris	42%	Berenson
Vincent's Commandos	R/R	M	[NF]	—	88%	Jonathan
Mercenary Combat Commands (CCAF)						
Always Faithful†						
Alpha†	R/R	M	100%	Aodh	47%	Aodh
Bravo†	E/R	H	100%	Carbonis	[D]	—
Charlie†	R/R	M	100%	Bithinia	30%	Campertown
15th Dracon†	R/R	M	100%	Bhaktapur	35%	Mirach
Narhal's Raiders†						
First†	V/Q	M	[NF]	—	60%	Ullieri
Second†	R/Q	L	[NF]	—	[D:2819]	—
Northwind Highlanders†						
1st Kearny Highlanders†	E/Q	M	100%	Halloran V	43%	Halloran V
2nd Kearny Highlanders†	R/Q	L	100%	Halloran V	37%	Halloran V
3rd Kearny Highlanders†	R/R	M	100%	Northwind	47%	Northwind
McCormack's Fusiliers†	V/R	L	100%	St. Ives	51%	St. Ives
Marion's Highlanders†	R/Q	M	100%	Lee	31%	Yunnah
Stuart's Highlanders†	V/F	L	100%	Northwind	21%	Northwind
12th Star Guard†						
10th Heavy Assault†	V/R	A	100%	Tianamon	45%	Tianamon
42nd Striker†	R/Q	M	100%	Ashkum	32%	Farwell
4th Tau Ceti Rangers†	R/R	M	100%	Tecumseh	40%	Caselton

DRACONIS COMBINE MUSTERED SOLDIERY (DCMS)

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
1st Amphigean Light Assault Group	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	59%	New Rhodes III
2nd Amphigean Light Assault Group	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	67%	New Rhodes III
3rd Amphigean Light Assault Group	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	71%	Quentin
4th Amphigean Light Assault Group	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	72%	New Wessex
5th Amphigean Light Assault Group	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	65%	Tybalt
1st Arkab Legion	V/R	L	100%	Algedi	38%	McComb
2nd Arkab Legion	E/R	M	100%	Jeju	59%	Cussar
3rd Arkab Legion	V/R	L	100%	David	[D]	—
4th Arkab Legion	R/R	M	100%	Arkab	36%	Gandy's Luck
5th Arkab Legion	G/R	L	100%	Sulafat	55%	McGehee
6th Arkab Legion	G/Q	L	100%	Al Na'ir	34%	Addicks
7th Arkab Legion	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	58%	Deneb Kaitos
1st An Ting Legion	G/R	M	[NF]	—	100%	An Ting
2nd An Ting Legion	G/R	L	[NF]	—	100%	An Ting
3rd An Ting Legion	G/R	M	[NF]	—	100%	Matsuida
4th An Ting Legion	G/R	M	[NF]	—	100%	Kaznejoy
1st Benjamin Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Najha	35%	Kiesen
2nd Benjamin Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Trolloc Prime	42%	Buckminster
3rd Benjamin Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Dover	37%	Odabasi
4th Benjamin Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Benjamin	37%	Buckminster
5th Benjamin Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Irurzun	50%	Ludwig
6th Benjamin Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Benjamin	42%	Benjamin
7th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	L	100%	Tangerz	[D]	—
8th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	H	100%	Rukbat	47%	Reisling's Planet
9th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	M	100%	Elix	28%	Galtor III
10th Benjamin Regulars	R/R	A	100%	Kaus Borealis	30%	Paris
11th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	A	100%	Kaus Media	49%	Ludwig
12th Benjamin Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Osumi	36%	Vega
13th Benjamin Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Maule	44%	Maule
14th Benjamin Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Deshler	[D]	—

DEPLOYMENT TABLE

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
15th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	H	100%	Silkeborg	23%	Darius
16th Benjamin Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Reisling's Planet	[D]	—
17th Benjamin Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Matar	27%	Donenac
18th Benjamin Regulars	V/R	H	100%	Skat	33%	Donenac
19th Benjamin Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Kuzuu	35%	Proserpina
1st Dieron Regulars	E/F	H	100%	Alya	47%	Eltanin
2nd Dieron Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Shimonita	43%	Ko
3rd Dieron Regulars	V/R	M	100%	Junction	49%	Marlowe's Rift
4th Dieron Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Mara	[D]	—
5th Dieron Regulars	V/F	M	100%	Biham	34%	Proserpina
6th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Nai-Stohl	34%	Nai-Stohl
7th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Markab	40%	David
8th Dieron Regulars	R/Q	M	100%	Miyazaki	53%	Killbourn
9th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Ashio	29%	Skat
10th Dieron Regulars	R/Q	M	100%	Ancha	[D]	—
11th Dieron Regulars	G/R	M	100%	Cylene	26%	Sadalbari
12th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Ascella	58%	Atria
13th Dieron Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Yance I	33%	Dieron
14th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Sadachbia	[D]	—
15th Dieron Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Murchison	49%	Hean
16th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Nashira	28%	Dieron
17th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Sadalbari	[D]	—
18th Dieron Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Moore	[D]	—
19th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Halstead Station	[D]	—
20th Dieron Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Lambrecht	53%	Sabik
21st Dieron Regulars†	G/Q	L	100%	Lapida II	47%	Irurzun
22nd Dieron Regulars	V/Q	M	100%	Kuzuu	41%	Eltanin
23rd Dieron Regulars†	R/Q	M	100%	Kaus Australis	31%	Kaus Australis
24th Dieron Regulars†	V/Q	M	100%	Fellanin II	34%	Tripoli
25th Dieron Regulars†	V/Q	H	100%	Kurhah	[D]	—
26th Dieron Regulars†	V/R	M	100%	Altais	39%	Alnasi
27th Dieron Regulars†	R/Q	M	100%	Telos IV	57%	Yorii
28th Dieron Regulars†	V/Q	M	100%	Dabih	48%	Aubisson
29th Dieron Regulars†	R/Q	L	100%	Helen	54%	Fomalhaut
30th Dieron Regulars	G/R	M	100%	Okaya	38%	Mallory's World
31st Dieron Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Shinonoi	51%	Lyons
32nd Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Shitara	42%	Donenac
33rd Dieron Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Pokhara	42%	Yorii
34th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	68%	Fomalhaut
35th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	52%	Ronel
36th Dieron Regulars	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	57%	Asta
1st Galedon Regulars	E/F	A	100%	Medron	33%	Medron
2nd Galedon Regulars	V/R	M	100%	McComb	36%	Arlington
3rd Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Benet III	48%	Thestria
4th Galedon Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Misery	[D]	—
5th Galedon Regulars	V/F	L	100%	Enif	44%	Enif
6th Galedon Regulars	E/R	H	100%	Galedon V	49%	Marduk
7th Galedon Regulars	R/R	M	100%	Kawabe	[D]	—
8th Galedon Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Worrell	47%	Marlowe's Rift
9th Galedon Regulars†	R/Q	M	100%	New Aberdeen	34%	Deshler
10th Galedon Regulars†	V/Q	H	100%	Udibi	33%	Misery
11th Galedon Regulars	V/R	M	100%	New Samarkand	39%	New Samarkand
12th Galedon Regulars	R/Q	L	100%	*	47%	*
13th Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Cassias	43%	Galtor III
14th Galedon Regulars	V/F	H	100%	Galedon V	41%	Galedon V
15th Galedon Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Oshika	36%	Oshika
16th Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Delacruz	49%	Cimeron
17th Galedon Regulars	R/Q	H	100%	Tatsuno	35%	Lima
18th Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Bad News	37%	Bad News
19th Galedon Regulars	G/R	L	[NF]	—	33%	An Ting
20th Galedon Regulars	V/R	M	100%	Sinope	41%	Sinope
21st Galedon Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Valentina	35%	Valentina
22nd Galedon Regulars	V/F	M	100%	Bryceland	35%	Bryceland
23rd Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Gandy's Luck	51%	New Mendham
24th Galedon Regulars	V/R	L	100%	Lima	44%	Fellanin II
27th Galedon Regulars	R/F	M	100%	Thestria	53%	Gandy's Luck
29th Galedon Regulars	R/R	K	100%	McGehee	[D]	—
30th Galedon Regulars	V/R	K	100%	Ludwig	48%	Harpster
31st Galedon Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Ningxia	[D]	—
36th Galedon Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Echo	43%	Wittington
37th Galedon Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Lima	[D]	—
39th Galedon Regulars	R/R	M	100%	McGehee	26%	Udibi
40th Galedon Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Misery	27%	Irurzun
2nd Pesht Regulars	R/F	A	100%	Pesht	44%	Pesht
3rd Pesht Regulars	G/F	L	100%	Luthien	38%	Luthien
4th Pesht Regulars	G/R	L	100%	Isfahan	47%	Richmond
5th Pesht Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Land's End	46%	Land's End
6th Pesht Regulars	G/R	M	100%	Qandahar	44%	Qandahar
7th Pesht Regulars	R/R	M	100%	New Sapporo	34%	New Sapporo
9th Pesht Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Bjarred	46%	Bjarred
10th Pesht Regulars	G/R	A	100%	Hassi R'mel	52%	Hassi R'mel
1st Proserpina Hussars	E/F	M	100%	Proserpina	42%	Paris
2nd Proserpina Hussars	V/F	L	100%	Homam	34%	Lima
3rd Proserpina Hussars	V/R	L	100%	Chandler	32%	Wapakoneta
4th Proserpina Hussars	E/R	M	100%	Conroe	37%	Matar
7th Proserpina Hussars	V/R	L	100%	Gram	[D]	—
9th Proserpina Hussars	R/R	L	100%	Santiago	41%	Santiago
1st Rasalhague Regulars	E/F	M	100%	Richmond	18%	Richmond
2nd Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Alshain	37%	Heiligendreuz
3rd Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Rubigen	32%	Toffen
4th Rasalhague Regulars	G/F	L	100%	Marawi	30%	Oyevaina
5th Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	A	100%	Sternwerde	42%	Halesowen
6th Rasalhague Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Ferleiten	36%	Kufstein
7th Rasalhague Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Rasalhague	45%	Kirchbach
8th Rasalhague Regulars	R/Q	H	100%	Trondheim (DC)	30%	Trondheim (DC)
9th Rasalhague Regulars	V/Q	A	100%	Eguilles	33%	Baldur
10th Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	L	100%	St. John	44%	Hohenems
11th Rasalhague Regulars	R/F	L	100%	Christiania	44%	Mozirje
12th Rasalhague Regulars	V/R	H	100%	New Oslo	[D]	—
13th Rasalhague Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Bruben	39%	Liezen
14th Rasalhague Regulars	R/F	M	100%	Tovetin	36%	Outpost
15th Rasalhague Regulars	R/Q	L	100%	Kempten	40%	Kempten
16th Rasalhague Regulars	R/Q	M	100%	Soverzene	45%	Soverzene
17th Rasalhague Regulars	V/F	L	100%	Mualang	48%	Mualang
18th Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Luzerne	56%	Vorarlberg
19th Rasalhague Regulars	R/Q	M	100%	Kiruna	39%	Kiruna
20th Rasalhague Regulars	V/R	H	100%	Nykvarn	37%	Nykvarn
21st Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Pinnacle	48%	Pinnacle
22nd Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	H	100%	Vipaava	57%	Lovinac
23rd Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	M	100%	Engadin	48%	Bushmill
24th Rasalhague Regulars	R/R	L	100%	Rasalhague	45%	Liezen
25th Rasalhague Regulars	R/F	M	100%	Utrecht	34%	Eguilles
26th Rasalhague Regulars	G/R	L	100%	New Bergen	27%	Rodigo
1st Sword of Light	E/F	H	133%	Capra	85%	Benet III
2nd Sword of Light	E/F	M	133%	Luthien	78%	Arlington
3rd Sword of Light	V/F	L	100%	Eguilles	[DB]	—
4th Sword of Light	E/F	M	[DB:2785]	—	—	—
5th Sword of Light	V/F	M	133%	Awano	83%	Scheat
6th Sword of Light	E/F	M	[NF]	—	[DB]	—
7th Sword of Light	V/F	L	133%	Goito	69%	Bergman's Planet
8th Sword of Light	V/R	M	[NF]	—	80%	Stanzach
1st Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Luthien	38%	Luthien
2nd Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Rasalhague	49%	Rasalhague
3rd Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Galedon V	55%	Galedon V
4th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	R/F	L	100%	Benjamin	[D]	—
5th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	New Samarkand	24%	Gandy's Luck
6th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Aldrecht	[D]	—
7th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	M	100%	Hildaman	51%	Lima
8th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	R/F	M	100%	Minakuchi	[D]	—
9th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Latexo	60%	Latexo
10th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Nexus Ri	[D]	—
11th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	G/F	L	100%	Korramabad	23%	Elidere IV
12th Sun Zhang Academy Cadre	R/F	L	100%	Tarnby	45%	Périgueux
Mercenary Combat Commands (DCMS)						
Bad Dream (Btn.)	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	74%	New Wessex
Black Sharks†	V/R	M	100%	Numki	[D]	—
Bolton's Rangers†	V/Q	M	[NF]	—	97%	Kuzuu
Daemien's Destroyers†	R/F	L	100%	Kaesong	59%	Vorarlberg
Fuchida's Fusiliers†	V/R	H	100%	Tinaca	51%	Tinaca
28th Heavy Horse Regiment†	R/R	H	100%	Sheliak	38%	Gunzburg
52nd Heavy Assault Regiment†	V/F	A	100%	Pilkhua	[D]	—
Longhorns†	R/R	L	100%	Halesowen	See AFFS	
Paul Bunyon Regiment†	R/R	H	[NF]	—	97%	Lone Star
Red Eagles (Btn.)†	V/Q	M	100%	Alleghe	34%	The Edge
104th Striker Regiment†	V/Q	H	100%	Radstadt	54%	Gunzburg

* Dunklewälderdunklerflüssenschattenwelt

FREE WORLDS LEAGUE MILITARY (FWLM)

			(2786)		(2821)	
Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	Strength	Post	Strength	Post
1st Atrean Dragoons	V/F	M	100%	Atreus (FWL)	50%	Atreus (FWL)
2nd Atrean Dragoons	R/F	L	100%	Talitha	59%	Devil's Rock
3rd Atrean Dragoons	R/F	M	100%	New Dallas	49%	Hechnar
4th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	M	100%	Ionus	40%	Borka
5th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	H	100%	Castor	52%	Castor
6th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	M	100%	Paradise	41%	Paradise
7th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	L	100%	Savannah	48%	Acubens
8th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	M	100%	Irian	35%	Irian
9th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	L	100%	New Olympia	48%	Shiloh
10th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	L	100%	Holt	42%	Second Chance
11th Atrean Dragoons	V/F	M	100%	Atreus (FWL)	41%	Lopez
12th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	M	100%	Jardine	47%	Alula Borealis
13th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	H	100%	Gibraltar	[D]	—
14th Atrean Dragoons	R/F	L	100%	Tamarind	45%	Altoona (LC)
1st Bolan Defenders	R/R	H	100%	Promised Land	[D]	—
2nd Bolan Defenders	R/R	H	100%	Colfax	[D]	—
3rd Bolan Defenders	V/F	A	100%	Ilion	[D]	—
4th Bolan Defenders	R/R	M	100%	Valloire	[D]	—
5th Bolan Defenders	R/R	M	100%	Malazan	[D]	—
6th Bolan Defenders	V/F	L	100%	Rochers	[D]	—
7th Bolan Defenders	R/R	L	100%	Kamenz	[D]	—
8th Bolan Defenders	R/R	H	100%	Acrux	[D]	—
9th Bolan Defenders	R/R	H	100%	Finsterwalde	[D]	—
10th Bolan Defenders	R/F	H	[D:2785]	—	—	—
11th Bolan Defenders	R/R	M	100%	Rochers	[D]	—
12th Bolan Defenders†	R/Q	M	100%	Danxian	[D]	—
13th Bolan Defenders	G/Q	M	100%	Binyang	[D]	—
14th Bolan Defenders	G/Q	L	100%	Herzberg	[D]	—
1st Defenders of Andurien	V/Q	M	100%	Kanata	37%	El Giza
2nd Defenders of Andurien	R/Q	L	100%	Thurrock	37%	Thurrock
3rd Defenders of Andurien	R/Q	H	100%	Antipolo	47%	Mosiro
4th Defenders of Andurien	G/Q	L	100%	Butzfleth	46%	Villanueva
5th Defenders of Andurien†	V/Q	L	100%	Granera	49%	Fagerholm
6th Defenders of Andurien	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	61%	Tengil
1st Brigade	E/F	M	100%	Pec	54%	Kwamashu
2nd Brigade	V/R	L	100%	Fuentes	35%	Fletcher (FWL)
3rd Brigade	V/R	M	100%	Milnerton	48%	Lukla
4th Brigade	R/R	L	100%	Semenyih	35%	Blue Sava
Ducal Guards	E/F	M	100%	Oriente	27%	Nam Dinh
1st FW Guards	E/F	A	133%	Galisteo	75%	Galisteo
2nd FW Guards	V/F	M	133%	Mangor	68%	El Giza
3rd FW Guards	R/F	M	133%	Stettin (FWL)	87%	Stettin (FWL)
4th FW Guards	R/F	M	133%	Landfall	79%	Landfall
5th FW Guards	V/F	H	133%	McAffe	78%	McAffe
6th FW Guards	V/F	M	133%	Solaris VII	84%	Amity
Marik Guard	V/F	L	100%	Marik	44%	Graham IV
1st Marik Militia	V/F	L	100%	Tamarind	53%	Tamarind
2nd Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Van Diemen IV	55%	Dalcour
3rd Marik Militia	G/F	L	100%	New Olympia	29%	Corey
4th Marik Militia	R/R	L	100%	Berenson	[D]	—
5th Marik Militia	R/R	H	100%	Wing	30%	Wing
6th Marik Militia	V/F	L	100%	Hamilton (FWL)	47%	Shui-pào
7th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Alphard (FWL)	[D]	—
8th Marik Militia	G/F	M	100%	Oriente	39%	Hassad
9th Marik Militia	R/R	H	100%	Cranston	48%	Cranston
10th Marik Militia	R/R	M	100%	Eleusis	49%	Eleusis
11th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Lesnovo	28%	Lesnovo
12th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Maxwell	53%	Maxwell
13th Marik Militia	R/R	M	100%	Rochelle	[D]	—
14th Marik Militia	G/R	A	100%	Griffith	28%	Griffith
15th Marik Militia	R/R	H	100%	Kalidasa	40%	Savannah
16th Marik Militia	G/R	H	100%	Danais	44%	Danais
17th Marik Militia	G/R	L	100%	Aitutaki	[D]	—
18th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Cole Harbour	31%	Xanthe III
19th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Watermael	38%	Corey
20th Marik Militia	R/R	L	100%	Keystone	39%	Corey
21st Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Harmony	[D]	—
22nd Marik Militia	G/F	A	100%	Nova Roma	41%	Elnath
23rd Marik Militia	R/F	H	100%	Tyrfing	[D]	—
24th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Umka	50%	Andurien
25th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Megrez	47%	Megrez
26th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Thermopolis	61%	Thermopolis
27th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Hednesford	25%	Hednesford
28th Marik Militia	G/R	M	100%	Callison	43%	Callison
29th Marik Militia	G/R	L	100%	Tylarzka	[D]	—
30th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Nockatunga	42%	Ilion
30th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Trellisane	40%	Dixie
32nd Marik Militia	G/Q	L	100%	Ellijay	57%	Colfax
33rd Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Loburg	33%	Cavanaugh II
34th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Denebola	[D]	—
35th Marik Militia	G/Q	L	100%	Calloway VI	46%	Tsinghai
36th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	New Delos	43%	Vanra
37th Marik Militia	G/Q	H	100%	Wasat	38%	Elnath
38th Marik Militia	G/Q	M	100%	Augustine	34%	Kristiandsund
39th Marik Militia	G/Q	H	100%	Tiber (FWL)	43%	Old Kentucky
40th Marik Militia	G/Q	L	100%	Gomeisa	43%	Elnath
1st Oriente Hussars	V/R	L	100%	Calloway VI	22%	Calloway VI
2nd Oriente Hussars	R/R	L	100%	Oriente	34%	Shuen Wan
3rd Oriente Hussars	R/R	M	100%	Jouques	31%	Alula Australis
4th Oriente Hussars	R/R	H	100%	Fletcher (FWL)	35%	Shuen Wan
5th Oriente Hussars	R/R	M	100%	Oriente	47%	Oriente
6th Oriente Hussars	R/R	A	100%	Tintavel	44%	Sappho
7th Oriente Hussars	G/R	M	100%	Dayr Khuna	50%	Wazan
8th Oriente Hussars	G/R	L	100%	Calloway VI	23%	Fletcher (FWL)
9th Oriente Hussars	G/R	M	100%	Daneshmand	33%	Daneshmand
10th Oriente Hussars	R/R	H	100%	Kievanur	27%	Ramen II
11th Oriente Hussars	G/R	M	100%	Hamilton (FWL)	45%	Bernardo
1st Orloff Grenadiers	V/R	A	100%	New Delos	34%	Vanra
2nd Orloff Grenadiers	V/R	A	100%	Sophie's World	29%	Phact
3rd Orloff Grenadiers	R/R	M	100%	Ling	28%	Ibstock
4th Orloff Grenadiers	V/R	M	100%	New Praha	49%	Matheran
5th Orloff Grenadiers	R/R	L	100%	Nova Roma	39%	Harsefeld
6th Orloff Grenadiers†	R/Q	M	100%	Pavia	46%	Calloway VI
7th Orloff Grenadiers	G/Q	L	100%	Sorunda	33%	Park Place
8th Orloff Grenadiers†	V/Q	M	100%	Emris IV	43%	Calloway VI
9th Orloff Grenadiers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	[D:2788]	—
10th Orloff Grenadiers	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	39%	Kievanur
11th Orloff Grenadiers	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	[D:2814]	—
Iron Guard	G/Q	H	100%	Marcus	30%	Marcus
Steel Guards	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	57%	Dieudonne
1st Regulan Hussars	E/R	A	100%	Regulus	29%	Alhena
2nd Regulan Hussars	R/R	M	100%	Wallis	48%	Epsilon
3rd Regulan Hussars	R/R	H	100%	Alta	29%	Bondurant
4th Regulan Hussars	R/R	M	100%	Tiber (FWL)	44%	Cascade
5th Regulan Hussars	G/R	M	100%	Ildlandet	48%	Banfora
6th Regulan Hussars†	R/Q	L	100%	Muscida	37%	Cerillos
7th Regulan Hussars†	R/Q	M	100%	Köln (FWL)	38%	Remulac
8th Regulan Hussars	G/Q	L	100%	Avior	66%	Concord
9th Regulan Hussars	G/Q	L	100%	Cameron (FWL)	40%	Togwotee
10th Regulan Hussars	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	50%	Cameron (FWL)
1st Sirian Lancers	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	55%	Sirius
2nd Sirian Lancers	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	49%	Sirius
3rd Sirian Lancers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	68%	Procyon
Helm Cuirassiers	R/R	H	100%	Bainsville	33%	Oliver
Home Guards	V/R	M	100%	Stewart	20%	Stewart
Juggernaut	R/R	A	100%	Helm	34%	Myrvoll
1st Tania Dragoons	R/R	L	100%	Tania Borealis	48%	Van Diemen IV
2nd Tania Dragoons	G/R	L	100%	Tania Australis	44%	Myrvoll
Mercenary Combat Commands (FWLM)						
Baldwin's Cobras†						
79th Striker†	V/R	H	[NF]	—	42%	Mosiro
Alexander's Asps†	V/R	H	[NF]	—	44%	Kalmar (CC)
Black Cobra†	V/R	H	[NF]	—	43%	Kalmar (CC)
Clinton's Cutthroats†	V/R	H	[NF]	—	47%	Hamilton (FWL)
Dark Spirits	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	56%	Trellisane
Edom's Bandits (Btn.)†	R/R	M	[NF]	—	[D:2812]	—
Eridani Light Horse†						
151st Light Horse†	R/Q	M	100%	Trondheim (DC)	62%	Bella I
21st Striker†	R/R	M	100%	Trondheim (DC)	72%	Malazan
71st Light Horse†	R/R	M	100%	Trondheim (DC)	74%	Rochers
Gladstone's Gladiators	R/Q	M	100%	Dieudonne	[D]	—
Langendorf Lancers	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	63%	Calloway VI
Salicia's Defiants (Btn.)†	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	100%	Bordon
Smithson's Chinese Bandits	R/R	M	133%	Galatea (LC)	83%	Carbonis

