

BATTLETECH

**HISTORICAL
LIBERATION OF TERRA II**



THE END TIMES

In 2777—after ten years of savage fighting in the Periphery—General Alaksandr Kerensky and the Star League Defense Force launched the final phase in the war against Stefan Amaris, the Usurper of the Star League. For two more years, the greatest army ever forged by humankind would wage a planet-by-planet war for the heart of the League itself, ultimately landing on mankind's homeworld of Terra. As the single greatest campaign ever fought in human history, Operation LIBERATION would change the fate of generations to come.

Historical: Liberation of Terra, Volume 2 describes the final years of the civil war that ultimately brought about the end of the first Star League. Covering the fighting that followed Kerensky's conquest of the Rim Worlds Republic and the early stages of the Hegemony campaign to the final conclusive battles on Terra itself, this book provides a hard look at the last days of the Star League Era, and the fateful decisions that would eventually pave the way for centuries of Succession Wars to come.



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L·I·B·E·R·A·T·I·O·N· OF TERRA

V O L U M E T W O



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HARD JUSTICE

**Near the Via di Trastevere
Rome, Italy
Terra
11 October 2777**

Mikkelsen burst through the flimsy door, the portal rebounding with a sharp retort. He careened into the opposite wall, grazing knuckles and cheekbones. He pushed off, continuing his headlong flight as sounds of pursuit echoed through the building.

How did the bastards find me? The question ricocheted around his brain. Six months in hiding as Kerensky's dogs hunted them down, then this morning finding them on his scent. He didn't stop to count them. Dogs hunted in packs, and these had very sharp teeth.

He stumbled on a grate and his shoulder grazed the wall. Pain lanced through his arm and he heard a tearing sound as cloth ripped free, but he didn't slow his pace. *If I can lose them in the alleyways, then I might stand a chance.* He allowed himself a brief snort of contempt as he launched himself onto a beer crate and then leapt over a low wall into the neighboring yard.

Stone chips showered down on him as he landed heavily, the report of automatic weapons fire echoing along the courtyard. He kicked at another gate, a metal one, and swore as he saw the solid chain securing it. Imagining the SLDF troops drawing a bead on his back, he launched himself at the gate, grabbed the top and hauled himself over. Hardly elegant, but the vault was sufficient. A half dozen paces down the *passetto* he could see daylight and the trees along the boulevard. If he could escape into the crowds...

The rifle butt caught Mikkelsen on the bridge of the nose as he emerged into the sunlight. He fell like a sack of potatoes, shock and agony removing any chance of escape. A twitch of his right hand toward the pistol in his belt was stopped by heavy boots crushing his fingers into the pavement.

"Please, try that again," said the Lyran-accented trooper whose assault rifle was pointing at his chest. "I'd love the excuse."

A second trooper held up a scanner to Mikkelsen's ruined face and compared images on the screen. "It's him."

Mikkelsen held up his free hand, fingers spread in submission. His heart raced and he spat to clear blood from his mouth. "You lapdogs of Kerensky wouldn't dare. Your master has you too well at heel."

The trooper looked at him wryly, then stepped back. "You may be correct in my case. But not his."

Mikkelsen could see another figure now. Dark-haired and uniformed, but not SLDF. The figure leaned in to look at the scanner and nodded. "Under the provisions of the Lateran Treaty—" The voice was accented, but different. Davion? French? *Swiss?* "—the Sovereign State of the see of Saint Peter calls for the extradition of the war criminal Hans Mikkelsen, formerly of the mercenary body known as the Greenhaven Gestapo."

"All yours," the Lyran said.

Mikkelsen sneered. "So, you get your show trial, candy striper?"

"Whatever gave you that idea that I'm Swiss Guard? I'm with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith." Mikkelsen blanched and the dark-haired man smiled coldly. "Yes, I see even you've heard of us." He paused to cross himself. "By the authority vested in me by the Curia and His Holiness I excommunicate you and condemn you to eternal Purgatory." He paused again and drew a pistol, pulling back the slide and then leveling the barrel at Mikkelsen's forehead. "And because of what you people did to Pope Clement, I'll help you on your way."



**Amaris Imperial Palace,
Lake Louise, Canada
Terra
29 September 2779**

Elaine's eyes snapped open, an instant transition from sleep to wakefulness. The water in the glass beside her cot danced. *Earthquake?* She dismissed that immediately, knowing full well what was happening. A second tremor came, and this time she heard the explosion.

"That's artillery," Marie said, an edge of panic in her voice. She threw back her own covers and reached for the clothes heaped beside the bed. "Kerensky's going to kill us."

A third explosion registered, this time close enough to shake dust loose from the bare ferrocrete walls. Elaine sneezed and shook her head. "Not down here. They'd need to use nukes or a Damocles orbital artillery round to do that." She sounded more confident than she felt. They'd been briefed on the safety of the facility when they'd been assigned the bedroom on sub-level seven. "Bedroom" could be considered generous for their accommodation, though; it was a storeroom somewhere near the auxiliary generators. Still, at least there were only two of them living there. Many of the Republican Guard were quartered a dozen troops in a room of similar size.

"Well, I'm not going to sleep though that." Marie finished pulling on her boots and did up the buttons on her green and gold uniform jacket. "I'm going to see if anyone wants to be spelled."

Elaine rolled over on her cot and grabbed her chronometer. She groaned; they'd only been off shift ninety minutes and she'd been asleep less than thirty. "See if there's any coffee in the pot, will you?" She sank back into her pillow, an arm across her eyes, as her companion departed.

The sound of artillery faded into the background noise of the complex—the tread of boots, the rattling of pipes and distant thrum of machinery—and her breathing became more regular as she drifted off to sleep again. The sound of the metal door opening jolted her back to wakefulness and she sat bolt upright. "You took your ti... oh." She clutched the blanket to her chest as she realized it wasn't Marie coming into the room, but a young guardsman.

"Miss Young?" She nodded. "General Bridge wants to see you."

▲▼▲
**Cheapside,
 London, United Kingdom
 Terra
 14 August 2777**

The view from the sixteenth-story ledge was spectacular, the best money could buy. To the west rose the neo-classical edifice of St. Paul's, the third cathedral on that site, while to the east, almost hidden by the Minster Court stratoscraper, was the low structure of the Tower of London. Seventeen hundred years old and still a focus of tourism, at least until *he* came. Roger Calvinson sighed as he recalled the glory days, a marked contrast to his current precarious perch a hundred meters above the street.

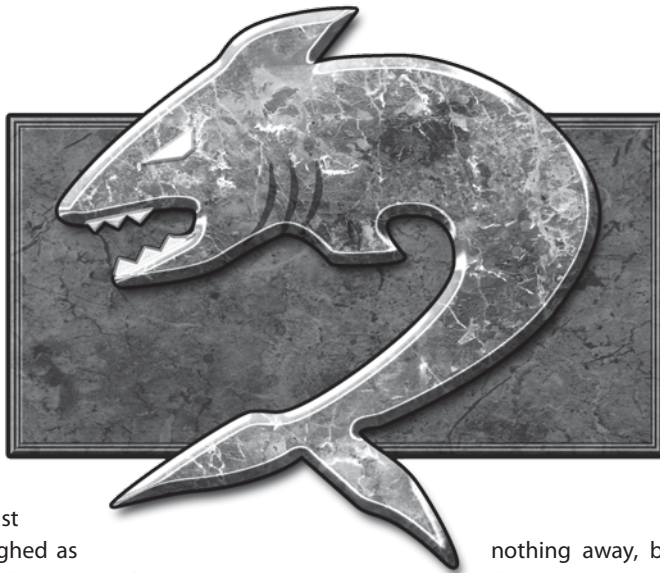
It had all been so easy. A country bumpkin whose desire to spend far exceeded his pocket. It had been a pleasure to subsidize him—at first—knowing that eventually the bill would come due. And yet it never did. The Jolly Fat Man, constantly targeted by schemers and those seeking to exploit his generosity, always managed to turn the situation to his advantage. To make a profit. Some began to see him as a lucky mascot, a goose with golden eggs, and sought to include him in business ventures. *When the Fat Man suggested several investments of his own and sought massive loans to finance his ventures, we were blinded by our greed. The Regency years were good for business, and even with the wastrel boy on the throne, life was looking up for the Hegemony's elite. Even when war came, we weren't too concerned. We'd beaten the Periphery before and when they lost, as they surely would, there'd be yet more opportunities for us to exploit.*

Then the jaws of the trap snapped shut.

The Fat Man was no longer so jolly. Instead, he was a murderer and usurper. Whom the elites had bankrolled and who now had an iron grip on their finances. Yes, he owed them trillions—*god, how did it escalate to that level*—but by the time Roger and others realized they couldn't force him to pay, he had them over the metaphorical barrel. The only way they could ever hope to recoup those debts was if the Fat Man won. And yes, at first the elites supported him wholeheartedly, but then they saw just how ruthless he could be. Goddard tried to put a coalition together to force Amaris to pay up, and look where he'd landed: floating face-down in the Thames. No one tried that again. Instead, good money poured after bad, feeding the voracious war machine of the new Emperor.

And now he has lost, and with him falls the Hegemony's financial structure and our fortunes. A wry smile tugged at Roger's lips as he glanced down at the street below. *With him falls me.*

Releasing his fingers, he let gravity pull him down.



▲▼▲
**Amaris Imperial Palace,
 Lake Louise, Canada
 Terra
 29 September 2779**

Elaine exhaled sharply, her hands unconsciously tugging at the cuffs of her jacket. Her stride was brisk, heels clicking on the polished hardwood floors of the opulent palace. Once opulent, at least; now holes had been drilled through ornate paneling and cables ran along statue-lined corridors like so many snakes. She reached a junction and waved her ID at the armored troops. Their dark visors gave nothing away, but she could almost sense what they thought as they waved her through.

Pity.

It felt like the last walk of the condemned, this progress through the Star Palace-as-was. Elaine's colleagues had given her that look when the general chose her for the task. No one wanted to face *him*, particularly at this juncture. Too many had been sent before and failed to return, subject to the capriciousness of fate. She was, when it came down to it, expendable. A secretary, not a decision-maker.

She turned into another long corridor. Less cabling here but more signs of casual damage—defaced paintings and headless statues. Singed chairs and broken mirrors. A dark patch caught her eye—a halo of droplets and a long smear down the wall. There was a coppery tang in the air and drag marks on the once-pristine floor. She shuddered. *Not me. Please, not me.*

A final corner turned, then a pair of solid doors. More guards, more ID checks. This time she had to press her thumb against a contact panel and felt a sharp prick as the DNA scanner extracted its sample. The light flashed green and the guards stepped aside, ushering her into the heart of darkness.

▲▼▲
**Hegemony Congress,
 Geneva, Switzerland
 Terra
 19 February 2777**

"You should have got out while you could," the mercenary growled. "Not been penned up in here with us dogs." The contrast between them was immense: the civilian short, fat and clean-shaven in a crumpled but once-elegant grey suit, the trooper lanky with a week's growth of beard, in urban camouflage fatigues and with a wicked-looking machine gun strapped across his chest.

"I tried, but they turned me back at Les Avanchets when the spaceport fell."

"Heh. Bad luck." The trooper glanced at the stack of documents and then at the small fire. "Burning evidence?"

"Keeping warm. Though now you mention it..." He flicked through one of the folders, then scattered the contents on the fire. "Tax returns."

They both laughed.

"Well, I guess all the bigwigs bugged out before things hit the fan." The trooper gestured at the battered oak paneling lining the rooms. "This must have belonged to someone pretty high up."

"No idea," said the suit. "I was in the media department."

"Oh. Computer jockey?" The trooper feigned interest.

"More media relations. PR."

"Ah. You ever make the holo? You look familiar."

He laughed. "No, I was a behind-the-scenes type." He stroked the back of his right hand across his jowls. "Not really got the looks for the camera."

"Well, I guess we're all soldiers now. You armed?" The suited figure shook his head and the trooper drew a pistol from his belt, handing it grip first to the suit. "You'd best have one, to defend yourself against our guys as much as the Leaguers. You know how to use it?"

The suit ejected the magazine, checked it and reinserted it, pulling back the slide. "I've shot a few times. Just target practice, you know."

The merc nodded. "Better safe than sorry. Anyway, gotta finish my rounds. We're at the north end if you fancy some company and a bite of something that was freeze dried a century or so back." He sketched a jaunty salute and ducked back out into the corridor.

The suited man watched the soldier walk away. Then he stooped to pick up a holo lying face-down on the floor. It showed him standing behind the right shoulder of a rotund Asiatic gentleman with a thin mustache and gold-embroidered robes. He grunted and threw it onto the fire, then reached inside his jacket and removed a rectangular plastic badge. He ran his fingers along it, clearing away a patina of dust. His own face stared back, the name *Samir Njari, Chairman, Krypteia Operations* stenciled prominently underneath. That too went into the fire.



**Amaris Imperial Palace,
Lake Louise, Canada
Terra
29 September 2779**

Elaine stepped into darkness, only the light from the guard post illuminating the chamber. She fumbled for a light switch and flipped it, but there was no response. As the doors swung shut, leaving only a thin strip of light underneath them, her eyes slowly adjusted to the gloom. Various pieces of furniture lay scattered around the room and a few meters to her right she slowly made out drapes. A window, she hoped, taking several shuffling steps towards them. Her foot collided with something on the floor and her heart raced as the object tinkled and rolled away. She took

deep breath and stepped forward again, then took a second step. Her right hand reached out to clasp the drapes.

"Leave them," a voice rasped from the darkness behind her. She spun and saw one of the shadows move. She swallowed.

The shadow spoke again. "So, they send a child. A secretary. Did they think that would save you? Surely they know better." The figure chuckled. "Come over here." He gestured, something in his right hand glinting in the faint light. "I'll not bite."

"My..." She swallowed again, struggling to maintain her composure. "My lord." She sketched a curtsy, wobbling. The man took a step closer and she could make out the distinctive mustaches and bald pate. He wore glasses, the left lens filled with a spiderweb of cracks. His hands, peeking from the sleeves of dark robes, twitched and she saw that the glinting object was a pistol.

"Bridge always was a mewling coward. Never a new thought in his head, eh, Ricky." He glanced to his left and grinned as if addressing someone else. They were alone in the room. "Bloody traitors," he muttered. "You, though. You I remember. Lots of spirit, like Elise." He spat. "And Shera. Fucking bitch." He glanced to his left again. "No, I won't mind my language." He turned back to Elaine and gave her an eerie smile. "Sorry, he talks too much. Bloody ghosts."

"My lord?"

He gestured dismissively with the pistol. Elaine flinched. "I presume *he* is here. *Abaddon*." He snorted. "That's what Bridge was too chickenshit to tell me." He scoffed. "Like I couldn't figure that out for myself when he kicked the gate down. Diplomacy never was Aleks's strong suit." The madman looked intently into space. "He'll kill us all, him and his Wolves."

"Y-yes sir. General Bridge said..." She winced as gunfire echoed in the distance. "He said Kerensky wanted you to surrender in person."

"That's General Kerensky to you, girl. Always show proper respect." His head tilted to one side. "No, I'm not being hypocritical. He's my subordinate, or at least he should be, so I'm perfectly entitled to call him Aleks." He made a dismissive noise. "Well, that's what you think."

He reached out with his left hand and patted Elaine on the shoulder. "Well then, best go settle up, eh, Elise. Will you help your old uncle to the door?" He grasped her right hand with his left, the former lord of the Rim Worlds Republic and Emperor of humanity leading her gently back toward the exit.



**Presnensky
Moscow, Russia
Terra
14 February 2777**

"You have blood on your face."

Megan Cole watched as the girl touched her cheek and her fingers came away reddened. "It's not mine." She looked at her shoes, refusing to meet her aunt's gaze. "Kolya and I were down by the river. We wanted to see the 'Mechs."

Her aunt grabbed her chin and forced Jess's head back. A cloth daubed at her cheek, wiping away blood and grime. "You're not to

see that boy. He's trouble. Him and his brother, and that *bezúmnnyj* mother of theirs." Jess fidgeted, but her aunt didn't release her chin.

"I'm twelve. I can look after myself," she pouted, and tried to pull away.

Megan grabbed the girl's shoulders and shook her. "Jessica, if you think you can run wild with the 'Goons on the rampage and the General visiting his wrath on them like an avenging angel, you've got another thing coming. It's dangerous. Very dangerous."

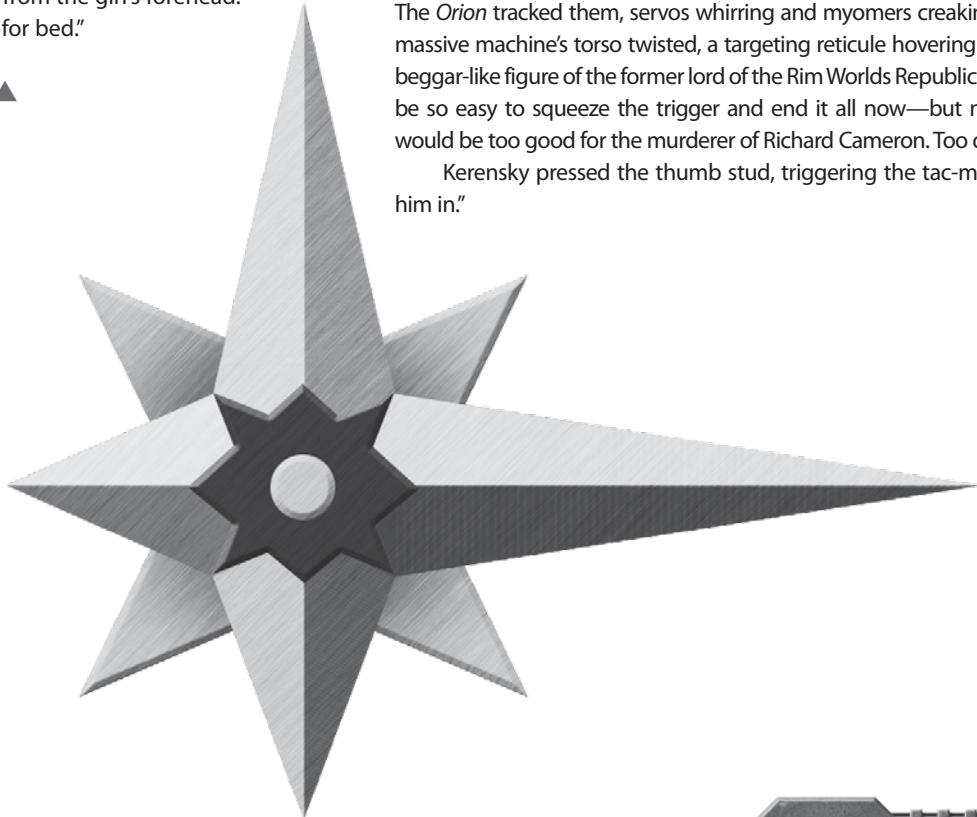
"But we wanted to see the Star League soldiers." Jess wriggled free. "And the General."

Megan shuddered at that prospect. *Of course he did.* She'd almost bolted after working out who the ragged eight-year-old boy playing with Jess was all those years ago. It was something he'd said that gave the secret away. "Ryszard Semyonovich," he'd called the fallen First Lord, something she'd heard the father say back in Unity City when exasperated with another boy almost a quarter century back. Before that boy-child's fall from grace and Jess's birth. Before Amaris. *With twelve billion people on Terra, what were the odds of our two children meeting and becoming friends?* She shuddered again. The boy's existence was explosive, let alone adding Jess to the mix. *Would we survive either revelation?*

Now, half a decade later, things were coming to a head. Kerensky was here and was sure to come for his wife and children. *Should I confide in him?* A dozen years of lies and pretense. A decade of looking over her shoulder for assassins. She could be free of that burden. Jess would be safe with him, surely.

The girl bounced over to the sideboard, the scolding seemingly forgotten. Megan watched her intently. The child Helena couldn't keep. *Can I give her up?* She exhaled, knowing the answer, reaching over to brush an errant lock of hair from the girl's forehead.

"Come on. Let's get you ready for bed."



Amaris Imperial Palace
Lake Louise, Canada
Terra
29 September 2779

It would be so easy to step forward and squash the life out of him, thought the pilot. To destroy this worm who had betrayed not only the Star League but the boy he had befriended. His fingers caressed the target selector. *The boy I swore to protect.*

The Usurper seemed calm, his eyes fixed on the jeweled pistol now discarded at the 'Mech's feet. A frightened girl had helped him through the door, but she'd ducked back inside after seeing the hulking olive-drab *Orion* and its companions staring down at them. Amaris had hobbled down the stairs, scarcely looking at the lead 'Mech, and then thrown the weapon at its feet. He'd ignored Aaron's *Atlas* and Liz Hazen's *Highlander*, even when she raised her gun-arm at him and he'd ordered her to hold fire, focusing on the *Orion* that contained his nemesis.

Amaris didn't say a word, instead cocking his head on one side as if straining to hear something. Sighing, the broken figure had looked up at the polarized canopy as if his eyes could meet those of the pilot within. With his shoulders slumped, he appeared resigned. Accepting that he would have to pay for his treachery and the carnage his actions had wrought over the past decades. No, not accepting. Expecting. The traitor expected summary justice.

The 'Mech remained motionless, a colossus staring down an ant. The chubby figure shrugged, his tattered and bloodstained robe catching in the light breeze. Then he stepped past the war machine. He glanced to the left and a thin smile crossed his lips as his wife and children emerged from a side door, scuttling across the courtyard to join his final walk. Hand in hand, they walked toward the shattered gate. The *Orion* tracked them, servos whirring and myomers creaking as the massive machine's torso twisted, a targeting reticule hovering over the beggar-like figure of the former lord of the Rim Worlds Republic. It would be so easy to squeeze the trigger and end it all now—but no, death would be too good for the murderer of Richard Cameron. Too quick.

Kerensky pressed the thumb stud, triggering the tac-mic. "Bring him in."

Whenever the history of Man is viewed, be it in detail or at a distance, it is plainly evident that the ripples and currents that propel contemporary events are the very same that our ancestors felt centuries and millennia ago. While others have linked the cataclysmic events of the past three hundred years directly to the Amaris Civil War, and gone on to blame that terrible conflict on the Reunification War, which in turn resulted from the Age of War, the Second Soviet Civil War, the World Wars, the Holy Wars, Judas' thirty pieces and even the Exodus of the Twelve Tribes, the simple truth is that a single element links each of these terrible times: humankind. Man's desire to take what he wants and to do so at any cost is the crash of the wave, be it simple tide or inexorable tsunami, which strikes to destroy what others have built. Clearly most leaders fail to realize that whatever they build is just as susceptible to another's waves of aggression and greed.

Viewing the Amaris Civil War as a whole, there are striking similarities between the Word of Blake's Jihad, Terra's Second World War, or any number of history's other terrible conflicts. But if you look just a bit deeper, you can catch reflections and barely perceptible hints from both the past and the future. It is easy to see Hitler in Amaris, or Alexander in Kerensky, but what of parallels shared with others? Many have condemned my father for being the new Amaris in initiating the Fourth Succession War, but few have made even obvious connections between individuals like ilKhan Ulric Kerensky and his forebear—both of whom prosecuted pragmatic campaigns that were seriously limited by manpower and logistical concerns, and who were each ultimately betrayed by their supposed allies.

Unfortunately, even if history has frequently proven that what has happened before will happen again, it has also very clearly pointed out that Humanity rarely learns from its mistakes. So while we may, for the moment, have peace in our time, the time is now to study the flow of past currents so that we can predict and prepare for the next waves to crash, lest everything we have rebuilt be washed away once more.

—Paladin Victor Steiner-Davion, Santa Fe, Terra, 3090

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

BattleTech Historical: Liberation of Terra, Volume 2 is the latest in a series of products that explore the major yet little-detailed conflicts in the past of the BattleTech Universe. In this case, we cover the end of the long war between the Star League and the Usurper Stefan Amaris, a conflict alternately known as the Amaris Civil War or the Star League Civil War. As with the other books in the *Historical* series, *Liberation of Terra, Volume 2* is part sourcebook and part rulebook, describing the background and major events of the conflict as well as providing tools relevant to players who wish to recreate battles of the historical era in question.

Hard Justice, the introductory story, shows how justice came to some of Amaris' inner circle, including the Usurper himself. The first full chapter, *Heart of Darkness*, provides a brief recap of the war and the events leading up to it from the perspective of Stefan Amaris himself. *Personalities* describes some of the notable political and military players that took center stage in the latter years of the SLDF's drive into the Terran Hegemony, as well as in the aftermath of the war. The next five chapters cover the final years of the war, including the tremendous campaigns that did, in fact, result in the Liberation of Terra—albeit at a tremendous cost. *Tightening the Noose* recounts the SLDF's efforts to cut Terra off from the rest of the Hegemony, roughly covering the years 2775 and 2776. *Ring of Steel* covers the final half of 2776, describing Kerensky's battles to liberate the five systems closest to Terra itself. *The Terran System* highlights the herculean efforts of the battered Star League Navy as it desperately fought to overcome the most potent weapon in Amaris' arsenal: the Reagan Space Defense System and its hundreds of drone WarShips and thousands more robotic DropShips and fighters. *The Landings* sees the SLDF finally make landfall on Terra itself and covers its campaigns to eradicate Amaris' control over Europe and Asia, while the final chapter of the war is played out in *Endgame*, which brings the fight to North America after a brief campaign in Australia and the South Pacific. *Aftermath* brings completion to the long story

of Amaris' brutal and devastating Civil War, describing in detail not only the efforts to punish those responsible for the war even while the Inner Sphere attempted to rebuild, but also the political machinations that resulted in the dissolution of the Star League as well as the creation of ComStar, Kerensky's Exodus (and the eventual founding of the Clans) and the Succession Wars.

The *Rules Annex* includes a number of items designed to aid play in the late Star League era, including rules for generating SLDF and Republican forces, as well as a number of *New Combat Units* that played a significant role in the war.

A NOTE ON SOURCES:

Select details of the Amaris Coup and Operation LIBERATION have appeared in numerous volumes: the *Star League Sourcebook, Handbook: Major Periphery States* (and its precursors, *Periphery 1st* and *2nd* editions), and the *Handbook* series (and their *House Book* precursors), as well as several Technical Readouts (notably, but not exclusively, *TR2750* and *TR3075*). The era has also appeared in fiction: The early Star League (and the "Kids Clique") form the backdrop of the BattleCorps novel, *Fall from Grace* by Chris Hartford, and the early years of Aleksandr Kerensky on Tharkad appears in the *Destiny's Call* serial by Loren Coleman. The histories of several notable SLDF and RWA personalities can be found in *Historical: Operation Klondike* as well in the *Wolf Clan* and *Jade Falcon* sourcebooks together with *Invading Clans*. *Field Manual: SLDF, Era Report: 2750* and the *Field Report: 2765* series provide additional details on the military and political situation prior to the Periphery Uprising and Amaris Coup. *Historical: Reunification War* provides a detailed introduction to the earliest days of the Star League, and especially lays the foundations for the conflicts that directly led to the Amaris Coup. And, of course, the companion *Historical: Liberation of Terra, Volume 1* covers the Periphery Uprising, Amaris' coup, General Kerensky's conquering of the Rim Worlds Republic, and the first years of the campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony.



HEART OF DARKNESS

"What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! ... The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealth, the germs of empires."

—Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad, 1902

"And so the founder asked her,

'When is night darkest?'

And she declaimed,

'When dreams become nightmares.'"

—Attributed to Anna Rosse, *The Remembrance of Clan Nova Cat* (referring to her childhood with the Terran Resistance)

[Stone,

I'd intended a short précis on events to this point as a preamble to the discussion of the actual Liberation of Terra, but sifting through ComStar's archives the team chanced across the following, salvaged from the ruins of Amaris' palace at Lake Louise in 2780. I thought you might appreciate the insights it offers into the psyche and motivations of the Usurper himself... in his own words.

—Victor]

Voicelog transcript: 28 August 2725

I wanted a car or a chemistry set but instead I got this stupid thing for my birthday.

When Man voyaged to the stars, he took with him factional politics and nationalism. The result was the fragmentation of the first great pan-human empire, the Terran Alliance, and the formation of many of the states we are familiar with today. The Ares Conventions of 2412 enshrined warfare as a legitimate means of dispute resolution in these turbulent years, protecting civilians and infrastructure while espousing the ideal of might-makes-right.

The introduction of the BattleMech in 2439 shifted the balance of power away from armor and infantry, and with authority delegated to regional lords in a neo-feudal structure designed to counter the difficulties of communicating over hundreds of light years, the walking behemoths became the equivalents of the knights of old. The rise of the compact, powerful war machines further supported the idea of war as an extension of politics; where once tens of thousands of troops were thrown onto the battlefields, now dozens or a few hundred could duke it out.

But not everyone felt this state of affairs was justified. Director Deborah Cameron of the Terran Hegemony, the successor to the Terran Alliance, sought to bring peace with the surrounding nations, employing her state's technological prowess to maintain order. It was her son, Ian Cameron, who finally succeeded in that mission, unifying the six great Inner Sphere powers—the Terran Hegemony, Lyran Commonwealth, Draconis Combine, Federated Suns, Capellan Confederation and Free Worlds League—in a new pan-human alliance.

This new Star League sought to bring peace and prosperity, but in one of the greatest ironies in history its first major action was to wage war against the smaller nations of the Periphery, compelling them to join the alliance. After a bloody twenty-year war they succeeded, but in doing so instilled deep distrust of the Cameron family and the Star League. Only one of the four main Periphery powers joined the Star League voluntarily, and in doing so it provoked a popular uprising that had the nation's ruler, Gregory Amaris, under effective house arrest for the duration of the conflict. Though eventually rescued

THE DREAM IS OVER

Reverberations from the Amaris Coup and Aleksandr Kerensky's war against the would-be First Lord had a deleterious effect on far more than just the Star League government and the Terran Hegemony. Indeed, the economies of each of the Star League member states were thrown into a recessive turmoil from which, as history eventually showed, they would never fully recover.

Within days of the Coup, rumors of everything from an alien invasion of the Hegemony to a civil war launched by Aleksandr Kerensky to a computer virus created by a secret coalition of industrial giants to take command of the SLDF within the Hegemony spread across the Inner Sphere. Fragmented reports from the relatively few JumpShips to escape the Coup agreed on one fact: Someone had launched an attack on dozens of Hegemony systems. In addition, the HPGs within the Hegemony had apparently all shut down and expeditions sent into the Hegemony did not return.

The interstellar stock markets crashed while commodities and futures skyrocketed. Public confidence in the economy of the Star League plummeted, while vital corporations that relied upon Hegemony-based concerns (or worse, Hegemony money) suddenly began to panic. Never once had anyone considered a worst-case scenario in which the Terran Hegemony was cut off from the rest of the Inner Sphere—it was just too inconceivable a prospect. Private citizens everywhere similarly began to panic; after all, if the Hegemony could suddenly be swallowed by a black hole, what was preventing their own nation from suffering the same fate? Entire life's savings were withdrawn from accounts, while hundreds of millions of citizens followed the precedent set by investment firms and major corporations across the stars and liquidated their Hegemony-based stock portfolios, followed quickly by similar liquidations of other holdings when those non-Hegemony stock prices suddenly began to nosedive.

Amaris' Inner Sphere-wide declaration on 31 January 2767 did little to quiet fears. Though communications and shipments into and out of the Hegemony began again, in the process opening interstellar commerce back up, the Inner Sphere's confidence had been shaken. Worse, reverberations from the economic crash would continue for

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the rest of the year. After a month on virtual hold, the Hegemony's economy crashed as soon as its exchanges and markets opened up communications again with the rest of the Inner Sphere markets, which in turn sent another shock through the member-state economies that were just beginning to see some slight upturns after such a huge crash. This back-and-forth effect left behind it a wake of failed banks, bankrupted companies and impoverished citizens.

The only real solution to recovering from this nightmare was, unfortunately, not an option that General Kerensky would allow. He ordered a blockade of the Terran Hegemony and declared anyone who continued to support Stefan Amaris' occupation government in any way—which included doing business with Hegemony concerns—a criminal. Commerce could no longer legally flow into the Hegemony, while anyone caught circumventing these restrictions could be prosecuted for treason.

Not that the General needed to make those proclamations, at least in most cases. While the economy of the Inner Sphere very much relied upon the Terran Hegemony to drive and feed it before the Coup, in its immediate wake those businesses that did not immediately fail were forced to find options other than those based in the Hegemony to supply their needs (or purchase their wares). In fact, the five Star League State Administrators set up clearing-houses on each member state and regional capital to mate non-Hegemony companies with each other in an effort to keep business and commerce flowing through the rest of the Inner Sphere.