LYRAN COMMONWEALTH ARMED FORCES (LCAF)

			(2786)		(2821)	
Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	Strength	Post	Strength	Post
1st Arcturan Guards	V/R	M	100%	Arcturus	44%	Icar
2nd Arcturan Guards	R/R	M	100%	Liezen	[D]	—
3rd Arcturan Guards	E/F	H	100%	Kufstein	26%	Tamar
4th Arcturan Guards	R/R	A	100%	Niangol	61%	Elba
5th Arcturan Guards	R/R	H	100%	Suk II	45%	Suk II
6th Arcturan Guards†	R/Q	M	100%	Starshine	39%	Starshine
7th Arcturan Guards†	V/Q	H	100%	Caldrea	42%	Numki
8th Arcturan Guards	V/R	M	100%	Stanzach	40%	Weingarten
9th Arcturan Guards	R/R	A	100%	Sabik	[D]	—
10th Arcturan Guards	V/R	A	100%	Tharkad	46%	Tharkad
11th Arcturan Guards	R/R	H	100%	Bolan	27%	Radostov
12th Arcturan Guards	R/R	M	100%	Nox	48%	Utrecht
13th Arcturan Guards	V/R	A	100%	Gunzburg	46%	Thannhausen
14th Arcturan Guards	G/R	A	100%	Bolan	52%	Kamenz
15th Arcturan Guards	G/R	L	100%	Muswell	48%	Karston
16th Arcturan Guards	R/R	H	100%	Maisons	39%	Marsalle
17th Arcturan Guards†	V/Q	A	100%	Chimpaw	32%	Camlann (LC)
18th Arcturan Guards	G/R	M	100%	Altenmarkt	51%	Rubigen
19th Arcturan Guards	R/Q	A	100%	Al Jafr	41%	Al Jafr
20th Arcturan Guards	G/R	M	100%	Ford	47%	Ford
21st Arcturan Guards	G/R	H	100%	Borghese	42%	Borghese
22nd Arcturan Guards	G/F	H	100%	Poulsbo	30%	Timbiqui
23rd Arcturan Guards	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	40%	Cebalrai
24th Arcturan Guards	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	55%	Lambrecht
25th Arcturan Guards	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	70%	Moore
1st Donegal Guards	E/F	A	100%	Donegal	32%	Donegal
2nd Donegal Guards	V/F	M	100%	Roadside	41%	Barcelona
3rd Donegal Guards	V/F	H	100%	Ridderkerk	43%	Ridderkerk
4th Donegal Guards	R/F	H	100%	Sudeten	27%	Sudeten
5th Donegal Guards†	R/Q	M	100%	Giausar	39%	Giausar
6th Donegal Guards	R/R	H	100%	Buckminster	38%	Camlann (LC)
7th Donegal Guards	G/F	M	100%	Alarion	30%	Chara
8th Donegal Guards	R/R	H	100%	Port Moseby	34%	Port Moseby
9th Donegal Guards	G/Q	H	100%	Buena	29%	Aquileia
10th Donegal Guards	E/F	L	100%	Alkaid	21%	Thorin
11th Donegal Guards	R/R	M	100%	Bella I	51%	Zwenkau
12th Donegal Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Summer	53%	Summer
13th Donegal Guards	G/Q	L	100%	Hyde	[D]	—
14th Donegal Guards†	V/Q	M	100%	Launam	33%	Launam
15th Donegal Guards	G/Q	H	100%	Myrrdin	40%	Marsalle
16th Donegal Guards	G/Q	M	100%	Inchicore	39%	Catroxx
17th Donegal Guards	R/F	M	100%	Trell I	28%	Trell I
18th Donegal Guards	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	39%	Shionoha
19th Donegal Guards	G/Q	H	[NF]	—	50%	Bolan
20th Donegal Guards	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	42%	Memmingen
1st Donegal Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Nestor	52%	Nestor
2nd Donegal Regulars	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	75%	Bolan
4th Hesperus Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Lamon	49%	Hesperus II
6th Hesperus Guards	V/R	A	100%	Canonbie	49%	Hesperus II
9th Hesperus Guards	V/Q	L	100%	Caledonia	47%	Hesperus II
11th Hesperus Guards†	V/R	M	100%	Hesperus II	46%	Hesperus II
1st Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Nusakan	36%	Nusakan
2nd Lyran Guards	V/R	H	100%	Radostov	[D]	—
3rd Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Orkney (LC)	45%	Sulafat
4th Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	The Edge	47%	New Caledonia
5th Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Duantia	[D]	—
6th Lyran Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Skondia	41%	Skondia
7th Lyran Guards	R/R	A	100%	Arc-Royal	35%	Newtown Square
8th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Koniz	51%	Koniz
9th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Miquelon	45%	Kowloon
10th Lyran Guards	V/F	M	100%	Tharkad	33%	Tharkad
11th Lyran Guards	G/R	M	[NF]	—	69%	Pressby
12th Lyran Guards	V/R	M	100%	Cavanaugh II	42%	Abramkovo
13th Lyran Guards	G/R	M	[NF]	—	63%	Bella I
14th Lyran Guards	G/R	A	100%	Denebola	48%	Denebola
15th Lyran Guards	G/R	H	100%	Mizar	46%	New Earth
16th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Aristotle	27%	Shahr Kord
17th Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Ewanrigg	44%	Kerman
18th Lyran Guards†	V/R	M	100%	Cor Caroli	38%	Rigil Kentarus
19th Lyran Guards†	V/Q	H	100%	Wyatt	38%	Wyatt
20th Lyran Guards	R/Q	M	100%	Dar-es-Salaam	29%	Here
21st Lyran Guards	G/R	M	100%	Waldorff	41%	Somerset
23rd Lyran Guards	V/F	A	100%	Afleir	39%	Zosma
24th Lyran Guards	R/R	A	100%	Tainjin	32%	Valabhi
26th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Zdice	56%	Tylarzka
29th Lyran Guards	G/R	H	100%	York (LC)	44%	New India
30th Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Skandia	45%	Skandia
32nd Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Harvest	59%	Kreller
33rd Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Fefferfer	31%	Najha
35th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Son Hoa	49%	Son Hoa
36th Lyran Guards	G/R	M	100%	Loric	41%	Loric
40th Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Loxley	60%	Alekseyevka
41st Lyran Guards	R/R	M	100%	Tamar	50%	Tamar
43rd Lyran Guards	G/R	L	100%	Oyevaina	36%	Shardayne
44th Lyran Guards	V/R	H	100%	Tamar	26%	Tamar
45th Lyran Guards	R/R	H	100%	Albion (LC)	61%	Alarion
53rd Lyran Guards	G/R	L	100%	Novara	51%	Hinckley
54th Lyran Guards	R/R	A	100%	Kirkcaldy	[D]	—
1st Lyran Regulars	V/F	H	100%	Orestes	41%	Orestes
2nd Lyran Regulars	R/R	M	100%	Dove	30%	Caldrea
3rd Lyran Regulars†	V/Q	M	100%	Apollo	38%	Apollo
4th Lyran Regulars	R/Q	H	100%	Elume	24%	Elume
5th Lyran Regulars	R/Q	H	100%	Timbuktu	53%	Timbuktu
6th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Unzmarkt	53%	Arc-Royal
7th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	L	100%	Inarcs	56%	Inarcs
8th Lyran Regulars†	R/Q	H	100%	Revivim	60%	Marsalle
9th Lyran Regulars†	V/Q	H	100%	Bobruisk	52%	Zdice
10th Lyran Regulars	G/R	H	100%	Firenze	36%	Firenze
11th Lyran Regulars	R/Q	M	100%	Rodigo	41%	Harvest
12th Lyran Regulars	R/R	M	100%	Mahone	33%	Bella I
13th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	M	100%	Ayacucho	42%	Aigle
14th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Timbiqui	58%	Timbiqui
15th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	H	100%	Bushmill	39%	Kandis
16th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	52%	Vulture's Nest
17th Lyran Regulars	G/R	M	[NF]	—	40%	Dijonne
18th Lyran Regulars	G/R	M	[NF]	—	58%	Zdice
19th Lyran Regulars	G/R	M	[NF]	—	63%	Acrux
20th Lyran Regulars	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	54%	Gienah
21st Lyran Regulars	G/R	M	[NF]	—	64%	Marsalle
22nd Lyran Regulars	G/Q	M	[NF]	—	68%	Verthandi
1st Odessa Regulars	G/G	H	100%	Satalice	31%	Satalice
2nd Odessa Regulars	G/R	M	100%	Odessa	33%	Annunziata
1st Royal Guards	E/F	A	100%	Tharkad	52%	Tharkad
2nd Royal Guards	E/F	H	100%	Tharkad	57%	Tharkad
3rd Royal Guards	V/F	H	100%	Donegal	42%	Donegal
4th Royal Guards	E/F	H	100%	Coventry	44%	Coventry
1st Sakhalin Regulars†	V/Q	M	100%	Sakhalin (LC)	50%	Sakhalin (LC)
2nd Sakhalin Regulars	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	58%	Sakhalin (LC)
1st Skye Rangers	V/R	M	100%	Talisker	50%	Shionoha
2nd Skye Rangers	R/Q	A	100%	Izar	27%	Alkalurops
3rd Skye Rangers	R/Q	M	100%	Skye	33%	Skye
4th Skye Rangers	R/Q	L	100%	Vega	51%	Baxter
5th Skye Rangers	V/R	A	100%	Accrington	21%	Accrington
8th Skye Rangers	R/Q	H	100%	Kessel	55%	Kessel
9th Skye Rangers	V/R	A	100%	Shiloh	52%	Gacrux
10th Skye Rangers	R/R	L	100%	Altoona (LC)	[D]	—
14th Skye Rangers	R/Q	M	100%	Menkent	44%	Muphrid
15th Skye Rangers	G/R	H	100%	Dromini VI	51%	Dromini VI
16th Skye Rangers	V/Q	H	100%	Phecda	32%	Wing
17th Skye Rangers	R/Q	M	100%	New Kyoto	45%	New Hope
20th Skye Rangers	G/R	M	100%	Premana	48%	Acrux
21st Skye Rangers	R/Q	H	100%	Phalan	37%	Skondia
22nd Skye Rangers	R/F	H	100%	Tsukude	56%	Kannon
25th Skye Rangers	E/F	A	100%	Pardeau	39%	Uhuru
Stealths**	G/R	M	100%	Syrma	83%	Poulsbo
Tamar Tigers	E/F	L	100%	Tamar	[D]	—
23rd York Regulars	G/R	M	100%	Dell	36%	Dell
27th York Regulars	E/R	M	100%	Chateau	27%	New Caledonia
31st York Regulars	R/Q	A	100%	Tukayyid	43%	Chandler

** Began as mercenaries; nationalized 2810

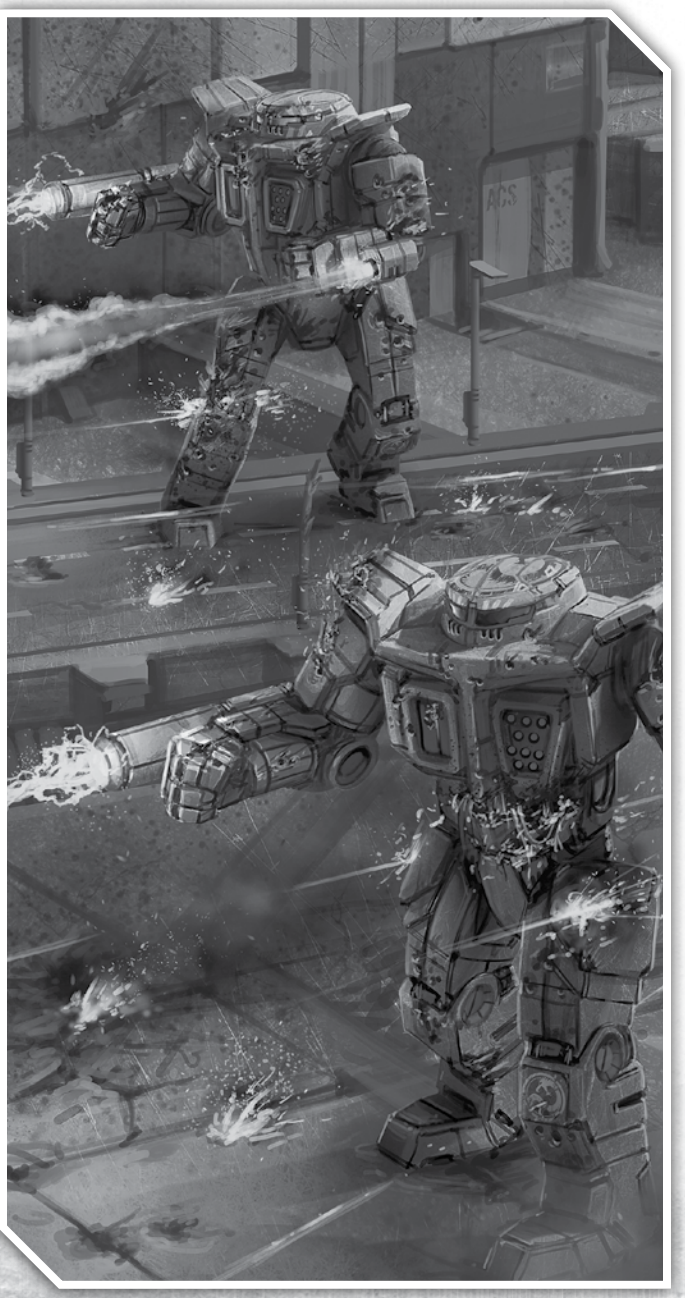
Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
Mercenary Combat Commands (LCAF)						
The Fomorians†	V/R	H	100%	Eltanin	[D]	—
Freeman's Fanatics (Btn.)†	R/R	L	[NF]	—	61%	Planting
12th Heavy Assault Regiment†	V/R	A	100%	Alkalurops	47%	Radostov
Iron Raven Mercenary Group (Btn.)†	R/R	H	100%	Morrigan	[D]	—
Illician lancers						
21st Rangers	R/R	L	100%	Rahne	36%	Alkes
4th Rangers	R/R	M	100%	Zaniah	23%	Gniezno
59th Strike	R/R	H	100%	Alhena	58%	Zaniah
9th Rangers	R/R	M	100%	Algorab	41%	Kalidasa
Raymond's Redcoats†	R/Q	M	[NF]	—	77%	Langhorne

ACTIVE WARSHIPS OF THE GREAT HOUSES

Navy	2786	2821
Federated Suns Navy	184	15
Capellan Confederation Navy	157	12
Draconis Combine Admiralty	199	16
Free Worlds Navy	159	14
Lyran Commonwealth Navy	217	18

MAJOR PERIPHERY STATES

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
Magistrcy of Canopus						
1st Canopian Fusiliers	R/R	M	100%	Luxani	49%	Luxani
2nd Canopian Fusiliers	G/R	M	100%	Booker	46%	Booker
3rd Canopian Fusiliers	G/Q	L	100%	Tarol IV	36%	Tarol IV
1st Canopian Light Horse†	V/R	M	100%	Hastur	34%	Hastur
2nd Canopian Light Horse†	R/R	L	100%	Schmitt	51%	Schmitt
Kossandra's Volunteers	G/R	M	[NF]	—	35%	Brixtana
1st Canopian Cuirassiers†	V/F	M	100%	Canopus IV	42%	Canopus IV
Magistracy Guards†	V/R	M	100%	Canopus IV	47%	Canopus IV
Outworlds Alliance						
Alliance Grenadiers†	V/R	M	100%	Lushann	44%	Lushann
Alpheratz Guards†	V/R	M	100%	Alpheratz	46%	Alpheratz
Alliance Provisional Relief Force	G/Q	L	[NF]	—	[DB:2820]	—
1st Baliggora Defenders	G/Q	L	100%	Baliggora	38%	Baliggora
1st Ramora Guards	R/Q	L	[NF]	—	37%	Ramora
Taurian Concordat						
Concordat Commandos	V/F	M	100%	Menion	36%	Samantha
Concordat Cuirassiers†	V/Q	H	100%	Perdition	41%	Amber Grove
Concordat Jeagers	R/R	M	100%	New Vallis	36%	Brinton
Hyades Light Infantry	R/R	L	[NF]	—	50%	Pinard
Pleiades Hussars	V/F	M	100%	Illiushin	29%	Sterope
2nd Pleiades Hussars	V/R	M	[NF]	—	[D]	—
Red Chasseurs†	R/R	M	100%	Coromodir	40%	Rockwellawan
Taurian Guard	V/F	H	100%	Taurus	42%	Taurus
Taurian Velites	E/R	L	100%	Parian	43%	Mithron



UNCONTRACTED MERCENARIES

Combat Command	Exp/Loy	Wt.	(2786) Strength	(2786) Post	(2821) Strength	(2821) Post
Black Band Legion†	V/Q	H	100%	Brinton	46%	Brinton
Black Warriors	V/Q	M	100%	Circinus	28%	Circinus
Blackhearts†	E/R	M	100%	Sterope	24%	Sterope
Cardinal Sins†	R/Q	M	100%	Dumassas	45%	Dumassas
Grave Walkers						
First	V/R	H	100%	Bethonolog	38%	Bethonolog
Second	R/R	M	100%	Gallis	38%	Gallis
Grim Determination	V/Q	M	100%	Cerberus	45%	Cerberus
King's Wild Cards†	R/Q	L	100%	Luxen	35%	Luxen

RULES ANNEX

The following rules allow the complexities of the First Succession War to be simulated in regular campaign play. These rules are intended for use with all levels of *BattleTech* as detailed in *Total Warfare* (*TW*), *TechManual* (*TM*), *Tactical Operations* (*TO*), *Strategic Operations* (*SO*), *A Time of War* (*AToW*), *Alpha Strike* (*AS*), *Alpha Strike Companion* (*ASC*) and *Interstellar Operations* (*IO*).

Creating First Succession War Scenarios, when used in conjunction with the *Creating Scenarios* rules contained in *Total Warfare* (see p. 256, *TW*), allows for the quick generation of *BattleTech* scenarios and forces for pick-up games.

The last section, *Combat Units,* provides descriptions and game information for several common BattleMechs seen on the battlefields of the First Succession War.

SPECIAL CASE RULES

The Early Succession Wars brought few new innovations, but some of the special items from the Star League era survived, or returned to common use. Players creating forces for this era should note that the Early Succession Wars saw widespread deployment of the following era-unique units and equipment featured in *Interstellar Operations*:

- SLDF Advanced Neurohelmet (pp. 68-69)
- Centurion Weapon System (pp. 85-86)
- Land-Air BattleMechs (see pp. 105-115)
- Thermobaric Weapons (pp. 165-166)
- Weapons of Mass Destruction (pp. 166-168)
- Binary Laser (see p. 319, *TO*)

Additionally, players may find that *The Early Succession Wars Sub-Era* rules (see p. 19, *IO*) add another layer of immersion into this tumultuous time.

CREATING FIRST SUCCESSION WAR SCENARIOS

The following rules allow gamemasters and players to generate scenarios set in the Early Succession Wars era, with an emphasis on the First Succession War.

BEFORE YOU START

The Early Succession Wars era encompasses a wide variety of battles and campaigns, and so the following pages present a basic framework for generating forces and unit abilities. With these, gamemasters and players can create their own battles based on those described in the previous chapters.

Gamemasters and players should use the historical information in those chapters to create a general framework for any battles or campaigns, and then use these rules as well as common sense to generate the specifics. Prior to the start of any games or campaigns, all players should agree on the setup and any special rules that will be included.

Finally, remember the two "prime directives" of playing *BattleTech*:

1. HAVE FUN

2. DON'T LET YOURSELF GET SO CAUGHT UP IN THE RULES THAT YOU STOP HAVING FUN

GENERAL RULES

Except as outlined below, gamemasters and players designing scenarios and campaigns set during the Early Succession War era should follow the rules for creating scenarios presented in *Total Warfare*.

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLES

The Random Unit Assignment Tables in this section should be used instead of those provided in *Total Warfare* and *A Time of War* (pp. 267-271, *TW*; pp. 130-135, *AToW*) to generate era-specific unit choices. The Random Unit Assignment Tables in this book are designed specifically for the composition of Early Succession War-era forces.

Statistics for most of these units may be found in *Technical Readouts 3039*, *3050 Upgrade*, *3057 Revised Edition*, *3075*, *Record Sheets: Operation Klondike*, and the *Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives* series, as well as in this book.

RECORD SHEET SOURCE TABLE

Abbr.	Source
3039	Record Sheets: 3039 Unabridged
3050U-C	Record Sheets: 3050 Upgrade, Clan and Star League
3058U-C	Record Sheets: 3058 Upgrade, Clan and Star League
3075u-AW	Record Sheets: 3075 Unabridged—Age of War
3085u-PP	Record Sheets 3085: Project Phoenix
OK	Record Sheets: Operation Klondike
HistRW	Historical: Reunification War
JSBD	Jihad Secrets: The Blake Documents
3057R	Technical Readout: 3057 Revised
XTRPrim1	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 1
XTRPrim2	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 2
XTRPrim3	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 3
XTRPrim4	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 4
XTRRetro	Experimental Technical Readout: RetroTech

Assigning 'Mechs and Vehicles

After determining the weight classes of the combat units in each force (see p. 265, *TW*), use the appropriate Random Unit Assignment Tables on pages 148-153 to determine the specific designs to be used.

When determining the BattleMechs to be fielded by a Great House or Periphery realm force, first decide whether the scenario will involve a combat command unique to that faction's armed forces. If so, roll 2D6, apply the modifier shown in the Die Roll Modifiers By Combat Command portion of each faction's Random Assignment Table (see p. 147), then consult the appropriate weight class column.

If using vehicles, aerospace fighters and/or DropShips, simply roll on the corresponding faction columns of the Vehicle and Aerospace tables

Ex-Star League Defense Force Commands: The Star League Defense Force's Deployment Zones—and hence an SLDF Army's proximity to the Terran Hegemony and the heart of its manufacturing might—factors into the types of units available to an ex-SLDF force, as well as whether Royal units bled into such commands.

To reflect this, when building a force which includes former SLDF commands, first determine the exact SLDF origins of the command (see *Those Left Behind*, pp. 32-36). Then, roll a d6 and consult the SLDF Army Deployments Table below and add the appropriate modifier to reflect the unit's SLDF deployment; the "Royal" modifier is not cumulative with any other modifiers. On a result of 5 or more, roll on Column A of the Star League Defense Force Random Unit Assignment Table (see p. 152); on a result of 3-4, roll on Column B; on a result of 2 or less, roll on Column C.

For example, a player is building a scenario that includes the Second Avalon Borderers. Checking the *Those Left Behind* sidebar, she notes that that the Borderers were once part of the SLDF's Fifth Army. Reviewing the Army Deployments Table, she sees a +2 modifier applies to SLDF commands with origins in the Fifth Army. She then rolls a D6 and gets a result of 4, leaving her with a final result of 6: she'll be able to roll for her units on Column A of the Star League Defense Force Random Assignment Table!

Assigning Pilots

Once the players have determined the 'Mechs and other battlefield units they will use, they should assign pilots to each using the Random Experience Level Table and the Random Skills Table (Expanded) (see p. 273, *TW*).

If playing an Elite force, the controlling player should add a +4 modifier to the Random Experience Rating roll and a +2 modifier to the Random Skill Rating roll. If playing a Veteran force, add +2 to the Experience Roll and +1 to the Skill Roll. If playing a Regular force, apply no modifiers, and if playing a Green force, apply –2 to the Experience Roll and –1 to the Skill Roll.

Ex-Star League Defense Force Commands: Despite several years of peace between the fall of the Usurper at the end of Operation CHIEFTAIN and the start of the First Succession War, the SLDF saw nearly a decade of unrelenting combat, making it the most experienced military force in the Inner Sphere. As such, anyone playing ex-SLDF forces (see *Those Left Behind*, pp. 32-36) may apply a +3 bonus to all Random Experience Rating Table rolls, and a +2 bonus to all Random Skills Table rolls for all SLDF pilots. These bonuses are in addition to any other appropriate modifiers.