That, of course, did not stop all trade flowing into and out of the Hegemony. Stefan Amaris set up "free market zones" on border worlds that were designed to encourage trade with the Hegemony, and further created a shell game of interstellar transport companies that moved cargoes through uninhabited systems to avoid detection. Those corporations and individuals that relied upon particular Hegemony products could still get them, though at a premium.

The Great Interstellar Crash, as the post-Coup economic problems were called, affected citizens of every nation, background and social stratum. Moreover, it hit hard each of the five Star League member states and their ruling Great Houses. Tax revenues fell beyond critical levels while the number of citizens and businesses demanding relief

by the Star League, he blamed them for his difficulties. In this creation of an ideal society was born the seeds of its own destruction: the mistrust of the Periphery nations and the hatred toward the Star League of one of the Periphery's ruling families. For almost two centuries both bided their time as the House Lords sought to advance their own positions.

Voicelog transcript: 29 August 2725

Mother says I must record my thoughts so that future people can learn from me and so she has given me this diary. She says it is important that future people know what I had to learn and what is our family story. She has told me that story every birthday since I was little, that Princess Terens Amaris sacrificed her life on Terra so that she could bring light to the people of the Rim Worlds and that her best friend, Lady Heather, made her the queen of the Rim Worlds. Then many years later the evil king Cameron of Terra tried to take control of all of everything and unlike most of the free Perrifry kingdoms, Terens's grandson King Gregory decided to allow the bully to take his stuff. Some of the people didn't like this and told Gregory to go away but he said no and so they hit him. Gregory fought bravely but had to hide for many years while the bullies tried to discover his secrets. But they weren't clever enough and eventually he escaped and the bullies were punished.

The idea of the Star League as a golden era owes a lot to rose-tinted glasses and the perspective of the apocalyptic Succession Wars, though it was a time of social and technological advancement. Humanity lived far longer than at any other time in its history and was able, thanks to the development of the HPG, to communicate almost instantaneously across the vastness of space. Political tensions still manifested as warfare, but the SLDF could intervene (notably in the War of Davion Succession between the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns) or act as a direct participant, such as in the "First Hidden War" against renegades from the DCMS. Yet on some occasions the SLDF stood aloof; it let the Free Worlds League fight a bloody civil war, and permitted the Federated Suns and Capellan Confederation to prosecute a bloody border war. When the Periphery rose up in revolt in 2765, it was seen as just another situation for the Star League military to resolve, provoked by the excesses of the High Council and the mismanagement of First Lord Richard Cameron.

Voicelog transcript: 29 July 2736

I'm not sure what I expected of the Martial Olympiad. Something more ... military, I suppose. Instead, the Outreach games seemed more corporate sponsorship and arms fair than a competition. Sure, there was a lot of jingoistic drivel and flag-waving for the SLDF and condescending praise for the poor unfortunate House forces who failed to make these finals, but in essence its purpose has been lost. Cameron doesn't care—he's lost in la-la-land, and those self-aggrandizing wastrels of the High Council are too busy with their own schemes. Even the Commanding General, Becky Fetladral, seems unengaged with the contest, not seeing how far it has fallen. Her aide is another matter. He sees and he cares—someone to watch out for. God, what was his name? Ah yes. Kerensky.

In truth, the Periphery Uprising was part of a grand scheme two hundred years in the making. The Amaris clan had long held a grudge against the Camerons, and the death of First Lord Simon Cameron afforded the current ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic, Stefan Amaris, the opportunity to exact vengeance for all the slights inflicted on his family.

The perpetrator of Simon Cameron's murder has never been clearly established, but Amaris positioned himself to exploit the aftermath. Beginning in 2753, he ingratiated himself with the boy ruler Richard Cameron (who wielded little actual power), corrupting

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the already traumatized youth and shaping him to become a hedonistic despot akin to the worst historical monarchs. In doing so, he gained immense power for himself, but that did not satisfy the Rim Worlds lord. He wanted revenge.

Voicelog transcript: 4 March 2750

Well, well, well. That changes the equation. The whelp is, what, eight? Who's going to look after the family silver while he plays?

Voicelog transcript: 19 June 2753

I'm glad I took the time to study the child. He's so sweet and innocent. So lonely and afraid. So pliable. Come to your jolly fat uncle and tell me what the horrid people have been saying.

Voicelog transcript: 28 August 2754

Duke Windsor needs to be put in his place. How dare he interrupt the First Lord's gift-giving on my birthday. I know what he thinks about me, but I'm damned if the stuck-up English kinglet will get in the way. Njari should cook up some scandal with one of his brats. Some compromising pictures of that horse-faced daughter of his should distract him nicely.

Voicelog transcript: 30 October 2754

Well, that was almost too easy. Hook, line and sinker, as mother used to say. Almost no need for bait. Just one word and I had you. The rest was almost superfluous, sweet Isleen, but worth it to make sure you're going to bring me Nicoletta on a platter. I know where her dreams lie, and believe me, I can turn them into reality.

General Aleksandr Kerensky, appointed regent for the First Lord and *de facto* ruler of the Star League, found himself enmeshed in the politics of the Great Houses and had little time for the boy. His occasional efforts to educate and habituate Richard proved unsuccessful. Richard's accession to the throne in 2762 when he reached his majority marked the start of dark days for the Star League. Convinced (thanks to Amaris) of his divine rights, Richard attempted to govern in a dictatorial and selfish manner, only to find the other nations refusing to cooperate. The Star League was an alliance, not the personal fief of the Camerons.

Voicelog transcript: 19 June 2762

Oh, well played, Aleks. Little Ricky didn't see that coming at all. He expects you to jump when he orders. Not me. I knew what you'd do. In fact, I was counting on it, my Russian friend. Relying on you to undermine your liege and make him distrust you. Even I couldn't do it, but you with your nobility and honor manage to shoot yourself in the foot. And you don't even realize you've done it, do you?

The House Lords had exploited Kerensky's distraction during the Regency to advance their own positions (at the Periphery's expense) and Richard's attempts to reverse them were ham-fisted and ineffectual. Much of this was according to Amaris' plan—he wanted the Star League divided, Richard undermined and the Periphery realms on the verge of open war.

Voicelog transcript: 24 March 2760

Well, that I didn't see coming. Young love? Bugger that for one of Kerensky's tin soldiers. We'll see just how determined you really are, Miss Graham.

increased exponentially. General Kerensky and his closest advisors may well have complained about the lack of support from their supposed allies, but in reality those allies simply could not afford to give the SLDF the aid it was looking for. Each of the five member states, as well as the four Periphery nations that were themselves just recovering from war, had trillions of destitute citizens they now had to care for, lest they themselves fall next to a petty dictator.

Where 2767 was the year of the Great Interstellar Crash, 2770 was the start of a slow climb back from the depths of economic ruin. After three years, the economies of the Star League member states had begun to rewire themselves, eliminating Hegemony connections in favor of domestic options. In the course of just a few years, Stefan Amaris wiped out all of the effort Simon Cameron had begun more than two centuries earlier. For the first time since the Age of War, the five Great Houses eschewed the notion that they were members of an interstellar economic community and instead turned inward. No longer would they rely entirely upon external trade for their survival—a view that would obviously color their interactions and decisions concerning the fate of the Star League in the wake of the Liberation of Terra.

—Kana Sohiri, *Rock Bottom: Rebuilding from Revolution*, Tharkad Press, 3066

Voicelog transcript: 19 April 2763

I want to puke. Best man? If I wore a hat, Elise Graham, it would be off to you. I underestimated you, you little minx. Didn't realize just how attractive Richard would find someone saying no to him. And it's so sweet, dear girl, you want to rescue him. You're too late for that. Far, far too late.

A few years after he'd started influencing Richard, Amaris—whose persona at court as a bumbling yokel led most to underestimate him—proposed an alliance with the Periphery states to throw off the Star League yoke so brutally imposed in the Reunification War. Using the wealth of the Rim Worlds Republic and his influence in the Hegemony, he would help them build armies and stage an uprising to regain their liberty. This Freedom War would, ironically, be partly funded by the Star League itself, through Amaris and his cronies misappropriating trillions of SL-dollars.

Voicelog transcript: 2 April 2765

Almost there. I'm so glad you listened, Aleks. That you thought I was extending an olive branch rather than holding out a poisoned chalice. If you think things are tough now, wait until you see some of the toys I gave Nicoletta's people. This will give you a nasty surprise, and if they don't get you out of my hair, the next surprise will.

Amaris' manipulation of Star League politics made the uprisings, which began in 2765, appear spontaneous, but they were instead a deliberate trap for Kerensky's SLDF. The Star League troops sent to suppress the insurrections expected simple peacekeeping duties and were devastated by the huge armies the Periphery states had assembled. The massive conflict drew in more and more of the SLDF, leaving a military vacuum around Terra. Rather than calling on the Great Houses who had belittled him for support, Richard Cameron reached out to his good friend Stefan Amaris, whose Rim Worlds Republic continued to show unwavering support for the Star League.

Voicelog transcript: 9 December 2766

Legos and his cohorts seem unaccountably amused by the name of the operation. I think Apotheosis—rising to godhood—shows hubris, but the staff likes it and so I have to indulge them.

Amaris sprang the trap on 27 December 2766, assassinating the First Lord while the two of them were exchanging gifts and ordering his troops to seize control of the Terran Hegemony. Despite a few hairy moments, the operation was largely successful and Amaris set about establishing himself as Director of the Terran Hegemony and First Lord of the Star League. The former he achieved through politics, Richard having been so unpopular among the Hegemony citizenry that sufficient numbers voted for Amaris to legitimize his installation

(though evidence suggests some gerrymandering took place to make sure). Becoming First Lord was more of an issue. The Star League Constitution only acknowledged the Cameron family as First Lords, and so Amaris adopted the title Emperor. However, the Star League Council refused to meet and ratify his installation, and so his self-proclaimed usurpation of the Cameron office stalled. Furthermore, the head of the SLDF, General Kerensky, denounced the coup d'état and swore to liberate the Hegemony and avenge the slain First Lord.

Voicelog transcript: 27 December 2766

Shit, shit, shit. I can't believe how close that was. Which one of the bastards didn't spot the security system? They very nearly wasted ten years of planning. Actually, fuck the planning. They very nearly got me wasted. My heart is still pounding and I'm sure those charges have damaged my hearing. One of the little bastards is going to pay for that.

The conflict that followed is known officially as the Star League Civil War, though the terms "the Amaris Coup" and "Operation Liberation" are also commonly used to refer to it. Neither is entirely correct: the Amaris Coup strictly refers to the assassination of Richard Cameron and the Usurper's consolidation of power over the Hegemony (which the Rim Worlds called Operation APOTHEOSIS), while Operation LIBERATION refers to the SLDF assault on Terra (the liberation of the Hegemony was Operation CHIEFTAIN).

Voicelog transcript: 21 January 2767

Yes, you can look at me with your doe-eyed innocence, Elise, but I know just what a little bitch you are. You sought to take Richard away from me. To make him your own and redeem him. Well, you failed, you little trollop. You never did realize just how sick and depraved he was. Never realized that your innocence was just another turn-on for him, an alternative to those whores he called sisters or the procession of party favors. You may think you have courage, the will to stand up to me. To look down on the man who killed your darling husband. But you don't get that he was a monster and that I did the universe a favor. I think you know that you and your spawn will soon join him, and I salute your guts, but let's face it. Your nobility only makes my life easier, but I bet some of those Camerons will be willing to crawl on their bellies to save their skins. I wonder, should I let them live?

Rather than attacking Terra directly, Kerensky spent several years occupying Amaris' home state, the Rim Worlds Republic, and using its facilities to repair and restructure the SLDF after its losses in the Periphery Uprising. Simultaneously, he sought to win the support of the High Council for the retaking of the Hegemony. He failed, but most of the council chose not to support Amaris either. The principal exception was the Draconis Combine, whose Coordinator seemed to be in cahoots with the Usurper and who was widely considered to be the true mastermind behind the coup. Kurita was, in truth, collaborating with both sides, providing covert aid to the SLDF while publicly opposing them. This schizophrenic approach came about

because Amaris held the Coordinator's nephew hostage. Other High Councilors proved unsupportive of Kerensky for personal reasons—both the Lyran Archon and the Captain-General of the Free Worlds League disdained the Commanding General and proved obstructive. Their people, on the other hand, threw their weight behind the General's cause and volunteers swelled the SLDF's ranks.

Voicelog transcript: 19 September 2769

Aleks, you bastard, you're going to pay for this. You may be hundreds of light-years away, but there are all those Muscovites you love so much. I'm sure some of them are your kin, so I'll make you hurt in the same way your rape of the Republic hurts me. You think I'm a monster but, god, I've not even started.

Operation CHIEFTAIN, the liberation of the Terran Hegemony, began on 14 July 2772, attacking sixty-six worlds in three broad thrusts. Over the next two years the SLDF pressed forward, facing Amaris' forces in space and on the ground. Outnumbered, many of the Amaris Empire Armed Forces (AEAF) troops resorted to dirty tricks and brutality, using planetary populations as pawns in the conflict.

Voicelog transcript: 2 July 2773

I don't care. Kill them. I planned the defense so I know it will work. If they claim otherwise, they're cowards. Any step back is a betrayal of me, and saying they don't have enough men is just an excuse for incompetence and disloyalty. Tell the Krypteia to do it if you're too soft but get it done.

Adding to the SLDF's woes were the defenses established by Jonathan Cameron half a century earlier. Intended to protect the Hegemony and Terra from attack, they now served its conquerors. The Space Defense Systems (SDS) protecting a number of worlds proved to be a particular obstacle. The combination of ground-based weapon batteries and autonomous drone WarShips made for a lethally effective defensive system that threatened to gut SLDF invasion fleets before they could land—and the closer the armies got to Terra, the more of these systems they encountered. The advance slowed, and by the end of 2774 looked about to stall. It would take a miracle for the SLDF to regain their momentum, and Amaris dared to dream of victory against Kerensky even as his sanity ebbed away.

Voicelog transcript: 14 October 2773

Damn you, Richard, let me sleep. I've got a war to fight. Don't care what you want to tell me about Mandy walking, or Elise's latest baking. Just shut up. The dead should be quiet. Leave me be.

Then came 2775 and several momentous events upon which the success of the war hinged.

Voicelog transcript: 19 January 2775

God. SomeONE clean up the MESS! I'm not like YOU, am I, RICHARD. I don't like people saying NO. I get angry <tee hee>. And someone might Just GET SHOT. I said pull them back, and I MEANT IT. Unless, of course, you want to JOIN HIM.

KEY EVENTS OF HUMAN HISTORY: THE FORMATION OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE TO THE FALL OF THE STAR LEAGUE

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 2011 Commencement of the Second Soviet Civil War | 2412 Ares Conventions signed, limiting the scope of warfare while legitimizing it as a means of resolving disputes | 2751 Simon Cameron is assassinated on New Silesia. His young son becomes First Lord with Kerensky as his Regent. |
| 2014 End of the Soviet Civil War and formation of the Western Alliance | 2439 First BattleMechs built and used in combat | 2753 Stefan Amaris begins to influence the child First Lord. |
| 2017 First fusion-powered spacecraft voyages to Mars | 2556 Age of War ends thanks to Terran peacemaking efforts | 2762 Richard Cameron reaches his majority; end of Kerensky's regency |
| 2086 Western Alliance becomes the Terran Alliance | 2571 Star League formed by Ian Cameron and Albert Marik | 2765 Uprising begins in three of the four Periphery States, secretly sponsored by Amaris' Rim Worlds Republic. In these outlying realms this is referred to as the Freedom War. |
| 2108 The first interstellar vessel, TAS <i>Pathfinder</i> , visits Tau Ceti | 2577 Official commencement of the Reunification War | 2766 Amaris murders Richard Cameron and seizes control of the Star League and the Terran Hegemony. |
| 2110 Establishment of first extra-solar colony on New Earth (Tau Ceti) | 2597 Reunification War ends | 2767 Kerensky refuses to accept the Amaris takeover and pledges to unseat the Usurper. Star League Civil War begins. |
| 2236 Outer Reaches Rebellion against the Terran Alliance begins | 2630 First use of the Hyperpulse Generator (HPG) allows faster-than-light communication. | 2767-2769 Rim Worlds Republic invaded and destroyed |
| 2238 Terran Alliance abandons its colonies; new interstellar nations begin to form | 2693 Jonathan Cameron orders a major increase in the SLDF's budget and construction of massive defenses around Terra | 2772-2776 SLDF campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony (Operation CHIEFTAIN) |
| 2314 Terran Alliance collapses in civil war. It is reborn two years later as the Terran Hegemony under the command of James McKenna. | 2738 Simon Cameron becomes First Lord of the Star League; Aleksandr Kerensky becomes Commanding General of the SLDF | |
| 2398 Accepted start date of the Age of War | | |

PERSONALITIES

"I have returned many times to honor the valiant men who died...every man who set foot on Omaha Beach was a hero."

—Lieutenant General Omar Bradley

STAR LEAGUE



JANOS GREC

Rank/Position: SLDF Admiral, Director of the Naval Command

Lived: 19 October 2705 – circa 2802

Born on Highspire in the Capellan Confederation, Janos Grec was introduced to flying at a young age. Both his parents were commercial pilots for White Star Galactic and Janos' earliest memories were of shipboard life or of the sailplanes his father built and flew as a hobby. He joined the SLDF's Air Training Corps in high school, enrolling in the full SLDF shortly after his 18th birthday. He attended Flight Academy of Graham and entered active service with the SLDF just in time to be deployed in Operation SMOTHER. He provided combat air patrols for the 16th BattleMech division on Royal. There he made the acquaintance of a young captain in the division's BattleMech forces, Aleksandr, the start of a long working relationship between the pair.

By 2730 Grec commanded the air group on the SLS *Scipio*, followed by a tour as commodore of a pursuit squadron on the

border between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League. His record was exemplary, firm but fair, and his hands-on approach—he spent much of his spare time tinkering with his personal *Gotha*—earned him the respect of the pilots and crews under his command. In 2745 he married Lydia Vance, a businesswoman from Carver V, with whom he had two daughters, Isabel and Katrine. However, with his career taking him away from home for months on end—the SLDF was desperately trying to maintain peace between the Great Houses—Grec's marriage began to founder. Given a choice between divorce and his family, he opted for the latter, retiring from active duty in 2751 and taking up a teaching post at the Fleet School of Keid.

Just over a dozen years later—and somewhat overweight after years of good meals and soft living—Grec took to the air once more for a "last hurrah," taking a research sabbatical to accompany his old friend Kerensky in peacekeeping operations in the Periphery. He got more than he bargained for, seeing firsthand the Periphery Uprising in full force. He was still with Kerensky when news of the Amaris Coup broke. His first thought was to rush home to Lydia and the children (now in their mid-teens), but Kerensky pointed out the futility of such a move given Amaris' dominance in the Hegemony and the reports that the Usurper had used strategic weapons against many of the SLDF's academies.

Despite being in his sixties, Grec volunteered his services to the SLDF and Kerensky brevetted him into the fleet with his old rank of commodore. As part of Kerensky's staff, "the Professor" soon earned the respect of his peers, orchestrating the Black Buck raid against Apollo, and returning to front-line duty two years later as commander of one of the squadrons scouting the fringes of the Hegemony. In 2770, command of Seventh Fleet followed and when Ignacio Blake's ill health forced him to stand down in 2772, Grec assumed command of the Star League Navy. Grec soon proved his worth and determination, planning much of the SLDF's naval strategy and developments over the next few years, including the NIKE system. Though rarely overseeing operations directly, he became known as "Grinder Grec" for his willingness to use naval firepower and repeated bombing missions to pound Amaris positions.

Though best known for circumventing the SDS, his greatest challenge came in planning the assault on Terra itself. Though costly, Grec's strategy proved successful, allowing Kerensky and his troops to land and begin the last battle against the Usurper. While he waited for Kerensky's operations on Terra to conclude, Grec searched for news from Keid regarding his family, eventually learning that his wife and daughters survived the Amaris takeover. He searched desperately for them, but what he learned crushed him. After surviving a dozen years of occupation, Lydia and the girls had established themselves in the city of Kitimat. Unfortunately,

AEAF strategic weapons had targeted the city during the liberation and there were few survivors. Katrine was eventually found alive, but by the time she was reunited with her father, Grec had sunk into a deep depression fueled by alcoholic binges. She spent the next two years attempting to rehabilitate her wrecked father.

Kerensky's Exodus offered Grec new hope—a chance to escape the memories of the war and his losses—and together with his daughter, he set off for a new life in the distant reaches of space. The early years in the Pentagon Worlds were hard but good, honest work after years of butchery. Though testing out of the SLDF, Grec remained influential in it, overseeing much of the inter-planetary logistics. When Kerensky died on Eden, Grec was among those who jockeyed for power. Though a loyal follower of the General, Grec opposed Nicholas Kerensky's bid to succeed his father, believing the young man too inexperienced to manage the new society. Instead he advanced his own candidacy, and when that was rejected, set about establishing his own petty state.

The date and manner of Grec's death are unknown, but it may well have come during the naval battles around Dagda in late 2802. Katrine Grec followed Nicholas Kerensky into Exile along with her husband Rikard Magnus. Their son, Sergey, would become one of Nicholas' 800, helping found Clan Snow Raven.

LAUREN HAYES

Rank/Position: Major General, Commander of the SLDF 151st Royal BattleMech Division; Commander of the ComStar Armed Forces (2788-2815)

Lived: 27 December 2731 – 2 January 2832

Born on Engadin, a world jointly owned by the Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine but administered by the Terran Hegemony, Lauren Hayes had an eclectic childhood. Raised with hybrid nationality, she spoke German (the Lyran state language), Japanese (official language of the Draconis Combine), and Terran-standard English. The legal provisions of such jointly administered worlds allowed children to choose a specific nationality when they attained their majority, but some retained their multiple nationalities into adulthood. Lauren Hayes was one such who, like many of those raised in similar circumstances, became a staunch advocate of multiculturalism and of the Star League.

Athletic and intelligent (though not particularly academic), it was little surprise that Lauren volunteered for the SLDF shortly after her eighteenth birthday, quickly showing an aptitude for 'Mech operations and leadership. She began active service in 2754, quickly rising through the ranks. A decade later—as the SLDF prepared for war in the Periphery—she became XO of the 151st Royal BattleMech Regiment, the lead unit of the 151st Royal BattleMech Division. The chaos of that conflict saw her command bloodied in the Canopian campaign, the death of Colonel Reynolds on Krimari elevating Hayes to acting command of the regiment. That post was never confirmed and instead, in the reorganization of the SLDF prior to Operation CHIEFTAIN, she was promoted to the divisional command staff, where she remained for the duration of the campaign. In 2776, prior to the assault on Terra, Kerensky



moved Major-General Sau Trappendorf (who headed the 151st Division) onto the command staff of Ninth Army. Trappendorf nominated Hayes as his successor, a move swiftly confirmed by the SLDF, and Lauren had the dubious honor of overseeing almost 8,000 troops and support personnel in the titanic conclusion to the Amaris Civil War. Almost a third of her command would perish during the bloody campaign.

The battle for Terra saw Hayes fight in India, where she led the drive north to New Delhi, and Mexico, where her command spearheaded the landings at Arriaga. She sustained serious injuries in the battle for Houston, losing her right hand—though prevented from piloting a 'Mech for the rest of the campaign, she continued to lead her division from the front, employing the observer's seat in a dual-cockpit *BattleMaster*. After the war, her hand was replaced with a bionic prosthesis and she continued to serve with the SLDF, becoming SLDF administrator of South America where her battered division was based in Buenos Aires.

A staunch believer in the Star League and Terran Hegemony thanks to her upbringing, she pushed for a more pro-active stance by Kerensky and the SLDF within the Hegemony, becoming a vociferous opponent of the Exodus plan. She believed Kerensky was abandoning his duty and refused to follow him into exile. Most of her command followed suit and the 151st became the focus for SLDF troops wishing to stay in the Inner Sphere. This posed a problem for Kerensky, who did not want the SLDF to be used by the Great Houses, but a compromise solution soon emerged: Hayes

would place her troops under the command of Communications Minister Jerome Blake, becoming the military arm of what would soon be called ComStar.

Hayes played a key role in the planning and execution of Operation SILVER SHIELD, taking control of Terra for ComStar. Officially mercenaries carried out the action, but over two-thirds of the force used was ex-SLDF, their gear ultimately cached on Terra for later use. Hayes remained at the head of ComStar's small armed forces—a precursor to the role of Precentor Martial in the 3040s when the Com Guard went public—until 2815 when, in her mid-80s, she retired. Following Blake's death in 2819, the rebels led by Herman Schwepps attempted to draw Hayes back into active service, but she refused and as a consequence survived Conrad Toyama's purges. She died peacefully in 2832, shortly after celebrating her 101st birthday.

JACK LUCAS

Rank/Position: SLDF General, Commander of Third Army

Lived: 25 November 2725 – 9 December 2831

John Peter Lucas III, or Jack, as he was called throughout his life, was the third of six children born to Bishop John Peter Lucas, Jr., and Melissa Sayers Lucas. He and his siblings were raised within the strict environment of a neo-Jesuit bishop. Though his father groomed Jack and his younger brother for the priesthood, Jack instead chose a similar regimented life in the Star League Defense Forces. He graduated in the top ten percent of the Combat College

of New Earth's class of 2747, but due to his birth on the Lyran world of Zaniah—and the fact that his Hegemony-born father never bothered to file the paperwork according Jack and his siblings status as Hegemony natives—Sergeant Lucas was turned down for assignment in a Royal regiment.

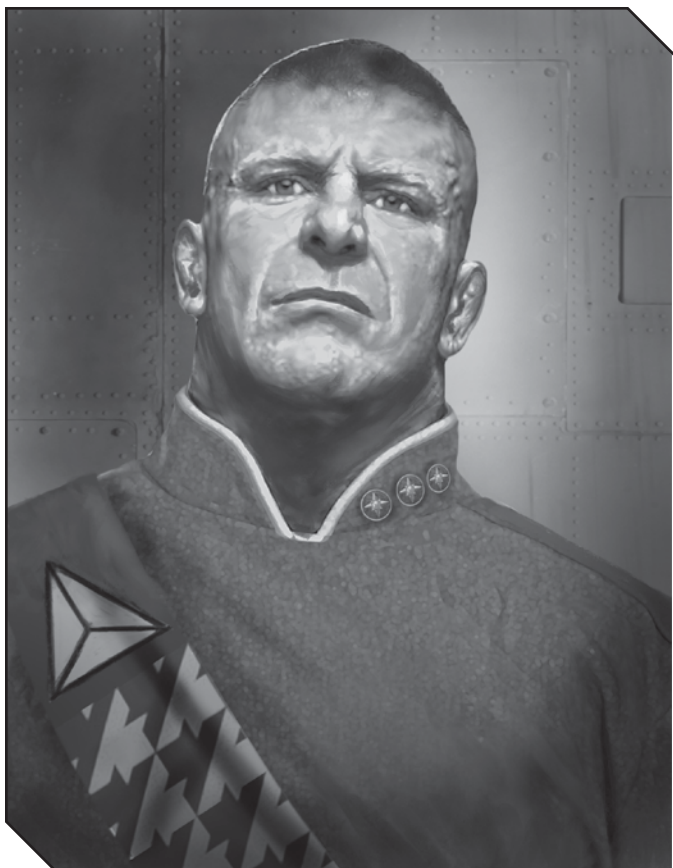
MechWarrior Sergeant Lucas instead began his career within the 326th BattleMech Division. The intelligent and aggressive young MechWarrior soon earned promotion to lieutenant, distinguishing himself as a capable and inspiring officer who challenged his charges rather than bullying them. Within the peacetime SLDF, even one led by Aleksandr Kerensky, the higher he rose, the fewer chances he had to earn promotion. As a major serving on Fourth Army's operations staff during the PERSUASIVE FORCE maneuvers, he impressed General Aaron DeChavilier, who kept an eye on Lucas' career from that point on.

When the Periphery Uprising came, Lucas was in command of the 253rd Battle Regiment, a part of Fourth Army's 202nd BattleMech Division. His regiment was one of hundreds deployed in the Periphery to suppress the uprising, and likewise one of hundreds that were chewed up in the fighting, in the case of the 202nd Division due to the inexperience and timidity of its leaders. Within days of his division's near-destruction, Colonel Lucas found himself quickly elevated first to brigade command—leading just ten battalions of 202nd Division survivors—before being promoted to command of the 255th Royal Mechanized Infantry Division by DeChavilier himself.

The Periphery Uprising proved exceptionally hard on the SLDF, and especially its senior leaders—many of whom were simply unprepared to wage a star-spanning war against enemies that not only wanted to defeat them, but to murder them. Kerensky and DeChavilier were perceived by many SLDF officers as ruthless in dealing with corps and army commanders who failed to live up to their standards, but the reality was simply that the SLDF could not afford to keep generals who were too timid or incapable of managing their battlefields in command positions.

Lucas, who likely would have retired at most as a Lieutenant General after thirty years of peacetime service, jumped from colonel to full general in less than a year's time. DeChavilier promoted him to command of Third Army in mid-2766 after General Stangher was relieved due to serious health problems, jumping Lucas past a number of officers with over a decade more service than he. Nevertheless, he assumed complete command of the army, motivating his opponents to hate him if he could not charm them, and infusing his new command with a new energy.

Under his command, Third Army soon earned distinction as the most aggressive within the SLDF—they accounted for more enemy casualties and prisoners, and more quickly completed their objectives. While their own casualty rates initially seemed higher, their campaigns were concluded earlier and thus suffered fewer overall casualties than other Star League armies. Unbridled aggression was Third Army's *modus operandi*, which served it well throughout twelve more years of continuous warfare.



On the other hand, the years of fighting were tough on General Lucas. He built himself up as the always-capable and unflappable leader, and seemingly kept that as a perpetual front. As the years passed, he internalized more and more of the stress and exhaustion, which wreaked havoc with his physical health, while the Republican atrocities he came across desensitized him and caused him to see his enemy as less than human. He often turned a blind eye to the mistreatment of prisoners, and indeed encouraged his troops to “murder those bastards” in battle, which had the unfortunate consequence of prompting the execution of POWs in a few isolated incidents.

These facts, coupled with Lucas’ increasingly vocal outspokenness on the “coddling of sub-human criminals” and other controversial topics, forced DeChavilier to relieve him of command in the final stages of Operation LIBERATION. Lucas was placed on convalescent leave, but retired soon after the Liberation of Terra, taking up residence on Errai, where he began a new career in politics. He very quickly won election as governor, where he used his larger-than-life reputation and personality to help rebuild the world. The coming of the Succession Wars, however, permanently soured him on warfare. Instead, he reinvented himself one last time and turned back to the life he’d eschewed more than six decades earlier.

The Reverend John Peter Lucas III, SLDF General (retired), died at the age of 106 having spent nearly four decades as a parish priest on Errai and Northwind.

RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC/ AMARIS EMPIRE

ANTILOS LEGOS

Rank/Position: General, Commander of the Greenhaven Gestapo, AEAF Strategic Operations Director

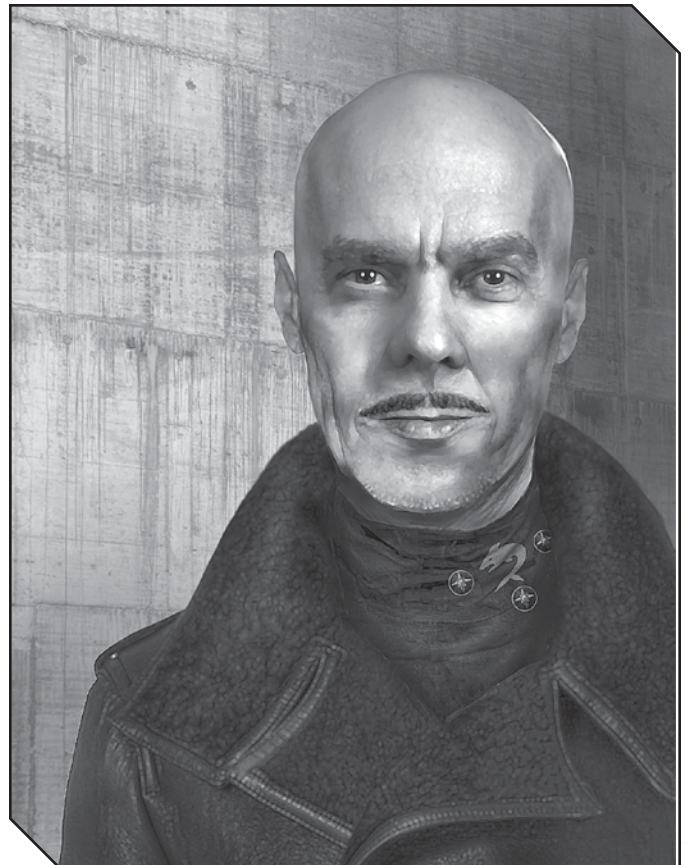
Lived: 8 May 2725 – 24 March 2777

History likens Antilos Legos to the most depraved barbarians of the past, citing him as a new Adolf Hitler or Genghis Khan and as a testament to the warlike people of the Rim Worlds Republic. In truth, Legos was born on Abbey in the Free Worlds League, and rather than the crazed psychopath histories often portray him as, was clinically cold and rational. If anything, this makes the crimes he and his people carried out even more horrific. They weren’t done in the blood-rage of combat, but more often were calmly considered actions.

Escaping an abusive childhood—rumor suggests the thirteen-year-old Legos killed his father—he became embroiled with gangs, and by the early 2740s served with Hudson’s Legion, one of the mercenary forces employed by the Free Worlds League against the Lyran Commonwealth (and the SLDF) in the Third Hidden War. Ruthless and efficient, young Legos earned respect and fear in equal measure, but many of his methods soon became unpalatable to his commanders and he left the Legion in 2747. Several more contracts followed, but in 2750 he took command of his own destiny, raising his own mercenary battalion, Legos’s Lancers. A

few years later on the Lyran world of Novara, the unit gained a new name. Garrisoning the city of Greenhaven for a local lord, their vicious and authoritarian tactics drew the ire of the local mayor. He confronted Legos, likening his troops to Hitler’s Gestapo. Rather than reacting angrily, Legos was amused by the insult, and when the mission ended and the mercenaries began searching for a new contract, Legos adopted the name the Greenhaven Gestapo for his now-regimental unit.

It is unclear when Legos’s association with Stefan Amaris began, but by the early 2760s Legos was serving as a military advisor to the Rim Worlds lord. Some histories credit it him with planning Operation APOTHEOSIS, though it seems unlikely a mercenary would play such a prominent role. Legos’s troops were, however, at the forefront of the operation and, because of their lack of scruples and violent nature, became the Usurper’s go-to troops for irregular operations. They perpetrated numerous atrocities, the most infamous of which was the murder of Pope Clement XXVII in Rome (precipitating the splitting of the Catholic Church into Terra and New Avalon factions) and the execution of hundreds within the Vatican. Legos himself presided over the “trial” of the College of Cardinals, taking the role of prosecutor and president of the court while the Pontiff served as the defense council. Legos offered to free the Catholic hierarchy if they paid a stupendous ransom, but with their finances already devastated by the Coup, the church had no resources. Legos found the church guilty and then executed Pope Clement before ordering



his men to “have fun” with the rest of the cardinals. With dissolute individuals like Bernard “Ogre” Critchley and Alexis “Succubus” Adley making up the Gestapo, the horrors inflicted on the Cardinals and the people of Rome were unimaginable.

Legos’s troops carried out terror attacks throughout the Hegemony during Operation CHIEFTAIN, acting on commissions direct from Amaris, and Legos served as a military advisor to the Emperor on several occasions. Legos maintained an adversarial relationship with General Patrick Scoffins, who viewed Legos’s casual brutality as a stain on the Amaris Empire, but both Legos and his troops remained favorites of Amaris. As a reward for their services, the Usurper gave Legos control of Italy, whose population the Gestapo terrorized for a dozen years until the arrival of the SLDF.

Legos waged a bitter campaign against the Star League forces, unafraid to use terror tactics and strategic weapons, but his troops couldn’t hope to prevail against a whole SLDF army. Legos died in the final battle outside Ferrara on 24 March 2777, rumors suggesting he was executed by SLDF troops.

PATRICK SCOFFINS

Rank/Position: Commanding General of the Amaris Empire
Armed Forces

Lived: 3 February 2708 – 9 October 2781

Patrick Gregory Scoffins was born to a family of limited means, the second of three children of Rim Worlde farmers. He spent his youth working on his family’s Austerlitz farm, with his mother and aunts providing him and the other children in the family a very minimal education at night. Patrick would not settle for life on the farm, however, and after failing to pass the university admission boards, spent two additional years studying during his every free moment to pass those boards. He finally gained admission to the Austerlitz Public University in 2728, where he studied history and classical literature. His family being unable (and, as it turned out, unwilling) to aid him financially, Scoffins paid for his education by enlisting in the Rim Worlds Army.

Scoffins had no intention of making a career in the military. His dream was to escape the farm and try to offer others in his situation opportunities he never had. His Rim Worlds Army service gave him something he’d never had before, though—a sense of purpose. As Scoffins’s enlistment contract came to an end, Stefan Amaris became President of the Rim Worlds Republic and was already beginning to focus his nation on the future—a future in which the Rim Worlds Army would play a significant role. The RWA would need to expand, and to fuel that expansion it needed talented and driven leaders. Scoffins accepted an appointment to Officer Training School in exchange for an extension of his service contract. He served as a training officer, and eventually as a training company commander, and on the verge of promotion to major he chose to extend his commitment once again with the RWA. Though it wasn’t quite what he’d envisioned for his career, he was in fact teaching new generations of Rim Worlds youths, many of whom came from backgrounds as disadvantaged as his.



Over the next ten years, Scoffins advanced rapidly through the ranks of the expanding RWA, serving in quick succession as a battalion and regiment commander before entering the ranks of the Rim Worlds general officers. Stefan Amaris himself pinned the insignia of a lieutenant general on Scoffins’s uniform—as the President often did in order to foster even greater loyalty within his officer corps—and welcomed him into service with the Rim Worlds Army Command on Apollo. There, he served in a number of supervisory roles within the RWA operations staff, crafting war plans and designing training exercises and programs for the RWA. He also gained remarkably free access to his President, for whom he felt nothing but respect and admiration, and whom he also found a willing audience for his own ideas on how to turn the RWA into a true military power.

The two shared a similar view that the Rim Worlds Republic had long been victimized by the Inner Sphere, and especially the Camerons’ Star League. Scoffins believed without question that the Camerons and their Star League needed to be punished for their crimes against the Rim Worlds Republic, as well as against the entire Periphery. Within short order, Amaris promoted Scoffins to full general and introduced the one-time farmer into his inner circle of planners. Scoffins was happy to take charge of covertly forming and training the Secret Army—this time having the opportunity to train and inspire tens of thousands of undereducated and disadvantaged commoners like himself from across the Periphery. Once that task was done, he took charge of

the strategists that planned the military side of Amaris' Operation APOTHEOSIS, coordinating their efforts with the Rim Worlds Krypteia as well as the steadily growing twin Hegemony Security Force and Office of Policy and Doctrine—agencies he detested for their distasteful and dishonorable tactics, but tolerated due to the important role they played.

Amaris chose Scoffins to take command of the RWA forces that would participate in Operation APOTHEOSIS, a post that ensured the general would also assume command of the disparate military units that would become the Amaris Empire Armed Forces. In that role, Scoffins developed the strategies and tactics that the RWA and its mercenaries used in carrying out the Coup. On the other hand, he also gave very strict instructions on how to deal with SLDF holdouts and how to treat prisoners of war—all of which very much mirrored the same directions given by Kerensky. Scoffins was a true believer in Amaris, but he was also an honorable and principled warrior who held no grudge against the people of the Hegemony or Star League—just their leaders.

While "Emperor" Amaris often went around Scoffins and entrusted the OPD to deliver his most brutal orders into the field, Scoffins was neither stupid nor ignorant. Like other senior Amaris Empire officials, he was tried and convicted of crimes against humanity, and publicly executed by hanging on 9 October 2781. Also present were his wife, youngest daughter and three grandchildren; his eldest son had perished during the SLDF's invasion of the Rim Worlds Republic, while his middle son spent two more years in a Republican POW camp.

LISSA OUTERBRIDGE

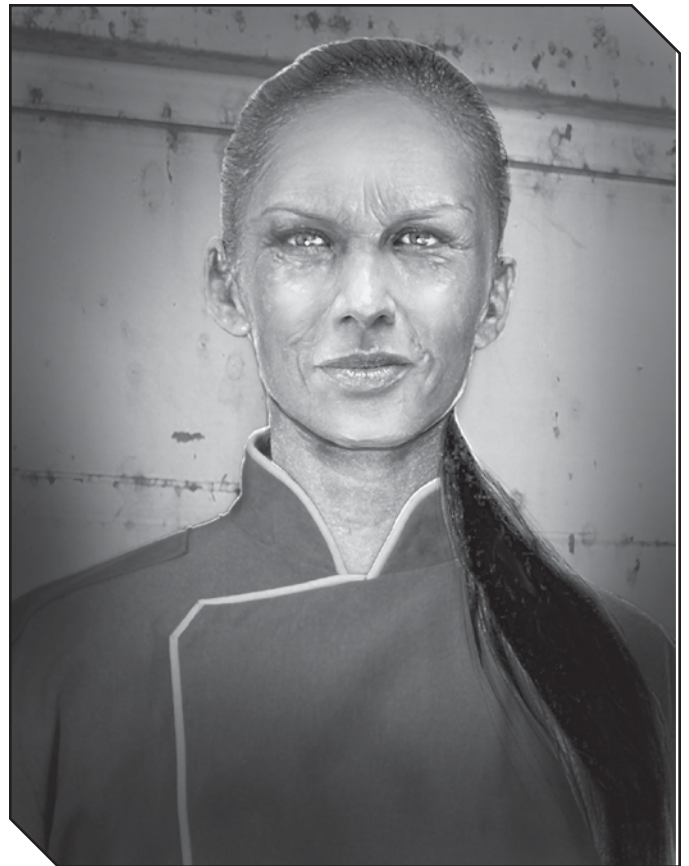
Rank/Position: Director, Office of Policy and Doctrine

Lived: 19 August 2727 – ??? (presumed circa 2781)

Unlike many of Stefan Amaris' inner circle, Lissa Outerbridge was Inner Sphere-born, the daughter of Free Worlds League industrialist Tragan Outerbridge. She was raised in wealth and educated in the best schools the League had to offer, gaining degrees in business, communications and interstellar relations. Her father intended that she would take charge of the family business, but after a campaign of industrial espionage and illegal maneuvers covered up by her father's enemies within the Hegemony and Free Worlds governments, the family business was bankrupted and sold off piecemeal. Tragan Outerbridge committed suicide soon after, leaving behind his wife and five children to deal with cleaning up the mess.

Lissa nevertheless managed to get appointed to the Free Worlds' Terran consulate, thanks to the machinations of the last of her father's political allies. Though she hated the Hegemony, and to a lesser extent the Free Worlds government, for how her father had been treated, she hoped to somehow arrange for the downfall of those responsible for the crimes against her family. She accomplished just that in the end, through an entirely unexpected alliance.

Her duties kept her in nearly constant contact with each of the other nine member- and territorial-state consulates on Terra, within which she forged some unique alliances. One contact



within the Rim Worlds consulate led her to Stefan Amaris, who some say became enamored with Lissa. The two forged a close relationship, and after he assisted her in taking revenge on two of the conspirators who'd ruined her father, she was ushered into his inner circle.

Though Amaris' other advisors tried to convince the President that Lissa brought little to the table—especially Samir Njari, who considered her an outsider and dilettante—she was a consummate political strategist and negotiator. Moreover, after just a few years on Terra she had built a considerable array of contacts, including a number of powerful players she had intended to use in seeking revenge on her father's enemies. She had suborned most of these contacts through behind-the-scenes maneuvering and power brokering, and collected damning evidence on the rest. With what she already had on-hand, she began to build a massive transnational political and economic power base for Amaris from her offices on Terra.

Lissa was never content with simply working behind the scenes, however. As she helped Amaris build his alliances, he ensured that she—and his other closest advisors—were also well taken care of. Even as Amaris unofficially inserted himself into the Star League government through his association with Richard Cameron, he made sure that those advisors each received appointments in the Star League government. Lissa Outerbridge took a position in the Bureau of Star League Affairs, and built a cadre to do all of Amaris' dirty jobs.

Lissa gave her cadre the innocuous name “Office of Policy and Doctrine,” which soon enough began to expand even further to include “advisors”—spies and handlers—who would ensure that First Lord Richard Cameron’s (or, more accurately, Amaris’) policies were carried out. Within just a few years, Outerbridge’s OPD had operatives in every major government office and its members were regular sights in the offices of the biggest Hegemony corporations.

In the days following the Coup, Outerbridge expanded the OPD even further into a paramilitary force that reported only to Amaris, quickly supplanting the Krypteia in the Terran Hegemony with more agents and more “political officers” (and in the process marginalizing Njari). Openly serving OPD agents soon began to wear unique military-style uniforms and held rank equal to AEAFF officers (though they held the authority to countermand legitimate orders that were not “in the best interests of the Amaris Empire”).

Under Outerbridge’s watch, hundreds of thousands of former SLDF personnel, and the families of current members, were rounded up and questioned—or imprisoned—while tens of thousands more potential enemies of Amaris received similar treatment, many of whom were never seen again. Outerbridge’s OPD continued to keep the Hegemony’s population in line, terrorizing those who might oppose Amaris and eliminating any threats—real or imagined—that emerged. Her agents ensured the absolute loyalty of the AEAFF, though in the process they not only ruthlessly carried out their orders, but also took whatever they wanted.

Lissa Outerbridge apparently remained within Amaris’ close circle until Kerensky’s invasion of Terra, after which fewer and fewer reports of her presence in Unity City or the Imperial Palace surfaced. She was last seen alive prior to the North American landings. Some rumors say she used cosmetic surgery to alter her appearance and hid in South America, or even left Terra on one of the DropShips that escaped late in the North American campaign. Others say she simply began to hide in plain sight, making herself out to be an innocent refugee. She was convicted in absentia and sentenced to death for her crimes.

SAMIR NJARI

Rank/Position: Chief Executive Officer of Njari Communications; Rim Worlds Minister of Communications (2755-2767); Amaris Empire Minister for Media (2767-2777); Head of the Krypteia (2767-2777)

Lived: 6 December 2717 – 17 September 2781

Growing up in one of Apollo’s most prominent families, the Njari media clan, Samir found himself at the heart of power and as a child was a regular visitor to the Amaris palace. Only four when he met Stefan Amaris for the first time, he naturally fell into the princeling’s circle, becoming one of the young Amaris’ few childhood companions. Despite being older by a few months, Njari was an obedient follower and Amaris came to trust him implicitly. Often Samir took the blame for Stefan’s misdeeds, Amaris accepting this as his due while rewarding Njari for his loyalty.

The two drifted apart during their teens, Stefan to be schooled in politics and Samir in his father’s media empire, though they traded

irregular communications. Njari spent his most of twenties heading up the Tri-D arm of Njari Communications, including the Apollo News Network, but following his father’s death in 2746 he assumed the role of CEO of the entire organization. Like many of the Republic’s upper echelons, Njari had been inducted into the Krypteia but his media skills and information-gathering network gave him significant influence and by 2752 he was one of the group’s governing council. He would become its head in the early years of the Amaris Civil War.

With the death of Simon Cameron throwing the Star League into chaos, Amaris began making plans, and he turned to his boyhood friend for support. Media control and intelligence gathering were essential to Amaris’ plots, and Njari’s position as a media mogul and member of the Krypteia was a near-perfect fit. Njari was a willing participant in the scheme—he’d been frustrated in his efforts to expand Njari Communications across the Star League, red tape strongly favoring Inner Sphere corporations, and saw Amaris’ plans as a means of redressing the balance. Njari helped craft Amaris’ public image, and played a direct role in the masquerade immediately before the Coup, falsifying media reports of the Battle of Götterdämmerung. His most significant contribution was in influencing the Hegemony media in the immediate aftermath of the Coup, making Amaris’ actions seem proportionate and justified and almost single-handedly ensuring Amaris’ election as Director-General of the Hegemony. He proved less effective outside the Hegemony, however, and largely abandoned such efforts after the Rim Worlds campaign began.



Six weeks before Operation BLACK BUCK struck Apollo, Njari had been raised to leadership of the Krypteia. He expanded the society's secret police role throughout the Hegemony, something to which his predecessor had objected. He thus became Amaris' enforcer among the general population, wielding both the carrot of the media and youth volunteer groups and the stick of the secret police. Though their areas of responsibility were officially distinct, Njari frequently clashed with OPD Director Lissa Outerbridge. Outerbridge felt the youth volunteer corps should fall under her jurisdiction, but Njari refused to relinquish control.

Njari never married, but was linked to a succession of women throughout the Republic and Hegemony, including Aisling Connor. He fathered five illegitimate children, though anti-Amaris sentiment post-war meant few of them acknowledged their parentage. ComStar's genealogical records show that several of his descendants remain prominent in the Bureau of Terran Affairs.

Njari was in Geneva when the SLDF landings began, and made an abortive attempt to escape only to be turned back by SLDF fighters. Despite efforts to conceal his identity, he was taken into custody in early June after the fall of the Hegemony Congress. He remained in custody for four years and was tried in the Geneva Trials, being convicted on three counts (war crimes, crimes against the Star League and crimes against humanity. He was acquitted of genocide charges.). His execution was set for 9 October, but on 17 September a Krypteia agent smuggled poison into the detention block that Njari used to commit suicide.

AISLING CONNOR

Rank/Position: Director of Economic Development

Lived: 8 May 2735 – 11 October 2801

Born and raised in Dublin, Aisling Reeves became a child model at the age of six and remained a fixture in Hegemony fashion media throughout her teens. In 2754, at the age of nineteen, she quit modeling and focused her attentions on design and marketing, establishing the *Something Wonderful* chain across Terra. Within 18 months she had stores across the Hegemony, and by 2757 had expanded into all of the Star League member states. Photogenic and charming, she became a darling of the business classes and the general public, dashing millions of dreams when she married New Earth businessman Bernard Connor in 2759 (they would divorce in 2765).

Amaris and Aisling first met at society soirees in the early 2750s, but it was only in 2760 that their association began in earnest. Amaris had sought to win Bernard Connor over to his cause but instead found himself charmed and enthralled by the young woman he'd previously dismissed as an airhead. Her grasp of economics exceeded even that of her husband, and Amaris sensed in her a kindred spirit. To the public she was sweet and charming, but this concealed a scheming and assertive personality. Like him, she was playing a role and had proved very good at getting what she wanted. Connor didn't immediately join Amaris' cause, but the

Rim Worlds lord was determined and spent considerable effort convincing her. Eventually she agreed to work with him, though it was several more years before Amaris revealed the true extent of his plans.

Connor became Amaris' bridge to the business community, affording a means for him to get his message across to the business leaders and allow the oligarchs a channel of communications direct to Amaris' councils. In the years before the Coup, the significance of this relationship wasn't readily apparent, but after Amaris' assumption of power the benefits (and with them the importance of Connor as the intermediary) soared.

Several rumors alleged an intimate relationship between Amaris and Connor, but while the Emperor was a renowned womanizer, there is little evidence that Connor was one of his conquests. The same cannot be said of Connor and Samir Njari—her daughter Aoife, born in 2769, is widely believed to be Njari's—though their on-off relationship soured in the mid-2770s.

Connor made little effort to escape the SLDF and was captured in New York in September 2779. Like many of Amaris' close confidants, she was arraigned for trial in Geneva and was found guilty of crimes against the Star League. She did not receive the death penalty but was instead sentenced to ten years imprisonment at the Koryo Penitentiary on Mars. She was released in 2789 but struggled to adapt to life on ComStar-controlled Terra and the loss of her prestige. She disappeared from public life and died a recluse in 2801.



COMSTAR



JEROME BLAKE

Rank/Position: Star League Minister of Communications (2780-2819)/Prime Administrator of ComStar (2788-2819)

Lived: 11 January 2739-15 May 2819

Born and raised in the Great Lakes Administrative District of Terra's North America, Jerome Blake demonstrated exceptional intelligence and mechanical aptitude. At six he was undertaking classes designed for high school pupils and by twelve he had embarked on an engineering degree at the University of Lambrecht. He graduated in 2755, aged sixteen, and his specialization—Hyperspatial Mathematics and applied Physics—naturally led him to a career in the Star League's Department of Communications, where he rose to the rank of chief technical operations officer for the HPG station on Oliver.

Blake was on vacation in the Free Worlds League (typically for him, a working vacation) and so he escaped the Amaris Coup and the purge of the HPG staff that ensued. The young scientist-administrator immediately volunteered his services to the SLDF—Kerensky desperately needed aid to maintain the HPG system, particularly with the Prime Communications Circuit stations near Terra either destroyed or in Amaris' hands. These First Circuit class-A stations were vital to the routing and management of interstellar communications, and so Blake and his fellow volunteers had to

devise and implement a system that used only those stations outside Amaris' control. The success of this venture allowed both the SLDF and the Great Houses to maintain communications despite Amaris' control of the Hegemony. It also brought Blake to the attention of the General and the House Lords.

As the SLDF advanced through the Hegemony, the technicians' skills would be tested to the limit to restore and maintain the systems damaged in the Coup or Operation CHIEFTAIN. Media reports portrayed Blake and the teams as charismatic adventurers, questing through the ruins of the Hegemony, but in reality many were technicians who thrived on the challenges of restoring the communications system, no matter the military necessity. Blake himself was socially awkward and reserved but nonetheless managed to become the head of the HPG repair teams and *de facto* controller of the SLDF's communication network. It would have been easy for him to sit behind the lines managing the work, but Blake took part in his share of it, most notably in restoring the Class A station on Dieron. An AEAF counterattack killed many of the team and wounded Blake, but the station was returned to operation.

SLDF medics treated Blake aboard the *McKenna's Pride* and Kerensky visited the convalescing scientist frequently. They discussed a wide range of philosophical, political and scientific issues and Blake came to regard the General as a friend. Though they disagreed on many points—Blake was somewhat clinical in his assessment of what needed to be done and how, while Kerensky allowed concepts like honor and passion to shape his decisions—the two Terrans each wanted to preserve the Star League and the Hegemony and to protect its people from the horrors of war.

In late 2779, Blake began the mammoth task of restoring Terra's HPGs—Amaris' paranoia that they would serve as an access point for electronic warfare had resulted in their destruction after the SLDF took New Earth. The Unity City HPG was a write-off, as were many of the other installations across Terra. Only the half-built complex above the Castle Brian at Hilton Head remained salvageable. He was working on Hilton Head when the Star League High Council met for the first time since the Coup, and knew little of what was happening there. The Lords agreed on little, but one thing the loss of the Prime Communications Circuit and the resulting communications difficulties had outlined was the need for someone to oversee and maintain the HPG network. Nicoletta Calderon said there was only one candidate for the job, as demonstrated by his efforts during the SLDF's campaign: Jerome Blake. Kerensky seconded the nomination and, after two days of deliberation, Blake was confirmed as the Star League's Minister of Communications. It was to be one of only three matters the council agreed on.

With Kerensky marginalized and unwilling to seize the reins of power, authority within the abandoned Hegemony came to focus on Minister Blake. Initially unwilling to accept the authority of the new office, Blake came to see it as the only way the people of the Hegemony could be helped. His efforts to restore the Hegemony solidified his image in the public's mind, and though never elected he came to be regarded as the acting Director-General of the Hegemony. Unfortunately, with relief efforts foundering—the High

Council refused to help and told Blake to do as he saw fit until the council re-formed—and no centralized government, the shattered Hegemony was surviving though the efforts of the Ministry of Communications and the SLDF.

In late 2783, Kerensky shared his Exodus plan with a stunned Blake. Furious, the minister pointed out that the departure of the SLDF would undermine the relief efforts and accelerate the predation of the Hegemony by the Great Houses. They struggled to find a solution, but in early 2784 an answer emerged. Not all the SLDF wished to depart with Kerensky, and the General persuaded the leader of the refusing troops to swear fealty to Minister Blake. The Ministry would retain numerous divisions of troops and, Blake hoped, this would allow him to maintain law and order on the remaining Hegemony worlds.

It soon became clear this plan would fail. As the Houses girded for war, their occupation of fringe Hegemony worlds accelerated. Kerensky's Exodus opened the floodgates and hopes of holding the Hegemony faded. Instead, Blake set about winning agreement from the House Lords to respect the neutrality of the Ministry and to adopt the ComStar Letter of Credit as the principal means of international exchange. Privately, Blake continued with plans to take control of the Hegemony, but in early 2788 abandoned the Hegemony in favor of a single achievable goal. On 27 June 2788, ComStar took control of Terra in Operation SILVER SHIELD, crushing the independent SLDF and House troops on the capital world. The House Lords were furious at Blake's action (especially as the Communications Protocol of 2787 called on them to respect ComStar's neutrality), but with hostilities already underway in what would become the First Succession War, none contested Blake's takeover.

Over the next few years, Blake re-forged ComStar as a business. By 2802, his financial acumen allowed ComStar to pay off its massive debts—the Ministry had borrowed trillions to fund relief efforts throughout the Hegemony—and to operate at a profit. Blake's clinical corporate decisions didn't always sit well with the rest of the First Circuit—he focused restoration efforts on worlds that would generate the most revenue and largely ignored the Periphery—but his choices, though cold, were successful. Blake also demonstrated a more steely aspect of his personality in banning outsiders from access to ComStar's technologies and creating ROM as an agency for maintaining the security of ComStar's secrets, serving as both a counter-espionage force against Great House intelligence agencies now desperate for technological secrets, and as a police force to secure the loyalty of ComStar's members. ComStar did not gain its mystical trappings until the reign of Conrad Toyama, but many of its structures and policies can be laid at the feet of Blake.

In his latter years Blake suffered health issues, including seizures related to the injuries he'd sustained on Dieron. When he fell ill at a First Circuit meeting in May 2819, there was initially only mild concern, particularly as the workaholic Primus seemed to recover swiftly. Four days later, on 15 May, he collapsed again and his condition—a rare genetic disorder—was discovered to be fatal. He spent the rest of the day being visited by the First Circuit, the last of whom to arrive was Conrad Toyama. During his time with Toyama,

Blake lapsed into unconsciousness and did not awaken. Blake's will called for his ashes to be scattered over the Court of the Star League, but Toyama, installed as the new Primus of ComStar, overruled this and ordered Blake's body preserved and placed on display at Hilton Head. It was the first move in the deification of Blake and the reformation of ComStar into the techno-religious organization that ultimately gave us the Word of Blake and the Jihad.

CONRAD TOYAMA

Rank/Position: Precentor Dieron (2786-2819); Primus of ComStar (2819-2837)

Lived: 9 September 2752 – 17 April 2839

It is an oddity of Inner Sphere history that the man responsible for creating one of the largest pseudo-religious institutions of recent centuries showed little inclination toward matters of faith in his youth. While Jerome Blake believed in quarks, muons, and in his later life the C-bill, Conrad Toyama had no great passions beyond sports and girls, and even the coming of war did little to distract the youngster.

Born and raised on Styx, Conrad Toyama was only fourteen when Amaris took control of the Terran Hegemony. There were no great battles for control of the world and the Amaris-installed governors were little different to those of the Hegemony, though all that changed during his twentieth year. First the DCMS (in later 2772) and then the SLDF (in August 2773) took control of Styx. Described by one of his classmates as a "charming rogue with the gift of the gab," Toyama had prospered during the Amaris occupation by orchestrating deals in the markets of Styx, particularly for items the authorities sought to control. Part fence, part fixer, Toyama bribed the AEAF troops to ignore his black-market deals—a lucrative arrangement for both sides—but the DCMS and SLDF forces were less flexible and he suffered beatings (from the DCMS) and stiff fines (from the SLDF).

Styx's HPG had been sabotaged by Amaris forces during the takeover in 2766 and remained offline when the SLDF arrived. As a non-battleground world, restoring the communications link was not a priority and it wasn't until mid-2774 that teams began work on Styx's station. Toyama soon proved invaluable to the repair team, his ability to acquire rare components and materials, as well as to jury-rig parts, allowing them to finish the work in half the expected time. Toyama found himself seduced by the team's stories of danger and daring, for the first time imagining a life other than trading on Styx.

In late 2780, Toyama's technical expertise won him a place with Jerome Blake's Communications Ministry and within five years he'd risen to head the strategic Dieron station. This elevated him to the First Circuit and unlike many of the Ministry personnel, Toyama brought his years of trading experience with him. Blake was attempting to reform the Ministry into a communications and media conglomerate, but the name "Ministry of Communications" was staid and generic. Toyama suggested rebranding the organization to reflect its commercial role, adopting a name that hybridized the names of Communication Enterprises and Starlight Broadcasting, for whom Blake had been working at the time of the Amaris Coup: ComStar.



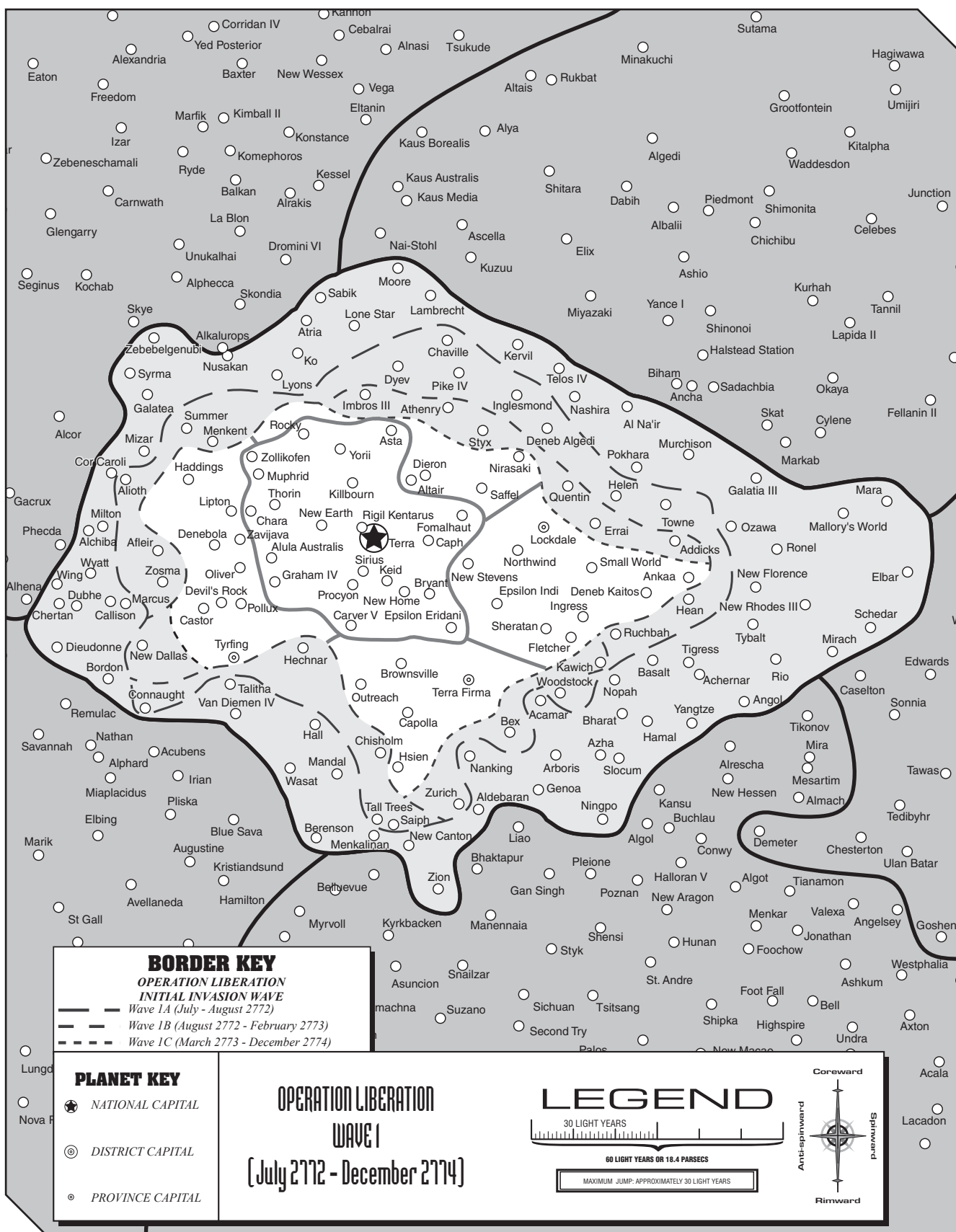
Toyama's mix of commercial and technical knowledge, together with his natural charm, served him well and he rose from being one of Blake's advisors to becoming his principal aide and confidant. Despite their different ages and personalities, each saw the other as a kindred spirit. Both saw the darkness facing humankind and believed their organization could be a beacon against that darkness. Blake's zeal to not only restore communications but to make doing so commercially viable impressed Toyama, particularly the steely determination with which the older man manipulated—despite his seeming lack of social graces—the Great Houses into accepting the Communications Edict of 2787 and, a year later, securing Terra. In many regards, Toyama came to regard Blake as a messiah figure, idolizing him and hanging on his every word. Yet, as often happens with hero worship, something shattered Toyama's image of Blake.