Assigning 'Mechs and Vehicles in A Time of War

The Random Unit Assignment Table can also be used to assign the starting 'Mech or Vehicle for *A Time of War* characters created in the Early Succession War era, rather than the Random Assignment Tables in *AToW* (see pp. 130-135, *AToW*). Base the character's equipment rating on their current regiment (or the regiment in which the character last served).

If the character never served with the SLDF before joining a Great House, Periphery or mercenary force, assume they have an equipment rating of C. Increase the rating by one level for every two of the following that the character possesses: Property, Title, Connections, Leadership Skill level of 7+, or a Tour of Duty Life Module (only one Tour of Duty Module counts toward this total). Decrease the rating by one level for every two of the following they possess: negative-TP Reputation (any level), negative-TP Wealth (any level), negative-TP Extra Income (any level), Bloodmark (any level), or use of the Ne'er-Do-Well Life Module during character generation. The character's final equipment rating cannot be increased above A (or B for non-SLDF characters) or below C.

Repairs

For most stand-alone battles, repairs will not be a concern. For campaign play, players and gamemasters will need to know the availability of replacement weapons and equipment, as well as the techs and repair facilities they can call upon. Use the following guidelines, in conjunction with the *Maintenance, Repair, Salvage and Customization* rules (see pp. 166-199, *SO*) to determine each force's repair abilities.

ARMY DEPLOYMENTS TABLE

Forces Origins	Modifier
Includes "Royal" in name	+4
1st Army	+3
2nd/5th/8th/11th/14th Army	+2
3rd/4th/6th/7th/9th/10th/12th/13th/15th/16th Army	+1
17th/18th/19th/20th	+0

Years 2786-2807: First, for each individual combat unit and vehicle, roll 2D6 on the Random Quality Table below. Apply a modifier based on the combat command RAT modifier (see *Rat Die Roll Modifiers By Combat Command Table*, p. 147)—for example, Liao Guards apply +1 modifer and Atrean Dragoons apply a +3 modifier. This will provide the quality level of the unit to be repaired. Next, determine the technician's Skill Rating by rolling on the Random Experience Rating Table (*TW*, p. 273—see Support Personnel Experience Table, *SO*, p.168 for the actual Skill Ratings, once again applying any skill bonuses applicable to the unit). Finally, follow the *Obtaining Replacement Parts* rules (see p. 178, *SO*) to determine if replacement parts are available through the supply chain, or must be scavenged or fabricated. If replacement parts can be found, follow the rules for *Repairs and Replacements* (see p. 181, *SO*).

Years 2808-2821: Between 2808 and 2821 the various factions had exhausted their strategic reserves and no longer had a nearly limitless logistical train to draw upon. While the Great Houses developed a chain of suppliers to provide ammunition, spare parts and other consumables, there are limits to the quantity of these supplies available, and how quickly they can be delivered. Whenever possible, factions salvaged and scavenged what they could from the battlefields, or even turned to local factories and tradesmen to manufacture or modify parts to keep their 'Mechs, tanks, fighters and other vehicles operating. On the other hand, the factions possessed a highly-skilled technical pool that has learned to work under less than ideal conditions, with each company typically assigned its own technical team and additional teams standing by at the regimental level to assist with battle repairs.

Most regiments' best maintenance facilities were still on their DropShips, which, except in rare instances, were typically far removed from the battlefields. As a result, most techs used portable field repair gantries—of which there were limited numbers, typically only a handful per battalion formation—to meet most of a combat command's maintenance and repair needs. That is, unless their regimental commander authorized the movement of their DropShips closer to the battlefield.

Of course, that was easier said than done. The typical 'Mech and aerospace fighter carrier has little additional space for carrying replacement parts, let alone for the support personnel (cooks, administrators, logisticians, radio operators, military police and the like) needed to keep things running. One or more additional DropShips, typically cargo ships or troop carriers, maintain and house those support personnel. Using a DropShip to deliver maintenance and repair supplies means finding and offloading the right parts, and then getting them to the right place. A DropShip can take off and relocate, but which one (or ones) should go? If one or more DropShips relocate, what happens to the field base set up around them? Moreover, a suitable landing zone may not be available close by—few hard-packed surfaces capable of supporting a landing DropShip and allowing it to take off again exist in most mountain, jungle and arctic landscapes.

On the other hand, successful campaigns driving deep into enemy territory may be able to benefit from repurposed enemy factories, with the quality of those key facilities increasing as fighting reaches the opposing nation's core worlds.

Players and gamemasters should take all these difficulties into account and alter the rules above (Years 2786-2807) in accordance with the state of their own campaigns during the years 2808-2821.

RANDOM QUALITY TABLE

2D6 Roll	'Mech/Tank/Fighter/ DropShip/ Vehicle Quality
Less than 2	A
3-4	B
5-7	C
8-9	D
10-11	E
12+	F

Random Quality Roll Modifiers

Use combat command RAT modifier (see *RAT Die Roll Modifiers By Combat Command Table*, p. 147). For example, Liao Guards apply +1 and Atrean Dragoons apply a +3.

Customization

Numerous customized combat vehicles and 'Mechs were used by the various Great Houses at the start of the First Succession War, both those retooled on the production lines en masse and developed on the battlefield. As the conflict dragged on, far fewer factory-customized units remained operational. On the other hand, wide-scale patchwork repairs were the norm, resulting in numerous "field-customized" units in most regiments.

If players seek an additional level of excitement and randomness into their games, use the following rules in conjunction with *Customization* guidelines (see p. 188, *SO*).

The modifiers listed below are drawn from the *Army Deployments Table* for former Star League Defense Forces (see p. 143), or the Die Roll Modifiers By Combat Command portion of each faction's Random Assignment Table (see p. 148-153), as appropriate. For example, a player is running a force from House Kurita's Proserpina Hussars Combat Command. Reviewing the Die Roll Modifiers By Combat Command Table for the Draconis Combine, the player notes a +2 modifier, which means they use the +2 modifier rules below when customizing their units.

+0 Modifier: No customization is allowed.

+1 Modifier: All company commanders (or lance commanders in any Ex-Star League Defense Force units that previously had "Royal" in their name) may make minor customizations to their 'Mechs/ fighters/vehicles. They may replace one major weapon or piece of equipment (massing five tons or more and/or occupying three critical slots or more), or up to five lesser pieces of equipment (massing no more than ten tons total) with equipment of the same or a different class (yet massing the same amount and occupying the same or fewer critical spaces). This replacement may be a Class A or Class B Refit (see p. 188, *SO*), and all new equipment must be placed in critical slots vacated by the replaced equipment.

+2 Modifier: All battalion commanders (or company commanders in any Ex-Star League Defense Force units that previously had "Royal" in their name) may make any number of Class A or Class B Refits (see p. 188, *SO*) to their 'Mechs/fighters/vehicles.

+3 Modifier: All regimental commanders and higher (or battalion commanders and higher for any Ex-Star League Defense Force units that previously had "Royal" in their name) may make any number of Class A, B and/or C Refits (see p. 188, *SO*) to their 'Mechs/fighters/vehicles.

+4 Modifiers: All regimental commanders and higher (or battalion commanders and higher for any Ex-Star League Defense Force units that previously had "Royal" in their name) may make any number of Class A, B, C and/or D Refits (see p. 188, *SO*) on their 'Mechs/fighters/vehicles.

2808 to 2821: For battles fought between 2808 and 2821, rotate all modifiers down one level; i.e., a +1 Modifier Combat Command now uses the rules for a +0 Modifier unit (no customizations); the +2 Modifier Combat Command now uses the rules for a +1 Modifier unit; and so on.

Note: These refits may only be made to the soldier's primary battlefield unit (the unit he or she was initially assigned). Replacement and captured units cannot be refit "automatically" in this way during the course of a campaign—though one soldier can pilot another's customized unit if the situation warrants, such as on a temporary basis, or if permanently assigned to that unit after the death or incapacitation of its previous warrior).

PRE-EXISTING DAMAGE TABLE

1D6	TOTAL WARFARE	ALPHA STRIKE/BATTLEFORCE*	SBF/ACS
1	No pre-existing damage.	No pre-existing damage.	No pre-existing damage.
2-3	Light pre-existing damage. This unit receives 1 point of damage for every 5 tons of mass, distributed randomly in 5-point (or fraction thereof) groups. Do not roll critical hits, even if internal structure is damaged.	Light existing damage. This unit receives 1 point of armor damage; if it has no armor, this point of damage is transferred to structure. Ignore this damage if it would destroy the unit by eliminating the last of its structure.	Light existing damage. This Unit subtracts 5% of its armor (round down); if it has no armor, this damage is transferred to structure. Ignore this damage if it would destroy the unit by eliminating the last of its structure.
4-5	Moderate existing damage. This unit receives 2 points of damage for every 5 tons of mass, distributed randomly in 5-point (or fraction thereof) groups. Determine one critical hit to a random location, as well as any possible critical hits suffered from internal structure damage. Disregard any hits that would immobilize or destroy the unit, including cockpit/crew killed hits, ammunition hits, and destroyed motive systems/engines and gyros.	Moderate existing damage. This unit receives 2 points of armor damage; if it has no armor, these points of damage are transferred to structure. Ignore any damage that would destroy the unit by eliminating the last point of its structure. Determine one critical hit, as well as any possible critical hits suffered from structure damage. Disregard any hits that would immobilize or destroy the unit, including crew killed hits, ammo hits, second engine hits and Unit Destroyed hits).	Moderate existing damage. This Unit subtracts 10% of its armor (round down); if it has no armor, this damage is transferred to structure. Ignore the last of the damage that would destroy the Unit by eliminating the last of its structure. Determine one critical hit, disregarding the Unit Destroyed result.
6	Heavy existing damage. This unit receives 4 points of damage for every 5 tons of mass, distributed randomly in 5-point (or fraction thereof) groups. Determine two critical hits, each to a random location, as well as any possible critical hits suffered from internal structure damage. Disregard any hits that would immobilize or destroy the unit, including cockpit/crew killed hits, ammunition hits, and destroyed motive systems/engines and gyros).	Heavy existing damage. This unit receives 3 points of armor damage and 1 structure damage; if it has no armor, these points of damage are transferred to structure. Ignore any damage that would destroy the unit by eliminating the last point of its structure. Determine two critical hits, as well as any possible critical hits suffered from structure damage. Disregard any hits that would immobilize or destroy the unit, including crew killed hits, ammo hits, second engine hits and Unit Destroyed hits).	Heavy existing damage. This Unit subtracts 20% of its armor and 5% of its structure (round down); if it has no armor, this damage is transferred to structure. Ignore any damage that would destroy the Unit by eliminating the last of its structure. Determine two critical hits, disregarding the Unit Destroyed result).

*For *BattleForce*, apply all the rules on the table to each Element of a Unit.

Pre-Existing Damage

The First Succession War was a staggeringly expensive proposition for all of its combatants. By the midway point of the thirty-five years of unrelenting war, significant shortfalls in spare parts, replacement personnel and equipment adversely affected each faction's ability to keep their 'Mechs and vehicles in operational order.

Unless otherwise indicated, units may begin a scenario with pre-existing damage. First, roll 2D6 for each individual combat command with elements in the battle. Modify this roll by +1 for every two years that the combat command's forces have been fighting the war (to a maximum of +6); ex-SLDF forces apply an additional +1 modifier to this roll. On a result of 10 or greater, pre-existing damage is possible for that regiment's units. Roll 1D6 for each combat unit in the regiment ('Mech, vehicle, conventional or aerospace fighter) and apply the appropriate result from the Pre-Existing Damage Table (p. 145) to determine what damage, if any, each suffers.

Units that receive pre-existing damage suffer the indicated amount of damage and critical hits; the locations affected and any critical hits are randomly determined. For BattleMechs, use the Front/Back column to determine the locations of all damage. For aerospace fighters and conventional aircraft, use the Above/Below column. For conventional combat vehicles, determine the location of any damage by first rolling a direction of attack using the BattleMech Facing After a Fall Table (see p. 68, *TW*) before rolling the hit location of any damage. Reroll any critical damage that would destroy a unit or reduce its mobility to 0. If the second result also destroys or immobilizes the unit, disregard both results and apply an additional 5 points of damage to a random location.

There is also a chance that any units with pre-existing damage which employ ammunition-based weapons may not have a full combat load. Roll 1D6 for each individual combat unit that requires ammunition. On a result of 1-2, the unit has a full load of ammunition; on a 3-4, the unit has only half its ammunition load for each weapon (rounded up); on a 5, the unit has only 1D6 rounds of ammunition for each weapon; on a 6, the unit has no ammunition. Again, all former SLDF forces apply an additional +1 modifier to this roll.

Finally, specialized ammunition is rare. Any time specialized ammunition is requested (including LB-X cluster and Artemis missile ammunition), roll 1D6. On a result of 1-2, the ammunition is available; on any other result, the specialized ammunition is unavailable.

Campaign Play: Players and gamemasters embarking on a First Succession War campaign should first generate all the units available to each force taking part in the campaign. They can then apply any pre-existing damage to the various units, as appropriate. This will be the condition in which each unit starts campaign play. Once the pre-existing damage is applied, no further rolls for such damage need be made through the end of the campaign (unless reinforcements are received—if their parent combat command initially rolled 10+, then each combat unit in the reinforcements must roll for pre-exisintg damage as well). All units must then accomplish regular maintenance, as well as repair battle damage, as appropriate.

Downgrades

Every non-infantry unit such as 'Mechs, vehicles, fighters, and exoskeletons that feature any Tech Rating E technologies as part of their original design must check for downgrades prior to the start of a *BattleTech* scenario. To do this, the controlling player rolls 2D6, and applies to the result all appropriate modifiers from the First Succession War Era Downgrades Table (see below) based on the date of the scenario, the force's affiliation, and its Skill Rating. If the modified roll result is 7 or higher, the unit does not have to be downgraded—although players may still decide to downgrade it at their option. On a modified result of 6 or less, the unit is considered to be using extinct equipment and *must* be downgraded with equivalent non-extinct technologies.

If no equivalent downgraded technologies exist for the item or items the unit must sacrifice, alternate replacement items of any kind may be substituted, as long as the combined weight and critical space requirements of these replacements are equal to or less than those of the original items. If the extinct technology is a unit class—such as power armor suits after 2766—the unit must be deleted from the player's force and replaced with a unit of a lesser class. (DropShips or JumpShips, for example, would replace WarShips, while conventional infantry would replace power armor infantry.)

Downgrade rules do not apply to ComStar forces.

Universal Technology Advancement Table: For a more detailed determination of what is available, consult the Universal Technology Advancement Table (see pp. 35-63, *IO*) to find which items have gone out of production by the time of a given scenario.

FIRST SUCCESSION WAR ERA DOWNGRADES TABLE

Base TN to avoid downgrade: 7	
Condition	**Modifier**
Scenario Date	
2790-2819	–1
2820-2821	–2
Force Affiliation	
Major IS Power	+0
Minor IS Power	–1
Major Periphery Power	–1
Minor Periphery Power	–2
Mercenary/Pirate	–2
Force Skill Rating	
Elite	+2
Veteran	+1
Green	–1

Force Compositions

In contrast with the modern combat environment, the armed forces of the Great Houses in the Early Succession Wars displayed a remarkable degree of homogeneity. Any supplier of military goods in this era had to be able provide for the entirety of the Star League (at least on paper), rather than just one House. Massive factory complexes churned out new war machines by the hundreds or even thousands, sending their products to every corner of the League. As a result, when the Succession Wars broke out, each combatant drew on a common pool of mass-produced and SLDF-approved units. Victory would go not to the combatant with the better equipment, but with the superior doctrine behind its employment.

To reflect this homogeneousness, in battles set between 2786 and 2807, once the weight class of a particular lance has been determined, roll only once on the Random Unit Assignment Tables per lance; all 'Mechs in the lance are of the resulting type. In games set between 2808 and 2819, roll twice for each lance. From 2820 onward, normal rules for Random Unit Assignment apply.

Ex-Star League Defense Force Commands: The SLDF long embraced unit homogeneity, but losses incurred during the Rim Worlds Campaign and the Liberation of Terra largely eradicated that trait. As such, any ex-Star League Defense Forces apply normal rules regardless of the year in which a battle is set.

RAT DIE ROLL MODIFIERS BY COMBAT COMMAND TABLE

Mod.	Capellan Confederation	Draconis Combine	Federated Suns	Free Worlds League	Lyran Commonwealth
+4	Capellan Hussars	Sword of Light	Davion Brigade of Guards, Avalon Hussars (1st–20th)	Fusiliers of Oriente, Orloff Grenadiers	Royal Guard
+3	St. Ives Armored Cavalry, Capellan Chargers	Galedon Regulars	Avalon Hussars (22nd–56th), Dragon Lords	Atrean Dragoons, Free Worlds Guards	Donegal Guards, Odessa Regulars
+2	Chesterton Regulars, Andurien Hussars	Proserpina Hussars	Arcadian Cuirassiers, Robinson Chevaliers, Syrtis Fusiliers, Tancredi Loyalists	Marik Guard, Regulan Hussars	Skye Rangers, Arcturan Guards
+1	Liao Guards, Liao Lancers, Sian Dragoons, Tikonov Lancers	Dieron Regulars, Sun Zhang Academy Cadre, Rasalhague Regulars, Arkab Legion	Ceti Hussars, Crucis March Militia	Bolan Defenders, Stewart Dragoons	Lyran Guards
+0	Confederation Reserve Cavalry	Pesht Regulars	Capellan March Militia, Draconis March Militia	Marik Militia, Oriente Hussars, Defenders of Andurien	Hesperus Guards, Lyran Regulars, York Regulars
			Die Roll Modifiers For Dropships:		
+4	Fleet	Fleet	Dept. of the Line, Dept. of Naval Assault	FWLN Fleet	Fleet
+3	—	—	Dept. of Naval Defense	—	—
+2	—	—	—	Provincial Navy Fleet	—
+1	—	—	—	FWLN Transport	—
+0	Transport	Transport	Dept. of Naval Transport	Provincial Navy Transport	Transport

Mod.	Magistracy of Canopus	Outworlds Alliance	Taurian Concordat
+2	Magistracy Royal Guards, Chasseurs a Cheval	Avellar Guards, Alliance Borderers	Taurian Guard, II Corps, III Corps—Pleiades Hussars, III Corps—Pleiades Lancers
+1	Canopian Fusiliers	2nd Baliggora Fusiliers, Onverwacht Guards, Blommenstein Demons, Cerberus Watch	I Corps, III Corps—4th–8th Perdition Guards
+0	People's Volunteers	4th and 6th Ramora Regulars, 3rd Baliggora Fusiliers, Trader Sentinels	IV Corps
		Die Roll Modifiers For Dropships (All Periphery):	
+2		Fleet	
+0		Transport	

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: BATTLEMECHS

CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	STG-3R Stinger [20] (3039)	SCP-1N Scorpion [55] (3039)	CPLT-C1 Catapult [60] (3039)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
3	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	BJ-1 Blackjack [45] (3039)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
4	WSP-1L Wasp [20] (3039)	WTH-1S Whitworth [40] (3039)	GHR-5H Grasshopper [70] (3039)	GOL-1H Goliath [80] (3039)
5	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
6	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	VL-2T Vulcan [40] (3039)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
7	FRB-2E Firebee [35] (3075u-AW)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	KSC-3I Koschei [65] (3075u-AW)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
8	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
9	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
10	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
11	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)
12	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085-PP)	WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (3075u-AW)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-I)
13	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	KSC-4L Koschei [65] (3075u-AW)	XNT-3O Xanthos [100] (3075u-AW)
14	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)*	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)*	EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (3058U-C)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
15	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (3075u-AW)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)*	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

DRACONIS COMBINE

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	SCP-1N Scorpion [55] (3039)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
3	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	BJ-1 Blackjack [45] (3039)	QKD-4G Quickdraw [60] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
4	STG-3G Stinger [20] (3039)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	GOL-1H Goliath [80] (3039)
5	JR7-D Jenner [35] (3039)	WTH-1S Whitworth [40] (3039)	DRG-1N Dragon [60] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
6	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	VL-2T Vulcan [40] (3039)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
7	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
8	PNT-9R Panther [35] (3039)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	CHP-1N2 Champion [60] (3050U-C)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
9	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] 3075u-AW)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
10	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)
11	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-I)
12	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (3058U-C)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
13	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	FLS-8K Flashman [75] (3050U-C)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)
14	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)*	PXH-1Kk Phoenix Hawk [45] (ER2750) (3039)*	WHM-6Rk Warhammer [70] (ER2750) (3039)	STK-3Fk Stalker [85] (ER2750) (3039)
15	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)*	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (3075u-AW)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

FEDERATED SUNS

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	HER-1S Hermes [30] (3050U-C)	SCP-1N Scorpion [55] (3039)	HMH-3D Hammerhands [75] (3075u-AW)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
3	STG-3R Stinger [20] (3039)	BJ-1 Blackjack [45] (3039)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
4	LCT-1M Locust [20] (3039)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	BKX-7K Battleaxe [70] (3075u-AW)	GOL-1H Goliath [80] (3039)
5	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
6	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	VL-2T Vulcan [40] (3039)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
7	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
8	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
9	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	STN-3L Sentinel [40] (3050U-C)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
10	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
11	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-I)
12	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085-PP)	WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (3075u-AW)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
13	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (3058U-C)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)
14	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)*	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)*	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	BLR-1Gd BattleMaster [85] (ER2750) (3039)
15	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	DV-6Md Dervish [55] (ER2750) (3039)	TDR-5Sd Thunderbolt [65] (ER2750) (3039)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)*	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

* Player may choose the Land-Air BattleMech of the appropriate weight (STG-A5 or PHX-HK2) instead of the rolled result.

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: BATTLEMECHS

FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	HER-1S Hermes [30] (3050U-C)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
3	STG-3R Stinger [20] (3039)	HER-2S Hermes II [40] (3039)	QKD-4G Quickdraw [60] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
4	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	VL-2T Vulcan [40] (3039)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	GOL-1H Goliath [80] (3039)
5	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	ICR-1S Icarus II [40] (3075u-AW)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-I)
6	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
7	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	ON1-K Orion [70] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
8	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
9	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	TBT-5N Trebuchet [50] (3039)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
10	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	STN-3L Sentinel [40] (3050U-C)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
11	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)
12	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (3075u-AW)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
13	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085-PP)	FLS-8K Flashman [75] (3050U-C)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)
14	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)*	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)*	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	BLR-1Gc BattleMaster [85] (3075u-AW)
15	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (3058U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)*	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

LYRAN COMMONWEALTH

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	STG-3R Stinger [20] (3039)	SCP-1N Scorpion [55] (3039)	WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (3039)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
3	LCT-1S Locust [20] (3039)	BJ-1 Blackjack [45] (3039)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
4	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	WTH-1S Whitworth [40] (3039)	ON1-K Orion [70] (3039)	GOL-1H Goliath [80] (3039)
5	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
6	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	VL-2T Vulcan [40] (3039)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
7	COM-2D Commando [25] (3039)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
8	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
9	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	BWP-3A Ymir [90] (3075u-AW)
10	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	ZEU-5S Zeus [80] (3039)
11	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
12	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085-PP)	FLS-8K Flashman [75] (3050U-C)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
13	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (3075u-AW)	BLR-1Gc BattleMaster [85] (3075u-AW)
14	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)*	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)*	GLH-2D Galahad [60] (3075u-AW)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)
15	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (3075u-AW)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)*	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

MAJOR PERIPHERY STATES

Roll	Light BattleMechs	Medium BattleMechs	Heavy BattleMechs	Assault BattleMechs
2	FS9-K Firestarter [35] (3039)	SCP-1N Scorpion [55] (3039)	CPLT-C1 Catapult [60] (3039)	CGR-1A1 Charger [80] (3039)
3	STG-3R Stinger [20] (3039)	ICR-1S Icarus II [40] (3075u-AW)	RFL-3N Rifleman [60] (3039)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
4	HER-1S Hermes [30] (3050U-C)	HOP-4C Hoplite [55] (3050U-I)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)
5	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	BJ-1 Blackjack [45] (3039)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
6	STG-3G Stinger [20] (3039)	WTH-1S Whitworth [40] (3039)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
7	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	ON1-K Orion [70] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
8	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
9	FLC-4N Falcon [30] (3039)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	OSR-2C Ostroc [60] (3039)	MSK-8B Mackie [100] (3075u-AW)
10	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	RMP-2G Rampage [85] (ISP2)
11	FFL-3A Firefly [30] (OK)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
12	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (3039)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085-PP)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u-AW)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)
13	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
14	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)
15	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (3075u-AW)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)
16	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)*	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)*	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (3050U-C)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)

* Player may choose the Land-Air BattleMech of the appropriate weight (STG-A5 or PHX-HK2) instead of the rolled result.