Pinpointing this break is difficult but their ideologies began to drift apart around 2812. Blake believed staunchly in ComStar's neutrality, using force to protect it as needed, but he would not sanction ComStar's involvement in politics. That, he believed, would threaten both its neutrality and its profitability. Toyama believed that, like religious institutions in the medieval era, ComStar should use its trans-national position to influence the secular world. They could mediate and bring peace or, if the situation warranted it, they could force the issue by denying communications to one or more of the Great Houses. Excommunication had been a significant power of the church, against both individuals and states, so could not ComStar wield its interdictions similarly?

Blake's health deteriorated after 2814 and though this appears to have been a natural process, accusations have been leveled at Conrad Toyama, suggesting he poisoned his former mentor. No conclusive evidence of this exists, but considerable circumstantial evidence has prompted historians to consider the possibility. Blake's swift and terminal descent came less than a week after he'd proposed contracting the New Earth Trading Company to sell low-grade, non-military technologies to the Great Houses. After the bloody years of the First Succession War, the Successor States were desperate for once-basic goods. Toyama was appalled that the man he'd once idolized could consider trading technology, ComStar's sacred charge, for mundane C-bills. That Toyama was the last to see Blake conscious could have been coincidence, but the speed of his final decline—and Toyama's interference with monitoring devices as well as his later ignoring of provisions in Blake's will—suggest a darker purpose.

Once Blake was dead and Toyama installed in his place, ComStar began to change. Blake was elevated to the status of a demi-god and the organization began to take on quasi-religious aspects. Styling himself Primus, Toyama's leadership of ComStar pushed the organization into a more proactive role, though others sought to go even further, suggesting the reestablishment the Terran Hegemony by force. To Toyama this was tantamount to heresy and he unleashed ROM to crush his rivals in what he later called a "purification" of the order. The organization that emerged was the classic ComStar of robes and incantations. This cult of personality and technology—Toyama began to refer to ComStar as an order rather a corporation—became enshrined in what Toyama called the Word of Blake. Though that phrase has an evil connotation today, in the early 29th century its meaning was simpler: the teachings of Blake as encapsulated by his journals and technical treatises. These became the focus of the new ComStar faithful, though many of the quotes attributed to Blake did not originate with the Prime Administrator.

Despite blocking the use of military might to recover the Hegemony, Toyama showed little compunction about wielding political pressure against the Great Houses. When members of the order fleeing the Purification sought refuge in the Federated Suns, the new Primus threatened an interdiction of the realm if the "renegades" were not returned. Toyama also began to leverage ComStar's communications monopoly to increase fees, and some in the Inner Sphere began to wonder if they'd created a monster in allowing Blake's organization to prosper. The Lyran Commonwealth attempted to tax ComStar's operations (and Tharkad was interdicted for doing so, the year-long denial of communications crippling the Lyran state). A few years later, Toyama oversaw a more direct involvement in the Succession Wars, manipulating the various states to resume their apocalyptic warfare. This culminated in ComStar's first direct conflict, a shadow war between ROM and the Free Worlds League intelligence organization known as SAFE. ComStar won, though they did not achieve Toyama's ultimate goal of turning the Free Worlds League into a ComStar puppet, and the shadow war badly undermined Toyama's position. Five months later he was dead after a massive stroke, his ashes entombed in the Court of the Star League.



TIGHTENING THE NOOSE

There is only one tactical principle which is not subject to change. It is: to use the means at hand to inflict the maximum amount of wounds, death and destruction on the enemy in the minimum of time.

—General George S. Patton, Jr.

Dearest Lord, bless us, Your humble servants, and watch over us in these most troubling of times as we smite Your iniquitous enemies and hallow these lands with their spilt blood that we may once and for forever end this depraved conflict.

—Field Marshal Mears Coblitz

THE ASTA MISTAKE

The general feel within [Amaris'] inner circle [by 2774] was, of course, one of fear and paranoia. After all, everyone who walked the halls of the royal palace had either heard stories of or seen it with their own eyes: Stefan Amaris swinging his pistol around and raging at no one about the devil Kerensky. By then, the royal guards were removing at least one corpse from the palace a week, shot dead by the Emperor's own hand.

No single incident could be more illustrative of this than the "Asta mistake." In the last months of 2774, Emperor Amaris was growing more and more sullen because of reports coming in from the front, alternating with bouts of anger and contemplative reasoning. He would meet with his strategists every few days, and by mid-December, those meetings would be daily. Eventually, the consensus was to withdraw from worlds with no strategic value and no significant defenses.

Amaris saw the final list of worlds two days before the orders were published. I'm not sure he more than glanced at it before approving, but hours before it was published he started raging that one of the worlds was Asta, which of course lay within 30 light-years of Terra—a hard border he had never mentioned previously. The Emperor was nevertheless livid, and demanded to know who put such an obviously important world on the list. The inner circle blamed a colonel no one had ever heard of, whose body was added to a mass grave the next day, and the orders were changed to delete that world. The routing data, however, was not changed. The withdrawal order went to General Muulun on Asta, and though the name of his assigned world was not explicitly listed, the orders were transmitted directly to him. And Asta was certainly a world that "held no strategic value to the Empire, nor possessed intrinsic defensive measures." Unwritten was the implication that these worlds would read-

PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

Two years of hard fighting brought to both the Star League Defense Forces and the Amaris Empire Armed Forces a number of realizations. Kerensky and his generals knew from the outset that the campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony would bring with it a butcher's bill like none ever seen, while Amaris had but one goal in opposing Kerensky—to make that butcher's bill too high a price to pay. Unfortunately, each leader had sorely underestimated his enemy's resolve—that of the SLDF in reclaiming their ancestral homes and that of Amaris' followers in fighting for what they knew was likely their very survival. Even though their forebears had learned these same lessons more than two and a half centuries earlier during the Reunification War, at the precious cost of their sons and daughters, the SLDF and AEAFF had to learn them all over again.

As 2774 drew to a close, both leaders looked at what they'd accomplished compared to the cost. They began to make changes to their strategies, knowing well that the hell their armies had already faced was a mere fraction of what was to come.

GOOD ENOUGH

For Amaris, who was sliding deeper and deeper into paranoia and depression with every new dispatch from the front lines and every report of Kerensky's armies liberating another world, the options were few. He could no more surrender or flee than he could commit suicide—for in his mind, those options were one and the same. Kerensky's armies had plunged deep into his empire, but had not yet penetrated its core—the oldest, most populous and richest worlds surrounding Terra itself. Moreover, these systems were defended by an array of eighty-three Castles Brian and nineteen Space Defense Systems—more than Kerensky's armies had faced to date, each one representing a tremendous obstacle that cost the SLDF more time and more men.

Rather than keep his ranks spread thinly across the Hegemony, Amaris decided to focus his armies' efforts on key defensible systems. The AEAFF would completely withdraw from every system not possessing significant defensive mechanisms (primarily Space Defense Systems and Castles Brian, but including other well-defended key worlds) outside of a thirty light-year radius around Terra (though a critical miscommunication prompted the evacuation of one system within that perimeter). Dispatched on 19 January 2775, the order was carried out within mere weeks.

Amaris identified a dozen worlds that his armies would abandon. In keeping with his standing Operation TRIPWIRE scorched-earth strategies, he ordered his retreating commanders to leave behind a wake of destruction and chaos, focusing on any supplies and industry that could be used by the SLDF, in an effort to occupy Kerensky's armies with disaster relief operations. The process began with orders redeploying the "volunteer" Patriot units offworld. After that, Amaris' true loyalists stole every last bit of war materiel or commodity they could before turning their guns and missiles on the world. Expanding upon Operation TRIPWIRE, they targeted population centers, infrastructure and agricultural centers alike with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in an effort to leave behind as much destruction and chaos as they could. Most also left behind booty

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traps and other unfortunate surprises for the SLDF (or, as it turned out, the countless civilian emergency responders who poured in from the surrounding Star League member states) who arrived to lend assistance to the surviving populations.

While each of the redeployed Patriot units were dispatched to worlds outside of the thirty-LY radius of Terra, the Amaris loyalists were largely brought closer to Terra in order to strengthen that frontier against SLDF incursion, especially to worlds like Dieron, Carver V and Procyon—all of which were well within the SLDF's reach (Carver V was, of course, already being contested). Meanwhile, Amaris' navy—still more than one hundred fifty WarShips strong—continued to patrol the length and breadth of the Hegemony, searching for small SLDF squadrons and flotillas to ambush.

INSIDE LOOKING IN

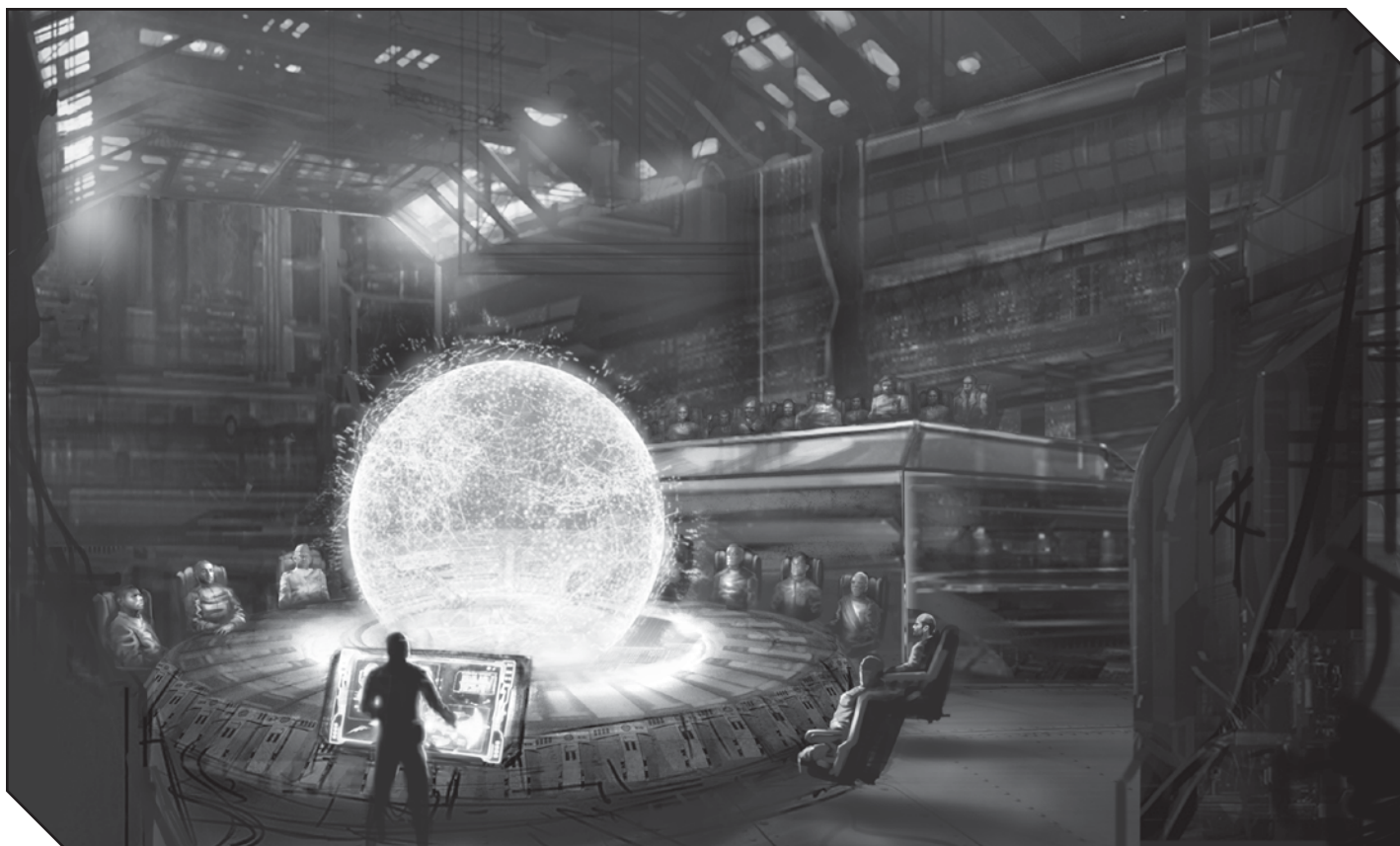
Constant evaluation and re-evaluation of battle goals and progress was an ingrained way of life for every SLDF officer, from the Commanding General down to the newest lieutenant, but grasping the "big picture" on a campaign as large and intricate as Operation CHIEFTAIN was difficult, even in the relatively contained Hegemony. General Aleksandr Kerensky met with his other two task force commanders and what remained of the SLDF High Command on Talitha in November of 2774 specifically to look at that big picture. After two years of hard fighting, exhaustion and losses were exacting horrible tolls on the Star League Defense Forces, and even the most experienced generals were not immune to these effects. Kerensky knew that many of his army and fleet commanders were too focused upon their relatively small "slices" of the invasion. They had lost perspective on the conduct of the campaign as a whole, and as a result were expending more and more scarce resources—men and materiel—on riskier and less critical endeavors than they should have. It was time to refocus on the ultimate goals.

ily fall to the SLDF. Ignoring such an order, or even questioning its source, would have been treason punished with death.

And so General Muulun salted the earth of Asta, destroyed all AEAF facilities behind him and pulled up stakes. As soon as the Emperor saw Muulun's withdrawal report, he exploded. Muulun and everyone involved was to be shackled in front of him within a week. In fact, that happened thirteen days later. The Emperor's strategists presented two score of anonymous prisoners, with a bloody Muulun at their head. The Emperor ordered them all, save for Muulun, shot. He then ordered Muulun's family brought in front of him as well, along with the consort and youngest child of General Norr, then in charge of the Strategic Council. The Emperor stripped Muulun of rank, pronouncing him a traitor to the Empire. He also demoted Norr, and while the Emperor personally shot Muulun, he instructed Norr to execute the rest—including his consort and son.

Norr did, of course. After that, Norr was transferred to Carver V, where he was said to have died leading an assault on the SLDF Quantico base.

—Alto Chuluun, *Inside the Amaris Empire*, Herriman Publishing, 2785



Moreover, lines of communication for the invasion forces were growing longer and longer. The supply dumps and material rehab centers established by the SLDF prior to the invasion were now weeks, if not months, away from the front lines. While each army and army group maintained personnel and equipment reserves that moved forward with their headquarters, those alone could not keep up with the needs of the SLDF. Before the three task forces could continue any deeper into the Hegemony, the logistics networks would need to establish new forward nodes.

That the latter months of 2774 signaled a relative lull in the ferocity of the campaign, then, was no coincidence. Kerensky ordered a temporary halt to new invasions until these concerns could be addressed. While his logisticians established new facilities—in many cases, simply returning to and rebuilding Hegemony-based SLDF depots—and rushed to bring damaged defense industries back online, the general used the Talitha Conference to refocus the SLDF on their only true goal: freeing the Terran Hegemony from the Usurper Stefan Amaris and his minions.

The Talitha Conference was, of course, kept as secret as possible. The world had only been recently liberated, and isolated battles against the final Republican holdouts and other Amaris agents were still being waged. Moreover, Talitha was just a few light-years from the Amaris-held strongholds of Tyrning and Pollux—a determined counterassault from either of those worlds could well have spelled the end of the war, and even the SLDF. Kerensky and his senior officers all arrived quietly, eschewing their flagships and escort fleets for nondescript DropShips and frigates that looked like just a part of every other supply and patrol squadron that entered and left the system daily and weekly. General Kim Solheim and her Fifth Army were charged with security for the conference, which went off without a hitch, despite a handful of vehicle bombings and sniper attacks on the very base at which Kerensky and his officers were meeting.

The assembled generals and admirals not only looked closely at the conduct of Operation CHIEFTAIN to date, they examined every factor that affected their operations, from training new recruits still pouring in from the Star League member states (though not to the extent they had prior to the invasion), to supplying and repairing the wide variety of equipment used by the SLDF, to intelligence gathering, medical care and all the support mechanisms that needed to run smoothly for the SLDF to continue on.

Their conclusions were bleak. If the SLDF continued on to liberate Terra, it would require significant support from the five Great Houses. The resources trickling in from what remained of the Star League bureaucracy were not enough to support continued combat operations as well as civilian relief efforts. Kerensky's logisticians believed they could bring enough of the Hegemony's manufacturing capacity back online to supply the war effort, but it would take at least another year before any significant supplies would reach the troops. Moreover, the same lines of communication that kept the SLDF front lines supplied now had to perform double duty in order to keep worlds left ravaged by Amaris' troops supplied with the bare minimum of necessities until the Hegemony's once-substantial transportation backbone could be reassembled.

Just as troubling were the conclusions reached through reviewing after-action reports from the front lines. It was clear that, more and more, Amaris' retreating troops were leaving wastelands behind them, and while the Star League troops were generally well prepared for fighting on an NBC battlefield, the civilian populations of these worlds were not. Though common SLDF doctrine called for a measured approach to any battle, experience had shown that the best way the Star League forces could prevent civilian casualties inflicted by Amaris' Operation TRIPWIRE was to rush headlong into battle and count on their superior numbers and training to carry the day, regardless of whether current intelligence was available or even if the attack would destroy large sections of a major city and leave behind a wake of civilian dead. Kerensky, in particular, had difficulty accepting this paradigm. Not only did it conflict with his own ideals, he knew just as surely that the public would not accept such a determination. There were already millions of liberated citizens on dozens of worlds calling for his head—as well as the prosecution of innumerable SLDF personnel—for the damage and deaths caused by the invasion to date.

These concerns were nonetheless dwarfed by the greatest threat still facing the SLDF: the fact that Amaris and his armies were still protected by the very defenses designed to keep the Terran Hegemony safe and secure. The scores of Castles Brian still scattered throughout the occupied Hegemony were obstacles that could be removed, if not easily, by expending two of the SLDF's most valuable and scarce commodities—time and manpower. The Space Defense Systems, however, posed the greater challenge. Once again, superior numbers could overcome the SDS, but the cost was far too great for even the mighty Star League Navy to absorb without breaking. The SDS was just designed too well.

Admiral Janos Grec, who became Director of the SLDF Naval Command when Admiral Ignacio Blake stepped down due to poor health in 2772, had traveled throughout the invasion corridors to talk directly with the commanders and crews that had fought in the four SDS-protected systems attacked thus far. Unfortunately, save for using marine boarding parties to activate the SDS ships' self-destruct systems and to capture manned WarShips that could later confuse defenders in other star systems, there were no "magic" weapons or tactics that could easily overcome the strength of the SDS.

In response, the admiral created Project NIKE and charged its working group to devise an effective SDS countermeasure. Under the NIKE aegis, dozens of former SDS technicians and operators, as well as additional engineers and computer specialists, worked on the problem for more than a year. When they presented at the Talitha Conference, they had no answers other than to suggest that the Nirasaki Computers Collective—the designer and maintainer of the Space Defense System—be designated a prime target for capture, in the hopes that an answer could be discovered there.

The Talitha Conference concluded on 28 November with a symbolic feast hosted by Kerensky, celebrating the SLDF's accomplishments to date and praying for success in their future endeavors. The SLDF would not initiate any new invasions for at least four more months to give their logisticians time to establish

new supply depots and rehabilitation centers. Instead, it would focus its efforts on ending hostilities on the nearly dozen worlds still being contested. Each of the three task forces would continue to stage reconnaissance raids and probing attacks into the still-occupied Hegemony, especially on the world of Carver V, but would pursue no new major combat operations for the time being. Meanwhile, Kerensky would dispatch personal ambassadors to meet with the leaders of the five Star League member states in an effort to convince them to directly support the SLDF in “ridding the Inner Sphere of the Amaris scourge.”

MINE, ALL MINE

While help would be on its way to Kerensky far sooner than he expected, the assistance dispatched by Coordinator Minoru Kurita was neither requested nor truly helpful. Throughout the war against Amaris, Kurita had stood as a mystery to Kerensky; at times, the Combine's leader had opposed Operation CHIEFTAIN, blocking the movement of Kerensky's forces or the delivery of critical shipments, while at other times he obviously provided tacit—if not outright—approval of aid as the SLDF plunged into the Terran Hegemony. It was clear to Kerensky, as to Amaris, that Kurita was playing both sides against each other.

That Kurita's game was all a ploy to benefit the Combine at the Hegemony's expense was a possibility that crossed Kerensky's mind as he received word that Twentieth and Twenty-First Army Groups were beginning to see Combine troops arrive on worlds like Chaville, Moore and Telos IV—supposedly to aid in recovery operations and to “free up” SLDF forces for continued operations against the occupied Hegemony. Of course, these Kurita troops were all armed to the teeth, and supported by hundreds of government representatives who seemingly spent as much time building a pro-Combine propaganda machine as they did legitimately assisting the planets' populations. By the end of 2774, this “assistance” had arrived on eight worlds along the Combine frontier.

The implication was clear to Kerensky; Kurita was making a power play for those worlds. But at the same time, the Combine possessed a legitimate claim on some of them—Moore and Nashira were both “jointly” held by the Combine and Hegemony prior to the Coup, while on each of the other worlds, including Al Na'ir, Galatia III, Mara and Murchison, Combine troops relieved the SLDF of many reconstruction and assistance duties with which they'd been overwhelmed.

Unwilling to pursue a war of words—very likely to devolve into an armed conflict—Kerensky once again took no direct action save for a terse rebuke to the Coordinator. The General chastised Kurita for sending armed troops into a war zone, reminding him that not only was martial law still in effect on those worlds, but that the SLDF would be forced to disarm or even eliminate any threats to the Star League or the Hegemony—including interference with planetary reorganization efforts. Kerensky likewise reinforced those policies with his own commanders at all levels.

Of course, the SLDF and what remained of the Star League bureaucracy was sorely limited in manpower and funding, and inevitably could not prevent the Draconis Combine, or any of the other member states, from interfering with internal politics. Kerensky knew this, but perhaps did not fully grasp the implications. In his mind, he wanted only to fight one war at a time, especially as he still needed significant support from the member states. After he had dealt with Amaris, he could refocus on the other problems that had surfaced.

Don't Fight It

When word spread to the other members of the Star League Council that Minoru Kurita had sent heavily armed “relief forces” to recently liberated Hegemony worlds, each of the other four House Lords likewise began to take matters into their own hands. Beginning with jointly held worlds, throughout 2775 each of the five leaders

THE REAL DEAL

Even the common citizen of the Inner Sphere is no longer ignoring the simple truth that Kerensky's war is both illegal and immoral. Star League recruiting stations across known space are closing down on a daily basis because the listless youth are no longer allowing the Cameronists to pollute their minds with false tales of the honorable knight (or samurai or crusader) Kerensky battling the devil incarnate Amaris. No, the citizens of the Inner Sphere are finally seeing through the lies their corrupt Cameronist overlords have been feeding them and recognizing for themselves the inescapable truth: that Kerensky has been throwing away the lives of their fathers and mothers and sons and daughters, all for simple greed.

The Cameronists and their corporate greedmongers are using Kerensky to fight their war for them, and are lining their pockets with the innocents being murdered in this illegal war. Their criminal enterprise seeks but one thing: to topple the only man who dared bring the Cameronists down and give Terra back to its own people. And while they fight for the very survival of their way of life, they profit from selling their foul implements of war to Kerensky and to Amaris. Convoys packed with the most destructive implements man ever conceived of stream in from the four corners of deep space to sell their vile wares to the criminal Kerensky and the Emperor, knowing that millions upon millions of innocents will be caught in the crossfire and pay the ultimate price.

—Gordon Xiang, editorial, *Ares Daily Media*, 2775

For the first time in more than a decade, total JumpShip and DropShip transit rates in the Hegemony are increasing, in many cases exponentially. Companies that long avoided trading with the Amaris government are again shipping their wares into the liberated Hegemony, the crash of the Star League Dollar notwithstanding. Meanwhile, ships that stood idle for weeks or months at a time, or had been “nationalized” following the Coup, are now transporting Hegemony wares and refugees alike into the rest of the Inner Sphere, in turn bringing relief back to the Hegemony. Soon enough, we'll start to see the flow of consumer products, electronics and vehicles especially, and agricultural surpluses begin again.

Hope is finally on the horizon. Complete economic recovery is still years, if not decades, away. The terrible price in lives may never be known, but the Star League will pick up the pieces while Human ingenuity will put them back together. Probably better than ever before.

—Hope San Angelo, editorial, *Ares Daily Media*, 2775



FUTURE IN THE PAST

Prosecuting more than thirteen years of total war across the Inner Sphere and Periphery certainly took its toll on the Star League Defense Forces, which were cut off from the majority of suppliers, not to mention funding, after the Amaris Coup. Literally left out in the cold as he prosecuted a war against the rebelling Periphery nations, and with a rapidly dwindling supply reserve, [General Kerensky] quickly made peace with the Periphery and turned his attentions instead toward the Rim Worlds Republic. There, he hoped to put its extensive industrial capacity to work to keep his armies and fleets in supply long enough to liberate the Hegemony.

The Rim Worlds Republic was not the only source Kerensky turned to, however. Military suppliers throughout the Inner Sphere, especially those never seriously considered before and those whose offerings had been rejected in the past, jumped at the chance to demonstrate their wares to the SLDF. But for the first time, *ever*, the SLDF suddenly had to

tested Kerensky's resolve, with varying degrees of success. Kenyon Marik was the most aggressive; Free Worlds forces landed on Chertan, Dieudonne and Wing in March of 2775, seemingly as the same kind of "relief forces" that Kurita had. On Connaught, however, the situation was different. After landing in May, the Second Marik Militia attempted to occupy Kong Interstellar's main production complex, to "provide relief to the over-extended SLDF." As a prime military supplier that was just beginning to regain its pre-war production capacity, the Kong complex was a key piece of infrastructure that the SLDF was not about to give up. A tense standoff resulted in shots being fired, followed by a brief battle that left two companies of Marik Regulars destroyed and the rest of the regiment disarmed and interned—at first in a POW camp on the world before they were transferred to a prison camp erected just for them on Talitha under orders from Kerensky.

Captain-General Marik demanded the immediate return of his men and compensation for their losses. Meanwhile, FWL troops on Chertan, Dieudonne and Wing all issued ultimatums to the SLDF garrisons to leave these "sovereign Free Worlds." The result was a forcible disarming and deportation of four of Marik's regiments (though the relief workers were allowed to remain). This prompted a long series of hostile communications between Marik and Kerensky that forced the latter to maintain a far greater defensive posture towards the Free Worlds League than he'd hoped. By August, most of the Second Militia had been repatriated, though five—including its commander, Colonel Lisl Stephenson—were tried and convicted, sentenced to anywhere between eight and thirty years for their crimes against the SLDF.

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The other member-state leaders took much different approaches. First Prince John Davion, Chancellor Barbara Liao and Archon Robert Steiner each significantly increased the amount of aid being sent into the liberated Hegemony, focusing of course on worlds nearest their own realms. First Prince John Davion made the additional offer of directly supporting the SLDF with arms and equipment, while also providing limited military assistance in the form of police and light infantry solely to help maintain law and order—all of whom would nominally report directly to either the appointed military governor or to the legitimate civilian government.

Kerensky was no fool, but Davion had always been straightforward in their dealings. Not only would this deal net the SLDF sorely needed materiel, it would potentially free up soldiers who were needed on the front lines while ensuring that SLDF martial law would remain in place. Kerensky agreed, forging the way for Barbara Liao and Robert Steiner to make similar agreements. These were clearly not ideal agreements to make, but to Kerensky it was the only viable way to ensure the SLDF would remain adequately supplied in the foreseeable future.

PLANETS ON FIRE

In January of 2775, Kerensky began receiving unexpected news. Listening posts established by Operation KEYHOLE in systems throughout the occupied Hegemony first began to report the redeployment of numerous Amaris forces in late January. Within days, those listening posts dispatched new reports of the extensive use of weapons of mass destruction on many of those same worlds, followed closely by news that Amaris' occupation forces had withdrawn completely from them. By the first week in February, the tally of worlds devastated and then abandoned by Amaris had reached twelve.

Kerensky responded by immediately ordering the SLDF into action. Twelve corps plunged into the occupied Hegemony, encountering no opposition in any of the systems. What they did find shocked and horrified them; while Amaris' troops regularly used WMDs against the SLDF, those attacks were meant primarily to damage or slow their enemies, with attacks on civilian targets made largely to prevent their enemies from taking full advantage of a world's resources. On the recently abandoned worlds, however, Amaris' minions freely used their weapons to damage and destroy the planets' ability to sustain their populations and industries (rather than directly target the populations themselves). The goal was simply to create wastelands that Amaris knew Kerensky would have no choice but to clean up and starving populations that the general would need to feed. This goal, they accomplished.

Ankaa, Asta, Brownsville, Castor, Deneb Kaitos, Devil's Rock, Haddings, Hsien, Nirasaki, Rocky, Sheratan, and Zavijava were all targeted in this way and then abandoned by the AEA. Each of these worlds was, simply put, devastated. As soon as he learned of the level of damage done, Kerensky ordered the SLDF reserve into action; almost a hundred total divisions were either on the ground already or en route to these worlds by the end of February, every one of them tasked with cleaning up what damage they could and providing aid to those left displaced, hungry or without services.

Amaris' tactic worked. Kerensky's dedication of so much of his ready reserve severely limited his ability to resume a full-scale invasion for the first months of 2775. Ultimately, the general turned to his nominal allies in the Capellan Confederation, Federated Suns and Lyran Commonwealth to provide additional relief forces for these worlds, though the damage done would take much, much longer than anyone expected to clean up (if ever, as in the case of Brownsville, Haddings and Rocky).

consider one major factor: economy. Gone were the seemingly limitless funding pools and the emphasis on the absolute cutting edge, replaced instead with the mandate for cheap, simple and easy to operate.

So where the "second-tier" defense contractors expected to sell Kerensky their absolute best, once more they received rejections nearly across the board. Many gave up on the effort, but a handful returned to the SLDF with what could only be called their "economy" models—BattleMechs, tanks and aerospace craft designed and marketed to militias, security firms and other budget-conscious entities. Iconic BattleMechs like the *Blackjack* and *Vulcan* served well throughout the war, while designs like the *Enforcer*, *Grasshopper* and *Quickdraw* all sprang from the same movement.

Unfortunately, relying on second-tier manufacturers and short-changing the competitive testing process often led to unanticipated consequences (unanticipated at least by those who never worked within the SLDF bidding process). Though a handful of major players, like General Motors, continued to do business with the SLDF, the expanding use of second-tier suppliers meant poor quality control, non-standard parts and regular breakdowns for much of this new equipment. In modern times, this is jokingly called the "Quikscell Effect;" during the Amaris Civil War, it was life or death.

At the same time, SLDF mechanics and technicians were very quickly learning the arts of scavenging, salvaging and jury-rigging. Without the luxury of being able to ship a problem machine to a maintenance depot or back to the factory for repair, the SLDF logistics arms had to keep as many machines running as possible for as long as possible, and then somehow cobble together useable combat vehicles from the battered remains of equipment that just a few years ago would have been sent directly to the scrap yard.

It was a very different time indeed for the Star League Defense Forces.

—Lieutenant General Ran Felsner, *Logistics is the Key*, Avalon Military Quarterly, 3002

Karma Wheel

The lone bright point in this disaster was the liberation of Nirasaki. Amaris' agents had ransacked Nirasaki Computers Collective shortly after the Coup, rounding up and transporting key research and technical staff to Terra while entombing the remaining NCC staff within a demolished corporate headquarters. SLDF intelligence operatives combed through the NCC rubble as soon as they landed. The company's memory cores and backups had been erased, and its paper files burned, with all technical equipment and research projects either moved to Terra or destroyed. But more than a week into the search of company's ruins, a portable computer was found hidden away in a cleaning closet in the lowest levels of the headquarters. Hidden years before by Dr. Catherine Glimp, an NCC researcher and Professor of Computer Science at Nirasaki Union University who was among the forefront of artificial intelligence researchers, the computer contained as much technical data on the SDS design as she and her colleagues could pack into its memory cores.

Dr. Glimp and her colleagues provided as much insight into the SDS as they could. They realized it would pose a significant challenge to an SLDF liberation force, and hoped the computer would somehow remain hidden and that the SLDF would eventually discover it. In their notes, the NCC researchers provided some options that could make the SDS less formidable, but in their own words, "we just did too good a job, never once imagining we might one day wish the stupid things were more vulnerable."

Admiral Grec's Project NIKE working group made good use of the information provided. Within weeks, they had designed a system that could theoretically overload and jam the command networks that allowed the individual SDS ships to coordinate their actions. By mid-March they were outfitting two squadrons of SLDF WarShips with computer and communications systems, scrounged from dozens of sources, which would be the guts of the makeshift jammers. Two weeks later, Kerensky himself, with Admiral Grec by his side, led the assault that would prove whether or not the system truly worked. Based on what they learned during that first assault, the Project NIKE team refined the system and contracted with electronics manufacturers surrounding the Hegemony to provide the components needed to build dozens more SDS jammers.