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: AEROSPACE

CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	TR-5 Thrush* [25] (3039)	TR-9 Transit** [50] (3039)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Colossus (2660) (3075u-AW)
3	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
4	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Black Eagle (2453) (XTR:Prim2)
5	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Fury (2638) (3057R)
6	TR-5 Thrush* [25] (3039)	GTHA-100 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	EGL-R9 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Confederate (2703) (3057R)
7	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	TR-9 Transit** [50] (3039)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Gazelle (2351) (3057R)
8	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Dictator (2600) (3075u-AW)
9	TRN-3T Trident [20] (3050U-C)	HCT-213S Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Triumph (2593) (3057R)
10	THK-53 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
11	RGU-133F Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	CHP-W7 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Union (2708) (3057R)
12	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Overlord (2762) (3057R)
13	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	HMR-HE Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
14	ZRO-114 Zero [35] (3050U-C)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
15	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	IRN-SD2 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	CHP-W7 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Titan (2647) (3057R)
16	RGU-133Eb Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	HCT-214 Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Vengeance (2682) (3057R)

*TR-5 Thrush uses ferro-aluminum armor. Identical to TR-7 with 1 additional armor point per wing

**TR-9 Transit uses ferro-aluminum armor. Identical to TR-10 with 2 additional armor points aft and 15 AC ammo

DRACONIS COMBINE

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	SPR-H5 Sparrowhawk [30] (3039)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Gazelle (2351) (3057R)
3	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Vulture (2312) (3075)
4	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)	HCT-213R Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
5	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
6	TRN-3T Trident [20] (3050U-C)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	Dictator (2600) (3075)
7	S-2B Star Dagger* [30] (XTR:Retro)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Triumph (2595) (3057R)
8	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
9	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
10	SPD-502 Spad [30] (3050U-C)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
11	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
12	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
13	SB-27b Sabre [25] (OK)	SL-26 Samurai [50] (3039)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
14	ZRO-114 Zero [35] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
15	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
16	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15b Lightning [50] (OK)	HMR-HDb Hammerhead [75] (3075u-AW)	Model 96 "Elephant" (2600) (3075u-AW)

* Use S-2 Star Dagger with standard components. Replace engine with 240 rating. Replace small laser with medium laser. Armor layout is 34/22/18.

FEDERATED SUNS

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	SPR-H5 Sparrowhawk [30] (3039)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R10 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Fortress (2613) (3057R)
3	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R9 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Confederate (2703) (3057R)
4	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	HCT-213R Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Colossus (2660) (3075)
5	CNT-1D Centurion [30] (3075u-AW)	HCT-213S Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Vampire (2715) (3075)
6	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
7	CNT-1D Centurion [30] (3075u-AW)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
8	TRN-3T Trident [20] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Dictator (2600) (3075)
9	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Union (2708) (3057R)
10	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
11	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Triumph (2593) (3057R)
12	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-214 Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	HMR-HE Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Overlord (2762) (3057R)
13	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
14	ZRO-114 Zero [35] (3050U-C)	SL-26 Samurai [50] (3039)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
15	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Vengeance (2682) (3057R)
16	SPD-502 Spad [30] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD2 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	CHP-W5b Chippewa [90] (OK)	Titan (2647) (3057R)

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: AEROSPACE

FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
3	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Fury (2638) (3057R)
4	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Gazelle (2351) (3057R)
5	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	GTHA-300 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	EGL-R10 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Black Eagle (2453) (XTR:Prim2)
6	THK-53 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Dictator (2600) (3075u-AW)
7	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	GTHA-100 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
8	SPR-H5 Sparrowhawk [30] (3039)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Triumph (2595) (3057R)
9	TRN-3T Trident [20] (3050U-C)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Union (2708) (3057R)
10	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	EGL-R9 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
11	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
12	ZRO-114 Zero [35] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	CHP-W7 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Vengeance (2682) (3057R)
13	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	HMR-HE Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
14	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD2 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
15	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)	HCT-214 Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	EGL-R6b Eagle [75] (OK)	Titan (2647) (3057R)
16	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Model 96 "Elephant" (2600) (3075u-AW)

LYRAN COMMONWEALTH

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	TFN-3M Typhoon [90] (3075u-AW)	Gazelle (2351) (3057R)
3	SYD-21 Seydlitz [20] (3039)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
4	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	TFN-2A Typhoon [90] (3075u-AW)	Dictator (2600) (3075u-AW)
5	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
6	CNT-1D Centurion [30] (3075u-AW)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Fortress (2613) (3057R)
7	SYD-21 Seydlitz [20] (3039)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
8	SPR-H5 Sparrowhawk [30] (3039)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Union (2708) (3057R)
9	SYD-21 Seydlitz [20] (3039)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	CHP-W7 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
10	THK-53 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Fortress (2613) (3057R)
11	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
12	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Achilles (2582) (3057R)
13	ZRO-114 Zero [35] (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	RPR-101 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)	Titan (2647) (3057R)
14	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	SL-26 Samurai [50] (3039)	CHP-W7 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Intruder (2655) (3057R)
15	THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-214 Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	RPR-101 Rapier [85] (3075u-AW)	Model 96 "Elephant" (2600) (3075u-AW)
16	RGU-133P Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	TFN-3M Typhoon [90] (3075u-AW)	Gazelle (2351) (3057R)

MAJOR PERIPHERY STATES

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Czar (2462) (XTR:Prim3)
3	TRN-3T Trident [20] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	see Periphery States sub-table
4	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	Vulture (2312) (3075u-AW)
5	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	GTHA-100 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Gazelle (2531) (3057R)
6	CNT-1D Centurion [30] (3075u-AW)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Dictator (2600) (3075u-AW)
7	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table
8	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Trojan (2720) (JSBD)
9	RGU-133E Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	GTHA-300 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Triumph (2593) (3057R)
10	THK-43 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	VLC-5N Vulcan [80] (3075u-AW)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
11	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table
12	THK-53 Tomahawk [45] (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	DroST IIb (2443) (XTR:Prim4)
13	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	STU-K5 Stuka [100] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
14	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table	see Periphery States sub-table

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: SLDF

LIGHT UNITS (20 TO 35 TONS)

2D6	BattleMechs A (5+)	B (3-4)	C (2-)	Vehicles	Aerospace Fighters (20 to 45 tons)
2	FIC -4Nb Falcon [30] (OK)	TLN-5W Talon [35] (3058U-C)	HSR-200D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)	Cobra Transport VTOL [30]^{V} (3075u-AW)	TRN-3T Trident [20]R
3	HER-1Sb Hermes [30] (OK)	HSR-200D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)	FFL-4A Firefly [30] (3050U-I)	Beagle [15]^{H} (3050U-C)	SWF-606 Swift [25] (3050U-C)
4	MON-66b Mongoose [25] (3075u-AW)	PNT-9R Panther [35] (3039)	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	Rotunda [20]^{W} (3050U-C)	ZR0-114 Zero [35]^{R} (3050U-C)
5	LCT -1Vb Locust [20] (OK)	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (3039)	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	Cobra Transport VTOL [30]V (3075u-AW)	THk-63 Tomahawk [45]^{R} (3050U-C)
6	OTT-7Jb Ostscout [35] (3075u-AW)	FFI-4A Firefly [30] (3050U-I)	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	Cyrano [30]^{V} R (3050U-C)	SPD-502 Spad [30] (3050U-c)
7	HER-1Sb Hermes [30] (OK)	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	Lightning [35]^{H} R (3050U-C)	SB-28 Sabre [25]^{R} (3075u-AW)
8	THE-Nb Thorn [20] (OK)	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	PNT-9R Panther [35] (3039)	J. Edgar [25] ^{H} (r 3039u)	TN-3T Trident [20]^{R} (3050U-C)
9	SL-1G Sling [25] (OK)	MCY-99 Mercury [20] (3050U-C)	STG-3T Stinger [20] (3039)	Ripper [10]^{V} ^{R} (3050U-C)	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)
10	STG-3Gb Stinger [20] (OK)	SPR-4F Spector [35] (3058U-C)	JVN-10N Javelin [30] (3039)	Nightshade [25]^{V} ^{R} (3050U-C)	RGU-133E Rogue [40]^{R} (3050U-C)
11	SPR-4F Spector [35] (3058U-C)	TLN-5V Talon [35] (3058U-C)	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	Chevalier [35]^{W} (3060u)	ZR0-114 Zero [35]^{R} (3050U-C)
12	HSR-200Db Hussar [30] (3075u-AW)	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (3058U-C)	SDR-5V Spider [30] (3039)	Gabriel [5]^{V} (3050U-C)	SB-28 Sabre [25]^{R} (3075u-AW)

MEDIUM UNITS (40 TO 55 TONS)

2D6	BattleMechs A (5+)	B (3-4)	C (2-)	Vehicles	Aerospace Fighters (50 to 70 tons)
2	WVE-5Nb Wyvern [45] (3075u-AW)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	Kanga [50]^{H} (3050U-C)	HCT-214 Hellcat II [50]^{R} (3050U-C)
3	WVR-7H Wolverine II [55] (OK)	STN-3L Sentinel [40] (3050U-C)	PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3039)	Zephyr [40]^{H} ^{R} (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65]^{R} (3050U-C)
4	KTO-19b Kintaro [55] (3075u-AW)	WTH-1 Whitworth [40] (3039)	GRF-1N Griffin [55] (3039u)	Thor [55]^{W} (3050U-C)	SL-26 Samurai [50] (3039)
5	SHD-2Hb Shadow Hawk [55] (OK)	CRB-27 Crab [50] (3050U-C)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	Chaparral [50]^{T} (3050U-C)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50]^{R} (3050U-C)
6	GRF-2N Griffin [55] (OK)	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	Turhan [50]^{W} (3075u-AW)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60]^{R} (3050U-C)
7	CRB-27b Crab [50] (3075u-AW)	PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3085u-PP)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	T12 Tiger [55]^{H} (HistRW)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50]^{R} (3075u-AW)
8	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (3039)	CDA-2A Cicada [40] (3039)	DV-6M Dervish [55] (3039)	Kanga [50]^{H} (3050U-C)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65]^{R} (3050U-C)
9	PXH-1b Phoenix Hawk [45] (3075u-AW)	ASN-21 Assassin [40] (3039)	ASN-21 Assassin [40] (3039)	Maxim [50]^{H} (3039)	GTHA-300 Gotha [60]^{R} (3050U-C)
10	STN-3Lb Sentinel [40] (OK)	GRF-2N Griffin [55] (OK)	CRB-27 Crab [50] (3050U-C)	Chaparral [50]^{T} (3050U-C)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)
11	CRB-27 Crab [50] (3050U-C)	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (3075u-AW)	STN-1S Sentinel [40] (3039)	Goblin [45]^{T} (3039)	HCT-213B Hellcat II [50]R (3050U-C)
12	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)	STY-2C Starslayer [50] (3058U-C)	KTO-19 kintaro [55] (3050U-C)	LVT-4 Hovertank [50]^{H} (XTRPrim2)	LCF-R20 Lucifer [65] (3039)

HEAVY UNITS (60 TO 75 TONS)

2D6	BattleMechs A (5+)	B (3-4)	C (2-)	Vehicles	Aerospace Fighters (75 to 100 tons)
2	EXT-4Db Exterminator [65] (OK)	CHP-1N Champion [60] (3050U-C)	FLS-8K Flashman [75] (3050U-C)	Burke [75]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] ^{R} (3039)
3	OST-2Cb Ostroc [60] (3075u-AW)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	Padilla [75]^{T} (3058U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)
4	BMB-12D Bombardier [65] (3050U-C)	LNC25-05 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (3039)	Burke [75]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100]^{R} (3075u-AW)
5	TDR-5Sb Thunderbolt [65] (OK)	WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (3075u)	GLH-2D Galahad [60] (3075u-AW)	Von Luckner [75]^{T} ^{R} (3039)	STU-K5 Stuka [100]^{R} (3039)
6	ARC-2Rb Archer [70] (OK)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (3039)	Magi [70]^{T} (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90]^{R} (3050U-C)
7	WHM-7A Warhammer [70] (OK)	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (3075u)	TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (3039)	Manticore [60]^{T} (3039)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] ^{R} (3050U-C)
8	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (3058U-C)	ON1-K Orion [75] (3039)	Bulldog [60]^{T} (3039)	RPR-100 Rapier [85]^{R} (3050U-C)
9	MAD-2R Marauder [75] (3075u-AW)	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (3075u)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	Demon [60]^{W} ^{R} (3050U-C)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75]^{R} (3075u-AW)
10	GLH-2D Galahad [60] (3075u-AW)	BMB-12D Bombardier [65] (3050U-C)	CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (3058U-C)	Burke [75]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)
11	CHP-1Nb Champion [60] (OK)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	Marksman [65]^{T} (3050U-C)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75]^{R} (3075u-AW)
12	EXC-B2b Excalibur [70] (3075u-AW)	CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (3058U-C)	ST-8A Shootist [70] (3058U-C)	Demon [60]^{W} ^{R} (3050U-C)	RPR-100 Rapier [85] (3050U-C)

ASSAULT UNITS (80 TO 100 TONS)

2D6	BattleMechs A (5+)	B (3-4)	C (2-)	Vehicles	DropShips
2	AS7-D-H Atlas II [100] (3075u-AW)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-C)	Puma [95]^{T} (3050U-C)	Leopard/Leopard CV^{A} (3057r)
3	NSR-9J Nightstar [95] (3058U-C)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)	Rhino [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Fortress^{S} (3057r)
4	STK-3Fb Stalker [85] (OK)	EMP-6A Emperor [90] (3058U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)	Puma [95]^{T} (3050U-C)	Overlord^{S} (3057r)
5	CRK-5003-1b Crockett [85] (OK)	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (3058U-C)	STC-2C Striker [80] (3058U-C)	Fury [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Union^{S} (3057r)
6	RFL-3N-2 Rifleman II [80] (3075u-AW)	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (3058U-C)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)	Fury [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Triumph^{A} (3057r)
7	HGN-732b Highlander [90] (3050U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)	Alacorn Mk. VI [95]^{T} (3058U-C)	Dictator^{S} (3075u-AW)
8	KGC-000b King Crab [100] (3050U-C)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)	Rhino [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Lion^{S} (3057r)
9	THG-11Eb Thug [80] (3050U-C)	AS7-D Atlas [100] (3039)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)	Puma [95]^{T} (3050U-C)	Mule^{S} (3057r)
10	BLR-1Gb BattleMaster [85] (3075u-AW)	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (3039)	EMP-6A Emperor [90] (3058U-C)	Alacorn Mk. VI [95]T (3058U-C)	Achilles^{A} (3057r)
11	STK-3H Stalker [85] (3039)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)	Fury [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Pentagon^{S} (3075u-AW)
12	SHG-2H Shogun [85] (OK)	KGC-000 King Crab [100] (3050U-C)	CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (3039)	Rhino [80]^{T} ^{R} (3050U-C)	Titan^{A} (3057r)

*This is a four-legged (quad) BattleMech. ^{A}Aerodyne ^{H}Hover ^{S}Spheroid ^{T}Tracked ^{V}VTOL ^{W}Wheeled. ^{R}Royal variant available for SLDF Royal units.

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: AEROSPACE

PERIPHERY STATES SUB-TABLE

Roll	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
Magistracy of Canopus				
4	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R10 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	DroST IIb (2443) (XTR:Prim4)
7	F-10 Cheetah [25] (3039)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
11	MM-1 Dragonfly [40] (Hist:RW)	GTHA-300 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Black Eagle (2453) (XTR:Prim2)
14	MM-2 Dragonfly [40] (Hist:RW)	F-90 Stingray [60] (3039)	EGL-R9 Eagle [75] (3075u-AW)	Leopard (2537) (3057R)
Outworlds Alliance				
4	CNT-1D Centurion [30] (3075u-AW)	HCT-213D Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
7	SYD-21 Seydlitz [20] (3039)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	Leopard CV (2581) (3057R)
11	SPR-H5 Sparrowhawk [30] (3039)	HCT-213S Hellcat [60] (3075u-AW)	VLC-6N Vulcan [80] (3075u-AW)	Trojan (2720) (JSBD)
14	RGU-133L Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	SL-26 Samurai [50] (3039)	TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] (3075u-AW)	Titan (2647) (3057R)
Taurian Concordat				
4	TR-5 Thrush [25] (3039)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	SL-15 Slayer [80] (3039)	DroST IIb (2443) (XTR:Prim4)
7	SYD-21 Seydlitz [20] (3039)	LCF-R15 Lucifer [65] (3039)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Lion (2595) (3057R)
11	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075u-AW)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	VLC-6N Vulcan [80] (3075u-AW)	Black Eagle (2453) (XTR:Prim2)
14	RGU-133F Rogue [40] (3050U-C)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075u-AW)	VLC-6N Vulcan [80] (3075u-AW)	Trojan (2720) (JSBD)

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: VEHICLES (ALL)

Roll	Light Vehicles	Medium Vehicles	Heavy Vehicles	Assault Vehicles
2	Beagle Hover Scout [15] (3050U-C)	Tiger Tank T-12 [55] (Hist:RW)	SRM Carrier [60] (3039)	Alacorn Tank Mk III [95] (3058U-C)
3	Tracked APC (LRM) [10] (3039)	Condor Hovertank [50] (3039)	Merkava Heavy Tank Mk VIII [75] (3075u-AW)	Alacorn Tank Mk IV [95] (3058U-C)
4	Packrat LPRV PKR-T5 [20] (3039)	Maxim Hover Transport [50] (3039)	Gallant Urban Assault Tank [70] (Hist:RW)	Fury Tank II [80] (3050U-C)
5	Hover APC (SRM) [10] (3039)	Goblin Tank [45] (3039)	Thumper Artillery Vehicle [60] (3075u-AW)	Mobile Long Tom [95] (3039)
6	Heavy Wheeled APC [25] (3060u)	LTV-4 Hover Tank [50] (XTR:Prim2)	LRM Carrier [60] (3039)	Rhino Tank (MG) [80] (3050U-C)
7	Galleon Tank GAL-100 [30] (3058U-I)	Prowler Multi-Terrain Vehicle [55] (3085)	Bulldog Tank [60] (3039)	Puma Tank PAT-005 [95] (3050U-C)
8	J. Edgar Hovertank [25] (3039)	Turhan UCV [50] (3075u-AW)	Burke Tank [75] (3050U-C)	Rhino Tank [80] (3050U-C)
9	Cyrano Gunship [30] (3050U-C)	Zephyr Hovertank [40] (3050U-C)	Manticore Tank [60] (3039)	Puma Tank PAT-005 [95] (3050U-C)
10	Ripper VTOL [10] (3050U-C)	Maxim Hover Transport [50] (3039)	Magi ISV [75] (3050U-C)	Fury Tank II [80] (3050U-C)
11	Chevalier Tank [35] (3060u)	Kanga Hovertank [50] (3050U-C)	Von Luckner Tank VNL-K65N [75] (3075u-AW)	Puma Tank PAT-005 [95] (3050U-C)
12	Beagle Hover Scout [15] (3050U-C)	Chaparral Artillery Tank [50] (3050U-C)	Marksman Artillery Vehicle [65] (3050U-C)	Rhino Tank (ML) [80] (3050U-C)
13	Lightning Attack Hovercraft [35] (3050U-C)	Goblin Tank (SRM) [45] (3039)	Demon Tank [60] (3050U-C)	Alacorn Tank Mk VI [95] (3058U-C)
14	Gabriel Recon Hovercraft [5] (3050U-C)	Condor Hovertank [50] (3039)	Von Luckner Tank (Star League) [75] (OK)	Fury Tank II [80] (3050U-C)
15	Maultier Hover APC [15] (3058U-C)	Thor Artillery Vehicle [55] (3050U-C)	Marksman Artillery Vehicle [65] (3050U-C)	Mobile Long Tom [95] (3039)
16	Packrat LPRV PKR-T5 [20] (3039)	Chaparral Artillery Tank [50] (3050U-C)	Thumper Artillery Vehicle [60] (3075u-AW)	Rhino Tank (Royal) [80] (3050U-C)

TECHNICAL READOUT

The re-imagined depictions on the following pages showcase a few of the now-ubiquitous BattleMechs that premiered during the First Succession War. The dates at right outline when each of these variants became available.

[EDITORIAL NOTE]: In assembling the following technical readout (TRO), which showcases a selection of the most prominent BattleMechs available across the Inner Sphere, I made a conscious editorial decision.

This document specifically covers the First Succession War. As a result, it is appropriate that this technical readout focuses on BattleMech variants that premiered during those thirty-five years of conflict. For example, the first entry covers the twenty-ton *Locust*, but details only the LCT-1E variant, which debuted in 2811.

Nevertheless, as with any 'Mech, the 1E was not the most prevalent variant of the age. As such, I chose to provide visuals of the model that would be most recognizable across all realms. In the instance of the *Locust*, the variant pictured is the venerable LCT-1V, which fought in great numbers and under every banner during the First Succession War.

—Paladin Constance McGuire, Geneva, Terra, 3150

TRO Timeline

2787: *Valkyrie* VLK-QA
2796: *Shadow Hawk* SHD-2D
2799: *Wasp* WSP-1L
2803: *Shadow Hawk* SHD-2K
2811: *Locust* LCT-1E
2816: *Wolverine* WVR-6M
2818: *Wasp* WSP-1K
2823: *Wasp* WSP-1D

LCT-1E LOCUST

Mass: 20 tons
Chassis: Bergan VII
Power Plant: LTV 160
Cruising Speed: 86 kph
Flank Speed: 129 kph
Jump Jets: None
Jump Capacity: None
Armor: StarSlab/1
Armament:
2 Martell Medium Lasers
2 Magna Small Lasers
Manufacturer: Bergan Industries
Primary Factory: Ares
Communications System: Garrett T10-B
Targeting and Tracking System: O/P 911

OVERVIEW

Debuting in 2499, the lightweight *Locust* BattleMech was already widely familiar in recon lances and raiding forces by the onset of the Succession Wars. Although originally introduced by Bergan Industries on Ares for sale to the Capellan Confederation, the rise of the Star League led to additional *Locust* manufacturing sites on New Earth (for the Terran Hegemony and SLDF), and all four of the Territorial States in the Periphery (under Bergan license) by the time of the Amaris Coup.

In the two hundred years after its introduction, three variations on the baseline LCT-1V model emerged: the LCT-1Vb "Royal" variant, the SRM-based LCT-1S variant, and the LRM-based LCT-1M. Of these, the most advanced was the "Royal" LCT-1Vb variant built on New Earth after 2610. Production of this model ended in the midst of the Star League's collapse, first stalling as a result of Amaris-era damage to the Bergan facilities, then ended entirely by ComStar's looting of advanced equipment from the New Earth factory complex. At roughly the same time, the destruction of the Timbuktu-based Diplass BattleMechs site in the course of the SLDF invasion of the Rim Worlds ended the manufacture of 1V models for the crumbling Republic.

The remaining *Locust* production sites survived the Star League's collapse and—despite shattered economies and the return of total warfare—continued to work toward arming the surviving realms, with the Ares factories running full-tilt to fill the needs of the CCAF. When the First Succession War kicked off, *Locust*s scurried into battle by the company, much like their namesake insects. As the heavy fighting of the early war years gave way to lower-intensity raiding, the Confederation ordered Bergan Industries to furnish them with a newer scout 'Mech that could deliver greater punch with less munitions consumption. Bergan answered in 2811 with a new *Locust* variant: the LCT-1E.

CAPABILITIES

The LCT-1E *Locust* earned its "E" designation for its all-energy loadout. Retaining all of the 1V's core features, this light, compact, and speedy 'Mech traded in its ammo-hungry SperryBrowning machine guns for a second Martell medium laser and two Magna small lasers. Eschewing the distinctive chin turret, Bergan's engineers instead mounted these weapons in the arm turrets, a feature that enabled *Locust*-1E pilots to overcome the 'Mech's limited firing arc by flipping its weaponry between forward and rearward firing modes at will.

BATTLE HISTORY

Though it only emerged in the final decade of the First Succession War, the *Locust*-1E made its presence felt in numerous engagements as the war wound down. The first company of these machines produced, in fact, was priority-shipped to Vincent's Commandos and took part in the Confederation's Chesterton offensive in May 2812. Although the Capellans failed to defeat the AFFS defenders, the Commandos' *Locust*-1Es proved instrumental in denying the Davions a quick victory outside of the city of Tristram, their speed and improved firepower often confounding the enemy forces trying to contain them.

As more *Locust*-1Es were rushed to the field, the Confederation Strategios saw to it that nearly every front-line regiment was put on the list for a minimum of one company of the new variants. Unfortunately, the widespread disruption of interstellar shipping, combined with the loss of several key industrial border worlds and a declining economy, hindered laser manufacturing realm-wide. Bergan simply could not meet the CCAF's demands fast enough. As a result, the majority of the 1Es produced were shipped to regiments closer to Ares—those along the Davion front.

As the First War finally began to wind down, *Locust*-1Es took part in the CCAF's few victories against the Federated Suns. Indeed, the retaking of Castleton, Farwell, and Ulan Batar might not have been possible were it not for the swarms of these Capellan "Energy *Locusts*."

NOTABLE MECHWARRIORS

Subcommander Buster "Buzz-Kill" Sakhoff: Subcommander Sakhoff led a lance of LCT-1E *Locust*s that took part in the CCAF's second conquest of Ulan Batar, the last major combat action in the First War between the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns. Known among his men as "Buzz-Kill" for his peculiar habit of reminding them how they're always one PPC bolt from death every time they take to the field, Sakhoff fought with a mix of speed and recklessness that bordered on suicidal.

His favorite tactic was a perfect example of this combat style. By racing directly at slower-moving lances of light or medium 'Mechs at full speed, he would fire his lasers the instant they came into range, often more to frighten and scatter his enemy than to cause any actual damage. Maneuvering to avoid collisions only at the last moment, he would then flip his 1E's lasers backward and fire again, often blazing holes into a target's rearward armor without ever slowing his stride. With this technique—its impact multiplied by four as all of his lance mates followed suit—he was credited with four kills (and two assists) in the battle for Ulan Batar.

LOCUST

Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Standard)
Tonnage: 20
Battle Value: 553

Equipment		*Mass*
Internal Structure:		2
Engine:	160	6
Walking MP:	8	
Running MP:	12	
Jumping MP:	0	
Heat Sinks:	10	0
Gyro:		2
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	64	4

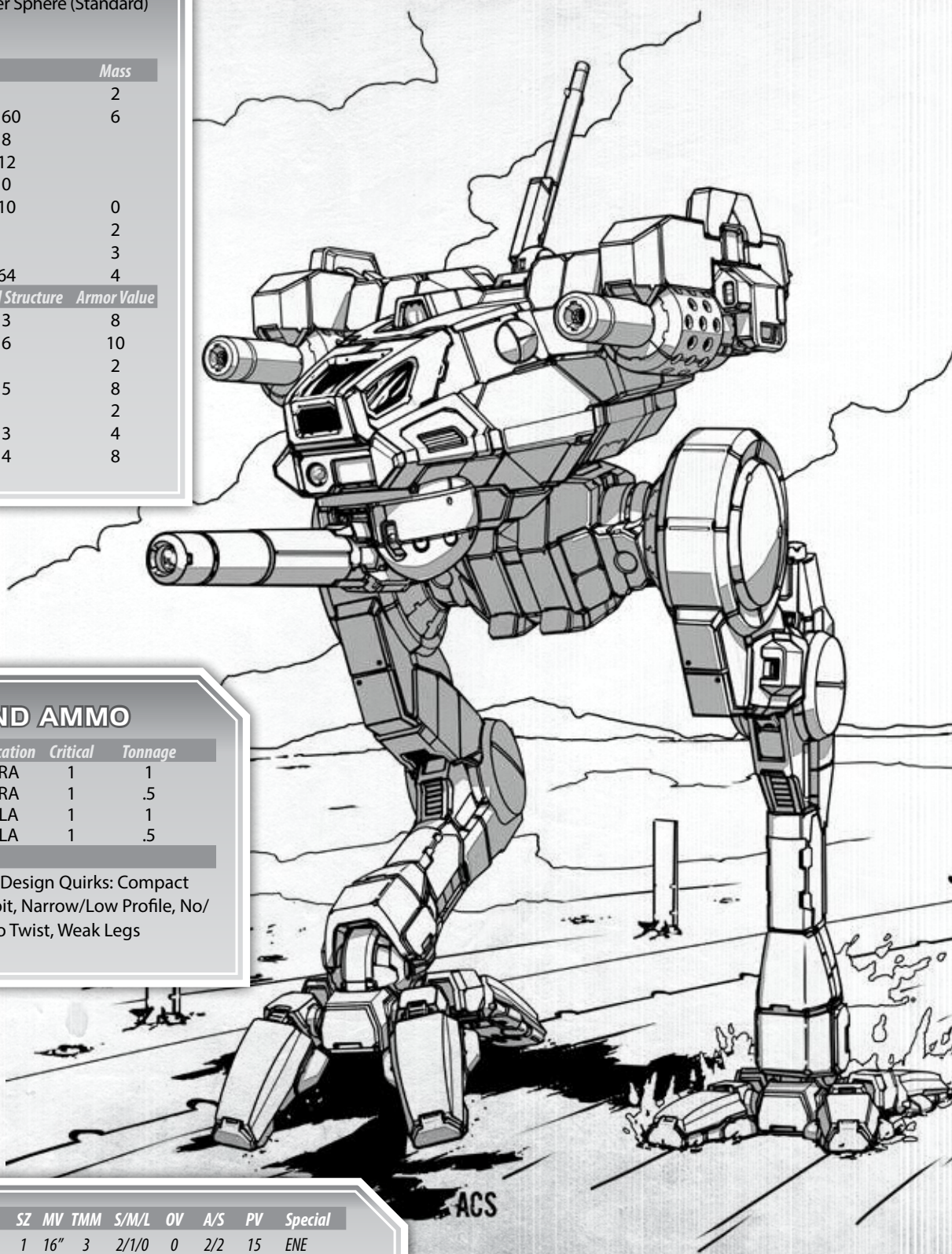
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	8
Center Torso	6	10
Center Torso (rear)		2
R/L Torso	5	8
R/L Torso (rear)		2
R/L Arm	3	4
R/L Leg	4	8

WEAPONS AND AMMO

	Location	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Small Laser	RA	1	.5
Medium Laser	LA	1	1
Small Laser	LA	1	.5

Notes

Features the following Design Quirks: Compact 'Mech, Cramped Cockpit, Narrow/Low Profile, No/Minimal Arms, No Torso Twist, Weak Legs



Unit Type	*Role*	*TP*	*SZ*	*MV*	*TMM*	*S/M/L*	*OV*	*A/S*	*PV*	*Special*
Locust LCT-1D	*Scout*	*BM*	*1*	*16"*	*3*	*2/1/0*	*0*	*2/2*	*15*	*ENE*

WSP-1D/1K/1L WASP

Mass: 20 tons
Chassis: 1A Type 3
Power Plant: Hermes 120
Cruising Speed: 64 kph
Flank Speed: 97 kph
Jump Jets: Rawlings 52
Jump Capacity: 180 meters
Armor: Durallex Light
Armament:
WSP-1D Variant
1 Diverse Optics 2 Medium Laser
1 Olympian Flamer
2 ChisComp 32 Small Lasers
WSP-1K Variant
1 Diverse Optics 2 Medium Laser
1 SperryBrowning Machine Gun
WSP-1L Variant
1 Holly Short Range Missile 4 Pack
Manufacturer: Irian BattleMechs Unlimited, Hellespont 'Mech Works
Primary Factory: Shiro III (Irian), Sian (Hellespont)
Communications System: Duotech 65
Targeting and Tracking System: RadCom TXX

OVERVIEW

A venerable BattleMech first produced for the Terran Hegemony by General Mechanics in 2471, the WSP-1A *Wasp* was as ubiquitous as it was unchanging throughout the Star League era. The first BattleMech to feature jump jets, the *Wasp* was lauded as cutting edge when it was new, and became the first recon 'Mech to enter mass production for the Terran military. Thousands of *Wasp*s were built in the centuries prior to the Star League's collapse, but few integrated the newer technologies the SLDF developed. (The closest thing to a *Wasp* variant to appear in the Star League period, in fact, was the Land-Air BattleMech version.)

By the time of the Amaris Crisis, the WSP-1A was in production at several sites throughout the Inner Sphere, including factories in all four Periphery states, the Free Worlds League, the Lyran Commonwealth, and the Capellan Confederation. While this explains how the venerable machine managed to survive the hellish years of the Succession Wars, it only further baffles those who wonder why new *Wasp* variants did not emerge until after the League's collapse.

CAPABILITIES

Of the three new *Wasp* models to emerge during the First Succession War, only one—1L variant—was born in the factory. Intended to augment forces deployed on a multitude of raiding missions, this machine replaced the 1A's weapon loadout with a four-tube SRM launcher, mounted on the right arm in place of the laser. The CCAF Strategios envisioned deploying this 'Mech with multiple munitions types based on the mission at hand, such as incendiary or gas SRMs for anti-infantry support, or smoke SRMs for recon-concealment.

The other two First War *Wasp* variants—the 1K and 1D—were actually after-market refits. Designated for the Houses who first fielded them, these machines largely reflected changes made due to logistical attrition in the latter years of the war. For the Davion variant (1D), the 1A's SRM launcher was swapped in favor of a pair of small lasers and a flamethrower for anti-infantry work, in an effort to improve its use as a raider. The Kurita (1K) variant also dropped its SRM launcher, but replaced it with a single machine gun and an extra half-ton of armor, to improve the machine's utility in clearing cities without wasting missiles.

BATTLE HISTORY

Of the new *Wasp* variants, only the Capellan WSP-1L variant saw much use during the First Succession War. Deployed as intended in a number of raiding actions along both fronts, its performance was deemed adequate by the CCAF leadership, but far from spectacular. The largest concentration of these machines saw use in the multiple battles for Oriente, where three full companies were dispersed in lance-sized formations among the various assault forces sent to seize the vital system. Of these thirty-six *Wasp*-1Ls, however, only five were still operational by the time the FWLM forced the Confederation back to its borders.

The Kuritan WSP-1K appeared just as the Federated Suns pushed the DCMS back to its prewar border, and was primarily funneled to defensive commands in that region in anticipation of a Davion incursion. When the Federated Suns chose not to push its luck further, these 'Mechs were left largely untested. Likewise, the Suns' 1D variant also saw little use in the years immediately after its debut; thanks to exhausted supply lines and massive industrial damage throughout the war, the first of these models did not march off the production lines until two years after the war had ended.

NOTABLE MECHWARRIORS

Subcommander Rico Cazador: Attached to the task force hastily assembled for the third assault against Oriente in late-2805, Subcommander Cazador of the Twenty-Fourth Sian Dragoons commanded a lance of *Wasp*s, of which two were the new 1L configuration. In the battle to capture Oriente's capital city of Cadiz, he and his lance were ordered to support CCAF infantry squads in clearing enemy insurgents from among the city's buildings. Considering himself an honorable warrior, he specifically forbade his lance mates from using lethal munitions in an effort to keep civilian deaths to a minimum, restricting his lance to using a mix of tear gas and smoke rounds against any structures from which small arms fire erupted.

This technique did indeed prevent a number of civilian casualties, and even aided his attached infantry squads in clearing swaths of the city with minimal losses. But it did so at a rate that Cazador's superiors considered far too slow for their liking. Thus, when the FWLM finally landed its troops on Oriente in December, the subcommander and his lance were assigned the task of harassing the enemy vanguards. Though he knew the mission was a death sentence, Cazador and his lance of *Wasp*s sold themselves dearly to delay the League's advance on Cadiz. Using Inferno and smoke munitions to scorch the land and obscure their movements, the four MechWarriors were able to not only slow down the inbound Regulan Hussars, but managed to take out two lances of combat vehicles and three light 'Mechs before succumbing to concentrated fire.

WASP

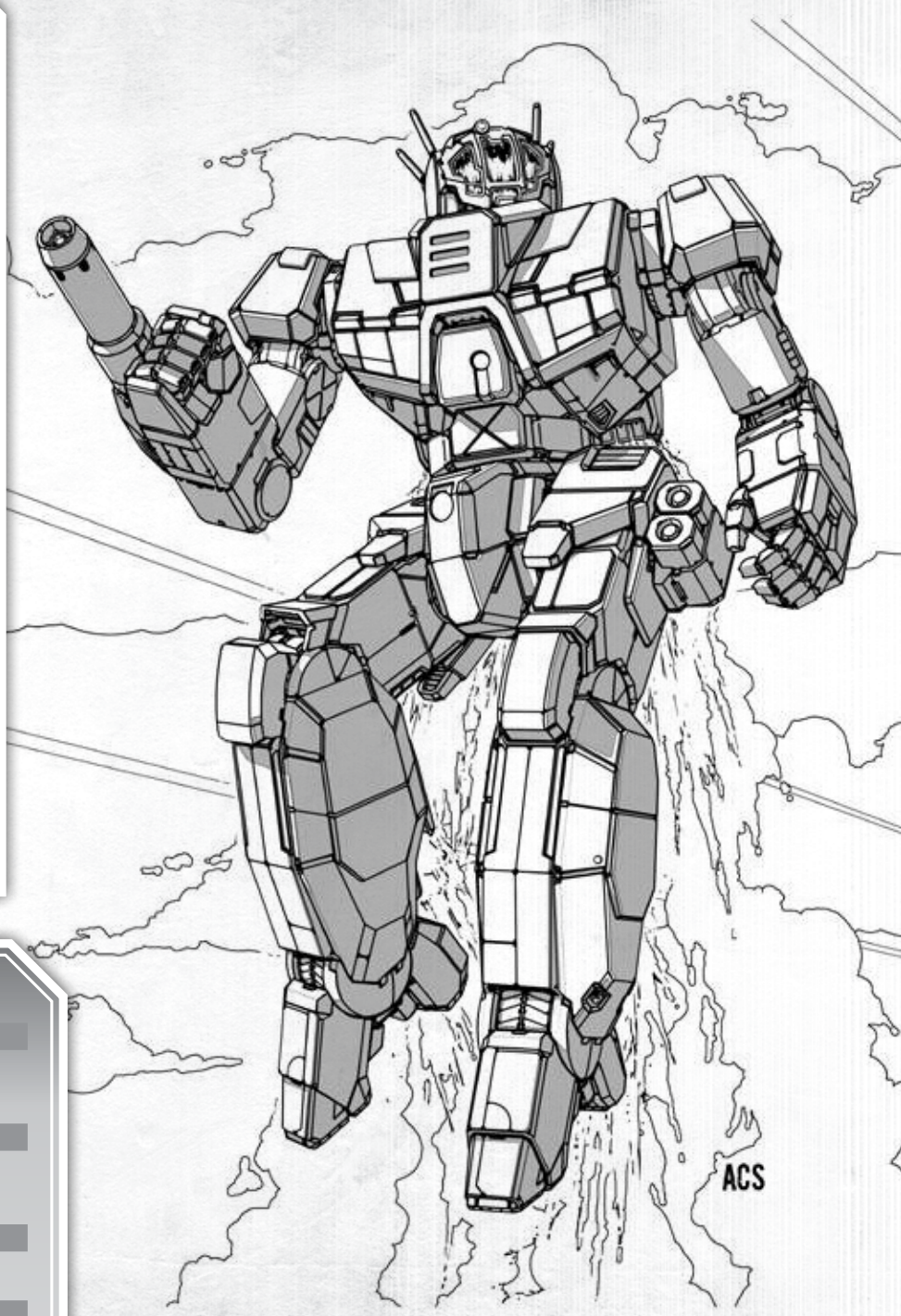
Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Standard)
Tonnage: 20
Battle Value (1D): 403
Battle Value (1K): 376
Battle Value (1L): 335

Equipment		*Mass*
Internal Structure:		2
Engine:	120	4
Walking MP:	6	
Running MP:	9	
Jumping MP:	6	
Heat Sinks:	10	0
Gyro:		2
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor (1D,1L):	48	3

	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	4
Center Torso	6	6
Center Torso (rear)		4
R/L Torso	5	6
R/L Torso (rear)		2
R/L Arm	3	4
R/L Leg	4	5

Armor Factor (1K):	56	3.5

	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	5
Center Torso	6	7
Center Torso (rear)		4
R/L Torso	5	7
R/L Torso (rear)		2
R/L Arm	3	5
R/L Leg	4	6



WEAPONS AND AMMO

1D Variant	*Location*	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
2 Small Lasers	LT	2	1
1 Flamer	LL	1	1
1K Variant	*Location*	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Machine Gun	LT	1	.5
Ammo (MG) 200	LT	1	1
1L Variant	*Location*	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
SRM 4	RA	1	3
Ammo (SRM) 25	RT	1	1
All Variants	*Location*	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Jump Jet	RT	1	.5
Jump Jets	CT	2	1
Jump Jet	LT	1	.5
Jump Jet	RL	1	.5
Jump Jet	LL	1	.5

Notes

Features the following Design Quirks: Easy to Maintain, Extended Torso Twist

Unit Type	*Role*	*TP*	*SZ*	*MV*	*TMM*	*S/M/L*	*OV*	*A/S*	*PV*	*Special*
Wasp WSP-1D	Scout	BM	1	12"j	2	2/1/0	0	2/2	15	ENE
Wasp WSP-1K	Scout	BM	1	12"j	2	1/1/0	0	2/2	14	
Wasp WSP-1L	Scout	BM	1	12"j	2	1/1/0	0	2/2	14	

VLK-QA VALKYRIE

Mass: 30 tons
Chassis: Corean Model 1AA
Power Plant: Omni 150
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Flank Speed: 86 kph
Jump Jets: Norse Industries 3S
Jump Capacity: 150 meters
Armor: Reise 470
Armament:
1 Sutel IX Medium Laser
1 Devastator Series-7 LRM 10
Manufacturer: Corean Enterprises
Primary Factory: New Avalon
Communications System: Lynx-shur
Targeting and Tracking System:
Sync-Tracker (39-42071)

OVERVIEW

The VLK-QA *Valkyrie* was originally commissioned by the Star League in the immediate aftermath of its civil war. At the time of the order, many believed that inter-realm business would soon return to normal in the wake of the Amaris years. Anticipating the SLDF's pressing need for replenishment after the conflict, the more profit-conscious military tech industries of the Great Houses made themselves ready, willing, and able to take advantage of this new demand. Corean Enterprises—one of the largest non-Terran defense industries to do business with the League military—thus easily secured a contract to produce a machine its marketing department billed as a lightweight support-fire unit.

When the Star League collapsed before the first *Valkyrie*s walked off the assembly lines on New Avalon, these machines instead found their way into the armies of the soon-to-be beleaguered Federated Suns.

CAPABILITIES

For a light 'Mech, the *Valkyrie* possessed only an average land speed compared to many of its contemporaries. Topping out at just under ninety kilometers per hour, with a 150-meter jumping range, it was about as maneuverable as high-end medium 'Mechs such as the *Shadow Hawk* and *Griffin*. This was considered acceptable, however, as its battlefield role was less focused on pursuit and reconnaissance, and more on fire support. Intended to act in concert with other light 'Mechs better suited to close-in work, the *Valkyrie* would play the huntsman to its lance mates' hounds, lobbing missiles at a target from afar while they worried the opponent's armor with quick slashing attacks.

BATTLE HISTORY

The *Valkyrie* debuted in 2787—barely one year into the First Succession War, and mere months after the Draconis Combine's border-wide assault against the Federated Suns. As the DCMS continued to overrun world upon world, the AFFS sent a rapidly increasing number of orders to Corean Enterprises for replacement machines, resulting in a faster and faster production cycle until the factory was pumping out almost 200 VLKs per year on New Avalon.

While Corean's output still lagged behind the rate at which the Federated Suns was losing materiel to its invaders, it all but ensured that *Valkyrie*s would find themselves shipped to the front lines by the battalion. Some of these shipments would be diverted en route—redirected to other commands as their destination worlds fell—while others were intercepted and destroyed or captured by the Kuritans. Enough made it to the front to see extensive use in battle, but in their haste to get there, many saw combat with bare, unprimed armor and factory labels instead of regimental colors and insignia.

As AFFS commands fell before the DCMS and Davion troops scattered into resistance groups and raiding parties, *Valkyrie*s became a common sight in their insurgent activities. In this capacity, their combination of lighter weight, decent mobility, and long-range hitting power gave the rebel forces exceptional supporting fire without risking their more expensive, slower, and heavier machines in the bargain. VLKs would thus play key roles in the operations of behind-the-lines forces operating on Galtor, New Rhodes, and, of course, Kentares IV.

Corean Enterprises continued to produce *Valkyrie*s by the company, even as the Federated Suns regained its footing after the Kentares Massacre, but by then the logistical strain was taking its toll. Shortages of parts and shipping disruption had reduced the factory's output by half, which barely enabled them to keep up with demand. Twice throughout the war, the New Avalon complexes suffered from months-long shutdowns to address wear and tear on their semi-automated, Star League-quality assembly equipment.

NOTABLE MECHWARRIORS

Leftenant Rachel Akron ("The Avenger"): Leftenant Akron was one of the survivors of the Seventh Crucis Lancers still operating as a resistance force on Kentares IV in 2796. Shot out of her *Enforcer* during the Combine's conquest of that world, she was assigned to infantry duties when the Seventh remained behind to continue harassing the DCMS occupiers. A shipment of *Valkyrie*s, smuggled to the planet in 2792, put her back at the helm of a BattleMech. Over the next four years, Akron and her *Valkyrie* served as the sole 'Mech support for a series of ground raids led by her former infantry platoon. Often using her 'Mech as bait, she would lure away the heavier defenses around the various depots and supply caravans they hit, leading these units into improvised traps that kept them busy enough for the rebel commandos to claim the goods and escape.

When word of Minoru's assassination on Kentares prompted Prince Davion to recall the Seventh from that planet, Leftenant Akron was among the majority who obeyed those orders, in the hopes that the DCMS would not retaliate against the people of Kentares. Most of her infantry comrades remained behind, intent on monitoring the situation. When she returned to Kentares in the wake of the Massacre, she learned that her infantry were among those killed by a First Sword of Light recon lance commanded by *Chu-i* Sohoshi Oshita.

Incensed, Leftenant Akron requested an immediate leave of absence to take up the bounty offered by House Davion for the heads of all members of Oshita's recon lance. By 2801, not only were all members of the infamous DCMS command dead, but so too were their technicians. Aided in her efforts by a small mercenary command, Akron tracked the recon lance to their latest posting on Tallmadge. There, as the mercenary bounty hunters set an ambush for the Kurita MechWarriors, Akron personally saw to the deaths of Oshita's technicians, stomping many under her *Valkyrie*'s feet when she stormed their unprotected field hangars.