Given the wide variety of contractors that provided components and the large number of tech teams assembled solely to build and maintain the SDS jammers, no two systems were identical. Then again, the SDS jammer was designed and built in weeks and months, not years or even decades like a typical SLDF project. There were failures, to be sure, but the system gave Kerensky's SLDF the boost it needed to push into the next phase of the war.

GET THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

After more than two years of heavy fighting, preceded by eight years of war in the Periphery, the Star League Defense Forces needed a break for more than logistical reasons. The very nature of the Hegemony campaign meant that a great many SLDF men and women were literally fighting to free their homes from Amaris' tyranny. Not only was the loss of so many comrades directly affecting them, so were the civilian casualties they encountered on a daily basis, along with every report of new atrocities committed by the Usurper's agents.

To say that many of the SLDF's hardened veterans were physically and emotionally exhausted is an understatement. The rate of AWOLs increased each day as soldiers who'd finally had enough simply walked away, while years of intense combat action coupled with the increased average age of the SLDF meant that more and more casualties—among whom there were just as many looking to quickly return to their units no matter the physical cost as there were those who wanted to shirk their duties—remained under care in hospitals and clinics at all levels for much longer terms. And of those being treated, more and more were being declared physically or mentally unfit for duty.

And so General Kerensky called a halt to new invasions in late 2774, specifically to give his armies and fleets some time to recuperate while the logisticians worked to shorten the lines of communication to the front. He also ordered units that had been standing by to begin rotating through to allow units still fighting some down time.

This temporary halt came to an end in February, when Kerensky learned of Amaris' withdrawal from a dozen worlds. But when the apparent key to defeating the dreaded Space Defense System came to light, the sleeping tiger that was the SLDF reawoke with a roar that would not cease.

General Kerensky himself participated in the first major operation of 2775: an all-out assault on the world of New Home. Given the nature of the campaign to date, with the three Star League task forces steadily pushing inwards from the Hegemony's outermost borders, this was an unexpected target—which was among the prime reasons Kerensky selected it. The SLDF had not targeted any new systems for more than a year, and more than anything Kerensky wanted to strike deep into the Hegemony at a well-defended world to send a message to Amaris and his generals: no target was safe from the Star League Defense Forces.

New Home was the first of many new systems targeted in 2775, but only one of four SDS-defended star systems struck.

New Home

The strike at New Home was simultaneously well-prepared and fought from the seat-of-the-pants. Kerensky's strategists had identified five different systems deep within the Hegemony core—only two of which were defended by an SDS—that the SLDF could assault in an effort to shake the confidence of Amaris and

his generals. Each of the five briefing packages included detailed intelligence analyses and operations plans. Given the difficulties the SLDF was having with overcoming the SDS, Kerensky did not truly consider New Home or Caph—the two SDS-protected systems on the list—as viable targets until Project NIKE’s breakthrough. As soon as he had a viable SDS countermeasure, Kerensky tasked Admiral Marina Akkayev-Cameron and her Fourth Fleet with leading the way. General Reed Challen’s Twenty-Fourth Army Group—reinforced by the Fifth Regimental Combat Team and the Third, Sixth and Eighth Volunteer Brigades—would be responsible for the ground assault. The New Home invasion force massed at Brownsville in February while Project NIKE teams rushed to outfit twenty-five WarShips with prototype SDS countermeasures.

Though General Kerensky and Admiral Janos Grec accompanied the invasion fleet, neither inserted themselves into the planning nor assumed direct command of the operation; indeed, while Kerensky’s WarShip squadron would arrive with the bulk of Fourth Fleet’s initial assault forces, they would serve only in a support capacity, jumping in well outside of the engagement range to either block an enemy escape effort or cover a withdrawal.

The naval assault began on 29 March 2775 when Admiral Akkayev-Cameron jumped in to a pirate point close to New Home itself with over a hundred WarShips—nearly half of which were temporarily assigned to her Fourth Fleet. As soon as they arrived, the SDS drone ships began to attack, but within minutes it became clear that they were not operating at full efficiency, and soon it was obvious they were not coordinating their efforts. Likewise, SDS ground and orbital batteries exhibited obvious difficulty in targeting ships they would have had no problems in eviscerating before. The fifty-three drone WarShips defending New Home were all destroyed or disabled in less than forty-five minutes, at a cost of four SLDF WarShips destroyed.

The Project NIKE-equipped ships all suffered various problems throughout the battle. At best, each of these ships lost their primary sensors and much of their internal and external communications capabilities to the overwhelming cross-band interference they were emanating; at worst, the severe interference and power drains caused cascading system failures that rendered three WarShips—two *Vincent*-class corvettes and an *Aegis*-class cruiser—dead in space (both of the *Vincents* were destroyed in battle, with the *Aegis* sustaining heavy structural damage and relegated to convoy escort for the remainder of the war).

The first SLDF ground forces—including the First and Fifth RCTs and the 241st Volunteer Division (Provisional) arrived via pirate point and were landing within twelve hours of that first battle’s end.

Meanwhile, Admiral Akkayev-Cameron turned towards the nadir jump point, jumping with more than eighty L-F battery-equipped WarShips thirty minutes after securing the world of New Home. The nadir defense ships had received word that the world was under attack just minutes prior to Fourth Fleet’s jump-in. The SDS drones responded immediately, but the four AEAJ WarShips,

six JumpShips and handful of DropShips were not yet ready for action. On the other hand, the three JumpShips and seven DropShips from the Secret Fleet at the nadir were ready as soon as Fourth Fleet appeared.

The Secret Fleet ships focused on the crewed Republican vessels while Fourth Fleet picked apart the SDS network. Here again, Fourth Fleet’s overwhelming numbers and Project NIKE countermeasures quickly eliminated the SDS ships and control station with minimal losses, though based on the initial assault on New Home, Admiral Akkayev-Cameron adjusted how she used the NIKE ships. Of the sixteen NIKE WarShips she had at her disposal in the nadir battle, only eight began with their countermeasures operational (all of the NIKE ships had been active during the first battle, each suffering significant onboard systems failures because of the jamming), with each active ship assigned a backup; the backup NIKE ships would only activate their countermeasures if their primary “active” were disabled or if Akkayev-Cameron required additional jamming in a particular sector of the battle.

This time, only one NIKE ship—an older *Lola III*—was disabled, targeted by numerous SDS ships (whose AIs determined it a priority target; it was repaired and returned to service within a year). The Secret Fleet crews meanwhile captured five of the six AEAJ JumpShips (along with two DropShips), and occupied the WarShips’ attention long enough for Fourth Fleet’s fighters and assault ships to cripple them.

Admiral Akkayev-Cameron gave the “all clear” to General Challen shortly thereafter, who led the remainder of his Twenty-Fourth Army Group, waiting patiently at Brownsville’s zenith point, to jump to New Home’s nadir. They arrived and, escorted by the bulk of Akkayev-Cameron’s fleet, began the eight-day burn-in to New Home—hours before the advance force consisting of the First and Fifth RCTs and 241st Volunteer Division had even entered New Home’s atmosphere.

That advance force landed on the southern reaches of the Spina Planetia continent and targeted each of the SDS ground-based batteries, securing the way for the remainder of Twenty-Fourth Army Group to make landfall on 8 April. Based on the information gained from Operation KEYHOLE observation of New Home, General Challen expected to be faced with at least a full division of assorted AEAJ troops dug into fortified positions; in fact, New Home had more than one full additional brigade of defenders, including a regiment of recently hired mercenaries and two of dragooned Patriot forces. The world further boasted extensive military facilities (though no Castles Brian), but its local commanders were more engaged with lining their own pockets and internecine political battles than with securing the world against invasion.

By the time Challen’s main force landed—more than a week after the first SLDF troops set foot on the planet—Amaris’ forces were only just beginning to take to the field to oppose the initial landings. To that point, only a mix of Republican aerospace and conventional

DON'T STOP ME NOW

As soon as he had secured his position on Terra, Stefan Amaris turned the Hegemony's industrial might towards strengthening his new empire's armed forces. The first, and only notable, fruit of those efforts was Krupp Stellar Technologies' AEM-01 *Dragoon* BattleMech, the first production models of which were delivered in January of 2771, and which Krupp continued to build in large numbers until the SLDF overran its factories six years later.

Amaris was obsessed with erasing the legacy of the Camerons though, a fact that took on many different forms. The most obvious included the removal of every public image, statue or even building name that referred to the Camerons, a complete reformation of the Star League's military was a key part of his strategy. At first, Amaris was content to make organic changes to his AEAF—phasing in completely new combat units as older models were retired. The *Dragoon* was to be just the first new 'Mech for the AEAF; Amaris' plans included new light 'Mech scouts, medium cavalry units, massive assault 'Mechs and a series of conventional armor vehicles to round out his armies. He also came to Terra with design plans for both new destroyer- and cruiser-class WarShips to complement the *Stefan Amaris* battleship he had just introduced to his navy, while his ultimate goals included completely new aerospace fighter and even assault DropShip models.

Those "pie in the sky" dreams, for the most part, remained just that. The dual realities of the Star League Council refusing to bow to him and Kerensky's war to liberate the Hegemony meant that he simply could not afford to lose the production time it would take to design and retool existing lines to build these new units. He was forced to entrust his defense upon the very same Cameron war machine that Kerensky was aiming at him—a fact that continued to haunt him even as insanity overtook him.

Nonetheless, soon after the fall of his Rim Worlds Republic, Amaris began pressing his generals and his industrialists to develop the new "super weapons" that would defend his empire from Kerensky's armies. None were the success the *Dragoon* was, and in fact both the quantity and level of impracticality of the concepts submitted increased with the depths Amaris plunged into insanity. A few designs, like the *Screamer* LAM and the *Rifleman III*, did manage to progress beyond the concept stage only to fail in prototype. One of Amaris' so-called follies, the overweight behemoth code-named *Matar*, did however see the light of day almost a century later—ironically within Kerensky's own Clans in the form of the *Stone Rhino*.

—Lorne Shakar, *The Amaris Legacies*, Tukayyid Publishing House, 3061

fighters had in any way engaged the initial strike force. With the arrival of the whole of Twenty-Fourth Army Group (and, of course, Fourth Fleet), the SLDF quickly assumed aerial superiority and dropped almost directly on top of every major Republican formation. Within days, the supposed "crème" of the AEAF units on New Home were crushed, with nearly every other battalion and regiment surrounded and engaged by a superior SLDF force.

General Kerensky remained in the New Home system only long enough to see Challen's landing on the world and to watch Admiral Akkayev-Cameron eliminate the final fleet of SDS drones. In this third battle, Fourth Fleet lost six NIKE countermeasures ships to systems failures, but the end result was no different than the previous two engagements—the SDS drone fleets were eliminated, and both Admiral Grec and Project NIKE's engineers had the information they needed to refine the system and tactics for future operations. Admiral Akkayev-Cameron withdrew Fourth Fleet in mid-April for repairs and refit—especially to the NIKE ships—before receiving her next assignment.

The campaign for New Home truly lasted only weeks longer before General Challen reported that all AEAF defense forces were either eliminated or pinned. In six weeks of active combat operations, Twenty-Fourth Army Group suffered the lowest casualty rate of any army group yet in the war, and was targeted by only a handful of Republican WMD attacks. Though the SLDF would suffer through terrorist attacks throughout the remainder of the war, Twenty-Fourth Army Group put an end to the most violent Republican insurgent groups by the end of summer, and in fact were freed up enough to conduct raids and support additional invasions by June.

TASK FORCE CONFEDERATION

The assault on New Home was just the first of several new invasions that Kerensky's Task Force Confederation planned during 2775. That assault, coupled with deployments to Brownsville, Hsien and Sheratan—three worlds within Task Force Confederation's area of responsibility (AoR) left in ruins after Amaris' troop withdrawals—and ongoing pacification operations within the AoR, forced significant changes in assignment given to each of Kerensky's four army groups. The most significant was the retasking of nearly the entire Twenty-Fourth Army Group to the New Home assault. General Challen had initially landed on Hsien after its abandonment, but during the planning for New Home, Kerensky shifted Eighteenth Army into a purely garrison role, taking over Twenty-Fourth Army Group's entire AoR in addition to its own. Eighteenth Army's LXIV Corps split its troops between Hsien and Brownsville, while the remainder of the army took up positions in the rear areas.

Twenty-Fourth Army Group made its New Home assault with more than six brigades of its troops still in garrison positions within their own AoR; those troops finally rejoined the rest of the army group in May and June.

With Eighteenth Army defensively tasked, Fifth Army—the second of Fifth Army Group's two component armies—was placed in reserve for the time being. It would eventually be responsible for assaulting Outreach and Tyrning, but given that both systems were defended by an SDS, those assaults could not happen until Project NIKE outfitted more SLDF WarShips with the countermeasures. Carver V was still a key target that Fifth Army Group hoped to strike soon, given that SLDF survivors there had prevented Amaris' forces from taking complete control of the world since the Coup years earlier, but for now Kerensky was content to leave Carver as a thorn in Amaris' side.

That left Twenty-Second and Seventeenth Army Groups responsible for most of the new combat operations early in 2775. Twenty-Second Army Group's First Army, having previously secured Aldebaran and Nanking (though still fighting a low-level campaign to rid both worlds of Republican supporters and insurgents), was given the task of securing Capolla. In order to accomplish that, First Army Commands per General Nulia Seth formed CCXX Provisional Corps by pulling three divisions each from X and XXI Corps under the command of Lieutenant General Ricard Pershaw. The remainder of X and XXI Corps remained in garrison on Aldebaran and Nanking, awaiting an eventual strike towards Terra Firma or even deeper.

Capolla

CCXX Corps hit Capolla in April of 2775. Though boasting no military industry, the world possessed a large population and produced an abundance of foodstuffs and industrial products, and so remained a vital world to Amaris, at least until CCXX Corps' landing. At that point, the AEAf defenders knew it would only be a matter of time before the SLDF's superior numbers overwhelmed and destroyed them.

Republican General Hera Gruenwald ordered the Patriot and mercenary forces under her command to meet General Pershaw's troops in the field and drive them from their landing zones. The 117th and 122nd Amaris Dragoons regiments were to give support, but instead focused on carrying out the edicts of Operation TRIPWIRE—demolishing Capolla's industry and infrastructure. Their sole support to their allies was the launching of an alternating series of nuclear and chemical attacks that caught AEAf and SLDF forces alike in their radius. Under the cover of those attacks, Gruenwald and both the 117th and 122nd Dragoons retreated from the world (along with a handful of Amaris' most ardent supporters), leaving the battered and disorganized mercs and Patriot forces to fend for themselves. Two Patriot battalions managed to surrender, their AEAf leaders either AWOL or overpowered by their unwilling draftees, while a third was finally captured after a series of running defensive battles. The mercenaries, on the other hand, were hunted down mercilessly.

Those brief weeks of heavy fighting by CCXX Corps were nothing compared to the response and recovery phase, which occupied the SLDF for the remainder of the war, and CCXX Corps itself for more than a year.

Fletcher

At the same time, Seventeenth Army Group similarly focused on the worlds ahead of it. Tenth Army took responsibility for relief efforts on Sheratan despite the world being outside its originally assigned invasion corridor, leaving Fifteenth Army ready to resume its attacks. Fletcher was targeted at the same time as Capolla, but represented a far more strategic target for both Amaris and Kerensky thanks to its extensive industry, including a number of major military contractors.

The attack itself came weeks after the New Home invasion began, news of which concerned Amaris' military governor General Ontus Walling, but did not prompt any additional preparations or alerts. This allowed XXXV Corps to sneak several battalions of troops onto the world ahead of the main invasion force with the help of the Secret Fleet. These troops spent the week prior to the arrival of the main body observing the garrison forces, securing potential landing zones and preparing a series of "surprises" for the Republican defenders. Two days before XXXV Corps landed, this insurgency force began to target prominent pro-Amaris figures and AEAf officers, killing some in sniper attacks and bombings while carrying out kidnapping attempts on other individuals and their families. Six hours before the landing, they also began cutting power and communications to key defense and government

facilities before launching a series of terrorist-like attacks on the garrison forces. In the process they secured a number of important objectives, including space traffic control centers and industrial complexes.

These preliminary attacks successfully removed or distracted a handful of key Republican decision-makers. The resulting disruption in communications, coupled with blatantly incorrect information passed on by three of Fletcher's now SLDF-controlled space traffic control centers, prevented the AEAf from effectively intercepting most of the invading force.

Other preliminary attacks did not fare as well, however. Attempts to take over StarCorps' production facilities failed miserably, forcing a fight for StarCorps that lasted nearly three weeks and kept the factory offline for most of the rest of the year. On the whole, the battle for Fletcher began squarely in the SLDF's favor and never changed. The preliminary attacks prevented the Republicans from accessing their WMD caches early, while direct assaults on their positions, though damaging to the surrounding environs, prevented anything more than accidental local releases.

Save for the final pacification of the inevitable insurgency, Fletcher was under SLDF control by summer.

TASK FORCE SUN

General DeChavilier's Task Force Sun targeted five total systems in early- and mid-2775 not counting the three abandoned worlds within its AoR. Nineteenth Army took responsibility for Ankaa (LXV Corps) and Deneb Kaitos (LVI Corps), two worlds where scorched-earth actions taken by Amaris forces had left the two worlds' relatively small populations struggling. This left one corps (XLVI) in reserve for either a deep strike or to take over garrison duties for other advancing armies.

Meanwhile Second Army, still dealing with the after-effects of liberating Angol and Tigress, targeted Ingress. Fourth Army meanwhile hit Small World and Third Army continued its inexorable advance towards Northwind, bypassing the SDS-defended Lockdale. Twenty-First Army Group's two armies likewise continued deeper into the Terran Hegemony, in the process shifting slightly coreward to take over some of Task Force Commonwealth's invasion corridor; Ninth Army targeted Saffel while Fourteenth Army struck the well-defended world of Altair.

Ingress and Saffel

Nineteenth Army Group's only early 2775 attack was completed by LII Corps, which struck Ingress in early May. Like Capolla, it was a self-sufficient world that the occupied Hegemony depended on for food and resource exports, though like all Amaris-occupied worlds since the Coup, production had steadily declined even as quotas increased. Landing a few weeks after the attack on Capolla, LII Corps intended to strike the Amaris defenders hard and maintain complete aerospace superiority to prevent WMD attacks. Just a brigade of defenders opposed them, including a mercenary regiment far more interested in lining their own pockets and later in saving their own hides than following their Emperor's orders.

Upon landing, LII Corps promptly surrounded the mercenary unit Jacob's Firebrands, which surrendered almost without a fight. This deprived the Republicans on-world of its BattleMech contingent, which was also the planet's only true rapid response force. The battle for Ingress quickly became one of a superior force with complete aerospace dominance tracking down and eliminating the small groups of rabid defenders left after the destruction of their main force bodies.

XXXIV Corps hit Saffel in the first week of April, shortly after Twenty-Fourth Army Group descended on New Home. Saffel became the second world within a thirty light-year radius of Terra that the SLDF struck, though where nearly every other world within that range was a fortified bastion, Saffel possessed few standing defenses and just a brigade of defenders. As a world locked in an ice age, its population largely lived at the equator, with only mining and nomadic herding operations wandering the rest of its icy expanses. XXXIV Corps did its best to quickly push Republican defenders out of the cities and into the wild lands, where those defenders had little access to support but could also be easily lost in the wilderness and weather. The Amaris defenders successfully made a number of nuclear and chemical weapon attacks, though Saffel's wintry weather contained much of their effects within new layers of snow and ice that continually accumulated (though even today pockets of Amaris War-era toxicity regularly turn up in glaciers and ice fields). Saffel became one of the notable worlds where the majority of Amaris' forces ultimately surrendered or committed suicide rather than fight to the death.

Small World

Despite being an icy world with a relatively small population, Small World was a resource-rich heavy exporter that the Terran Hegemony naturally defended with the construction of Castles Brian. The world's icy frontiers made it easily defensible while its numerous abandoned underground mines made for convenient and well-protected warehouses. It also ultimately became home to the SLDF Second Army and the entire Federated Suns Military Region.

By 2775, like many other once-bright stars in the Hegemony, Small World was a shadow of its previous greatness. After the Coup, the world suffered terribly as Amaris' agents severely limited access to food and other resources unless the population, especially the outlying mining settlements, met increasingly outlandish quotas and other requirements.

XXXVII Corps, reinforced by two of LXII Corps' divisions, hit the world in early April, brushing aside the Republican WarShip squadron defending the system and deploying marines to take command of the minor shipyard located in-system. XXXVII Corps itself landed in force at several different points across the planet. The two Castles Brian were key objectives they hoped to quickly surround and bar any significant AEAf reinforcements from coming in or out, but the bulk of XXXVII Corps actually focused on a number of key underground facilities—including AEAf bases as well as SLDF storehouses that intelligence reports suggested might never have been discovered. Though XXXVII Corps only came upon a

tiny handful of still-sealed SLDF storehouses, it did manage to trap the bulk of the Small World Republican garrison in underground holdouts that, while easily defensible, also prevented them from escaping into the open.

As a result, the pacification of Small World would not be complete for years, though with their opponents largely contained, XXXVII Corps could easily move whole regiments and brigades off the line for R&R, or even transfer whole divisions offworld for other operations. XXXVII Corps maintained a slow but steady progress against the defenders, and after removing the bulk of the pro-Amaris supporters within the government and industry, were able to call upon Small World's many mining companies to assist them in literally digging the defenders out of their holes (or, in other cases, to bore access shafts in so that they could deploy chemical and biological agents).

In the meantime, Fourth Army Group moved to Small World, once again turning the planet into a key SLDF headquarters.

Northwind

Northwind, a staunchly pro-Cameron world with a strong standing mercenary defense force—the Northwind Highlanders—had been an embattled world since the Coup. Though the Republicans initially targeted the on-world Highlanders during the Coup the same way they did to the SLDF throughout the Hegemony, Amaris' agents were only partially successful. As on worlds like New Dallas, the Republicans were met with open hostility and derision by the people of Northwind long before the Coup, though here the Usurper's troops were far more successful in their initial attacks than on New Dallas. They crippled three Highlander regiments in the first day and drove the survivors into hiding; by the end of the first week, the world was effectively, if not completely, under Amaris' thumb.

The fact that the Highlanders were raised entirely from natives of Northwind meant that Amaris had quite the built-in opposition. Thousands of former Highlander and SLDF personnel, as well as the families of those murdered in the Coup, quickly formed resistance groups, which coalesced into arguably the most united planetary resistance within the Hegemony. Even as Amaris moved more and more forces onto the world to beat its population into submission, the people of the highly industrialized and completely self-sufficient Northwind continued to resist—to the point that just a single Patriot battalion of pure volunteers could be raised on the world. With help first from the Secret Fleet and ultimately Kerensky's SLDF, combined with resources made freely available by the world's own people, the resistance remained well manned and well equipped, albeit constantly harried.

As soon as Third Army appeared in-system, the Northwind Covenanters—as the resistance movement had begun calling themselves—struck hard at the Amaris government and occupation forces with every man, woman and child they could muster. Though not overwhelmed, the AEAf was certainly embattled, and coupled with attacks on occupation government officials, was unable to respond effectively to LXIX Corps' landing on 12 April. This ensured that most of the Republican units were unable to

withdraw to the Northwind Castle Brian when faced with the SLDF's superior numbers. After the first several days, in which Amaris' troops launched nuclear attacks against LXIX Corps as well as some of the world's largest cities—presumably in retribution for support of the Covenanters—the Republicans lost access to their strategic weapon reserves.

They continued to use civilians to shield their movements and attacks as much as possible, but that only drew further ire from the people, especially the Covenanters. By the end of June, Amaris' power over the world had been broken, though at terrible cost to the Covenanters, which ceased to be an effective resistance force during their June anti-Amaris campaign. The Castle Brian remained a threat for the longest, with Patriot battalions shipped in from other worlds holed up inside. LXIX Corps pursued a slow and steady campaign to clear out the Northwind Castle Brian, finally reporting its complete reduction by the New Year.

Altair

While Twelfth Army struck the hell that was the fortress world of Dieron, Fourteenth Army hit Altair, sitting just four and a half light years away. XIV Corps allegedly won the right to assault Altair in a poker game between the army's four corps commanders, with XXII Corps standing in reserve on Nirasaki (VIII Corps' commander supposedly won the next hand, giving his unit the lead on the next major assault—Fomalhaut—leaving XXXIV to take Saffell). Major General Augustus Pinto used the system primary's inherent instability to its utmost; while the star's tremendous solar flares knocked most communications and orbital sensors offline (they were commonly shut down during periods of intense solar activity to prevent damage), he jumped his corps in to a pirate point along the orbital plane and was entering Altair's atmosphere before the system's defenders even knew Pinto's forces were there.

Knowing full well that those solar storms would wreak the same havoc on his own troops' communications and electronic surveillance attempts, General Pinto developed a detailed script for the first several weeks of operations on the world, during which quick transport VTOLs and sub-orbital aircraft would play a huge role in helping the general maintain situational awareness. To better aid their own operations, the SLDF specifically targeted communications hubs to further disrupt the AEAf defenders. As was the standard, they directly assaulted known Amaris military and government centers, and completely isolated the single Castle Brian on the world—or at least they believed so.

It wasn't until XIV Corps' third week on Altair, after numerous damaging Republican counterattacks against isolated and comm-impaired outposts and staging areas, that General Pinto's intelligence section realized that they had left a major hole in their perimeter around the Castle Brian. Once the solar activity died down enough to allow regular—if occasionally garbled—radio communications again, General Pinto's troops finally had the Republican troops on the run. Unfortunately, this was well after the Republicans had dispatched scores of small platoon- and company-sized contingents with express orders to make a series of seeming random WMD attacks that both fulfilled Amaris' Operation TRIPWIRE orders and allowed three DropShips full of Amaris supporters to escape the world.

August brought a new period of solar activity. While XIV Corps continued to root opposition out of the Castle Brian and other on-world fortifications, General Pinto received word via courier that his troops in a long-pacified sector were under attack. After a week of receiving reports of hit-and-run assaults that typically left few casualties but an increasing tally of damaged and destroyed equipment, Pinto's scouts finally caught sight of a company of attackers and identified them—it was the Draconis Combine's Third Arkab Legion. Within two days, Pinto had surrounded and taken the Combine regiment's third battalion prisoner and was interrogating its officers. A day later, *Tai-sa* Trevor al-Youssif approached in his *Orion* BattleMech and demanded a parley with General Pinto; the general instead ordered his troops to take the Combine officer prisoner, prompting two more days of sparring between the SLDF and DCMS that harkened back to the days of dueling before Pinto sat down to talk with al-Youssif.

CONNECTION

The Sons and Daughters of the Covenant is a lineage-based organization for men and women who are directly descended from a person who fought for the independence of the planet Northwind during the Amaris Civil War. Though lineage may be traced back to a member of the Star League Defense Forces who fought on Northwind during that war, strict guidelines require that individual to have either been physically on Northwind at the time of the Coup or to have been dispatched to Northwind prior to March of 2775 and have remained on the world for longer than thirty days in active opposition to the Amaris occupation government. This guideline was put in place to clearly delineate those who participated in the resistance movement from the SLDF invasion force that ultimately liberated the world with the assistance of the Northwind Covenanters.

The Sons & Daughters of the Covenant, or SDC for short, was formed during the First Succession War (some histories suggest 2801 while others indicate the SDC formed after several local patriotic groups merged in 2804) literally by the children and grandchildren of Northwind's freedom fighters—as the original Covenanters were rapidly aging and dying—to preserve their heritage and accomplishments. Increasingly during the Succession Wars, the SDC advocated for Northwind's independence, putting them at odds with the Capellan Confederation government, and especially its Maskirovka. During the Second and early Third Succession Wars, membership in the SDC became something of a fashionable choice for those who opposed increasing Capellan regulation and interference with planetary matters. Unlike their forbears, however, they did not take up arms against those they considered their oppressors, instead focusing their efforts on grassroots political action. Nevertheless, the Capellan Maskirovka investigated the SDC extensively throughout the 2800s for allegedly seditious acts.

This increased scrutiny prompted many to give up their membership, though in the latter part of the Third Succession War the SDC experienced a resurgence as largely a social organization, a “who's who” collection of notable Northwinders that prompted many who had never previously considered membership to confirm their lineages and join the SDC.

The SDC remains a moderately sized organization with chapters scattered across the Inner Sphere in each nation. It claims on its rolls many of Northwind's political and military leaders, including quite a few current and former serving members of the Northwind Highlanders, as well as a number of notable personalities outside of Northwind—including those in the innermost circles of the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns.

By all accounts, both officers blustered, neither backing down even though Pinto clearly held the upper hand. Only the arrival of more than a dozen Combine DropShips, which XIV Corps intercepted and boarded only to find thousands of relief workers and tens of thousands of tons of relief supplies, broke the stalemate. According to al-Youssif, the Third Arkab had been dispatched as a reconnaissance force to determine if Amaris' forces had abandoned the world; with communications and battlefield sensors rendered inoperable, the Arkab had supposedly mistaken XIV Corps for Amaris defenders and were conducting a harassment campaign until they could withdraw.

General Pinto didn't believe al-Youssif, and indicated so in his reports up the chain of command. Given the potentially volatile nature of this Altair incident, General DeChavilier himself made the final determination on what to do; the relief workers could remain on the world, but he ordered Pinto to disarm the Third Arkab, confiscate their weapons, and send al-Youssif out of the Hegemony. As with the incident on Connaught with the Second Marik Regulars, this prompted vocal complaints from the Combine, but no further direct incidents—at least for the time being.

TASK FORCE COMMONWEALTH

Responsible for almost half of the Hegemony systems yet to be invaded, Admiral Joan Brandt was happy to hand off Altair and Tyrfing to Task Forces Sun and Confederation, respectively. That still left her armies with more worlds to liberate than either Kerensky or DeChavilier—a tough proposition made even more difficult by Amaris' crippling and abandonment of more than a dozen worlds in early 2775, six of which were within Task Force Commonwealth's AoR. Second Army Group, preparing to strike some of the best-defended worlds in the Hegemony, instead focused its energies on relieving the worlds of Castor, Devil's Rock, and Zavijava. Fifteenth Army Group likewise landed divisions and corps originally destined to crack heavily defended objectives instead on Haddings and Rocky to lend aid to their beleaguered populations; neither of these worlds would ever recover. Thirteenth Army meanwhile rushed to Asta, "Amaris' Mistake," a world it would have targeted in the next invasion wave anyway.

With so many ravaged worlds to support, Admiral Brandt's armies pursued a limited campaign through much of 2775. Task Force Commonwealth, like its brethren, focused on key worlds without Space Defense Systems, bypassing most of those SDS-protected systems until the SLDF could deploy more Project NIKE electronic warfare ships. Only one world wouldn't wait any longer.

Dieron

Of all the worlds within her AoR, Dieron was the one planet Admiral Brandt dreaded the most. While the Republicans had initially failed to secure the world's four Castles Brian—leaving them to become safe havens for citizens to escape the Usurper's conquerors, at least for a while—years of complete dominance had left Amaris' agents in command of this key world. Through a combination of threats and key strikes, the Dieron AEF garrison

eventually took command of two Castles Brian from the handful of surviving SLDF troops left on the world after the Coup. They sealed the remaining two up tight with precision nuclear and conventional strikes, content to let the tens of thousands of refugees sheltered within starve. The Republicans figuratively and literally dug themselves into the world's many cities and main communities, using the same mountainscapes that dominated the world as natural protection against invasion or rebellion.

Those facts alone would have been enough to mark the world as a tough objective to reclaim without the fact that Dieron also possessed a Space Defense System. That it did ensured the postponing of the Dieron assault until after the New Home invasion and the evaluation of Project NIKE. Admiral Brandt's impatience nearly bested her, though after nearly constant pushing and prodding of her former subordinate, Admiral Janos Grec, she finally secured several squadrons of Project NIKE WarShips—the first equipped with upgraded "production-grade" SDS countermeasure suites. Admiral Godman Lawrence, commander of the victorious SLDF fleets that battled at Summer, took charge of this assault for Admiral Brandt.

Admiral Lawrence entered the Dieron system on 27 May 2775, targeting the zenith jump point. He had more than thirty Project NIKE ships at his disposal, fourteen of which were prototypes that fought at New Home. As at New Home, he began the battle with half of his NIKE jammers active. Within minutes, two facts were clear: the NIKE jammers still worked as they had at New Home, but the new jammers were both more effective and more reliable. Two of the prototype ships still suffered from cascading systems failures brought on by the jammers' heavy power consumption and powerful wide-band interference. The newly converted ships, on the other hand, did not have the same problems and also suffered fewer internal system glitches. Unlike the prototype NIKE ships, the newly converted ships were able to direct their guns and missiles at target ships, considerably adding to the potency of Lawrence's fleets.