VALKYRIE

Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Standard)
Tonnage: 30
Battle Value: 723

Equipment		*Mass*
Internal Structure:		3
Engine:	150	5.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	5	
Heat Sinks:	11	1
Gyro:		2
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	96	6

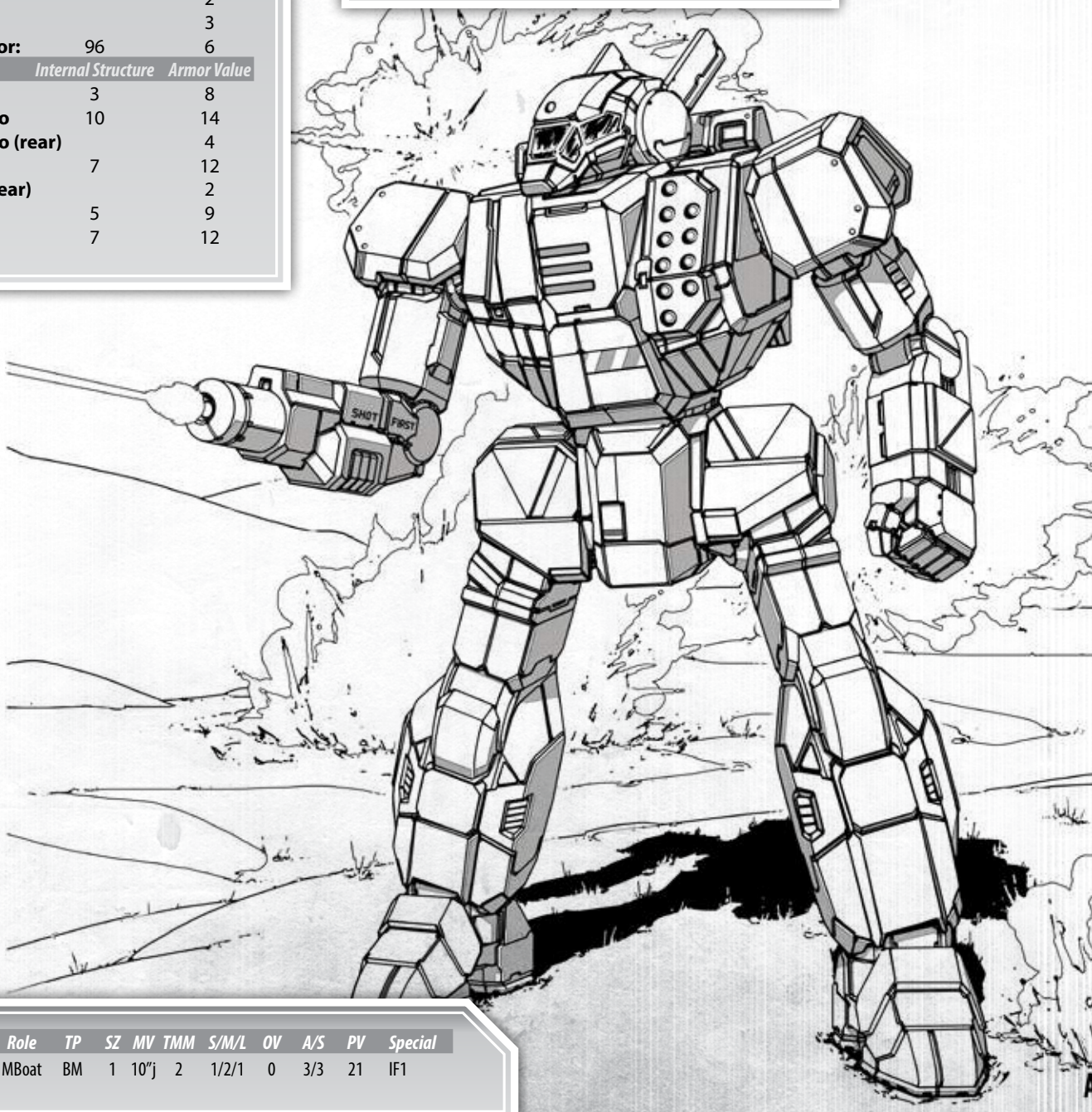
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	8
Center Torso	10	14
Center Torso (rear)		4
R/L Torso	7	12
R/L Torso (rear)		2
R/L Arms	5	9
R/L Legs	7	12

WEAPONS AND AMMO

	Location	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Ammo (LRM)	RT	1	1
LRM 10	LT	2	5
Jump Jets	RL	2	1
Jump Jet	CT	1	.5
Jump Jets	LL	2	1

Notes

Features the following Design Quirks: Easy to Maintain, Improved Communications



Unit Type	*Role*	*TP*	*SZ*	*MV*	*TMM*	*S/M/L*	*OV*	*A/S*	*PV*	*Special*
Valkyrie VLK-QA	MBoat	BM	1	10"j	2	1/2/1	0	3/3	21	IF1

SHD-2D/2K SHADOW HAWK

Mass: 55 tons
Chassis: Earthwerks SHD
Power Plant: CoreTek 275
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Flank Speed: 86 kph
Jump Jets: Pitban LFT-50
Jump Capacity: 90 meters
Armor: Maximilian 43
Armament:
SHD-2D Variant
1 Armstrong J11 Autocannon
1 Holly Long Range Missile 5 Rack
2 Holly Short Range Missile 2 Packs
2 Martel Model 5 Medium Lasers
SHD-2K Variant
1 Donal PPC
1 Holly Long Range Missile 5 Rack
Manufacturer: Lang Industries, Earthwerks Incorporated
Primary Factory: Caph (Lang), Calloway VI (Earthwerks)
Communications System: O/P 300 COMSET
Targeting and Tracking System: O/P 2000A

OVERVIEW

Much like the *Wasp*, the *Shadow Hawk*'s origins extend back to the earliest days of 'Mech development. The 'Mech was first produced for the Terran Hegemony by Lang Industries as early as 2467, using far more primitive components. Also like the *Wasp*, the standard model of the *Shadow Hawk*—the SHD-2H—became a mainstay that remained largely unchanged in form and function throughout the Star League era. Armed with a broad variety of weapons, this 'Mech boasted excellent maneuverability for its size, and was one of the heaviest to feature jump jets when it debuted. This made the *Shadow Hawk* an outstanding all-aspect combatant which found its way into the armies of each of the Star League's Member and Territorial States by the mid-2700s.

The eruption of the First Succession War severed the trade routes that had helped to distribute the SHD across the Inner Sphere, so much so that those realms that lacked their own *Shadow Hawk* factories—specifically the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns—found it increasingly difficult to maintain their damaged units. By the late 2790s, this obstacle prompted the emergence of the Davion variant (the SHD-2D), followed by the Kurita variant (SHD-2K) less than a decade later.

CAPABILITIES

Both the 2D and 2K variants of the *Shadow Hawk* were field refits, devised to meet the strategic needs their respective creators faced at the time. For the Federated Suns, reeling against the Draconis Combine's all-out assault, the goal was to create a BattleMech that could deliver more anti-'Mech firepower to the front as cheaply as possible. Thus, the 2D model reduced its armor protection to make room for additional SRMs and medium lasers—creating a raider unit with nearly twice the firepower at brawling range, but offering a level of protection more consistent with a scout.

The Combine's 2K variant likewise sought improved firepower. This version dropped the close-in weapons and the autocannon, replacing them with a PPC to enhance the machine's ability to pummel targets at long range. However, there was another reason for this change that was more telling: at the time the 2K emerged in 2803, the Federated Suns was beginning to turn back the Kuritans on nearly every front, often seizing or destroying whole depots of stockpiled munitions and supplies—exacerbating a dearth in autocannon components that the Combine was quietly wrestling with, which in turn forced the DCMS to seek alternative weaponry that could be obtained more readily.

BATTLE HISTORY

The Federated Suns' *Shadow Hawk* 2D refit first hit battlefields in 2796, shortly before the Kentares Massacre. With no native factories to produce new *Shadow Hawk*s, the AFFS instead distributed refit kits and instructions to its front line commands, encouraging them to make their modifications as needed. After First Prince Paul Davion took the throne and approved the uncoordinated reactionary assaults that stalled the Combine advance, he saw that many of these refit kits went to those commands that proved most successful in such operations. This essentially made the 2D refit one of the many rewards that his field commanders could reap in their raids against the Dragon, while also adding further incentives to hit worlds where the DCMS might be stockpiling compatible munitions.

The Draconis Combine's 2K *Shadow Hawk*s first saw battle against Capellan forces on Rio, when the DCMS raided that world (for the third time) in 2803. The PPC-armed *Shadow Hawk*s proved quite effective against the Confederation defenders, but the Kuritan raiders simply lacked the numbers to hold their ground for very long. It would not be until 2805, when the AFFS counterassaults reached the occupied world of New Valencia, that the Combine would finally see how its 2K variant fared against the 2D *Shadow Hawk*s.

NOTABLE MECHWARRIORS

***Chu-i* Karina Ayeed ("The Saber Smasher"):** A female ace MechWarrior in the Second Arkab Legion, *Chu-i* Ayeed was considered an oddity on many levels. Cold and tenacious, she was the bane of the AFFS in engagements throughout the war, but achieved her near-legendary status during the opening months of the Suns' third counteroffensive. During a prior Davion assault on Strawn, both Ayeed and her *Shadow Hawk*-2H suffered severe damage while covering the DCMS retreat. Although both survived, Ayeed spent months in recovery while her 'Mech was repaired and refit to the 2K variant.

By the time she faced FedSuns MechWarriors again on Doneval II on 2811, Ayeed had already made a name for herself as a dedicated insurgent-stalker who had hunted down and destroyed pro-Davion rebels across several Combine-occupied worlds, marking her kills as shattered swords painted on the shoulder plates of her 'Mech. Over the course of the two-month struggle to hold Doneval, Ayeed added four more "smashed sabers" to her kill card until her superiors informed her that, once again, the Second Arkab had been ordered to retreat.

Without hesitation, *Chu-i* Ayeed volunteered herself to help cover the Legion's withdrawal. While her fellow warriors fell back, she and a few other volunteers arranged themselves to face a demi-company of pursuing AFFS BattleMechs. The moment she sighted the first of these enemy units, however, Ayeed's normally stoic composure gave way to a sudden berserker rage. Charging forward, she savaged the approaching 'Mechs, taking one down before they could even react to her rampage. By the time the startled Davions managed to cripple her *Shadow Hawk*, Ayeed had killed two more of them and seized a third in a "death hug," detonating her own fusion plant to take just one more enemy down with her.

SHADOW HAWK

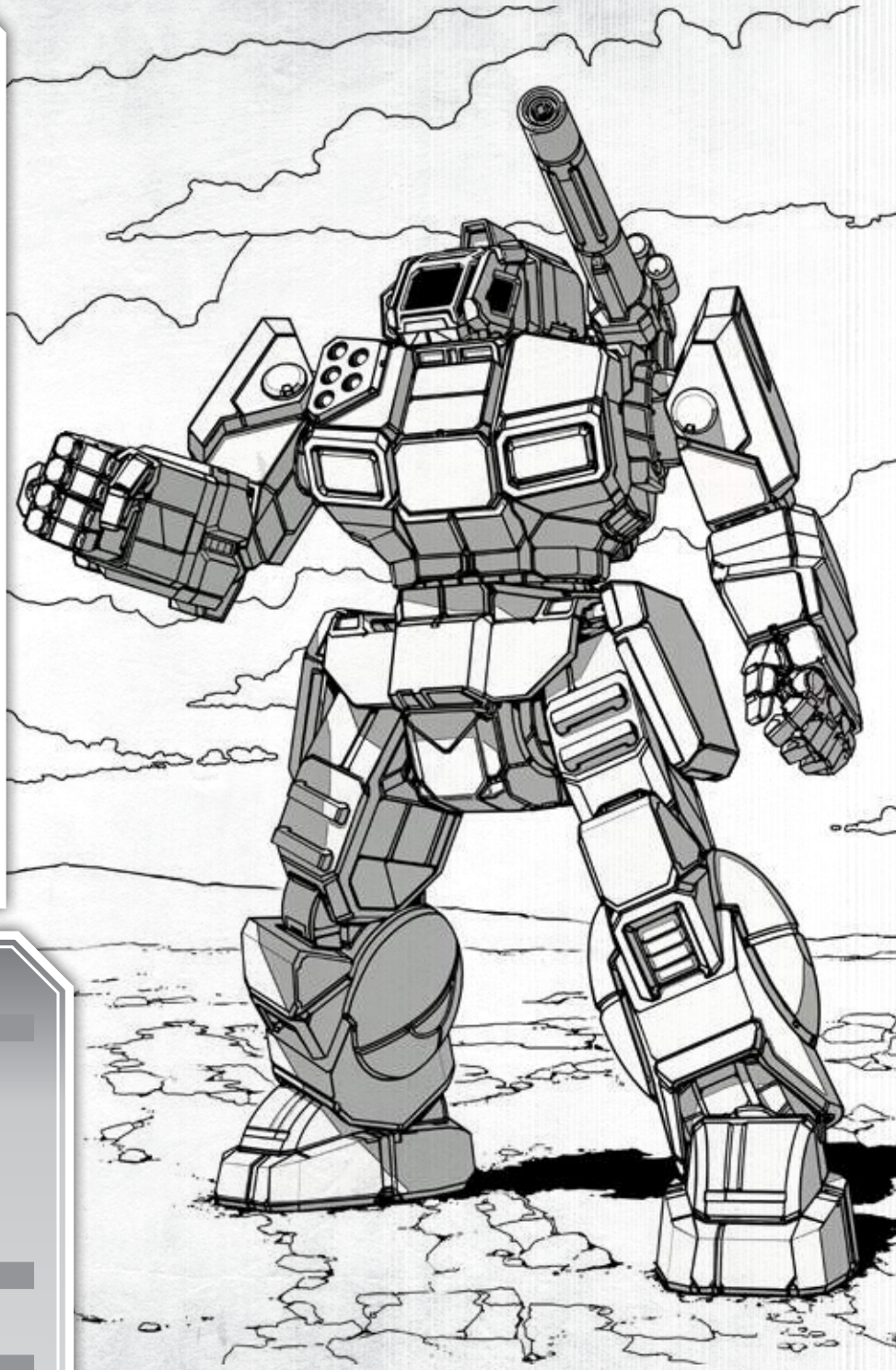
Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Standard)
Tonnage: 55
Battle Value (2D): 889
Battle Value (2K): 1,147

Equipment		*Mass*
Internal Structure:		5.5
Engine:	275	15.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	3	
Heat Sinks (2D):	14	4
Heat Sinks (2K):	17	7
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor (2D):	72	4.5

	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	6
Center Torso	18	12
Center Torso (rear)		6
R/L Torso	13	9
R/L Torso (rear)		5
R/L Arm	9	5
R/L Leg	13	5

Armor Factor (2K):	152	9.5

	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	9
Center Torso	18	23
Center Torso (rear)		8
R/L Torso	13	18
R/L Torso (rear)		6
R/L Arm	9	16
R/L Leg	13	16



WEAPONS AND AMMO

2D Variant	*Location*	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
LRM 5	RT	1	2
Ammo (LRM) 24	RT	1	1
Ammo (SRM) 50	RT	1	1
SRM 2	CT	1	1
SRM 2	HD	1	1
Autocannon/5	LT	4	8
Ammo (AC) 20	LT	1	1
Ammo (SRM) 50	LT	1	1
Medium Laser	LA	1	1
2K Variant	***Location***	***Critical***	***Tonnage***
LRM 5	RT	1	2
Ammo (LRM) 24	RT	1	1
PPC	LT	3	7
Both Variants	***Location***	***Critical***	***Tonnage***
Jump Jet	RT	1	.5
Jump Jet	CT	1	.5
Jump Jet	LT	1	.5

Notes

Features the following Design Quirks: Battlefists, Improved Life Support, Exposed Weapon Linkage (Autocannon/5, 1D variant; PPC, 2K variant)

Unit Type	*Role*	*TP*	*SZ*	*MV*	*TMM*	*S/M/L*	*OV*	*A/S*	*PV*	*Special*
Shadow Hawk SHD-2D	Striker	BM	2	10″/6″j	2	2/3/1	0	2/5	24	IF0*
Shadow Hawk SHD-2K	Sniper	BM	2	10″/6″j	2	1/2/2	0	5/5	30	IF0*

WVR-6M WOLVERINE

Mass: 55 tons
Chassis: Crucis-A
Power Plant: CoreTek 275
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Flank Speed: 86 kph
Jump Jets: Northrup 12000
Jump Capacity: 150 meters
Armor: Maximillian 60
Armament:
1 Magna Mk III Large Laser
1 Harpoon-6 SRM Launcher
2 Magna Mk II Medium Lasers
Manufacturer: Kallon Industries
Primary Factory: Thermopolis
Communications System: Tek BattleCom
Targeting and Tracking System: Garrett T11b

OVERVIEW

By the mid-2810s, decades of heavy fighting along the Free Worlds League's border with the Lyran Commonwealth had savaged industries and shipping on both sides of the line. In the wake of the League's failure to ward off the Commonwealth's final invasion of the Bolan Thumb worlds, the heaviest action focused on the central border region, with both realms clashing repeatedly on and around the world of Bella I. Located close to this active warzone, the Kallon Industries factories on Thermopolis managed to weather the conflict with only minor damage to its WVR-6R *Wolverine* assembly lines.

But while Kallon could still produce the *Wolverine* chassis on Thermopolis, the Lyran raids had destroyed the factory's stockpile of GM Whirlwind autocannons. Forced to adapt to this shortage, the local engineers devised a new variant that would not only overcome Kallon's lack of autocannons, but also enhanced the 'Mech's firepower and its endurance as a strike raider. This new House Marik variant—designated as the WVR-6M—hit the field in 2816.

CAPABILITIES

Trading in its lost autocannon for a large laser in the same semi-detachable mount, the *Wolverine* 6M not only improved its offensive power, but did so with a substantial weight savings that the designers used to add a second medium laser, additional heat sinks to handle the load, an even a little more armor. Together, this payload produced a striker with superior firepower and greater protection without sacrificing mobility in the bargain.

Although these advantages were somewhat limited by the heat management issues inherent in using so many energy weapons at once, the 6M proved itself many times against House Steiner in the years to come. Impressed by this performance, the FWLM placed increasingly large orders for the new variant, to which Kallon Industries responded by permanently retooling its Thermopolis factory to produce it.

BATTLE HISTORY

The first WVR-6M variants entered the war en masse a year after they marched off the assembly lines, during the League's final invasion of Bella I in 2817. There, two lances of these 'Mechs were deployed alongside a mixed company of standard 3R and Star League-era 3K variants. In the high-mobility fighting across the planet, this all-*Wolverine* battle group kept the Steiners guessing about their capabilities, denying them an easy defense strategy.

The 6M's heat management issues, however, also led to some of the more embarrassing failures in the battle for Bella I. A few Marik MechWarriors who received these refits tried to use them as aggressively as they did the original, much cooler-running 6R models. Several of these warriors thus found their machines growing sluggish far more quickly than anticipated, and a few succumbed to heat-induced ammunition explosions that claimed the 'Mech and pilot alike.

NOTABLE MECHWARRIORS

Mackenzie "The Knife" Henkel: Originally a company commander in the Free Worlds League Military, Mackenzie Henkel's career took an unexpected turn in the course of the League-Commonwealth fighting over the Solaris Bulge. Originally assigned to a medium support company on Kalidasa, Henkel led her command from the cockpit of a rare, SLDF-model TBT-3C *Trebuchet* when LCAF forces invaded the planet in 2819. A majority of the League defenders were intercepted in space on their way to another off-world post, but Henkel's company were among the lucky ones who had not been among them. This, however, did not spare her or her men the Lyrans' wrath when they eventually landed.

Despite the advanced nature of her *Trebuchet* (or possibly because of it), Henkel was quickly shot out of her BattleMech, and reassigned to a *Wolverine* WVR-6M whose pilot had been killed. For much of the two-month ground war on Kalidasa, Henkel adapted to her new ride and her new role as a raider, with five kills to her credit by the time the planet surrendered. Among the few surviving FWLM troops who managed to evade capture, Henkel was apparently prepared to stay and wage a guerilla war against the Lyran occupiers. Instead, League operatives managed to smuggle her and her BattleMech off-world mere weeks later.

With her command all but destroyed, Henkel was temporarily reassigned to serve as a liaison with the Red Eagles mercenary battalion. When the Eagles were paired up with elements of Clinton's Cutthroats to raid Solaris VII just a few months later, Henkel went with them, taking part in several skirmishes among the Bracken Swamps northeast of Solaris City. Unfortunately for the mercenaries, the LCAF response proved effective enough to separate several of their warriors from the rest, and as the raiders fled the planet, Henkel found herself stranded in what was now enemy territory. Before she could get a message back to her comrades, the planet was bombarded by the *Despiser*, an orbiting League destroyer—with Henkel dangerously close to ground zero as thousands perished.

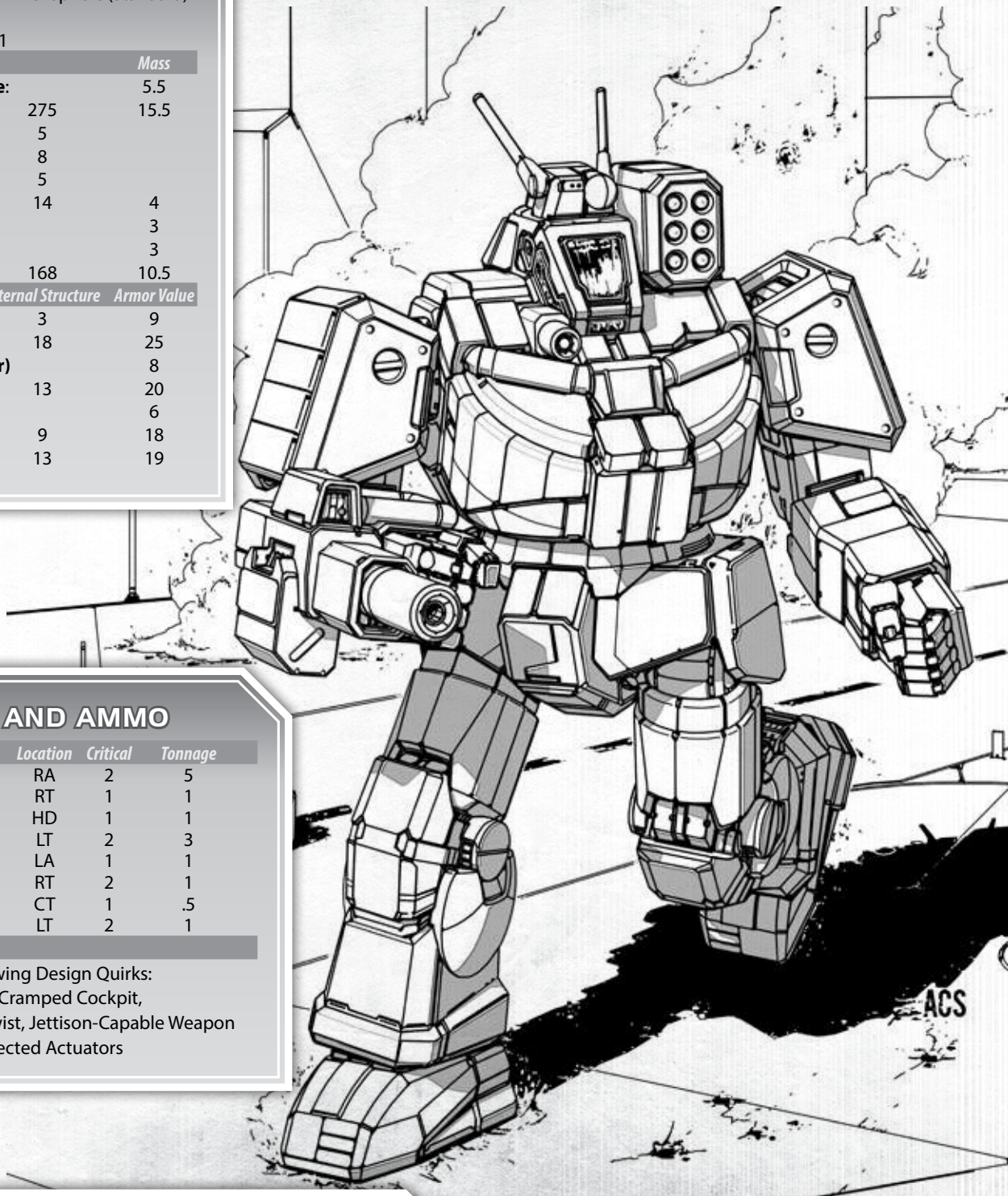
Horrified by the carnage she witnessed firsthand, Henkel quit the League's service. Partnering up with the few Red Eagle survivors she could find, she created the Red Knives, an independent stable of MechWarriors who made their living in the arenas of Solaris. Still piloting her WVR-6M *Wolverine*, Henkel developed a signature combat style in which she almost always dispatched her opponents via "backstabbing" laser fire. For this reason, and her place as de facto leader of the Red Knives stable, Henkel became known as "the Knife".