The Project NIKE engineers once again made numerous tweaks and updates to the systems following the battle, paving the way for Admiral Lawrence and his Twelfth Fleet to strike first at the Dieron Shipyards before targeting the world proper. Here too, the attacking SLDF combined fleet seized and maintained the upper hand, though an SDS drone in its death throes targeted Lawrence's flagship, the SLS *Terra Nova*. Crippled by fire from the SLDF battleship and its escorts, the drone nonetheless landed several powerful hits on the *Terra Nova*, including one that destroyed the CIC, killing Admiral Lawrence.

Vice Admiral Santi Frolander assumed command of the fleet and led it to victory over Dieron and again at the system's nadir jump point, paving the way for LXI Corps, supported by elements from II and XXX Corps, to land on Dieron proper. Though the SLDF was relatively unopposed to begin with, the AEF put up a concerted fight in the valleys and on plateaus across the planet, readily deploying a variety of WMDs against the invading SLDF at every turn. The SLDF fighters ruled the skies, but the world's extensive mountain ranges often limited their ability to directly support their ground-bound brethren, while the tight

spaces helped to negate LXI Corps' superior numbers. By fall, LXI Corps had only begun to make headway against the dug-in Amaris troops. The Republicans refused to concede a meter and continuously used the world's massive population as living shields against Star League attacks, also regularly leaving behind nasty surprises for the Star League attackers and escaping civilians.

After six months on Dieron, Twelfth Army—LXI Corps' parent organization—began rotating brigades through the fight, which ultimately involved the entire army. Only after a year of hard battling, which included every form of direct and indirect fire, from the simple rifleman to bombers delivering tactical nuclear weapons to orbital WarShip bombardment, did the SLDF declare Dieron pacified. Given the tremendous number of civilian dead and damage to the world's industry and infrastructure, "victory" was a word never used on Dieron.

Oliver

Second Army Group's only target in early in 2775 was the heavily populated and industrialized world of Oliver. Noted for possessing one of the most vocal anti-Cameron populations in the Hegemony prior to the Coup, Amaris' rule was nonetheless not kind to Oliver. By the end of the first year of occupation, word of mouth had declared its three Castles Brian Amaris' "murder castles"—detention facilities for a growing number of "political malcontents and traitors to the Amaris Empire" who were never seen or heard from again (Amaris' agents had in reality built detention facilities outside of the Castles Brian for this purpose). Rumors of mass civilian graves discovered in remote regions and of anonymous kidnapping squads were rife, and in many cases closer to the truth than not. Despite possessing a population numbering in the billions, Oliver's resistance movement was comparatively tiny with little base of support; by all accounts, Oliver was a beaten-down world.

LIX Corps landed on Oliver in May, catching the overly complacent AEAF garrison largely unawares. Initial strikes left a number of key Republican bases in ruins, while post-landing mustering points placed the SLDF squarely between the majority of Amaris' defenders and the safety of the world's three Castles Brian. In very much a turnabout from the typical Hegemony invasion, LIX Corps assumed the initiative and held the upper hand throughout the campaign, simultaneously pressing the retreating defenders while working to clean one city, one community at a time of Amaris influence—a particularly difficult task given the broken spirit of Oliver's citizenry.

Though it would take well over a year to crush the Amaris forces stationed in the three Castles Brian, and years longer to root out the worst of Amaris' supporters within the government and business, Oliver itself was captured relatively intact. Though the world did not bear many of the physical scars that other Hegemony worlds did, defiled as they were at the hands of Amaris' thugs, Oliver's citizens bore the mental scars of being terrorized by Amaris for so long. The complete toll will likely never be truly known—evidenced by archaeological discoveries of Amaris' crimes even today.

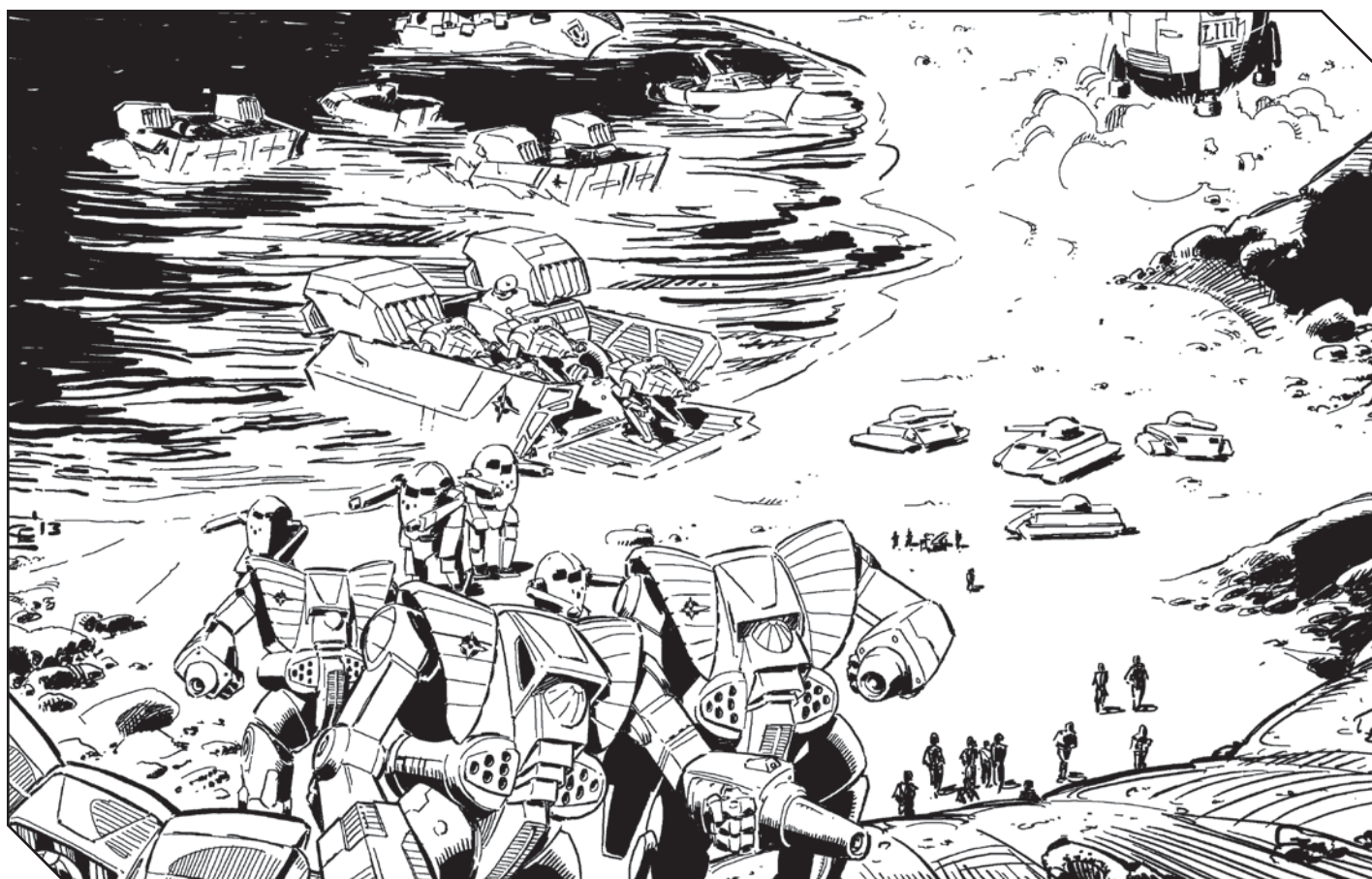
Chara, Lipton, Muphrid and Yorrii

Task Force Commonwealth struck an additional four systems in the first half of 2775. Each of these heavily populated worlds was a unique target in its own right, though ultimately none played a key role in Amaris' empire save to line the pockets of his supporters and to tie up as many SLDF invaders as they could.

Chara, also known as Pacifica, was a self-sufficient, primarily agrarian world cursed with a short daily cycle and wildly unpredictable weather. After facing the dual crucibles of Alioth and Summer, Seventeenth Army was prepared for an extended campaign. XLVIII Corps took the lead, encountering significant difficulties with the Amaris defenders, who were adept at using the cover of Chara's chaotic weather and quick nights to stage spoiling attacks and terror strikes alike. Here, Amaris' troops extensively targeted the civilian population, destroying weather modification equipment and agro-domes as well as Chara's many population centers, the latter primarily with chemical and bioweapons meant to disable rather than kill. Three weeks of these hit-and-run tactics culminated with a series of nuclear strikes that allowed the majority of the Amaris garrison to escape Chara.

Less than five light-years away lay Lipton, the kind of prosperous world Amaris coveted prior to the Coup. Lipton's populace possessed a wild independent streak that had chafed under Richard Cameron, but did so even more under Amaris' occupation. Within months of the Coup, the citizens of Lipton had formed a strong resistance force, while those who didn't join the armed resistance passively resisted Amaris and his cronies. Given the trouble experienced by the AEAF and Amaris' secret police in keeping Lipton under control, the only reason the Usurper did not order the world abandoned earlier in 2775 was its still-massive gross domestic product. That changed as soon as XLII Corps landed. As on Chara, the AEAF attempted to use WMD attacks against the SLDF and the civilian population to slow XLII Corps; instead, the people of Lipton rose up to actively oppose Amaris' troops and occupation government. XLII Corps arrived in Lipton City to find more than two hundred occupation government officials and secret police hanged outside the capitol building.

Eleventh Army, meanwhile, struck the world of Muphrid and Sixteenth Army hit Yorrii. The AEAF turned both worlds into tremendous battlegrounds after the SLDF's arrival. The battle for Neo Tokyo on Yorrii, in which the Forty-Third Amaris Dragoons set off firebombs throughout the city before using the cover of an exploding overloaded reactor to retreat, tallied perhaps the largest civilian casualty count of any single incident in the war to date. XXXVI Corps faced significant troubles on Yorrii, which possessed several major SLDF forts and castles; because of this, the Yorrii campaign took the better part of a year, months longer than the liberation of Muphrid.



ADDITIONAL OPERATIONS

The Star League Defense Forces struck several more major targets in 2775, only two of which possessed Space Defense Systems, out of more than a dozen star systems still protected by the SDS. The reason for this disparity was simple: though the SLDF had developed the Project NIKE countermeasures, the complex equipment had to be built and then installed in Star League WarShips—the only vessels with enough internal volume and sheer electrical power to carry the massive jammers (as well as their attendant networks and cooling systems). Only a handful of ships could be converted each month, at least until the electronics contractors could increase their own production of Project NIKE subsystems. The NIKE system was also a work in progress; each new battle presented new problems and failures, but also more raw data that could be used to tweak the systems' performance. As a result, Admiral Grec only allowed those two additional SDS assaults in 2775, though more strikes were planned in the following year after more NIKE ships came online.

Instead, the SLDF continued to focus the majority of its efforts on conventionally defended worlds. First up was Carver V, the one world that had held out the longest against Amaris' armies.

Carver V

The populations on most Hegemony worlds resisted Amaris' coup in some form, with a few notable worlds, like New Dallas and Sabik, putting up a dogged fight against strong occupation forces. None, however, reached the ferocity or duration of the Carver V fight.

Home of the CAAN regiments and their specialized training programs, Carver V possessed one of the strongest garrisons of any Terran Hegemony world prior to the Coup, due largely to the sheer number of recruits and veterans alike that passed through the CAAN schools every year. Moreover, the world was covered with oceans, punctuated by small masses of islands—the largest of which had been transformed into the heavily fortified home of the SLDF's CAAN corps.

Despite these facts, Amaris' generals failed to realize just how difficult a target Carver V would be. After failing to secure or destroy the heavily fortified Quantico Islands in the months following the Coup, the Republicans contented themselves with firmly establishing control over the remainder of the world—or, at least, its remaining island chains—before focusing their fury on the SLDF on Quantico. Even with AEAF WarShips in orbit, Amaris' forces were unable to establish aerospace dominance over the Quantico Islands, thanks to the many ground-to-orbit mobile batteries

as well as an extremely powerful integral aerospace contingent based there. Though severely outnumbered and outgunned, the Marines of Carver V refused to be defeated. The so-called Secret Fleet made regular supply drops on Carver V to keep the SLDF forces there armed during the first few years of occupation, while Kerensky picked up the slack with Operation INTRUDER, which thanks to the heroics of units like the Third RCT, ensured the Marines of Carver could continue their fight.

When Hechnar—just a short jump from Carver V—fell to the SLDF, Kerensky sent even more aid to shore up the world's defenses, but with other more looming threats to focus on, he could not yet task an invasion force to Carver. Instead he dispatched the Third RCT—a veteran organization that, to a man, volunteered to help relieve their comrades on Carver V. Detached from Twentieth Army Group in late 2773, the Third RCT jumped across the occupied Hegemony from their initial positions on the Combine frontier and made landfall, adding their number to Carver's thinned-but-resolute defenders.

Two years later, Kerensky was finally able to enact the relief of Carver. He had tasked the entire Twenty-Fourth Army Group to New Home for two reasons—first, to ensure complete domination over the world, and second, to give the SLDF a powerful strike force deep in the heart of the Amaris-controlled Hegemony. Twenty-Fourth Army Group's first new target was Carver V.

LIII Corps entered orbit on 4 June and began landing a day later, finding a weakened Republican garrison that had been harried for years by guerrilla attacks and CAAN strikes from the air and oceans. By the end of summer, Lieutenant General Burwis Lewell, the senior surviving officer of Carver's original defenders, reported the world's liberation to General Kerensky.

Bryant and New Stevens

While LIII Corps focused its energies on Carver V, the remainder of Twenty-Fourth Army Group looked to a pair of nearby worlds with small populations and minimal garrison forces, worlds that would be perfect stepping-stones for Task Forces Confederation and Sun as they advanced toward the innermost Hegemony worlds. Save for the fact that both lay within a thirty-LY radius of Terra, they likely would have been abandoned by the AEAf more than a year earlier. In fact, both garrisons had prepared for the eventuality of withdrawing from their new homeworlds since Amaris had ordered the dozen worlds abandoned in early 2775.

As soon as SLDF invasion forces were detected in each of the systems in June, the mercenary garrisons and senior government officials simply withdrew to already-loaded DropShips and literally headed out in the middle of the night, leaving behind volunteer Patriot units that were quickly smashed by the SLDF. The Amaris ships escaped the two systems from pirate points, heading deeper into the relative safety of the Hegemony core.

Both worlds had suffered under Amaris' thumb, Bryant perhaps the worst due to the destruction of its orbital Storm Inhibitor system during the Coup, but neither had suffered the Amaris-inflicted WMD scars that so many other worlds did. Twenty-Fourth Army Group spread its wings over both planets and almost immediately began constructing temporary bases that could be used by the approaching SLDF armies as they prepared for the final assaults into the Hegemony.

Fomalhaut

Fresh from victory on Saffel, Fourteenth Army pushed on to Fomalhaut, known throughout the Hegemony as a vacation world. Though largely self-sufficient with significant food surpluses, it possessed little to no industrial output and only produced limited raw materials exports. Accordingly, the AEAf only provided a small garrison, one that would temporarily double or triple in size during the month-long visits that Amaris and other senior occupation government officials regularly took during the first years after the Coup. XIV Corps hit the world in July, quickly eliminating the few Amaris defenders that did not retreat from the much stronger SLDF invasion force. Save for the loss of an orbital

DANGER ZONE

Forgive my language, but if you weren't there you don't know a goddamned thing.

Let me make this perfectly clear: my Marines never once needed rescuing. Those assholes tried, and failed, to take us out when the fat bastard killed Richard Cameron. They tried again and failed again, even with reinforcements. What they failed to realize was the resolve and training of a Star League Marine. We had almost four thousand Marines on Quantico when those bastards came, along with another five thousand SLDF personnel, from recruits to forty-year veterans. We had SDS batteries, heavy armor, BattleMechs and fighters. And we had the most powerful weapon the Star League ever leveraged—the support and trust of our citizens.

Quantico held out against the best that Stefan Amaris could throw at it for nine years. For nine long years we devoted our every waking moment to vigorously defending the ideals of Ian Cameron. And for nine long years the men, women and children that called Quantico home threw themselves into the very real battle against true Evil.

When this battle began, we had but four thousand Marines. By the end, we had better than twenty thousand fighting day in and day out, but just as many dead. The fathers and mothers of Quantico gave us their support, and they trusted us with their sons and daughters. In return, we willingly traded our lives for theirs.

Many so-called historians have written at length about the Carver V "campaign" and about Twenty-Fourth Army Group's "relief" of my Marines, how this dedicated handful of men and women only survived because of the ongoing support provided by the Third Regimental Combat Team, or the Secret Fleet or Fifth Army. But what they all failed to understand, and therefore failed to report, was just how important these Marines' efforts truly were to the war.

The Marines of Carver V fought for nine long years, drawing in and grinding up the best troops in Stefan Amaris' army. They did so despite horrendous losses in men and materiel, and on a logistical shoestring that no other SLDF unit was able to sustain for more than a few weeks. Their story is one of dedication and perseverance—the story of true Star League Marines.

—Major General Burwis Lewell, SLDF, *Danger Zone: The Story of the Marines of Carver V*, Esperanza Publishing, Ltd., 2785

ore refinery and significant damage to the planetary capital, the Republicans inflicted no lasting harm to the world; in fact, though the last holdouts attempted to poison the oceans surrounding Oanhui by releasing large chemical stores into the waters, less than a month later the world's ecosystem had absorbed the blow, in the process creating dazzling multi-hued sub-surface bio layers that even today make the world's southern oceans memorable.

Killbourn

Thanks to centuries of terraforming, the mining world of Killbourn had gradually transformed into a manufacturing powerhouse, with a population that only began to develop within the previous few decades. The Hegemony government placed a strategic resource reserve there, which prompted the construction of two Castles Brian. Following the Coup, Amaris turned more and more to the world to make up for quota shortfalls across the Hegemony, draining the Hegemony's strategic reserves long before L Corps struck in August.

A full brigade of AEF troops garrisoned the world, though two regiments were largely notional Patriot units that in actuality were less than half strength. As on other poorly defended worlds, the bulk of the loyal Amaris mercenaries and government officials attempted to flee Killbourn, but did not react quickly enough and were intercepted by L Corps' own landing force in orbit. The Republicans lost two DropShips in the encounter—including a company of mercenary Black Horse Carabineers 'Mechs and several hundred other loyalists—while the rest of the ships quickly returned to the world.

Those loyal Republicans, of course, burned whatever goodwill they may have had with the other planetary defenders when they tried to retreat, instantly causing a divide that L Corps took advantage of. The Carabineers waged what campaign they could, targeting the atmospheric processors and other critical infrastructure to slow the SLDF as much as possible. The Patriot regiments had been given control of a limited WMD cache prior to the mercenaries' attempted pullout, however, and retained those weapons, ultimately using two nukes to destroy the Carabineers before surrendering to the Star League forces and putting an end to the active battle for Killbourn.

Lockdale

There were no questions in anyone's mind that the invasion of Lockdale would likely be one of the toughest campaigns the SLDF would have to fight. This heavily industrialized world was also the political seat for the Hegemony's Lockdale Province, making it a communications and trade hub as well. Given its pre-Coup importance, the Star League had fortified Lockdale with five Castles Brian—in addition to numerous lesser fortifications—as well as a Space Defense System. Aside from Terra, it was easily one of the most fortified worlds in the Hegemony.

General Aaron DeChavilier wanted no one other than Admiral Marina Akkayev-Cameron, who had led the successful naval assaults on Nusakan and New Home, to pave the way through Lockdale's

SDS so that General Jack Lucas and his Third Army—DeChavilier's most successful field command—could crack that nut. Six months of refits and upgrades left Akkayev-Cameron's Fourth Fleet in a better shape than it had been for the Battle of New Home.

The admiral entered the Lockdale system on 11 September, jumping in to a pirate point that placed her fleet just two days away from Lockdale itself. Twenty-six hours later she was engaging the first SDS elements, which attempted to shadow and harass Fourth Fleet as it approached Lockdale. Akkayev-Cameron, possessing the advantage in numbers and firepower, largely ignored the SDS shadow, positioning NIKE ships to cover her entire fleet. Over Lockdale, the SDS squadrons attempted to lure Fourth Fleet close enough to the world for SDS ground batteries to lend their fire to the battle; Akkayev-Cameron instead focused first on the orbital defense stations and other military space traffic, finally drawing the SDS drones in.

As soon as the greater battle was joined, it was obvious to Admiral Akkayev-Cameron and her senior battle staff that either the SDS AI had learned that the NIKE ships were its biggest threat or else Amaris' strategists had programmed that fact into the drone systems. The NIKE countermeasures were just as effective as at New Home and Dieron, but while the drone ships were largely unable to coordinate their attacks, individual ships did focus fire on SLDF NIKE WarShips, often at the expense of easier and more damaged targets. As was the standard tactic, Fourth Fleet had activated only a fraction of its NIKE ships at the outset of the battle, so while many of those ships sustained heavy damage—and five were destroyed—Fourth Fleet kept its SDS countermeasures up throughout the battle, as well as the resulting bombardment of ground-based SDS batteries and other defenses.

Shortly after cementing her victory over Lockdale, the admiral called in her reserve (including Third Army's escorts and the bulk of its air wings) to a pirate point, where they deployed a massive screen of DropShips (making it seem as if they were the Lockdale invasion force). Hours later, Operation KEYHOLE ships and listening posts in-system reported that most of the drone ships were burning in hard to Lockdale. The bulk of SDS fleets from both the zenith and nadir points converged on Lockdale, something Admiral Akkayev-Cameron had hoped Lockdale's Republican commander would order.

The battle was joined three days later on 16 October, with the four fleets—Akkayev-Cameron's Fourth Fleet, her reinforcements, and the two drone formations—meeting just outside of orbit. This time, the admiral instructed her NIKE ships to alternate jamming, a simple countermeasure that once again confused the drone ships. With the assistance of the faux invasion force, Admiral Akkayev-Cameron once again defeated a major drone fleet, though not without significant cost; a dozen more NIKE ships were destroyed or heavily damaged, as were many more other WarShips.

Admiral Akkayev-Cameron divided her fleet, leaving the majority of her ships near Lockdale (including those most heavily damaged), while dispatching a smaller force under the command of Vice Admiral Els Cainero to clear the two standard jump points of Republican and SDS threats. Cainero began with the nadir point, which was the

location of a major civilian shipyard. Admiral Cainero's Task Force 4.5 secured the shipyards (though not before the Republicans inflicted significant damage) and eliminated the SDS threat before jumping to the zenith days later to secure that point as well.

Akkayev-Cameron focused the WarShips and fighter craft under her command on eliminating the threat of Lockdale's ground-to-orbit SDS batteries and what Amaris bases they could hit while Third Army's transport fleet arrived in-system and burned in to the world. General Jack Lucas landed on 25 September at the head of XXXIII and LXVI Corps. By that time, the division of Republican troops on Lockdale had withdrawn entirely into the world's fortifications and especially its cities.

The battle for Lockdale, then, became one of tremendous ground sieges and devastating city assaults that often left more civilian casualties than military. At the outset, Amaris' forces were content to use Lockdale's populace as shields against the SLDF, but that passive strategy soon proved incapable of slowing General Lucas's army, which continued to push using the strength of its superior numbers and complete aerospace domination. Even after the Amaris defenders detonated nuclear devices in the capital city of Cranford as well as Crimson Springs and Firebick—both heavily industrialized cities and major transportation hubs—in an attempt to kill as many SLDF soldiers as they could, General Lucas's troops responded by pushing harder and faster. Their action largely forced the Amaris forces out of the main cities by the end of February 2776, many left in ruins by the fighting and the AEAF's use of nuclear and other weapons. The campaign then transformed into one of breaking through static defenses to eliminate a dug-in enemy force.

The Lockdale campaign would last another long year, during which time Amaris' operatives released chemical and biological agents that poisoned water tables and arable lands alike. While the SLDF armies possessed protective gear that left them largely unaffected by these weapons, as well as a rotation schedule that ensured no SLDF member remained on the world for longer than a few months, the same was not true for the civilian population or the environment, which led to Lockdale's rapid decline as a viable world. The bulk of Third Army pulled off the world in June to take part in the invasion of Terra, leaving behind a handful of troops to complete the eradication of the Amaris threats.

Alula Australis

LXVII Corps, having spent most of the year providing relief to Denebola and Zavijava, was finally activated for an assault on Alula Australis in December. As one of the oldest colonized worlds in the Hegemony core, it was a prosperous, highly developed and heavily populated world, defended by three Castles Brian. Before the Coup, its industry supplied nearly all of the Hegemony's largest manufacturers with mechanical and electronic subsystems, while vehicles of all kinds assembled here could be found throughout the Inner Sphere. After the Coup, exports of manufactured goods steadily declined as the predations encouraged—or at least tolerated—by Amaris' government cut deeply into production capacity. At the same time, punishments for failing to meet expectations robbed once-efficient corporations of the very skilled managers and manpower they needed to even hope to meet those quotas.

When LXVII Corps landed, they found a world in depression and a desperate population. Two brigades of AEAF defenders, backed up by an immense corps of Hegemony Security Force (HSF) secret police and Office of Policy and Doctrine (OPD) political officers, had figuratively and literally beaten the world's people down over the past decade. It was no surprise that the SLDF troops received little support from Alula Australis's natives, at least at the beginning of the campaign. Here, as on other worlds, Amaris' troops used the cities as shields and wantonly made nuclear strikes and other WMD attacks in an effort to kill or wound as many Star League soldiers as they could, no matter who else got caught in the way.

CRACK IN THE WORLD

The Amaris Empire was schizophrenic, though this fact was not clear to most of us for many years. Amaris was clearly a micromanager, but he was also an outstanding strategist and an inspiring orator. He played many roles, each of them carefully crafted based on the audience, so perhaps the role he played with us was simply the one we most wanted to see.

From the outset, his stated goal was to build the greatest economy in the Inner Sphere. And he gave us every tool and approved every policy to make that happen. We had the freedom to create production goals as well as rewards for hitting those goals. We also had the ability to create teams from companies that never would have partnered before, and in doing so we made some incredible advances. We knew that not everyone would support our efforts, but we believed in Amaris. And we knew that the Star League's economy could be so much more than it was under the leadership of Richard Cameron. We knew deep down that, given time, the Hegemony's industrious spirit would bring the detractors around.

We never knew that Amaris had promised the galaxy to his closest supporters. Nor did we know that those supporters were sociopaths. We'd heard rumors of looting and outright robberies supposedly perpetrated by members of the AEAF, but we were assured by [OPD] Director [Lissa] Outerbridge that these reports were isolated instances. Apparently a handful of soldiers in the field secured for themselves new vehicles or computers.

In reality, the Emperor turned a blind eye to nothing short of the pillaging of the Terran Hegemony, a fact that only came clear at the very end. On some worlds, dozens of companies were bankrupted by this pillaging—a fact that we readily attributed to passive resistance and sheer worker laziness. It was the job of the OPD and HSF to arrest and prosecute individuals who committed crimes against the Empire, which Amaris eventually expanded to include “workers in critical industries” who refused to work. We never realized, or even suspected, that millions of Hegemony factory workers were sent to gulags. We only knew that our offices were expected to assist dozens, if not hundreds, of companies on nearly every world in finding new workers to replace those, as we'd been told, who had quit.

—Anderford Howe Wakeman, *Inside the Amaris Empire*, Herriman Publishing, 2785

A month into the campaign, the Eighteenth Infantry Division turned a brief opportunity into a fantastic victory, overrunning several AEAf outposts and rushing into the Mount Castarn Castle Brian. In less than a week, they cleared out the fortress and captured both the garrison commander and planetary governor. A brief trial, followed by a very public execution of the two outside of the planetary capitol in Horizon, seemed to energize the populace, but also brought further retribution from Amaris' forces, which leveled Horizon with a series of nuclear strikes. The citizens turned their rage against the Amaris loyalists. Despite countless prisoners taken and executions conducted by the HSF, the people were seemingly no longer afraid, which in turn encouraged LXVII Corps even more.

The Alula Australis campaign took only five hard-fought but bloody months. Though suffering significant damage to infrastructure and industry, as well as horrendous after-effects from extensive use of WMDs, other worlds suffered far worse at the hands of the Republicans than did Alula Australis, whose citizens quickly began the long journey to recovery.

Tyrfing

Admiral Santi Frolander, promoted after Admiral Godman Lawrence's death at Dieron, led Twelfth Fleet to Tyrfing in December. Like Lockdale, Tyrfing was a heavily industrialized world defended by no less than five Castles Brian and a Space Defense System. Though it was originally an Eighth Army target, General Kerensky's Task Force Confederation took responsibility for securing the system to give Admiral Brandt's thinly-stretched Task Force Commonwealth some relief, for which Brandt continued to thank the general throughout the remainder of the war.

Admiral Frolander began the invasion with a strike at the zenith jump point, intending to eliminate one SDS drone fleet at a time. The initial strike saw her fleet wipe out the scores of drone ships, but at a relatively heavy cost in SLDF ships and manpower. The NIKE ships especially suffered heavy damage and casualties as Admiral Frolander entered the battle with nearly all of her jammers active; the additional jamming devices had no real effect on the drones save to provide all their AIs with more priority targets to fire on throughout the battle. When Twelfth Fleet jumped to the nadir point hours later, they did so with fewer NIKE ships than doctrine recommended, and once again began the battle with more jammers active than required. The battle for the zenith point resulted in an SLDF victory, but one that left Twelfth Fleet too weak to prosecute a strike on Tyrfing itself.

Admiral Frolander nevertheless intended to continue the invasion and target Tyrfing, ordering the entirety of Fifth Army's escort to reinforce her damaged fleet. Fifth Army commander General Kim Solheim blocked those orders, reporting to her direct commander, General Bram Merga, as well as to General Kerensky that she did not believe Twelfth Fleet could successfully destroy the Tyrfing SDS without suffering excessive losses.

Kerensky stepped in, ordering Vice Admiral Els Cainero to report to the Tyrfing system and assume command of Twelfth Fleet. She arrived three days later via command circuit, and after reviewing the situation, requested two squadrons of Fourth Fleet WarShips, including the squadron she'd led since the invasion of the Hegemony as well as one squadron of NIKE ships. They arrived in the Hechnar system eight days later, where Cainero provided them the attack plans via HPG. A day later, both fleets jumped into pirate points near Tyrfing and linked up twelve hours later en route to the world. The final naval battle for Tyrfing occurred thirty-eight hours later, on 20 December. The veteran of Lockdale and Nusakan proceeded to shred the SDS drone fleet and defense stations just as Fourth Fleet had done in their previous SDS engagements. General Solheim's invasion fleet arrived on 23 December and, after celebrating an early Christmas in orbit, struck the world on Christmas Eve.

As on Lockdale, the ground campaign was long and bloody, with AEAf defenders liberally using nuclear weapons in the first month of the campaign to attack any purported SLDF advance, whether or not there actually were any Star League troops present. By the beginning of February, the AEAf had largely retreated into their fortifications, having already expended nearly their entire WMD cache. Fifth Army simply kept the Amaris forces bottled up for the first half of 2776, instead devoting the majority of its manpower to evacuating civilians either into safe zones or off the world completely. When General Solheim resumed the direct campaign, she relied extensively on orbital strikes and surgical nuclear strikes to bust the fortifications or simply to rain death upon the perpetrators. By mid-2777, with Tyrfing's infrastructure demolished and its economy ruined, Fifth Army declared the world pacified.

BIG TROUBLE

The year 2775 began slowly but ended with a roar for the Star League Defense Forces, who were engaged in some of the most brutal fighting of the war to date on just a handful of worlds. They were tightening the noose around Terra, but in doing so they had bypassed several fortress worlds in the name of expediency and force conservation—worlds upon which they would eventually have to focus their fury. After a brief rest in 2774, Kerensky's armies had unfortunately floundered a bit in resuming the hard-fighting pace they needed to achieve if ever the liberation of Terra could happen. By the dawn of 2776, Kerensky's SLDF was closer than ever to Terra, but at the same time still so very far from being able to reclaim Humanity's homeworld.

On the other hand, just after Christmas Kerensky received the word that he so desperately wanted to hear. Admiral Grec reported that the second series of Project NIKE WarShips was ready for deployment, and that a third series would likewise soon be ready. With more NIKE ships available, the SLDF could focus its efforts on the SDS-protected systems and continue to close the noose on Amaris.

WE'RE GOING HOME

The SLDF still had fifteen SDS-protected worlds to contend with as 2776 dawned, and after replacing losses sustained in the previous four assaults, enough NIKE ships to safely strike only two at a time, though the upgrades scheduled for completion by the end of January would either allow a strike at a third system or, if the worst occurred, would replace losses incurred previously.

Those were just some of the topics that Kerensky discussed with his task force and army group commanders on Carver V in December of 2775. Like the meeting on Talitha a year before, the Carver Conference was dedicated to outlining and planning the SLDF's future operations. But where the Talitha meeting was very much a collaborative effort between the most senior SLDF commanders, Kerensky himself drove the Carver Conference. The invasion of the Hegemony was already three and a half years old, and at the pace his armies were going, it would take at least as long to simply reach Terra. Given the weekly casualty reports he'd been receiving, he didn't believe the SLDF could hold up long enough to make it that far, let alone liberate the world.

With most of the SLDF's senior officers present, and representatives sent by those who could not make it, the general laid out his expectations. By mid-2776, he wanted to strike the worlds closest to Terra, quickly overwhelming them with sheer numbers, and by the end of the year land on Terra itself.

The assembled generals and admirals were, to say the least, stunned. Kerensky let his plan sink in for a moment before he called in the team of strategists that had been working on the broad strokes of this endgame for months under his direction. The plan they presented was bold and risky, and included bypassing a number of worlds—each protected by an SDS—in favor of striking at targets closer and more important to Terra.

The discussion generated by the presentation was never recorded for posterity, but tales recounted in biographies and historical documents after the fact recount days of heated and frank arguments both for and against the plan, with Kerensky rarely speaking and General DeChavilier and Admiral Brandt alternately arguing both sides of the matter. After three days of discussions, Kerensky asked each man and woman in the room their opinion; in the end, everyone agreed that his plan was the only viable option.

For two more weeks, the operational planners for each army group created detailed campaign plans that would take the entire SLDF—having already lost far more than half of its original strength between the Periphery Uprising and Operation CHIEFTAIN—to Terra by Christmas of 2776. Before the final steps could be taken, however, the SLDF needed to focus on some of the critical targets it had been putting off.

HUNGRY

In addition to the five systems closest to the Hegemony's seat, the SLDF Command Staff identified four systems at the Carver Conference that were critical to the ultimate assault on Terra. Epsilon Eridani, Graham IV, Pollux and Procyon all possessed important manufacturing centers that the SLDF needed to remain in fighting shape, as well as large garrisons that Amaris could call upon to

counter moves made on Terra or other core Hegemony worlds. All were protected not only by Space Defense Systems but also Castles Brian and other formidable SLDF-constructed ground defenses. And all were home to massive populations numbering in the billions. They would be assaulted two at a time, with the majority of a full army to make the initial ground strikes. A fifth target—Outreach—was added as an objective to the second wave of assaults; though a minor world compared to the rest of the potential targets, it was home to large SLDF training areas as well as a host of smaller manufacturers and other contractors with long histories of associations with the SLDF.

The first of these assaults was to begin in January of 2776, with Epsilon Eridani and Pollux chosen as the initial targets.

Epsilon Eridani and Pollux

When the question of who would lead the assaults on these two worlds came up, only two names came to the fore: Admiral Marina Akkayev-Cameron, commander of Fourth Fleet, and her protégé, Vice Admiral Els Cainero, promoted to command of Twelfth Fleet after successfully leading the final stages of the Tyrfin assault. On paper both fleets were battle-hardened, having made each of the most successful anti-SDS assaults, though in reality Admiral Janos Grec had been rotating WarShip squadrons and task forces between the various SLDF fleets throughout the war, ensuring that the SLDF's prime battle fleets would remain at strength while also preventing a relatively small number of crews from being forced to weather the worst fighting the Star League navy had ever seen.

Fourth Fleet was tasked with clearing the Pollux system, while Twelfth Fleet had responsibility for Epsilon Eridani. Each assault was also assigned an operational reserve, in the form of a complete SLDF fleet, to ensure victory. Moreover, the commanders of each of these fleets—Admiral Taro Marrkgrae of Fifth Fleet and Admiral Kerron Sukhanov of Sixteenth Fleet—would jump in with the initial strike force, remaining in reserve and able to respond if necessary. They would also observe the conduct of the battle, most especially the tactics employed by the two lead admirals.

The Star League fleets struck their two systems on 11 January 2776, both entering at the zenith points and engaging the SDS drones while also attempting to secure the recharge and repair stations located there. As both Akkayev-Cameron and Cainero had experienced first-hand, the SDS AIs had clearly been fed information from earlier anti-SDS attacks; the drone ships attempted to target the NIKE jammers, but both SLDF fleets overwhelmed the Caspars with sheer numbers, especially with massive numbers of fighters, assault craft and DropShips. The assault craft in particular took out a number of drones, which largely ignored them while focusing on the NIKE ships, by landing boarding parties.

Both battles were over within the hour, but after conferring by mobile HPG, the four commanding admirals waited a little more than three days before commencing their next attacks, quick-charging their WarShips' K-F drives and making expedient repairs and some field modifications to a handful of non-NIKE ships before striking at their primary targets from pirate points. Here again, the tactic was to overwhelm the drones with numbers, with the NIKE ships alternating

their jamming signals and the handful of modified WarShips constantly transmitted powerful wide-band interference over their comm arrays. Though neither powerful enough nor even transmitting the right signals to actually jam the SDS drones, these conventional WarShips seemed to confuse the drone Caspars even more, drawing additional fire from them, at least until their AIs appeared to eventually detect the ruse and returned to focusing fire on the NIKE ships.

The result of these battles was all but predetermined. Within hours, the planetary drone fleet, along with most of the primary ground batteries, were disabled or destroyed and the planet's orbit cleared of the most threatening space traffic. Admirals Marrkgrae and Sukhanov then led their own attacks on the nadir points, putting into direct practice the tactics they'd witnessed.

The fifteenth of January brought the arrival of the invasion fleets, both of which were landing troops on their objective worlds within a week. First Army, which was originally to have hit Terra Firma, instead jumped past that regional capital to strike at Epsilon Eridani. Twentieth Army, meanwhile, descended on Pollux (the latter with two LIX Corps divisions still engaged on Oliver). Lighting assaults were the tactic of choice for both armies, which dropped whole brigades on individual targets to overwhelm and quickly eliminate them. Casualties were high, but so was the rate of success. Moreover, critical civilian objectives could often be saved. The defending AEAf troops more readily turned to the use of nuclear weapons and other WMDs on these worlds than on others, but the overwhelming SLDF mass was also far more likely to foil those attacks. The battles for these worlds were complete in a fraction of the time it had taken for far less critical targets; by summer, the SLDF invasion forces were preparing for the final phases of the war.

Graham IV, Procyon and Outreach

Less than six weeks later, the SLDF turned towards its next wave of targets. Admiral Marrkgrae and his Fifth Fleet targeted Graham IV while Sukhanov's Sixteenth Fleet focused on Procyon. Both admirals had the benefit of deploying more NIKE ships as well as rapidly evolving tactics for dealing with the SDS defenses. Of course, mass was still the primary concern, and together the two admirals had nearly a quarter of the SLDF's active WarShips under their command for these battles.

The final outcomes were never in doubt, paving the way for Fifth Army to hit Procyon and Eighth Army—sans III Corps, which remained on garrison and relief duty—to strike at Graham IV. A week later, Admiral Cainero eliminated the SDS threat at Outreach, giving LXVIII Corps the chance to strike there.

The three planetary campaigns were each distinctive in their own ways. Graham IV, a moderately populated world that was a major industrial powerhouse for the Hegemony, suffered significant damage during the Coup. When its manufacturers could no longer keep up with demands placed upon them by Amaris' government, especially in the production of military equipment for the expanding AEAf, the punishments enacted left them even less capable of meeting those expectations. Kerensky's Eighth Army, in addition to purely military objectives such as AEAf bases and

key manufacturing centers, also targeted a number of reputed gulags where those who defied the Amaris Empire were taken for "punishment and reeducation"—in reality, torture and starvation.

Conditions on Procyon initially seemed far better, though with a population more than ten times that of Graham IV, it was also more difficult to see some of the scars that the occupation had inflicted. Admiral Sukhanov captured the key orbital shipyards partially intact, but had no choice but to ravage the Fort Lezak aerospace complex—a former major SLDF terrestrial naval base—with orbital bombardment to eliminate the Republican DropShips and fighter squadrons based there. Additional orbital strikes hit other suspected and actual AEAf bases, but could not dislodge the forces that had already taken position within the Castles Brian and other major fortifications.

Outreach, on the other hand, had but one industry: the Star League Defense Forces. Less than fifty million people called the world home, with a full quarter of those in some way supporting SLDF operations (either SLDF members themselves, contractors and manufacturers working on SLDF projects, or their families). The world was famous as the home of the Martial Olympiad, which in turn fueled a once-booming tourist industry, but it was also an important center for military training, research, development and testing. As a result, the general level of technology and advancement on Outreach was far in excess of what its annual domestic product would otherwise have suggested. Amaris had raided the world for what he could take, moving the most promising military research projects to Terra and leaving behind only detritus and scraps. With apparently little of value remaining, save for extensive fixed planetary defenses originally built to help support the Martial Olympiad and ongoing SLDF training, Amaris kept little more than a token garrison on the world.

Outreach fell to Kerensky's liberators within weeks. Graham and Procyon were different stories, however. On both worlds, the Amaris defenders relied heavily on WMD attacks, but particularly so on Graham. Despite maintaining complete aerospace superiority over the world, as well as a virtual constellation of WarShips in orbit simply waiting for any opportunity to strike at any Republican forces that showed their faces, the SLDF could not intercept every missile launched. Nor could they do anything to counter the weapons already in place, which simply waited for one of Amaris' agents to set them off. Within a month, the Graham IV garrison had been reduced to the last few holdouts cowering in the Castles Brian, but the world itself was, simply put, devastated.

Procyon fared better, though here too AEAf nuclear strikes had left deep scars. By the end of summer, however, Fifth Army was preparing to move on for the final assaults of the war.

UP NEXT

In focusing on these five star systems in early 2776, the Star League Defense Forces had bypassed four other critical systems, including the provincial capital of Terra Firma deep within their "rear area." The SLDF instead moved ever closer to Terra itself. Throughout the remainder of 2776, it would focus on five worlds to the exclusion of all others: Caph, Keid, New Earth, Rigil Kentarus and Sirius. The SDS-defended worlds Epsilon Indi, Terra Firma, Thorin and Zollikofen would simply have to wait.

RING OF STEEL

A war, even the most victorious, is a national misfortune.

—Field Marshal Helmuth Graf von Moltke

Let them burn. Let them all burn. Terra is all we need.

—Emperor Stefan Ukris Amaris

As the Star League Defense Forces drew ever nearer to Humanity's birthplace, the stakes as well as the price of the campaign surged higher and higher. Not only were the worlds surrounding Terra more densely populated, they were responsible for tremendous segments of the Terran Hegemony's economy. Accordingly, they were protected by much larger Amaris military garrisons, backed up by massive corps of HSF and OPD undercover agents.

Given that the SLDF's figurative noose was pulled tight around Amaris-occupied Terra, Kerensky's armies no longer had to spread themselves thin to reclaim each of the Hegemony's more than 150 worlds. They could instead focus a greater force on a relatively small number of target worlds, as they had with great success in the past year. On the other hand, while Kerensky's armies may have "liberated" the great majority of the Hegemony's worlds, the disarming of all the pro-Amaris agents was far from over—a process that required valuable soldiers to accomplish. Moreover, the SLDF had already sustained horrible losses over the past decade of fighting, and the invasions of the remaining worlds promised additional heavy casualties. The SLDF would need to focus its efforts even more on these worlds just to ensure it had enough manpower to take them.

The penultimate phase of Operation CHIEFTAIN began in July of 2776, with five SLDF armies each entering one of the systems immediately surrounding Terra simultaneously in the final week of the month. Given the import of these worlds, General Kerensky wanted to ensure that Amaris had no chance to respond to the attacks, and so the general ordered one further measure be enacted: the disabling of the HPG on each world prior to the invasions. Special forces teams infiltrated Keid, New Earth, Rigil Kentarus and Sirius in early 2776, while the Caph resistance was tasked with taking out their own HPG. Four of the five operations succeeded; only on New Earth did the attack fail, though even then the SLDF was able to quickly adapt.

ON FIRE

Outside of Terra itself, Caph was arguably the most valuable world in the Terran Hegemony. It was one of the earliest extraterrestrial worlds colonized, possessed ample arable lands and significant other natural resources, and claimed one of the largest populations in the entire Inner Sphere. Given those facts and its proximity to Terra, it was defended by a complex series of fixed fortifications, capped by four Castles Brian and an SDS—all of which Amaris readily took control of during the Coup.

The Amaris conquest of Caph was neither bloodless nor easy, however. Five battalions of freshly trained SLDF troops put up an initial fight that the Amaris troops could not quickly suppress, forming the genesis of a planet-wide resistance movement that only grew in size after the Usurper's troops began directly targeting the civilian population. The deactivation of the Large Fauna Containment Systems shortly after the Coup was just the first of many actions taken against the people of Caph; within six months, Amaris' agents were rounding up and placing in gulags those suspected of supporting the resistance movement. After Duchess Micha Confalonieri's murder at the hands of a disgruntled citizen, HSF agents began randomly arresting citizens and even executing people on the street for publicly espousing support for the resistance.

The Secret Fleet provided what support it could during the occupation and initial waves of Operation CHIEFTAIN, but given the presence of the SDS, such support was largely limited to whatever could be smuggled onto (or off of) the world. On the other hand, Caph was a rich industrial planet; resistance cells across Caph had only to beg, borrow or steal whatever they needed and then retire into the wilderness, where the Republicans rarely ventured lest they have to tangle with the "dinosaurs"—the many species of massive lizards reminiscent of the extinct Terran creatures—that were native to the world.

Fourth and Fifth Fleets entered the Caph system on 26 July, targeting the nadir and zenith points respectively, with Admiral Taro Marrkgrae assuming overall command of the naval forces (Admiral Marina Akkayev-Cameron had given Vice Admiral Robert Ebbens temporary command of Fourth Fleet as she prepared for the assault on Terra). As with the previous SDS engagements, both SLDF spacemen and SDS robotic AIs continued to refine their tactics, but even the addition of two squadrons of heavy Republican WarShips could not overcome the sheer mass that the SLDF brought into the system. The two Star League fleets quickly crushed their opposition and jumped in to pirate points surrounding Caph itself just minutes after reports of the two fleets' arrivals in-system reached the world from the jump points. That, of course, was too late for the AEA to respond quickly enough to repulse the combined SLDF assault fleet.

Third Army, reinforced by CCXL Provisional Corps (formed from a division each pulled from Twenty-Fourth Army Group's LIII and LXXI Corps, as well as a third provisional division—the 2400th, consisting of the First and Fifth RCTs and the Tenth Volunteer Brigade, which had jumped in with Fourth and Fifth Fleets), arrived

URBAN GUERRILLA

Caph was just like any other world before and after Amaris. There weren't many things that its whole population seemed to agree on, but the fact that Dickie Cameron had to go was right at the top. Rich or poor, old or young, noble or commoner, everyone seemed to have hopped onto that maglev and were all headed straight out of Cameron Station. True, it was faddish to hate the First Lord, and by the end even Cameron's most vocal supporters had abandoned him, but the fact of the matter is that everyone—and I mean everyone—had been hit in some way by one of his dumb policies or foolish moves. In those days, Amaris was just a Periphery bumpkin that for some reason had attached himself to Cameron, and whose name would round the celebrity rumor mills and less-than-legitimate news sources every few weeks or months.

After the Coup, it's fair to say everyone was happy to see Dickie Cameron gone, but we were all pretty divided on Amaris himself. Duchess [Micha] Confalonieri [Caph's noble leader] supported him, and that quieted a lot of the rhetoric. But not all of it. She backed the guy who'd removed the worst leader Terra had ever seen, but he also murdered a lot of military folks, and that didn't bode well for the Duchess...

Yang Timmons was just another mid-class worker in his twenties. He never considered military or government service and only cared about finishing his shift, having fun and the balance in his account. He publicly cheered the death of Richard Cameron, but by all accounts never even voted in the election that saw Stefan Amaris elevated to Hegemony Director-General—because he simply couldn't be bothered. The Caph resistance movement was a distant drama that didn't affect him; same with the rumors of continued fighting on worlds around the Hegemony. "Apathetic" was perhaps the best description of this young man, at least when it came to matters of politics and economics.

He was, however, devoted to his extended family; he had five siblings, and the close-knit Yang family numbered in the scores, mostly living in and around the city of Stelabran. After the death of two Amaris officers in a side alley one evening there, blamed on the Caph resistance (even though investigations traced the deaths back to an illegal gambling ring almost a year later), Amaris Colonel Orestes Tomasevi ordered the "dinosaur shields" (as they were colloquially known) around the city deactivated. Within a few days, a stampede through Stelabran left nineteen Yangs dead, five under the age of ten, including one of Yang's sisters and two cousins.

hours later and spent a week burning in to the world. Meanwhile, Fourth and Fifth Fleets systematically bombarded SDS batteries and AEAf bases. The two fleets also inserted the 2400th Provisional Division onto the planet, where it immediately engaged Republican units positioned outside the most significant fortifications, pinning them so they could be eliminated from orbit or by the two fleets' combined air groups.

The AEAf responded brutally, even more so than on other worlds. The Tenth Volunteer Brigade was destroyed in a series of nuclear strikes that left New Brunnel, the world's capital, a radioactive rubble pile before Third Army even landed. The two SLDF fleets retaliated as best as they could, continually pounding known Republican strongholds from orbit and the air. Unfortunately, where the Star League forces avoided targeting civilian objectives, at least without absolute confirmation of the presence of Amaris forces and the high probability of eliminating or substantially damaging those forces, the AEAf was under no such restraint.

By the time Third Army landed, CCXL Provisional Corps was little more than a shadow of its already understrength origins. After the destruction of New Brunnel and the volunteer brigade, the two RCTs focused on scouting rather than directly engaging, and on securing landing zones for Third Army. The Republicans doggedly pursued them, however, attacking with suicide strikes and other insurgent tactics—typically perpetrated by one of the few die-hard Amaris supporters remaining on the world or, more often, a citizen forced into action by threats against family members. The AEAf possessed a large arsenal of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and were more than willing to use them—especially on civilian targets.

Third Army landed on all three of Caph's continents, but focused the majority of its forces on Brunnel, the heaviest-populated continent. Third Army surrounded and cut off many of the AEAf-held bases and fortifications, leveling whatever they could rather than wasting time and casualties rooting dug-in Amaris troops out of positions they would likely fight to the death over. Nevertheless, Amaris' agents were in complete control of the world. Especially problematic were the massive numbers of HSF and OPD operatives that blended into the civilian population, and who continued to intimidate and blackmail Caph's citizens into making attacks on the SLDF.

The battle for Caph, then, was the bloodiest and most difficult of Third Army's campaigns. Caph's resistance movement was a tremendous aid in uncovering Amaris' hidden agents, and especially in foiling countless terror attacks, but the weight of detecting and spoiling the AEAf's many WMD attacks fell squarely upon the shoulders of Third Army and Fifth Fleet—a task at which they could never be entirely successful. (Fourth Fleet had left the system in order to support the New Earth invasion before beginning a hunt for existing AEAf WarShip detachments still operating within the Hegemony.)

Within a few months, the fighting was largely over save for the reduction of the Castles Brian, but the one-time jewel of the Terran Hegemony was left a wasteland. Every major industrial city was in ruins, along with most of the minor ones. The lush wilderness zones were scarred by WMD strikes that left entire regions uninhabitable and led to the eventual extinction of a number of native Caphian flora and fauna species. The Republicans, of course, paid the price with their lives—Amaris commanders captured alive were often summarily executed by SLDF personnel for their crimes—but the damage was done. And would take centuries to reverse.

ERUPTION

Keid, like Caph, was one of the original Terran colonies that grew into one of the richest and most populated worlds in the Hegemony. Though known primarily for its massive agricultural output, it was a major industrial world as well, with plentiful resources. Within the spacefaring and military communities, it was also home to a number of aerospace industries that produced everything from spacecraft components

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to entire WarShips, making it a natural location for the SLDF's Fleet School of Keid. Five major spaceport complexes were scattered across the star system, along with hundreds of mining outposts and refineries. Though Amaris focused primarily on the world itself, the entire Keid star system was a key objective for Amaris' armies and fleets following the Coup. The Usurper's forces ultimately took command of the world and every major space-based objective, though they relied on control of the jump points and Keid itself—which is to say, access to food, water, supplies and communications—to keep the rest of the system's denizens in line.

Given its critical nature, Keid was a target of critical interest to the SLDF's Secret Fleet throughout the Rim Worlds campaign and the first stages of Operation CHIEFTAIN. Intelligence-gathering and covert supply ships regularly used pirate points throughout the system to carry out their missions, making Keid one of the least secure star systems in the Amaris-occupied Hegemony. This, despite Keid's possession of an SDS, heavy naval patrols (including patrolling squadrons of Caspars) and roving marine inspection teams. Not only were the various resistance groups on Keid well supplied, scouts and intelligence operatives were already on-world and working years before the SLDF's invasion of the system began.

The actual invasion began very much like the strike at Caph, with Twelfth and Sixteenth Fleets simultaneously striking the two standard jump points. With so many critical targets, as well as Amaris spaceborne patrols, scattered throughout the star system, the actual invasion force had to split its focus. With the help of the Secret Fleet, SLDF marine strike teams had been inserted into the system in the months leading up to the invasion. Kerensky also turned to an old tactic taken directly from the Reunification War, one used at Al Na'ir just a few years earlier, to ensure he had enough troops to complete the operation. Drawing volunteers from throughout his Task Force Confederation, he created several provisional regiments of infantrymen that received rudimentary marine training; these troops would be responsible for clearing the dozens of secondary space targets in the system of Amaris influence. Meanwhile, Fifteenth Army would tackle Keid itself.

Sixteenth Fleet, under the command of Admiral Kerron Sukhanov, targeted the zenith jump point while Vice Admiral Els Cainero's Twelfth Fleet struck the nadir. With literally years worth of intelligence gathered by strategically positioned SLDF ELINT ships and listening posts to plan from, the two Star League fleets entered the system and quickly neutralized the manned defenses, though a crucial miscalculation on the part of SLDF Captain Ronald Rico left the SLS *Saratoga* and five other Sixteenth Fleet WarShips isolated for twenty critical minutes. SDS drones swooped in to cut off and pounce on the unsupported SLDF ships, in the process weakening the remainder of the zenith Caspar fleet enough for Admiral Sukhanov's Sixteenth to barrel through the drones to rescue their comrades. The *Saratoga* was crippled and its escorts destroyed, but the Caspar fleet was eliminated. Vice Admiral Cainero obliterated her opposition at the nadir and, using SLDF intelligence reports, dispersed Twelfth Fleet to counter the system patrols—an operation that took weeks before all of the Caspars were taken out and the AEA WarShip patrols were either destroyed or run out of the system.

Admiral Sukhanov meanwhile led Sixteenth Fleet, along with Fifteenth Army's invasion force, to Keid itself. The combined WarShips of the two SLDF fleets eliminated the SDS drones, though not before Amaris' agents destroyed the Omicron 2 Shipyards and three major orbital factories with prepositioned nuclear demolition charges. The provisional marine regiments fared better in their efforts to secure the smaller system outposts, primarily because they encountered just a handful of Amaris agents in their efforts; this action nonetheless took months of hopping between planets, moons and asteroids.

Fifteenth Army landed on 3 August at half a dozen landing zones (each secured by special forces and pathfinder units inserted onto the world months earlier), immediately pressing the attack against the four divisions of Amaris defenders on the world. Here, in complete contrast to their comrades' actions on Caph, the AEA commanders were

The normally meek and apathetic Yang Timmons snapped, as did so many other Caphians. But rather than join the resistance or target Amaris soldiers or agents, he fixated on Duchess Confalonieri. To him, it was her support that brought Amaris to power, and therefore her betrayal of Caph's people that allowed his agents to come to the world, and ultimately kill those members of Yang's family.

Yang plotted his revenge in secret for months. Though it turned out that he knew a number of people who were taking up arms against the Amaris Empire, he never sought out the resistance movement, nor even recruited any active assistance to carry out his revenge. Instead, he used his many social and family contacts to gather the intelligence and supplies he would need to carry out what eventually became a fantastically detailed plan. As an employee of the Caph Utility Conglomerate, he had wide access to private and government buildings across the continent of Caph Prime, as well as to critical infrastructure sites. He was also an avid gamer, who built and refined his ultimate plan with several groups of friends under the guise of playing an adventure game.

Yang had to wait until the opportunity to launch his plan presented itself, which came in August of 2768. Duchess Confalonieri scheduled a visit to Fallon, one of Caph Prime's major cultural centers, to attend the opening ceremonies of a two week-long annual festival of stage plays and holoivid screenings. Employing a sophisticated series of utility failures that pointed security troops towards an attack on senior Amaris military and government officials who were also in attendance, the twenty-four year-old pumped the Duchess' suite full of fire-suppressant gas that suffocated her and two aides late at night. He triggered electrical fires throughout the hotel in an effort to cover his escape, but didn't manage to elude the numerous HSF agents guarding the building.

Yang was never formally charged with the murder of Duchess Confalonieri, but nonetheless was tried, convicted and executed within a month of his arrest for treason and conspiracy to commit murder of officers of the Amaris Empire. He became an overnight hero of Caph's resistance, whose members often scrawled messages like "Remember Yang!" near the sites of their attacks.

—Peter Martell, *Unsung Heroes of the Occupation*, Far Star Media, 2794

SILVER LIGHTS

Let me tell you, infiltrating the Keid system was easier than walking into a corner market. Only there we didn't come in through the front door, or the back door. Most of the time, we made our own side entrance. Yes, we had to watch our steps and usually had to hide in the bushes, so to speak, which usually meant getting in close to one of the outer planets or hiding in an asteroid field. There were just too many outposts for Amaris to 100 percent monitor, which means the drones and his ships just had to patrol and look for the captains who were flying too nervous. Or casual. But mostly they left the outposts to themselves because they just didn't have the manpower to deal with them all.

As it was, they had a hard enough time with the crews of the big rigs—the Omicron 2 Shipyards, Royal Fabrication's orbital refineries, and the like. We inserted [into the Keid system] in '71, and already the tales from the Omicron Shipyards were legendary with the miners. Apparently, four of the shipyards' factory modules somehow decoupled from the rest of the station less than a day after the Coup, followed by everything from solar panels to entire habitation modules. Hell, the tri-vid of a grav deck just spinning out into deep space as a *Pinto* chased it down still makes me laugh, though that could be because of the soundtrack someone attached to it.

By all accounts, there was hell to pay. There are just as many stories of workers and supervisors getting shoved out of airlocks. Or their wives and kids. They had to import a bunch of workers to staff Omicron 2, which was a linchpin in Amaris' post-Coup strategy. Building more WarShips was his only chance. It took them six months to get production rolling again, but even before the Coup the Omicron 2 workers were masters of inefficiency. Afterwards, they took that to a whole new level, but at the same time they learned the fine art of industrial pranking. The first two ships to be completed—seventeen months late, mind you—left a cloud of rivets, bolts, armor panels and other debris—including a couple of helium tanks, if the stories are true—behind them. "Silver comets" is what they called those ships. After they jumped for the first time, I hear they mostly arrived, just not necessarily in one, or even a dozen pieces.

—Captain Jim Brannigan, *In Their Words: Destroying the Schemer Amaris*, Abraham Tarantino, ed., Dragon Technology Media, 2781

restrained in their use of WMD attacks—primarily making nuclear strikes on SLDF formations rather than indiscriminately targeting the civilian population. On the other hand, they also possessed far stronger Patriot formations than on Caph, thanks to a powerful pro-Amaris undercurrent on the world. Here, the SLDF found themselves regularly facing Hegemony citizens who fought against them to preserve the Amaris Empire.

The largely conventional campaign for Keid lasted only a few bloody months. While both sides resorted to making strategic nuclear strikes against their enemy—the AEAf obliterating the cities of Kitimat and Liuben, while the SLDF focused its nuclear attacks on the world's four occupied Castles Brian—the level of atrocities and civilian casualties was far lower than on other Hegemony worlds. As the campaign progressed, Sixteenth Fleet pulled away from Keid itself to focus on the remainder of the star system while Twelfth Fleet left the system entirely (to refit for the eventual assault on Terra). This left several major gaps in orbital defenses that allowed two regiments of Amaris defenders to escape the system.

The final reduction of the Castles Brian would not happen before the invasion of Terra, until which time Keid was transformed into a staging point for the SLDF armies massing for their final assault on the Hegemony's seat.

UNCHAINED

The SLDF battle for New Earth began the instant Stefan Amaris' forces started seizing Hegemony worlds in 2766, and continued right on until the SLDF returned in force almost eleven years later. Admiral Dmitrios Rummolo, who had put up a spirited fight against overwhelming Amaris naval forces during the Coup before leading a successful fighting withdrawal and ultimately taking command of the rag-tag Secret Fleet operating within the Hegemony borders, returned at the head of the fleet he was supposed to take command of a decade earlier. Rummolo led Ninth Fleet, which included his battered-but-functional flagship *SLS Wales* and hundreds of crewmen who survived the New Earth attack, into the system on 26 July. Listening posts in the system reported that the attack on New Earth's HPG had been unsuccessful, prompting the admiral to enact the backup plan.

Ninth Fleet first targeted the nadir jump point as a trio of Secret Fleet DropShips already in planetary orbit launched a volley of missiles that destroyed the HPG and crippled key command and control nodes. Though the three Secret Fleet DropShips were quickly destroyed by AEAf fighters, they accomplished their primary objective, leaving the system incommunicado. Meanwhile, Rummolo's WarShips systematically eliminated the nadir defenses before regrouping and jumping to the zenith point—long before word of the nadir assault reached the zenith's defenders—and accomplishing the same there.

The attack on New Earth itself would have to wait until Ninth Fleet's WarShips could recharge their jump drives. In the meantime, Admiral Rummolo called in elements from Fourth Fleet to help secure the rest of the system, which the Amaris defenders were abandoning in order to make a final stand at New Earth. Three days after securing the zenith jump point, Ninth Fleet jumped in to New Earth's L1 Lagrange point and, after a brief high-G burn-in, directly engaged the SDS fleet.

Rather than directly engage the SDS squadrons that came out to meet it, Ninth Fleet barreled through the drones and entered planetary orbit, where its fighter and assault ship squadrons split their focus between New Earth's orbital defenses and ground-based objectives. In many cases, Ninth Fleet's WarShips dove perilously close to the planet's atmosphere as well, directly firing on valuable ground targets—completely contravening most sound naval tactics. Though Admiral Rummolo's ships suffered significant damage as a result, they also drew the Caspars far closer to the planet than was typical, which likewise caused major problems for the drone ships, a number of which fell into New Earth's atmosphere and died during the fighting.



Admiral Rummolo certainly fought an unconventional battle, but over the course of several hours eliminated the drone ships and many ground-based SDS batteries, as well as most of the military DropShip traffic in and around the world. Before long, Republican fighter squadrons and combat DropShips added their firepower to the mix. Where the elite SLDF pilots and crews had few difficulties concentrating on their assignments within the swirling orbital melee, the Amaris crews were simply overwhelmed and outmatched, and soon proved to be liabilities of which Rummolo's fleet took full advantage. On the other hand, every Ninth Fleet WarShip that made it to New Earth sustained damage, in many cases severe. Nevertheless, while a greater percentage of Ninth Fleet's ships sustained heavy enough damage to render them non-combat worthy, Rummolo lost fewer ships destroyed or crippled compared to the other invasion fleets. (Unfortunately, most of these ships would be subsequently unavailable for Operation LIBERATION, though eventual repairs returned enough to combat readiness to complete the final stages of Operation CHIEFTAIN in 2778.)

Eleventh Army, known unofficially as the "Apostles of Apollo" after leading the invasion of Apollo, and later responsible for securing the heavily defended worlds of Nusakan and Zebebelgenubi, continued its long list of difficult assignments in landing on New Earth. Led by some of the most storied units in

the SLDF, Eleventh Army quickly established a foothold on the world and moved to bottle up the dozens of regiments of Amaris regulars and conscripts that defended New Earth. The Sixty-First Infantry Division (the Michigan 61st) spearheaded the invasion of the McKenna continent, while the 146th Royal BattleMech Division (the George S. Patton Division) secured a foothold on Lanhold and the 331st BattleMech Division (the North American Division) hit Neosasia—all bloody assaults that dislodged the AEAFF defenders and, after the rest of the army landed and began engaging the enemy, prompted the Republican defenders to respond with wide-scale WMD attacks, primarily nuclear strikes. Within days, the attacks were no longer aimed at the Star League forces. Instead, as on so many other worlds before, they focused on civilian targets.

The soldiers, airmen and MechWarriors of Eleventh Army threw themselves into the fight in an effort to quickly put an end to the AEAFF's devastating campaign, but just a few months of these unrelenting attacks left the world in ruins. The battles for the final Amaris-held New Earth objectives lasted into the new year, freeing much of what remained of Eleventh Army for the assault on Terra. The recovery phase, by contrast, would never end; the once-vital world of New Earth became a mere ghost of its former self. It never fully recovered, and by the end of the First Succession War supported a continually shrinking population less than a quarter of its pre-Coup glory.