WOLVERINE

Technology Base: Inner Sphere (Standard)
Tonnage: 55
Battle Value: 1,291

Equipment		*Mass*
Internal Structure:		5.5
Engine:	275	15.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	5	
Heat Sinks:	14	4
Gyro:		3
Cockpit:		3
Armor Factor:	168	10.5

	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*
Head	3	9
Center Torso	18	25
Center Torso (rear)		8
R/L Torso	13	20
R/L Torso (rear)		6
R/L Arm	9	18
R/L Leg	13	19



WEAPONS AND AMMO

	Location	*Critical*	*Tonnage*
Large Laser	RA	2	5
Ammo (SRM) 15	RT	1	1
Medium Laser	HD	1	1
SRM 6	LT	2	3
Medium Laser	LA	1	1
Jump Jets	RT	2	1
Jump Jet	CT	1	.5
Jump Jets	LT	2	1

Notes

Features the following Design Quirks: Command 'Mech, Cramped Cockpit, Extended Torso Twist, Jettison-Capable Weapon (Large Laser), Protected Actuators

Unit Type	*Role*	*TP*	*SZ*	*MV*	*TMM*	*S/M/L*	*OV*	*A/S*	*PV*	*Special*
Wolverine WVR-6M	Skirmisher	BM	2	10"j	2	2/2/0	1	6/5	32	

INNER SPHERE AT WAR (EXPANSION)

The following rules allow simulation of the First Succession War in an *Inner Sphere at War* (*ISW*) game (see pp. 344-368, *IO)*. These rules expand upon—or in some cases, completely replace—those from *Interstellar Operations*.

Game Setup provides the playable Factions' abilities and flaws, while *Starting Setup* provides their starting Resource Points along with world and force data.

GAME SETUP

Setup the Map

A pdf of the 2786 Interstellar Hex map is available from the downloads section of bg.BattleTech.com.

Choose Factions

The Player Factions (2786) Table lists the common Factions available in 2786, the year the First Succession War began. Players are strongly encouraged to choose only those Factions that border each other, favouring the Great Houses. Smaller Periphery Factions and other minor powers are not generally suitable for play during the First Succession War; they are only listed here for use in localized border conflicts. Mercenary forces are never considered Factions unto themselves; they are controlled only by the player Factions currently employing them, or by the gamemaster when unemployed.

PLAYER FACTIONS (2786)

Inner Sphere
Capellan Confederation
Draconis Combine
Federated Suns
Free Worlds League
Lyran Commonwealth

Periphery
Magistracy of Canopus
Outworlds Alliance
Taurian Concordat

Faction Abilities and Flaws

Consult the Faction Starting Abilities (2786) Table to determine any special Abilities with which a Faction begins play. Abilities in *italics* indicate new or modified abilities detailed in the *Intelligence Operations* section of *The Second Succession War*.

STARTING SETUP

The following tables provide the starting data and values for ISW First Succession War play.

FACTION STARTING ABILITIES (2786)

Inner Sphere	
Capellan Confederation	*Closed State*, Poison Pill, State Run, *Superior Black Ops*
Draconis Combine	Fanatical Offense, Fanatical Defense, State Run, *Superior Black Ops*
Federated Suns	Decentralized State, Open State, *Superior Counterintelligence*
Free Worlds League	Decentralized State, *Inferior Black Ops, Inferior Counterintelligence*, Merchant King, Parliamentary Chaos, Supply Problems
Lyran Commonwealth	Flawed Doctrine, Merchant King, *Superior Black Ops, Superior Counterintelligence*
Periphery	
Magistracy of Canopus:	Merchant Kings, Poison Pill, *Superior Black Ops*
Taurian Concordat:	Dug In, Fanatical Defense, *Inferior Black Ops*, Poison Pill, Production Issues: BattleMechs
Outworlds Alliance:	Decentralized State, Flawed Doctrine, Production Specialist: Aerospace, Unsteady

FACTION STARTING RESOUCES (2786)

Inner Sphere	# of Planets	Starting RP/RP per turn*
Capellan Confederation	432	3723
Draconis Combine	404	3411
Federated Suns	538	4081
Free Worlds League	338	3317
Lyran Commonwealth	476	4029
Periphery	**# of Planets**	**Starting RP/RP per turn***
Magistracy of Canopus	65	726
Taurian Concordat	77	1418
Outworlds Alliance	137	1214

*Does not include modifiers for Faction Abilities/Flaws

WORLD VALUES TABLE (2786)

World Type	RP Value*
National capital (e.g. Luthien)	160
Regional capital (e.g. Robinson)	80
Hyper Industrial world (e.g. Terra)	128
Major industrial world (e.g. Hesperus)	80
Minor industrial world (e.g. New Earth)	48
Other world (e.g. Lancaster)	5

*Values are cumulative, so a National Capital that is also a Major Industrial World will generate 240RP

FACTION CAPITAL WORLDS (2786)

Inner Sphere	National	Regional
Capellan Confederation	Sian	Tikonov, Sarna, Capella, St. Ives, Andurien
Draconis Combine	Luthien	Rasalhague, Galedon V, Pesht, Benjamin
Federated Suns	New Avalon	New Syrtis, Robinson
Free Worlds League	Atreus	Stewart, Regulus, Oriente, Kanata
Lyran Commonwealth	Tharkad	Donegal, Skye, Tamar
Periphery	**National**	**Regional**
Magistracy of Canopus	Canopus IV	Luxen, Ballad II
Taurian Concordat	Taurus	Brinton, Perdition, Dumassas
Outworlds Alliance	Alpheratz	Baliggora, Ramora, Cerberus

Starting Military

The First Succession War ISW campaign uses the Combat Commands listed in the First Succession War Deployment Tables (pp. 148-153). Each Combat Command's Experience and Loyalty are noted in the Exp/Loy column. All listed Combat Commands begin First Succession War campaign play with attendant Jumpships. Each Combat Command is placed in the Interstellar Hex containing the planet listed in the "Post (2786)" column.

If a Combat Command has an "[NF]" (Not Founded) notation in its "Strength (2786)" column, then the Faction does not begin play with that Command; all new commands past 2786 are created during gameplay in the Military Development Phase (see p. 166). The Faction is under no obligation to create these "future" Combat Commands, nor is the Faction limited to these named Combat Commands when creating new Commands.

To convert ISW Combat Commands for use in the Abstract Combat System, as well as *Strategic BattleForce*, *BattleForce*, *Alpha Strike* and *Total Warfare*, see *Converting ISW Combat Commands to Other Systems*, p. 166.

Starting Mercenary Assets: Each Faction begins play with the mercenary Combat Commands detailed in the First Succession War Deployment Tables (pp. 148-153), which are counted as "already hired" by those Factions. Combat Commands listed as Uncontracted Mercenaries at the beginning of play are considered "free agents"; see *Uncontracted Mercenaries* (p. 352, *IO*). Mercenary Combat Commands are converted to *ACS* play in the same fashion as Faction Combat Commands; see *Converting ISW Combat Commands to Other Systems*, p. 166)

MAJOR FACTORY WORLDS TABLE (2786)

CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

World	Factories	Type
Andurien	1(1)	Minor
Ares	4(2)	Major
Ascuncion	1	Minor
Axton	1	Minor
Bernado	1	Minor
Betelgeuse	4	Major
Capella	4(2)	Major
Corey	2	Minor
Grand Base	2	Minor
Indicass	3	Major
Nanking	2	Minor
Sarna	2(1)	Minor
Shiro III	2	Minor
Sian	3	Major
St. Ives	4(2)	Major
Styk	2	Minor
Tikonov	8	Hyper
Total:	**46(8)**	

DRACONIS COMBINE

World	Factories	Type
Andurien	1(1)	Minor
Avon	0(1)	Other
Chatham	4(2)	Major
Dover	1(1)	Minor
Irece	2	Minor
Jarett	1	Minor
Luthien	10(3)	Hyper
New Oslo (FRR)	4	Major
New Samarkand	3	Major
Oldsmith	6	Major
Proserpina	4	Major
Satalice (FRR)	2	Minor
Schuyler	2(2)	Minor
Spittal	1	Minor
Total:	**45(9)**	

FEDERATED SUNS

World	Factories	Type
Belladonna	1	Minor
Crofton	3	Major
Delavan	0(2)	Other
Galax	0(3)	Other
Johnsondale	1	Minor
Kathil	6(1)	Major
Kirklin	1	Minor
Layover	3(1)	Major
Marduk	3	Major
New Avalon	10	Hyper
New Syrtis	4	Major
New Valencia	2	Minor
Panpour	4(2)	Major
Robinson	2	Minor
Salem	2	Minor
Talon	4	Major
Total:	**46(9)**	

FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

World	Factories	Type
Amity	1	Minor
Atreus	0(2)	Other
Calloway	3	Major
Clipperton	0(2)	Other
Dalton	0(1)	Other
Emris IV	5	Major
Gibson	1(1)	Minor
Irian	8	Hyper
Kalidasa	5	Major
Kendall	4	Major
Keystone	7	Major
Loburg	2	Minor
Loyalty	1(2)	Minor
Marik	2	Minor
Savannah	2	Minor
Stewart	4	Major
Tamarind	0(2)	Other
Tematagi	2	Minor
Thermopolis	4	Major
Wallis	2	Minor
Westover	3	Major
Total:	**56(10)**	

LYRAN COMMONWEALTH

World	Factories	Type
Alarion	1(3)	Minor
Arc Royal	1	Minor
Arcturus	2	Minor
Carlisle	3	Major
Coventry	6	Major
Donegal	3	Major
Furillo	3	Major
Gibbs	3(1)	Major
Gienah	2	Minor
Hesperus II	9	Hyper
Loxley	1	Minor
New Earth	1(2)	Minor
Pandora	4	Major
Skye	4(2)	Major
Son Hoa	4	Major
Sudeten	5	Major
Tamar	1(1)	Minor
Tharkad	6(1)	Major
Twycross	4	Major
Yed Posterior	3	Major
Total:	**65(10)**	

PERIPHERY

World	Factories	Type
Magistracy of Canopus		
Canopus IV	1(1)	Minor
Dunianshire	2(1)	Minor
Total:	**3(2)**	
Outworlds Alliance		
Alpheratz	1	Minor
Mitchella	1	Minor
Ramora	1	Minor
Total:	**3 (0)**	
Taurian Concordat		
Iliushin	1(1)	Minor
McLeod's Land	1	Minor
New Vandenburg	2	Minor
Perdition	3	Major
Pinard	2	Minor
Sterope	2(1)	Minor
Taurus	2(1)	Minor
Total:	**13(3)**	

NEW COMBAT COMMAND COST TABLE

Combat Formation	Cost (RP) by Weight Light	Medium	Heavy	Assault
BattleMech Regiment*	16	24	30	40
Aerospace Wing	8	12	15	24
Armor Regiment	8	12	15	24
Infantry Regiment	6	6	6	6
Artillery Battery	5	5	5	5

*No more than 1 per Combat Command

COMBAT COMMAND COST MODIFIERS**

Experience	Mod.
Wet Behind the Ears (0 XP)	x0.5
Really Green (5 XP)	x0.75
Green (9 XP)	x1
Regular (13 XP)	x2

**Apply the appropriate modifier one at a time to the total cost of the Combat Command

Loyalty	Mod.
Questionable	x1
Reliable	x1.5
Fanatical	x2

Attendant JumpShips	Mod.
None	x1
Assigned	x2

MILITARY DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Creating Combat Commands

The following rules modify and supersede those found under *Military Development Phase* (p. 353, *IO*) by introducing Weight ratings to a Combat Command's constituent Formations.

To create a new Combat Command, a player must first determine its composition. Each new Combat Command must have 1 'Mech regiment (and can have no more than 1 'Mech regiment), but beyond that, its additional attendant Units need not follow the standard for that Faction. The new Command's exact composition and Weight dictates its cost. The cost is modified based on the Experience Rating (Green or Regular) of the Command and its Loyalty Rating (Questionable, Reliable or Fanatical). This cost is then doubled if the Command will have attendant JumpShips, which has an effect on the transportation cost for the unit (see *Movement*, p. 358, *IO*). Once this total cost is subtracted from the Faction's remaining Resource Points, the new unit can begin its existence on any world within your Faction except an 'Other' world. It is available for immediate use, such as combat and transportation.

Mercenary Combat Commands may not be created by the player Factions using these rules. The gamemaster may, at his own option, decide to create or introduce new mercenary Combat Commands if desired. These forces follow the basic ISW rules.

STANDARD COMBAT COMMAND COMPOSITIONS (2786)

Inner Sphere	'Mech Regiment	Aerospace Wings	Armor Regiments	Infantry Regiments	Artillery Battalions
Capellan Confederation	1	2	3	5	2
Draconis Combine	1	3	3	5	1
Federated Suns	1	2	3	5	1
Free Worlds League	1	2	3	8	1
Lyran Commonwealth	1	2	5	7	1
Periphery					
Magistracy of Canopus	1	2	3	5	1
Outworlds Alliance	1	10	4	7	1
Taurian Concordat	1	2	3	5	1
Mercenaries	1	1	1	1	1

Minoru wants to raise a new Sword of Light Combat Command on his National Capital of Luthien. He wants it to consist of a single medium 'Mech regiment, two light Aerospace wings, one light Armor regiment, and one infantry regiment. The total cost for this is 54 RP. While he would like this unit to have a higher Experience Rating, the highest quality permitted is Regular, which doubles the cost to 108 RP. Minoru insists that the new Combat Command must possess a Fanatical Loyalty rating, and the resulting 2.0 modifier brings the total to 216 RP. Finally, he intends for this force to be very active, and invests in attendant JumpShips, which brings the total cost for the new Combat Command to 432 RP.

CONVERTING ISW COMBAT COMMANDS TO OTHER SYSTEMS

The following rules detail how to convert ISW Combat Commands into playable units in the *Abstract Combat System*, *Strategic BattleForce*, *BattleForce*, *Total Warfare* and *Alpha Strike*.

Converting *ISW* Combat Commands to *ACS* Formations, Combat Units and Combat Teams: Combat in *ISW* requires taking Combat Commands—either from a detailed army list or created during *ISW* game play—and converting them into *ACS* forces.

Converting *ACS* Combat Teams to *SBF* Formations and Units: *ISW* campaigns can be expanded by narrowing the scope and "zooming in" by transferring *ACS* forces to *SBF* game play.

Converting *SBF* Units to *BattleForce*, *Alpha Strik*e and *Total Warfare* Elements: Players can drill down even farther by taking their *ISW* campaigns to familiar tactical levels in which every Element is represented.

CONVERTING ISW COMBAT COMMANDS TO ACS FORMATIONS, COMBAT UNITS AND TEAMS

Abstract Combat System Formations

The first step in converting Combat Commands to *Abstract Combat System* play is to select the Combat Command to be converted. This Combat Command is the equivalent of the *ACS* Formation. Place all Aerospace wings into an Aerospace Formation and the rest of the components into a Ground Formation (see *Type*, p. 305, *IO*).

To determine the Formation's Combat Units, the Combat Command needs to be broken up into its constituent components. If using a Combat Command from a detailed army list (such as those found in the First Succession War Deployment Tables, pp. 148-153), use the Standard Combat Command Compositions Table (p. 166) to break up the BattleMech, Aerospace and conventional forces within the Combat Command. If the Combat Command was created during gameplay (see *Creating Combat Commands*, p. 166), then the component forces have already been determined.

The Formation's Skill Rating is equal to the Combat Command's Experience Value (see *Experience Skill Value Table*, p. 328, *IO*). To determine the Formation's Movement, Tactics and Morale values, follow Steps 4C through 4E under *Create* ACS *Formations* (see p. 330, *IO*) after creating its component Combat Units (see *Determine* ACS *Combat Units*, below).

Determine ACS Combat Units

In order to assign stat blocks to Combat Units, their individual Weight stats must be derived.

BattleMech and Armor regiments: BattleMech and armor regiments need to be broken down further into their component battalions. Roll 1d6 and consult the Random Battalion Composition Table below, cross-referencing the roll result with the Weight of the overall Combat Command (or the Weight of the regiment if it was created during gameplay, see *Creating Combat Commands*, p. 166). The result provides the Weights of the component battalions. Note each battalion as a separate Combat Unit. If a Combat Command is listed at 133% Strength, add one extra 'Mech battalion (Combat Unit) with a Weight equal to that of the Combat Command.

Aerospace wings: For each Aerospace wing, roll 1d6; on a result of 6, the player may choose the Weight, while on a 1-5 the Weight is equal to the Combat Command Weight. If the Combat Command was created during gameplay (see *Creating Combat Commands*, p. 166), then the Weight of each wing should have already been determined. Note each wing as a separate Combat Unit.

Infantry regiments and artillery batteries: Note each Infantry regiment and each artillery battery as a separate Combat Unit. These units do not use a Weight statistic.

Once each Combat Unit is noted and its Weight has been derived, stat blocks can be assigned. For each Combat Unit, check the ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables for the appropriate faction (pp. 170-176) and go to the ACS Combat Unit subtable. Using the type and Weight of the Combat Unit, find the corresponding row and use the listed stats for the Combat Unit.

The Combat Unit's Skill Rating is equal to the Combat Command's Skill Rating. To determine the Combat Unit's Tactics and Morale values, follow Steps 3G through 3H under *Create ACS Combat Units* (see p. 330, *IO*). If a final PV is required by the gamemaster, it is determined by multiplying it by the skill value modifier. A Unit with a skill value of 4 does not modify its PV.

Less Experienced Units: For each point that the Unit's Skill value is higher than 4, multiply the Unit's PV by 1 – (0.1 per Skill value above 4). Round normally; a Unit's highest possible Skill value is 7.

More Experienced Units: For each point that the Unit's Skill value is lower than 4, multiply the Unit's PV by 1 + (0.2 per Skill value below 4). Round normally; the minimum PV increase is 1 point per point of Skill value improvement. A Unit's lowest possible Skill value is 0.

Minoru is converting his First Sword of Light for ACS *play. Looking at the Draconis Combine row of the Standard Combat Command Compositions Table (see p. 166), Minoru finds he has an* ACS *Ground Formation containing 1 'Mech regiment, 3 armor regiments, 5 infantry regiments, 1 artillery battery and an* ACS *Aerospace Formation containing 3 aerospace wings. The Combat Command's Experience Rating is Elite, thus the Formation's Skill Rating (for both the Ground and Aerospace Formations) is 2. The Formations' Move, Tactics and Morale Values will be determined after the Combat Units are assigned.*

Minoru's 'Mech and armor regiments need to be broken down further into battalions before they can be assigned Combat Unit stats. Minoru consults the Random Battalion Composition Table (see p. 167) and rolls 1D6 for his 'Mech regiment. He gets a 2, and since the First Sword of Light's Weight is Heavy, that means its 'Mech regiment is comprised of a medium, a heavy and an assault battalion (Combat Units). Since the First Sword of Light is listed at 133% Strength, another heavy battalion is added (as it is the same Weight as the Combat Command). Minoru rolls again for each of his armor regiments and records the results. For his aerospace wings, he rolls 1D6 for each, resulting in a 3, 6 and a 1. The first and third wings are recorded as heavy (the same as the parent Combat Command), but since he rolled a 6 for the second wing, he can choose its Weight, and decides on a light wing. Minoru's infantry regiments and artillery battery do not need any further breakdown or Weight designations. All Combat Units are assigned a Skill Rating of 2 (the same as the Formations).

With all his Combat Units recorded, Minoru can now assign them stat blocks. Looking at the Draconis Combine ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables (p. 171), and the Combat Units subtable, he finds each of his Combat Units and assigns them stats. His first Combat Unit is his medium 'Mech battalion, so he finds that on the table and records its stats as Size 2, Move 6, TMM 4, ARM 36, Short 9, Medium 9, Long 6, no special abilities, PV 108. If Jerome (the gamemaster) needs the final PVs for any reason, Minoru will have to calculate them—in the case of his medium 'Mech battalion, it is PV 151 (108 x 1.4).

Next Minoru determines Tactics and Morale values for each Combat Unit. For his medium 'Mech battalion, Tactics is 2 (10, – 6 for Move, – 2 for Skill) and Morale is 5 (3 + 2 for Skill Rating). The medium 'Mech battalion Morale Triggers are 9, 6 and 3 (ARM of 12 at 75%, 50% and 25%).

RANDOM BATTALION COMPOSITION TABLE

Roll	Light	Medium	Heavy	Assault
1	3 light	1 light, 2 medium	1 medium, 2 heavy	1 heavy, 2 assault
2-3	3 light	3 medium	1 medium, 1 heavy, 1 assault	1 heavy, 2 assault
4-5	2 light, 1 medium	1 light, 1 medium, 1 heavy	3 heavy	3 assault
6	2 light, 1 medium	2 medium, 1 heavy	2 heavy, 1 assault	3 assault

With all his Combat Units statted, Minoru can calculate the parent Formation's Movement, Tactics and Morale values (using the rules found in Create ACS Formations, *p. 330, IO). For the Ground Formation, the Move value is equal to its slowest Combat Unit, which is the artillery battery with a 3. Tactics is a 6 (10, – 2 for Move, – 2 for Skill). Morale is 5 (3 + 2 for Skill Rating). The Aerospace Formation values are calculated the same way, which results in a Move of 6, Tactics 2 and Morale of 5.*

Determine ACS Combat Teams

After the stat block for each Combat Unit is entered, its component Combat Teams can be determined. Each Combat Unit stat block listed in the ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables (see pp. 170-176) includes a "Composition" column which lists the Weights of its constituent Combat Teams. For each Combat Team listed in the composition column, consult the ACS Combat Team/SBF Formation sub-table and use the corresponding stat block.

The Combat Team's Skill Rating is equal to the Combat Command's Skill Rating. The Combat Team's PV does not need to be modified for skill, as the Combat Unit's final PV has already been determined above.

In order to use his medium 'Mech battalion Combat Unit in ACS *play, Minoru needs to create stat blocks for its constituent Combat Teams (companies). He checks the "components" column for the medium 'Mech battalion on the Draconis Combine ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables (see p. 171), and sees that it is comprised of 3 medium 'Mech companies. Minoru notes the 3 Combat Teams on this Combat Unit's record sheet (see p. 383,* IO*). For their stat blocks, he copies the entry from the medium 'Mech company row of the Combat Team sub-table—Size 2, Move 6, Jump 2, TMM 2, ARM 12, Short 3, Medium 3, Long 2, no special abilities, PV 36. The Skill Rating for each Combat Team is 2.*

CONVERTING ACS COMBAT TEAMS TO SBF FORMATIONS AND UNITS

Determine SBF Formations

Converting forces to *Strategic BattleForce* gameplay from *ACS* is a simple process. Each converted Combat Team directly corresponds to an *SBF* formation and uses the stats as-is from *ACS*, with the exception of PV and the addition of Tactics and Morale values. To determine the Formation's Tactics and Morale values, follow Steps 2H through 2I under *Create* SBF *Formations or* ACS *Combat Teams* (see p. 329, *IO*). The initial Formation PV is listed in the ACS Combat Team/SBF Formation sub-tables (see pp. 170-176) in parenthesis. If a final PV is required by the gamemaster, it is determined by multiplying it by the Skill value modifier. A Unit with a Skill value of 4 does not modify its PV.

Less Experienced Units: For each point that the Unit's Skill value is higher than 4, multiply the Unit's PV by 1 – (0.1 per Skill value above 4). Round normally; a Unit's highest possible Skill value is 7.

More Experienced Units: For each point that the Unit's Skill value is lower than 4, multiply the Unit's PV by 1 + (0.2 per Skill value below 4). Round normally; the minimum PV increase is 1 point per point of Skill value improvement. A Unit's lowest possible Skill value is 0.

John is converting a Twenty-Second Avalon Hussars heavy 'Mech company from ACS *for use as a Formation in* Strategic BattleForce. *He uses the same stats as in* ACS, *except for the base PV (he uses the PV in parenthesis instead, 122 in this case). The* SBF *Formation has a Skill Rating of 4 (Regular), and so would not have to adjust PV due to skill). The Formation's Tactics is 5 (10 – 5 for Move and – 0 for Skill) and Morale is 7 (3 + 4 for Skill Rating). John fills in the top box of the* Strategic BattleForce Formation Record Sheet *(see p. 382,* IO*) with the stat block.*

Determine SBF Units

After the stat block for each Formation is finalized, its component Units can be determined as well. Each Formation stat block listed in the ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables (see pp. 170-176) lists the Weights of its constituent Units in the "Composition" column. For each Unit listed in the composition column, consult the *SBF* Unit sub-table and use the corresponding stat block.

The Unit's Skill Rating is equal to the Formation's Skill Rating. The Unit's PV does not need to be modified for skill as the Formation's final PV has already been determined above.

Optional—Random Skill Ratings: If players wish to add more variety to the Experience/Skill Ratings of their SBF Formations and Units, they may roll randomly for their Unit Ratings. Roll 1D6 for each Unit, based on the Experience Rating of the Combat Command; the result on the Random Skills Table below is the Unit's Skill Rating. Once new Skill Ratings for the Formation's Units are determined, average them together (round normally) and apply that Skill Rating to the Formation. The Formation's PV may need to be recalculated from its initial PV (see *Determine SBF Formations*, at right).

Next, John needs stat blocks for the lances (Units) that make up his Twenty-Second Avalon Hussars heavy 'Mech company (Formation). He checks the "components" column for a heavy 'Mech company on the Federated Suns ISW Combat Command

RANDOM SKILLS TABLE

1D6 (Wet Behind the Ears)	1D6 (Really Green)	1D6 (Green)	1D6 (Regular)	1D6 (Veteran)	1D6 (Elite)	1D6 (Heroic)	1D6 (Legendary)	Skill Rating
1-3	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	7
4-5	2-3	1	—	—	—	—	—	6
6	4-5	2-3	—	—	—	—	—	5
—	6	4-6	1-4	—	—	—	—	4
—	—	—	5-6	1-4	1-2	1	—	3
—	—	—	—	5-6	3-4	2-3	1-2	2
—	—	—	—	—	5-6	4-5	3-4	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	6	5-6	0

Conversion Tables (see p. 172), and sees that it is comprised of 1 medium 'Mech lance and 2 heavy 'Mech lances. John creates an entry for each Unit. He uses the stats of the medium and heavy 'Mech lances from the SBF *Unit sub-table. While John can simply apply a Skill Rating of 4 (Regular) to each of these lances (the same Rating as the parent Formation), he decides he wants to mix things up a bit. He rolls a 6, 5 and a 3, so one medium and one heavy lance are assigned a 3 (Veteran) Skill Rating and one heavy lance retains the 4 Skill Rating. A side effect of these results is that the Unit's parent Formation, the heavy 'Mech company, is also upgraded to a Veteran Experience Rating with a Skill Rating of 3, and Tactics and Morale for the Formation are each lowered by 1.*

CONVERTING SBF UNITS TO BATTLEFORCE, ALPHA STRIKE AND TOTAL WARFARE ELEMENTS

Players may wish to zoom in on their campaign even further, to *BattleForce*, *Alpha Strike* or *Total Warfare* levels. There are two methods to do so: randomly or by using Point Values (PV). All players must agree which method to use before the beginning of the *BF*-, *AS*- or *TW*-scale game.

Random Method

The random method makes use of the Random Unit Assignment Tables contained in this book (see pp. 148-153) or any era-appropriate RATs for the campaign, as well as several tables from *Total Warfare*. First, note the Weight of the *SBF* Unit (lance) to be converted, and roll 1D6 on the Lance Weight Composition Table (see p. 265, *TW*) to determine the composition of the lance. Next, for each Element, roll on the appropriate Faction Random Assignment Table's sub-table for the corresponding weight class (including any applicable Combat Command modifiers).

Skill Ratings: Once all Elements are chosen, Skill Ratings need to be assigned. For Elements to be used in *Total Warfare* games, roll 1D6 twice on the Random Skills Table—Expanded (see p. 273, *TW*) for each Element, cross-referencing the Unit's Experience Rating in order to determine the Element's Gunnery and Piloting Skills. Wet behind the Ears-rated Elements subtract 2 from each roll, and Really Green Elements subtract 1 from each roll. Heroic Elements add 1 to each roll and Legendary Elements add 2. Elements to be used in *BattleForce* or *Alpha Strike* play roll 1D6 only once and consult the Random Skills Table (see p. 168). Repeat for every *SBF* Unit being converted.

PV Method

This method allows the most flexibility for players to fine-tune their Force as they see fit. Take the *SBF* Unit's PV and multiply by 4. This is the total PV allowed for the lance in *TW/AS/BF* scale. The player may choose any Element of appropriate type and Era, as long as the standard number of Elements does not exceed the limit per Unit (typically four per lance) and the total PV is not exceeded.

Skill Ratings: Each Element may have any Skill Rating assigned, as long as it is within one step in either direction of the *SBF* Unit's Skill Rating; For example, an Element from a Regular-rated *SBF* Unit can be Green, Regular or Veteran. The PV for each Element must be modified by its Experience Rating (see *Adjusting for Skill*, p. 24, *AS*), and the combined PV of all the Elements still cannot the total PV allowed for the lance. If the Elements are being used for *Total Warfare* play, once the Experience Ratings are finalized, assign the Elements the average Gunnery and Piloting ratings for that Experience Rating (eg. A Veteran-rated MechWarrior would be assigned a 3 Gunnery and 4 Piloting).

Battle Value (BV): Note that Battle Value is not used in these conversions. BV is used for balancing forces in *Total Warfare* scenarios, and while PV is similarly used for *BattleForce* scale and above, balancing forces in an *ISW* campaign is only achieved through the supervision of the gamemaster. PV is used in these conversion rules as a means to keep consistency between the different scales of play.

Barbara is converting an SBF *Unit for use in a* Total Warfare*-scale scenario. She feels more comfortable rolling the dice and seeing what she gets, as opposed to fiddling around with PVs. She has a Veteran Capellan assault 'Mech lance from the Chesterton Regulars, so first she rolls 1D6 on the Lance Weight Composition Table (p. 265, TW), resulting in a 5. Cross-referenced with the assault lance sub-table, she finds she has 1 heavy and 3 assault 'Mechs in the lance. For each 'Mech, she rolls 2D6 (and adds +2 to the result, since these are Chesterton Regulars), and consults the appropriate weight class table on the Capellan Confederation Random Unit Assignment Table. The rolls yield her a CHP-1N* Champion, *BLR-1G* BattleMaster, *STK-3F* Stalker *and a LGB-7Q* Longbow.

Barbara can assign each 'Mech a Veteran Skill Rating (Gunnery 3/Piloting 4) and complete the process, or she can roll randomly for the skills as well. She decides she would rather have variety and rolls 1D6 for each on the Random Skills Table—Expanded (see p. 273, TW*) against the Veteran column, and garners a 2, 3, 1, and 4. The* Champion *and* BattleMaster *receive a 4 Gunnery/5 Piloting and the* Stalker *and* Longbow *receive a 3 Gunnery/4 Piloting.*

Jennifer has an SBF *Unit—a Donegal Guards Regular heavy 'Mech lance—that she wishes to convert into Alpha Strike Elements. She decides to use the PV method to choose her Elements, so she multiplies the Unit's PV of 45 by 4 for a total of 180 PV as her limit. She chooses a MAD-1R* Marauder *(37 PV), WHM-6Rb* Warhammer *(38 PV), FLS-8K* Flashman *(37 PV) and a STC-2C* Striker *(36 PV) for a total PV of 148. She still has PV to spend, allowing her to assign all the Elements a Veteran Skill Rating (3)—just one Rating away from the original Regular Rating—for a new PV total of 177, just shy of the allowable PV total.*

CONVERTING BACK FROM BATTLEFORCE, ALPHA STRIKE AND TOTAL WARFARE TO SBF AND ACS

At the strategic scales of *SBF* and *ACS*, players will find lot of simplicity and homogeny in the stat blocks. However, once forces are converted to the tactical scales of *BF*, *AS* and *TW*, a whole world of detail unfolds. If the gamemaster agrees, players may use the *SBF* and *ACS* conversion rules found in *Interstellar Operations* (pp. 326-339) to bring any forces converted down to the tactical scale during the campaign back "upward" to *SBF* and *ACS* scale.

The Marik is pleased with how his Second Free Worlds Guards have performed in the battles they've fought across the Total Warfare *scenarios to retake Bolan, and feels that 'Mech for 'Mech and tank for tank, the Guards are an interesting Combat Command. He would like to convert this* Total Warfare *force back into* SBF *and* ACS *scale, replacing their default stat blocks as shown in the ISW Combat Command Conversion Tables. He asks the gamemaster, Jerome, for permission to do so; Jerome denies his request, and places the Free Worlds League under interdiction.*

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	5	30	9	9	0	—	87	RCN	3LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	39	10	10	3	—	107		1HM2MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	3	45	11	12	5	—	126		1AM1HM1MM
Assault Mech	3	5	NA	3	48	12	13	5	—	134		1AM2HM
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	3	21	6	6	0	—	60	IT45, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	3	24	9	6	3	—	72	IT57	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	2	30	12	12	9	—	93	IT33	3HV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	32	13	13	11	—	100	IT24	1AV2HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	6	NA	3	19	4	4	1	0	45	BOMB3, FUEL18	1MA2LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	21	6	6	3	0	54	BOMB4, FUEL18	1HA1MA1LA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	23	8	8	5	0	63	BOMB5, FUEL20	2HA1MA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	39	9	12	3	0	84	AT60,IT36,MT120,VT84	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	10	3	3	0	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	12	3	3	1	—	33 (99)		1L2M
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	15	4	4	1	—	41 (123)		1M2H
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	18	4	5	3	—	52 (156)		3A
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	24 (72)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	4	4	3	—	31 (92)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	5	5	5	—	38 (115)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL18	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL22	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	22 (66)	BOMB2, FUEL20	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	13	3	4	1	0	28 (84)	AT20,IT12,MT40,VT28	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	10	3	3	0	—	29	RCN
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	13	3	3	1	—	35	
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	16	4	4	1	—	44	
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	18	4	5	2	—	52	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	9h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	26	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	33	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	5	5	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL18
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL22
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	22	BOMB2, FUEL20
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	10	2|1|1	2|1|2	1|1|0	0	21	AT5, IT3, MT10, VT7
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: DRACONIS COMBINE (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	5	27	9	9	3	—	87	RCN	3LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	36	9	9	6	—	108		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	3	42	12	12	6	—	120		3HM
Assault Mech	3	5	NA	3	48	14	14	10	—	138		2AM1HM
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	3	21	6	6	0	—	60	IT45, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	3	24	9	6	3	—	72	IT57	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	2	30	12	12	9	—	93	IT33	3HV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	32	13	13	11	—	100	IT24	1AV2HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	6	NA	3	19	5	5	0	0	45	BOMB3, FUEL18	1MA2LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	3	21	7	7	2	0	53	BOMB4, FUEL18	1HA1MA1LA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	23	9	9	4	0	61	BOMB5, FUEL24	2HA1MA
DropShips	2	6	NA	2	45	9	12	9	0	99	AT48,IT60,MT12,VT36	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	1	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	12	3	3	2	—	36 (107)		1H1M1L
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	14	4	4	2	—	40 (121)		1M2H
Assault Mech	4	5	NA	1	2	17	5	5	4	—	49 (147)		2A1H
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	24 (72)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	4	4	3	—	31 (92)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	5	5	5	—	38 (115)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	10	NA	NA	4	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL18	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	3	3	0	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL24	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	21 (63)	BOMB2, FUEL27	3 HA
DropShips	2	6	NA	NA	2	15	3	4	3	0	33 (100)	AT16,IT20,MT4,VT12	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	1	—	29	RCN
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	12	3	3	1	—	35	
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	15	4	4	3	—	43	
Assault Mech	4	5	NA	1	2	18	5	5	3	—	51	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	9h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	26	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	33	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	5	5	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	10	NA	NA	4	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL18
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	3	3	0	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL24
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	21	BOMB2, FUEL27
DropShip	2	6	NA	NA	2	11	1|1|2	2|1|2	1|1|1	0	25	AT4, IT5, MT1, VT3
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: FEDERATED SUNS (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	5	27	9	9	0	—	87	RCN	1MM2LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	36	9	9	3	—	108		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	3	43	12	12	8	—	126		1AM1HM1MM
Assault Mech	3	5	NA	3	45	14	14	10	—	131		1AM2HM
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	3	21	6	6	0	—	60	IT45, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	3	24	9	6	3	—	72	IT57	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	2	30	12	12	9	—	93	IT33	3HV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	32	13	13	11	—	100	IT24	1AV2HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	3	18	3	3	0	0	39	BOMB3, FUEL18	3LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	21	6	6	3	0	57	BOMB3, FUEL22	3MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	27	9	9	6	0	66	BOMB6, FUEL21	3HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	39	9	12	9	0	123	AT60,IT36,MT120,VT120	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	0	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Valkyrie Company	1	5	NA	3	2	9	1	3	2	—	28 (84)		
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	12	3	3	1	—	36 (107)		1H1M1L
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	14	4	4	3	—	41 (122)		1M2H
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	17	5	5	4	—	49 (147)		2A1H
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	24 (72)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	4	4	3	—	31 (92)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	5	5	5	—	38 (115)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL18	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL22	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	9	3	3	2	0	22 (66)	BOMB2, FUEL21	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	13	3	4	3	0	41 (124)	AT20,IT16,MT40,VT40	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	0	—	29	RCN
Valkyrie Lance	1	5	NA	3	2	9	1	3	1	—	28	IF1
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	11	3	3	1	—	34	
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	15	4	4	3	—	44	IF1
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	18	5	5	3	—	52	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	9h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	26	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	33	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	5	5	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL18
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL22
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	9	3	3	2	0	22	BOMB2, FUEL21
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	10	2|1|1	2|1|2	1|1|1	0	31	AT5, IT4, MT10, VT10
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: FREE WORLDS LEAGUE (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	5	28	9	9	1	—	90	RCN	1MM2LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	30	9	9	3	—	96		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	2	42	11	11	7	—	128		2HM1MM
Assault Mech	3	5	NA	2	44	12	12	8	—	133		1AM1HM1MM
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	3	21	6	6	0	—	60	IT47, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	3	24	9	6	3	—	72	IT57	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	2	30	12	12	9	—	93	IT33	3HV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	34	14	14	13	—	107	IT15	2AV1HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	6	NA	3	19	5	5	2	0	45	BOMB3, FUEL18	1MA2LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	20	7	7	4	0	51	BOMB3, FUEL18	2MA1LA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	23	9	9	6	0	65	BOMB5, FUEL20	2HA1MA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	39	12	12	9	0	84	AT108,IT60,MT48,VT72	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	0	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	10	3	3	1	—	32 (97)		1L2M
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	1	1	16	4	4	3	—	48 (143)		1A2H
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	18	5	5	4	—	53 (159)		3A
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	24 (72)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	4	4	3	—	31 (92)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	5	5	5	—	38 (115)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL18	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	3	3	2	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL22	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23 (69)	BOMB2, FUEL20	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	13	4	4	3	0	28 (84)	AT36,IT20,MT16,VT24	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	3	0	—	29	RCN
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	11	3	3	1	—	34	
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	1	1	15	4	4	2	—	45	IF1
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	18	5	5	3	—	53	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	9h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	26	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	33	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	5	5	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL18
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	3	3	2	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL22
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23	BOMB2, FUEL20
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	10	2|1|2	2|1|2	1|1|1	0	21	AT9, IT5, MT4, VT6
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: LYRAN COMMONWEALTH (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	4	30	9	9	0	—	87	RCN	3LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	41	10	10	5	—	112		1HM2MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	3	47	12	13	10	—	133		1AM2HM
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	2	51	12	15	12	—	147		3AM
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	3	22	7	7	1	—	64	IT49, RCN	1MV2LV
Medium Vehicle	2	7	NA	3	26	10	10	5	—	79	IT49	1HV2MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	34	13	13	11	—	100	IT24	1AV2HV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	32	13	13	11	—	100	IT24	1AV2HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	10	NA	4	18	3	3	0	0	39	BOMB3, FUEL17	3LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	24	6	6	3	0	57	BOMB3, FUEL21	3MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	24	9	9	6	0	69	BOMB6, FUEL20	3HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	45	12	12	9	0	96	AT72,IT72,MT48,VT36	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	1	3	10	3	3	0	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	13	3	3	1	—	35 (105)		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	15	4	4	3	—	42 (125)		1M2H
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	17	4	5	4	—	49 (147)		2A1H
Light Vehicle	1	9	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	8	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	24 (72)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	4	4	3	—	31 (92)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	5	5	5	—	38 (115)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	10	NA	NA	4	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL17	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	8	2	2	1	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL21	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23 (69)	BOMB2, FUEL20	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	15	4	4	3	0	32 (96)	AT24,IT24,MT16,VT12	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	1	3	10	3	3	0	—	29	RCN
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	13	3	3	1	—	35	
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	1	1	16	4	4	3	—	45	IF1
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	1	1	17	4	5	3	—	51	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	9h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	3	2	1	—	26	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	33	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	5	5	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	10	NA	NA	4	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL17
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL21,PNT1
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23	BOMB2, FUEL20
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	11	2|1|2	2|1|2	1|1|1	0	24	AT6, IT6, MT4, VT3
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: PERIPHERY (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	5	30	9	9	0	—	87	RCN	3LM
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	4	36	9	9	3	—	99		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	3	42	12	9	9	—	123		3HM
Assault Mech	3	5	NA	3	46	13	11	10	—	130		1AM2HM
Light Vehicle	1	8	NA	3	21	4	4	0	—	60	IT45, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	7	NA	3	24	6	6	3	—	69	IT57	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	2	28	8	8	7	—	83	IT41	2HV1MV
Assault Vehicle	3	5	NA	2	32	11	11	13	—	98	IT24	1AV2HV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	6	NA	2	19	4	4	1	0	45	BOMB3, FUEL19	1MA2LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	20	5	5	2	0	51	BOMB3, FUEL19	2MA1LA
Heavy Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	22	7	7	3	0	61	BOMB4, FUEL20	1HA2MA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	33	9	9	3	0	81	AT12,IT36,MT72,VT132	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	10	3	3	0	—	29 (87)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	12	3	3	1	—	33 (99)		2M1L
Heavy Mech	3	5	NA	1	2	14	4	3	3	—	41 (123)		2H1M
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	0	1	18	5	5	4	—	48 (144)		2A1H
Light Vehicle	1	8	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20 (60)	IT15, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	7	NA	NA	3	8	2	2	1	—	23 (70)	IT19	1L2M
Heavy Vehicle	3	6	NA	NA	2	10	3	3	3	—	30 (89)	IT11	1M2H
Assault Vehicle	4	4	NA	NA	1	12	4	4	5	—	38 (114)	IT2	1H2A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL19	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19 (57)	BOMB1, FUEL21	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	1	0	23 (69)	BOMB2, FUEL20	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	11	3	3	1	0	27 (80)	AT4,IT12,MT24,VT44	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	7	NA	2	3	9	3	2	0	—	27	RCN
Medium Mech	2	6	NA	2	2	11	3	2	1	—	35	
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	0	1	16	4	4	2	—	44	IF1
Assault Mech	4	4	NA	0	1	19	5	5	3	—	50	IF1
Light Vehicle	1	8h	NA	NA	3	7	2	2	0	—	20	IT5, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	7w	NA	NA	3	8	2	2	1	—	25	IT7
Heavy Vehicle	3	5t	NA	NA	2	11	4	4	2	—	32	IF1, IT2
Assault Vehicle	4	4t	NA	NA	1	13	4	4	3	—	41	IF2
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	0	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL19
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	19	BOMB1, FUEL21
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	1	0	23	BOMB2, FUEL20
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	8	2|1|1	2|1|1	1|1|0	0	20	AT1, IT3, MT6, VT11
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6

ISW COMBAT COMMAND CONVERSION TABLE: SLDF REMNANTS (2786)

ACS COMBAT UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Battalion	Size	Move	Transport MP	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	8	NA	5	21	9	9	0	—	81	RCN	3LM
Medium Mech	2	5	NA	3	39	12	12	3	—	120		3MM
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	2	51	12	15	12	—	156		3HM
Assault Mech	4	3	NA	2	60	21	21	18	—	195		3AM
Light Vehicle	1	11	NA	4	21	3	3	0	—	57	IT36, RCN	3LV
Medium Vehicle	2	5	NA	2	27	9	9	6	—	81	IT36	3MV
Heavy Vehicle	3	4	NA	1	33	12	12	12	—	105		3HV
Assault Vehicle	3	3	NA	1	51	12	15	15	—	144		3AV
Artillery	2	3	NA	1	30	3	0	0	—	99	ART-S12	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	3	18	3	3	3	0	39	BOMB3, FUEL18	3LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	2	21	6	6	3	0	60	BOMB3, FUEL22	3MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	2	24	9	9	6	0	69	BOMB6, FUEL20	3HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	1	45	12	12	9	0	87	AT24,IT24,MT156,VT120	3 DS
Infantry Regiment	1	1f	6w	3	18	6	3	0	—	48	CAR54, IT54	3 Inf

ACS COMBAT TEAM/SBF FORMATION CONVERSION TABLE

Company	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV (PV SBF)	Special	Composition
Light Mech	1	8	NA	2	3	7	3	3	0	—	27 (81)	RCN	3L
Medium Mech	2	5	NA	1	2	13	4	4	1	—	40 (120)		3M
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	1	1	17	4	5	4	—	52 (156)		3H
Assault Mech	4	3	NA	1	1	20	7	7	6	—	65 (195)	FLK	3A
Light Vehicle	1	11	NA	NA	4	7	1	1	0	—	19 (57)	IT12, RCN	3L
Medium Vehicle	2	5	NA	NA	2	9	3	3	2	—	27 (81)	IT12	3M
Heavy Vehicle	3	4	NA	NA	1	11	4	4	4	—	35 (105)		3H
Assault Vehicle	4	3	NA	NA	1	17	4	5	5	—	48 (144)		3A
Artillery	2	3	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33 (99)	ART-S4	3 Art
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	1	0	13 (39)	BOMB1, FUEL18	3 LA
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	20 (60)	BOMB1, FUEL22	3 MA
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23 (69)	BOMB2, FUEL20	3 HA
DropShips	2	4	NA	NA	1	15	4	4	3	0	29 (88)	AT8,IT8,MT52,VT40	4 DS
Infantry Battalion	1	1f	6w	0	2	6	2	1	0	—	16 (47)	CAR18, IT18	2 Inf, 3 Transport

SBF UNIT CONVERSION TABLE

Lance	Size	Move	Transport MP	Jump	TMM	ARM	Short	Medium	Long	E (Aero)	PV	Special
Light Mech	1	8	NA	2	3	7	3	3	0	—	27	RCN
Medium Mech	2	5	NA	1	2	13	4	4	1	—	40	
Heavy Mech	3	4	NA	1	1	17	4	5	3	—	52	IF1
Assault Mech	4	3	NA	1	1	20	7	7	5	—	65	FLK1/0,IF1
Light Vehicle	1	11h	NA	NA	4	7	1	1	0	—	19	IT4, RCN
Medium Vehicle	2	5w	NA	NA	2	9	3	3	1	—	27	IF1,IT4
Heavy Vehicle	3	4t	NA	NA	1	11	4	4	3	—	35	IF1
Assault Vehicle	4	3t	NA	NA	1	17	4	5	4	—	48	IF1
Artillery	2	3t	NA	NA	1	10	1	0	0	--	33	ART-S4
Light Aerospace	1	9	NA	NA	3	6	1	1	1	0	13	BOMB1, FUEL18
Medium Aerospace	2	6	NA	NA	2	7	2	2	1	0	20	BOMB1, FUEL22
Heavy Aerospace	3	6	NA	NA	2	8	3	3	2	0	23	BOMB2, FUEL20
DropShip	2	4	NA	NA	1	11	2|1|2	3|1|2	1|1|1	0	22	AT2, IT2, MT14, VT10
Infantry Company	1	1f	NA	0	1	3	2	1	0	—	7	CAR9
Infantry Transport Lance	1	6w	NA	0	2	4	1	0	0	—	11	IT6