SPACE AGE SACRIFICE

By far, New Earth had to have been the riskiest jump of the whole damn war, at least to that point. The CONOPS [concept of operations] was to have special forces teams on New Earth (and the other four worlds hit in this wave) take out the HPGs so that the Goons couldn't report back to Terra *and* so that reports from the SDS control computers couldn't be passed around to the other Hegemony SDSs, which had been a problem in the past. Apparently even computers pass around hotwashes and after-action reports. We hadn't done this on other worlds to date because the HPGs were just so critical to *everything*. Here, though, the General decided that the strategic value of cutting off these five systems was just too great, and we could rely on mobile HPGs to take care of communications until the stations could be repaired.

So that means the real heroes of this operation were the crews of the *Memphis Tale*, *DeBritta* and *Rojo Caballero*. Word has it they were all civilian ships that joined up with Admiral Rummolo after the Coup, and later on were refitted with some heavy artillery. They went in early as the insurance policy in case the SpecOps teams couldn't get the job done, and when they didn't, those damn spacers went right to work, taking out the HPG with converted anti-ship missiles. I saw the site a few weeks later, and let me tell you they were right on the money. If I could, I would have given each of the crew members a medal and a hug. The Goons never gave them the chance, though.

Then came the final phase. Rear Admiral Lina Jeannet, commander of V Corps' naval escort, told me she nearly choked when she heard that Admiral Rummolo planned on jumping Ninth Fleet—after quick-charging their drives—into a Lagrange point. That didn't really mean much to me until she said it would be like eighty guys all simultaneously hitting baseballs into a bucket sitting at the back of a cart driving on the outfield perimeter track. Sure, they could hit them all from tees, but when it came down to it, they had thousands of variables to account for.

Somehow, they pulled it off. Mostly. Two ships had some sort of problems and didn't make the jump. Another one, the SLS *Xmucane*, just disappeared; they say it's probably dead in deep space somewhere with a blown drive. A few more suffered damage in the jump, but at least were able to get into the fight. After that, Admiral Rummolo had them fly right down the Caspars' throats, completely blow through them and crowd the planet. We all know WarShips and gravity wells don't get along too great. Apparently, computer-controlled WarShips have an even worse time of it. Jeannet was damn glad none of her ships had any part of that operation, but the guys that pulled off that attack won't be paying for their own drinks for the rest of their lives!

—Major General James McEvedy, SLDF, *Personal Remembrances*, Terran Archives, 2780

HOUSE OF PAIN

Long before Kerensky's SLDF arrived to liberate the world, Rigil Kentarus was beset by an Amaris-induced downward spiral. During the opening shots of the Coup, Amaris' troops had left deep scars on Rigil Kentarus and its relatively heavily populated moon, Riken Minor. Their liberal use of orbital strikes in eliminating the original SLDF defenders caused huge amounts of damage, while their heavy-handed methods of dealing with civilian insurrection quickly transformed a prosperous world into one whose gross domestic product plummeted by more than a quarter in less than a year, and continued to decline during the occupation.

As with each of the five core worlds targeted in this wave, Rigil Kentarus possessed an SDS, and though the SLDF had never constructed any true Castles Brian, the world and its moon were nonetheless honeycombed with fortifications. Eighth Fleet took responsibility for securing the space lanes to the world, focusing its fury on the zenith point as two raiding squadrons pulled from other SLDF fleets jumped in to the nadir to draw off some drone ships and to disable what ships they could. As the decoys fought their delaying action, Eighth Fleet cleaned up the zenith before jumping to the nadir to accomplish the same thing, paving the way for Thirteenth Army to jump in and begin its burn to Rigil Kentarus.

With SDS emplacements on Rigil Kent itself as well as its moon, supported by orbital defense stations, Eighth Fleet was careful to first clear Riken Minor, where Thirteenth Army staged its first operations, before removing the main world's SDS threat. Riken Prime, with a far smaller population and correspondingly fewer Amaris defenders, fell quickly and served as the ideal staging area for assaulting Rigil Kentarus. Less than a month after taking the moon, the SLDF began to muster forces and equipment there as well in preparation for the eventual assault on Terra.

The battle for Rigil Kent took on a grim aspect, due to the AEAF's use of WMD attacks as well as the discovery of so many work camps and ghettos set up by Amaris' agents to "encourage" Rigil Kentarus's people to increase their industrial and agricultural output back to their former glory. While SLDF intelligence gathering efforts had, in fact, learned of their existence, the Amaris Empire had successfully hidden the true nature of these camps. Corporal punishment of factory workers was standard operating procedure for the OPD-led overseers, but family members, including young children, were held in torturous conditions to ensure the workers' continued service. Bodies of those who did not survive their mistreatment—and those who stood up to the Amaris agents—were cremated to eliminate evidence of the crimes.

After Thirteenth Army's arrival, the Republicans began targeting these camps with nuclear strikes, in an effort to erase the evidence as well as to prevent the SLDF from making use of the industrial facilities. The Republicans soon found that the SLDF's superior numbers and absolute air and space superiority severely limited their success. By the final quarter of the year, the battle for Rigil Kentarus was reduced to the SLDF digging AEAF defenders out of their fortifications and of intelligence and police teams identifying and arresting—or simply eliminating—the many HSF and OPD operatives on-world.



LOSS OF CONTROL

Sirius was a target unlike any other in this phase of Operation CHIEFTAIN. Sirius V and VI were barely habitable—the former possessing a methane atmosphere and colonized only after the construction of domed cities and sealed structures, the latter seismically unstable and oxygen poor—but also rich in ores and minerals. Sirius VI's moon, designated Sirius VIa, was the only truly habitable planetary body, and quickly grew a population that at first focused on mining and resource processing, but eventually expanded into industrial manufacturing. Sirius VI saw some terraforming, but the greater population remained on its moon. Two major orbital complexes known as “the Projects” came to house many of the workers who traveled between the planet and its moon, serving also as transfer stations for the nearly constant stream of DropShips and shuttles moving to and fro.

Following the Coup, Sirius began to suffer more than any other core Hegemony system. Sirius V and VI were entirely dependent on constant food shipments from the moon, which itself relied on imports to supplement its food production. Amaris' agents used those facts to try to starve the resident miners into submission. When that didn't work, they cut off food shipments to Sirius V and VI and destroyed the Projects.

In the years between the Coup and the SLDF's arrival in July of 2776, the Sirius worlds' populations wasted away. Though Amaris attempted to restart mining production a number of times by bringing in outside firms, the planets simply could not support the same level of output as they did before the destruction of the Projects and raping of their infrastructure. The Emperor finally washed his hands of the system, ordering its SDS largely stripped of drone ships; what drone fleet remained was focused on Sirius VI (in reality, its moon), while the reassigned Caspars were added to other drone fleets around the Hegemony.

With intelligence reports indicating that the system's two standard jump points were defended only by SDS stations and a handful of ships, Nineteenth Fleet split its forces and struck simultaneously, quickly overwhelming the drone defenses. They then spent a day repairing and refitting before jumping to a pirate point near Sirius VI, arriving at their final target twelve hours before the alerts from the two jump points reached the world (the system's class-A main sequence star placed its standard jump points more than thirty-seven light-hours away, or almost seven weeks away by DropShip).

Nineteenth Fleet nonetheless remained in the system for most of the rest of the year, hunting down Caspar patrols and clearing the shipping lanes of Amaris influence. In the meantime, Eighteenth Army secured Sirius V and VI, as well as the moon, the latter just as under-defended as the rest of the system. Eighteenth Army had control of Sirius VIa within a month and provided what relief it could to the starving miners on Sirius V and VI—the majority of whom resented the SLDF for taking so long to finally relieve them. Sirius would never again be the major resource it once was for the Hegemony or the Star League.

BLOOD AND FIRE

The July assault on the five star systems closest to Terra left Amaris figuratively, if not actually, surrounded and cut off. The fact that the SLDF had apparently ignored a handful of objectives in focusing on these final targets gave the self-proclaimed emperor no cause for joy. When he learned of the attacks on Caph, Keid, New Earth, Rigil Kentarus and Sirius, Amaris raged for weeks, stories of which even reached Kerensky as he toured the worlds his armies had recently liberated.

The final phase of Operation CHIEFTAIN was rapidly approaching, but the endgame was still a distant mirage. Terra lay ahead of the Star League Defense Forces, but that was a campaign whose conclusion no one could clearly foresee.

SOMEONE OUT THERE

In actuality, the concept of “conquering” or even “securing” a system's jump point is patently ludicrous. The jump point is, after all, just a big open region of space that is far enough away from the system primary that the star's gravity won't affect a K-F drive. The “standard” jump points are conveniently located off of the star's north (zenith) and south (nadir) poles because that ensures standardized travel times to and from the planets (and moons and asteroids and stations) in the system (at least so long as the main planets don't have some sort of strange orbit that takes them off of the main orbital plane).

On the other hand, the DropShips and JumpShips that make interstellar travel possible do tend to congregate in a fairly small region of space. That is, after all, typically where the recharge and transfer stations are. And if they didn't all come to a particular “spot” in space, then the concept of “tramp ships”—independent JumpShips and DropShips that operate on their own schedule and simply hop from system to system transporting whatever cargo they pick up—on which the economy of the Inner Sphere for some reason relies just wouldn't work.

Reality, then, dictates that the great majority of space traffic passes through two tiny spots in each system (not counting the primarily unlicensed or otherwise illegal traffic that wants to avoid the traffic jam, or the customs authorities). This is true even in a nation slowly being conquered by a force that relies on overwhelming naval forces to secure a star system.

Interstellar travel and security didn't change significantly in the Amaris-occupied Hegemony. It was in Amaris' interest to keep civilian traffic focused on the two standard jump points. From there, his defense stations and WarShips could keep a tight rein (at least as tight as possible) on the civilian ships that he so desperately needed to keep trade flowing within the Hegemony. Likewise, with SLDF surveillance ships and listening posts potentially sitting in each and every star system, Amaris' admirals soon learned to keep their own military traffic similarly focused. A few ELINT ships armed with portable HPGs, calling in “space strikes” on isolated Amaris military or government convoys, was all it took to largely keep them bottled up.

Because of that, the jump point assaults pretty much worked. The civilians usually buttoned up and maintained a low profile until the fighting ended, while the military ships tended to put up a fight, knowing they needed every gun possible to even hope to win the battle.

—Commodore Launce Ribbentrop, *In Their Words: Destroying the Schemer Amaris*, Abraham Tarantino, ed., Dragon Technology Media, 2781

THE TERRAN SYSTEM

"The enemy must be annihilated before he reaches our main battlefield... We must stop him in the water...destroying all his equipment while it is still afloat."

—Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, 22nd April 1944

"The nation must be taught to bear losses. No amount of skill on the part of the higher commanders, no training, however good, on the part of the officers and men, no superiority of arms and ammunition, however great, will enable victories to be won without the sacrifice of men's lives. The nation must be prepared to see heavy casualty lists."

—Field Marshal Douglas Haig, before the Battle of the Somme, June 1916

By the autumn of 2776, all of the Hegemony had been liberated, but the SLDF was a shadow of its former self. Sixty-five percent of the Star League Regular Army and Navy had been destroyed or disbanded during the campaigns to date, and one final challenge—the hardest they would face—remained: The liberation of Terra itself. The SLDF remained the largest and most potent force in the Inner Sphere, but Kerensky couldn't rely on weight of numbers to carry the day. Thanks to Jonathan Cameron, Terra's defenses were too potent. Furthermore, he couldn't afford to use the entire SLDF in the operation as the rest of the Hegemony needed protection from over-aggressive House forces and the relief operations underway on many worlds needed military support.

Leaving around ten percent of the remaining forces as a garrison and to support relief operations (totaling four BattleMech divisions, thirteen infantry divisions and nineteen independent regiments), the bulk of the Star League military began preparations for the final clash of arms. One hundred and fifty-two divisions and over a hundred independent regiments were committed to the assault (a total of just under fifteen hundred regiments), facing off against sixty Amaris Empire divisions. Three-to-one odds should have shifted things in the attackers' favor, but first the SLDF had to overcome Terra's orbital defenses, which were an order of magnitude larger and more complex than those of other Hegemony worlds.

Well over three hundred M5 Caspar drone WarShips patrolled the system, more advanced models than employed elsewhere and each capable of independent action as well as coordination through a network of command-and-control satellites (which in turn had massive redundancy). HPG communication between the vessels and the satellites allowed the drones to react near-instantaneously to any threat. Smaller drones—the M3 DropShip-sized vessels and Mk. 39 *Voidseeker* drone fighter series—added further depth to Terra's defense. Additionally, numerous M9 *Pavise* defense satellites orbited the Terra system's three inhabited worlds, each also featuring ground defense installations. Terra's defenses were particularly formidable: 120 SDS batteries dotted the seven continents, including mobile ground batteries and submarine weapon platforms, while Lunar near-side installations and bases were placed so as to catch traffic approaching Terra in a deadly crossfire. Both the Caspars and these static defenses would need to be overcome if landings were to succeed.

The *Bug Eyes* and *Pueblos* of the Secret Fleet continued to provide Kerensky with intelligence on Terra, jumping into the deep dark of the Kuiper Belt, beyond Sol's proximity limit, from which they monitored ship and communications traffic within the system. Even here, some 30 AU from Sol, Amaris' forces remained a threat; autonomous Caspars patrolled the distant worldlets, part of a long-running terror campaign against the Belter population, and the possibility remained that one of these robotic warships would stumble on the Secret-Fleet watchers. Unlike the swarms of vessels that engaged the SLDF in other systems, no cloud of electromagnetic signal activity surrounded these lone vessels. They did not need to coordinate their activities, and their command and control centers were light-hours away. The isolation of these vessels made them simultaneously less effective as a military platform—lone vessels could be easily overwhelmed—and yet more dangerous. Several scout missions reported narrow escapes when they came across dormant Caspars lying inert among the Kuiper Belt Objects. Other scouts disappeared and are believed to have been lost to one of these stealthy leviathans.

Observation of the Terra system in the summer of 2776 began to show interesting patterns. Reporting back to New Earth on 4 July, the SLS *Peyton Randolph* reported significant coordinated Caspar movements but little of the communications noise usually associated with such moves. It was known from the SLDF archive that the vessels within Terra's Reagan Defense Network were more advanced than those employed elsewhere, smarter and more resilient than their cousins around other worlds, including the use of HPGs to communicate with distant C&C hubs. Such communication systems had been employed by vessels operating far from the principal inhabited regions, but a hypothesis arose within the SLDF that Amaris' technicians had refined the system to use the FTL comm network at all times, possibly as a counter to the SLDF's efforts with Project NIKE. If so, the attacking SLDF fleet could not rely on the discoveries made on Nirasaki being effective against Terra's drones. It would mean a return to the horrific days of 2774, with each centimeter of ground bought with SLDF blood.

The Battle of Eris

On 9 September 2776, a ten-ship task force jumped into trans-Neptunian space with the intent of luring one of the patrol Caspars into an engagement, during which the theories regarding the drones' systems could be tested. The dwarf planet Eris was the site of a Belter

colony known to have been harassed by Caspars repeatedly and so made an ideal proving ground for the SLDF's theory. Two days later, a brief bloody engagement with a lone Caspar realized the SLDF's worst fears. In the forty-minute engagement, a single Caspar crippled an SLDF WarShip so badly that it had to be scuttled, and mauled three others. The Terran drones were faster and more effective than their distant cousins, and the NIKE countermeasures had minimal effect on them. Adding to the SLDF's woes were accusations that the commander of the Eris operation had been overconfident, sure that his flotilla could handle a lone Caspar even if NIKE proved ineffectual. This claim was later dismissed, but its specter cast doubts on the validity of Eris as a true test of the Reagan system's drone WarShips.

This brief clash is often little more than a footnote in histories of Operation LIBERATION, but ComStar's records on Terra show the Battle of Eris played a key role in hardening Belter attitudes against the SLDF and the Star League. The Belters described the decision to stage an encounter with the Amaris-controlled Caspars near one of their outposts as "reckless in the extreme." They would later snub Kerensky's efforts at rapprochement and return to the isolationist policies they had pursued in earlier eras.

KICKING DOWN THE GATES

Eris demonstrated that the (relative) ease of recent years against the SDS systems could not be counted on in the assault on Terra. Even outnumbered ten-to-one, the M5 drone had managed to inflict significant damage, and while the SLDF had a better idea of the vessels' capabilities and would not underestimate them in future, that gave the SLDF reason for reflection. The Terran system contained between three and four hundred such drone vessels while the Star League Navy retained only around 900 warships. As the Caspars were effective pack-hunters, the SLDF would likely be mauled on the run-in to Terra without very careful planning and countermeasures.

Planning for the assault fell to Admiral Janos Grec, who had succeeded Joan Brandt as head of the Naval Command in 2772. The first part of Grec's strategy was simple: keep the fleet together so that its vessels could offer mutual support. Continuing the hunter-prey analogy, a dense herd would be much more effective in holding off predators than disparate groups that could be crushed piecemeal. This decision shaped the second part of the strategy: to maintain fleet cohesion, the SLDF would employ the standard zenith and nadir jump points rather than the limitless pirate points around the periphery of the system. This would allow the fleet to jump with far more precision and cohesion, as the jump points were well known and precisely mapped so vessels could be counted on to arrive in close proximity rather than being scattered though a vast swathe of space. Kerensky and Grec deemed that the added security this provided far outweighed the negatives of arriving at the standard jump points, namely the defense installations that had been assembled there. "Sometimes the best tactic is to kick down the gates and go in guns blazing," the general is reported to have told one of his junior officers. They would rely on speed and aggression to prevail...not to mention some misdirection and dirty tricks.

PREPARATIONS

The months after the liberation of the Hegemony were also a time for the SLDF to breathe, rest, recover and re-arm. Kerensky decided against changing the army group structure employed during Operation CHIEFTAIN, though troops, regiments and even whole divisions were reassigned to make good losses sustained during the campaign. The eight worlds closest to Terra became the jump-off points for the assault, ameliorating the stress placed on the already struggling planetary economies. New Earth became home to Fifteenth (Eleventh and Seventeenth Armies) and Fifth (Fifth and Eighteenth Armies) Army Groups; Kentarus to Seventeenth (Tenth and Fifteenth Armies) Army Group; Sirius to Nineteenth (Second and Nineteenth Armies) Army Group; Procyon to Twentieth (Twelfth, Thirteenth and Sixteenth Armies) Army Group; Keid to Twenty-First (Ninth and Fourteenth Armies) Army Group; Caph to Twenty-Second (First and Sixth Armies) and Twenty-Fourth (Seventh Army) Army Groups; Killbourn to Second (Eighth and Twentieth Armies) Army Group; and New Home to Fourth (Third and Fourth Armies) Army Group. Each formation also contributed troops to Ninety-Ninth Army Group (comprising four BattleMech and thirteen infantry divisions, as well as nineteen independent regiments) that would not partake in Operation LIBERATION but would instead serve as garrison for the Terran Hegemony and continue to aid relief operations. Ninety-Ninth Army Group would also serve as a reserve force for operations on Terra, providing replacement troops and formations should the situation warrant.

By mid-December 2776, the SLDF's logistical preparations were complete, though Kerensky and his staff continued to fine-tune the assault plan. The troops continued to prepare, staging a wide variety of exercises, and the Star League Navy commandeered the Krester shipyards at Keid. In the last few weeks of 2776, over a hundred DropShips and JumpShips were processed through the facility along with the SLDF's *Newgrange*-class yardships, undergoing top-secret modifications. The importance of this work would soon become clear.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

Kerensky had little doubt that a cataclysmic battle for Terra was inevitable and he knew the battle would be bloody and devastating to Terra. Despite his uncompromising stance against the Usurper, Kerensky decided to offer Amaris one last chance and, using representatives of the New Earth Trading Corps as intermediaries, offered the Rim Worlds lord one final opportunity to resolve matters peacefully. Delivered on 21 October, the five-hundred word missive called on Amaris and his forces to surrender themselves to the SLDF, and in return they would be treated fairly and in accordance with Star League civil law. If he did not surrender, the provisions of martial law—including summary executions—would apply.

Amaris' response, delivered three days later, was rambling and disjointed, showing the precarious state of his mind. Running to almost 150,000 words (and even so never actually addressing Kerensky's surrender demand), he likened Kerensky to Abaddon, the Angel of the Abyss, and accused him of dooming Humanity to some unspecified but horrendous fate. He claimed Kerensky hid his true face from the universe and was in truth the Devil, aided by an army of chimaera with scorpion tails, the bodies of snakes, wolves' faces and the wings of eagles. Kerensky dismissed the madman's ramblings and continued his preparations for war.

KERENSKY'S ADDRESS

"Soldiers of the Star League, I've a few words to say before we begin. We've come a long way, my friends. From the far Periphery to just outside home, we have fought battle after battle. We've seen our enemy fall before us. We've seen our friends die. Now tired, bloodied, and battered, we are about to enter a battle that many have said is impossible to win. Perhaps they are right. Perhaps freeing Terra from the Usurper is humanly impossible. If it is, I'm not worried. I have long known that the men and women whom it has been my honor to command are more than just flesh and blood. That they are more than the sum of their physical parts. An unalloyed spirit runs through you like the sparks in diamonds. It is hard to put this into words but when I look into the eyes of even the lowest-rank trooper, I see the Star League. And I know that the worth of the Star League lies with the fact that it gave birth to and nurtured men and women like you. Friends, it is time to go home. Godspeed to all of you."

—Commanding General's address to the assembled SLDF, 23 January 2777

THE "GO" ORDER

On 14 January 2777, troops began loading onto DropShips on their garrison worlds and embarked on the long voyage to the jump points. By 21 January the first JumpShips and WarShips reported their readiness at New Earth and would be followed over the next thirty-six hours by those at the other seven jump-off worlds. Kerensky had considered attacking directly from a single point, New Earth, but simulations suggested that coordinating jumps from multiple worlds was no riskier than from eight locales (despite the tight arrival zone and a limited time frame). A more conservative approach would also take longer to prepare as the fleets jumped to New Earth and then recharged.

As jump-hour (J-hour, shortly after 4pm TST) approached, Kerensky addressed the fleet, communicating directly with local vessels and employing shipboard HPGs to reach the vessels in other systems, making clear the pride he felt toward the gathered troops and his belief that they would prevail. His speech complete, the assault clocks on each of the 932 JumpShips and WarShips began to count down toward their specific jumps. Some would depart at J-hour, but most would jump at five-minute intervals, deemed sufficient for each vessel to maneuver clear of the arrival zone but much tighter than the twenty-minute separation mandated by civilian space traffic control.

At 16:12, the first vessels jumped and Operation LIBERATION began in earnest.

OPERATION BARBICAN

On the dot of J-hour, thirty-two vessels jumped into the Terran system. Twelve were observers, emerging well outside the main jump points but sufficiently close to monitor what was happening in them, reporting back to Kerensky at New Earth. The other twenty

were the vessels modified at Keid, all aging civil transports. These vessels had been retrofitted with robotic controls and jumped to Terra unmanned. They were not expected to survive the encounter, but that was irrelevant to the grand campaign strategy. Instead, they served as a weapons delivery platform, transporting the first offensive elements of the SLDF assault: Sixty DropShips, also under robotic control, with enhanced armor and packed to the gunnels with explosives.

These kamikazes had a single task, to engage and destroy the five battle stations at each jump point. This phase of the operation, designated Operation BARBICAN, was vital to the attack on Terra. The stations' weapon batteries engaged any arriving vessel that did not transmit a friendly code signature within sixty seconds of its arrival, or that took what the systems interpreted as hostile action. The SLDF drones did both and came under fire a scant fifteen seconds after their arrival. The lightly armored JumpShips died almost immediately, but the DropShips were already away. Accelerating far faster than would have been possible with a human crew, and with significantly enhanced armor allowing them to weather the storm of fire coming from the battle stations, the DropShips drove at their targets. The station crews had less than ninety seconds to deal with the threats and though sixty percent of the DropShips were destroyed, too many remained. At least one kamikaze struck each of the ten stations—in one case all six aimed at the station made it to their target—and detonated. Equipped with conventional explosives—Kerensky had Admiral Grec hold back from using nuclear weapons in Operation BARBICAN in case Amaris saw their use as a justification for his own use of strategic weapons—they nonetheless proved devastatingly effective. The combination of speed, mass and armor on the robotic vessels allowed them to punch through the outer hulls of the stations and their detonations were channeled through internal bulkheads.

Within five minutes of the jumps, news reached Kerensky that six of the battle stations had been destroyed and the remaining four were badly damaged and unlikely to mount serious resistance. Kerensky was unwilling to let his transports face even such denuded resistance and dispatched a WarShip squadron to deliver the coup-de-grace. These vessels, the first manned combatants of Operation LIBERATION, bombarded the crippled stations and the burning hulks.

As they did so, however, a second and hitherto unknown element of Amaris' jump-point defenses came into play. Known as the Caltrop Constellation for the small metal objects intended to slow cavalry, these were a cluster of planetoids gathered at the periphery of the jump points that were, following the destruction of the battle stations, themselves destroyed by pre-placed explosives. The result was a hail of debris thrown into the jump points that, while unlikely to directly strike the arriving SLDF craft, posed a significant navigation hazard. Combined with the debris from Operation BARBICAN and the pace of arrivals, the chance of an incident increased dramatically. Ordinarily the sheer size of the jump points and distinct inbound and outbound vectoring made the odds of JumpShip collision a near impossibility (odds of a million to one are often quoted), but due to the increase in hazards and the volume of traffic, that was revised to one in five hundred for the assault on Terra's jump points. The odds were not in the SLDF's favor.

Of 932 JumpShips and WarShips that departed the eight garrison worlds, eighteen suffered malfunctions that prevented their jumps and left them in their origin systems—commonly blown seals or safety cut-outs. A dozen more completed their jumps but suffered damage, either relating to the jump or to collisions with debris in the system. Only one vessel was lost; the SLS *Richardson*, a *Volga*-class transport, and a *Vincent*

-class corvette, *SLS Mississippi Queen*, arrived in the same space and interpenetrated, the *Queen's* bow materializing inside the *Richardson's* stern. The resulting explosion crippled the corvette and destroyed the transport, though quick thinking by the *Richardson's* captain had allowed its contingent of DropShips to escape.

With four squadrons jumping into each jump point every five minutes, it took a little over ninety minutes for all of the vessels to arrive in the Terran system. Forming up for the run in-system took another three hours, so it was J+5 hours before the two massive fleets finally got underway. Navy commander Admiral Grec commanded the zenith taskforce personally, while Admiral Joan Brandt led the nadir battle group.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

The two fleets that accelerated toward Terra had one objective in mind: Landing their troops on the homeworld. All other considerations were secondary, and it was understood that every WarShip, DropShip and fighter would, if needed, sacrifice itself to meet this goal. The DropShips and their precious human cargo were all that mattered.

The configuration of the fleets recognized this. At their heart were the transports, most notably dozens of *Potemkin*-class troop cruisers, each transporting twenty-five DropShips, and *Volga*-class bulk haulers, but also a variety of smaller transports and numerous independent DropShips. Around this core were concentric layers of anti-WarShip and anti-fighter defenses, WarShips arranged in complementary groups with interlocking fields of fire. Line and interdictor squadrons comprised the outermost shell, with escort and fire support squadrons forming the inner defenses. Pursuit and recon squadrons formed a mobile reserve. Fighters and assault DropShips buzzed among the WarShips, providing additional defenses, though their utility against the M5 Caspars would be limited. Outside of each fleet, groups of picket WarShips provided early warning of the drones' approach, though as the fleets neared Terra and the Caspars became more numerous and aggressive, these picket groups were withdrawn; they were too tempting and too easy a prey for the drones. Embedded throughout both fleets were NIKE-equipped vessels. Though the systems' effectiveness was in doubt, hope remained that it would provide some assistance against the massed fleets.

The first forty-eight hours after leaving the jump points were fairly uneventful for the SLDF. A few lone or paired M5s probed their defenses, presumably gathering data on the SLDF's organization and tactics that could be used by their brethren elsewhere in the system, but for the most part the drones shadowed the fleet. Efforts by the SLDF to dislodge their robotic stalkers proved ineffectual, the drones' speed and maneuverability making it almost impossible to bring them to battle while their intelligence and vast archives of naval tactical data made luring them into a precipitous engagement equally unlikely.

While lone Caspars and even small groups of drones posed little threat to the SLDF fleet, Kerensky and his officers knew that there were hundreds of drones in the system, with a particular density in trans-Lunar space, guarding Terra's approaches. Here, the drone-ship packs would contain dozens—and potentially hundreds—of aggressors. Such a density of enemies posed a grave risk to the transports, quite capable of overwhelming the screening forces, particularly if they could focus their attentions on one of the approaching fleets. The SLDF needed to thin the numbers of opponents and disrupt their operations.

Task Force Leonidas

The task of doing this fell to the forty ships of Task Force Leonidas, named for the king of Sparta whose small band of troops held back the vastly larger Persian armies of Xerxes at Thermopylae, giving the Greek states time to mount an effective defense and eventually win the war. There was no illusion among the troops in the task force—it would be a suicide mission—but their sacrifice was the only way the transports would survive to land on Terra. Kerensky had offered all of the crews the opportunity to back out, but less than thirty spacers had done so from a total contingent of eight thousand. Ordering the ships into action on 26 January, Kerensky added his own personal message to the go-order. "My brothers and sisters, the hope of the Star League goes with you. May your bravery never be forgotten. Good luck and godspeed."

The vessels, waiting at New Earth, jumped to a pirate point within the Sol-Mars L1 stability zone a million kilometers sunward of the red planet, immediately engaging the handful of drones in Mars orbit. Even equipped with the best technology the Star League had to offer, the forty WarShips faced a daunting task against the Caspar swarms. Unlike the breakthrough at the gates, Kerensky authorized the use of nuclear weapons in the war against the Caspars and many of the capital-class missiles carried by the taskforce were armed with warheads whose yields were between 250 and 650 kilotons of TNT.

THE DUSTMEN

The battles at the jump points and in Terran orbit created clouds of debris, some of it manufactured deliberately, posing a significant navigation hazard. At the speeds DropShips transited the system, even fragments of debris could cause significant damage and while magnetic shields and anti-debris lasers could deal with routine obstacles, the concentrations left by Kerensky's assault threatened to overwhelm these defenses. The odds of a fatal collision soared, and with them concern among the SLDF and the merchants desperately trying to support Terra and the other battered Hegemony worlds. So grave did the situation become in the early 2780s that it was likened to blockade of the system and was one of the factors that drove the mass exodus from Terra during those years.

Jerome Blake, as *de facto* head of the reconstruction effort, sought a solution to the problem. Most of the debris in low-earth orbit would de-orbit naturally in a few years, but that in higher orbits, at the Lagrange points or at the jump points would remain a threat for the foreseeable future. To tackle it, Blake created the ComStar Space Debris Command—a fancy name for garbage men-cum-scrap merchants—whom he charged with clearing the space lanes of man-made hazards. Much of this work was reactive, attending areas where debris strikes had been reported or accidents had occurred, but at others it involved controlled demolitions and de-orbiting operations. Life in the CSDC was dangerous and poorly paid, yet vital to the restoration of Terran commerce in the immediate post-war period.

—*Worst Jobs in the Universe #3*, Terra Free Press, 3088

THE TERRAN SYSTEM



R. Valle

The initial engagements against duos and trios of Caspars went the task force's way even though they refrained from employing their nuclear weapons so as not to tip their hand to the drones. Within hours the number of robotic vessels was increasing significantly and in the third hour of fighting, with the SLDF task force now engaged with over thirty drones, several vessels unleashed their nuclear arsenals. The effect on the robotic craft was devastating—sixteen were destroyed instantly and a number of others were crippled. The SLDF expected the drones to pull back and assess the impact of these new weapons, but instead the M5s pressed their attacks, focusing on the vessels that had launched the deadly volleys. The first SLDF loss, the *Congress*-class SLS *Europa*, fell victim to the swarms in this bloody frenzy. Several other vessels sustained serious damage. However, with almost forty Caspars destroyed or rendered ineffective, the trade-off was deemed acceptable.

Over the next three hours, the drones staged harassing attacks, often with pairs of WarShips dashing in and raking the fleet. They seemed to be daring the SLDF vessels to use their strategic weapons, but with warheads in short supply the captains held back. A war of attrition began, the kill-count of the Leonidas fleet slowly climbing but their own casualties mounting too. Ten hours after the engagements began, some fifty drones were out of action for the cost of six SLDF vessels. Then, having gathered their strength, the Caspars attacked en masse once more. The SLDF bore the brunt of the initial attacks—in the first hour of fighting a further eight SLDF ships met their end, this time for a loss of only four drones—but over the next dozen hours the numbers shifted back in the SLDF's favor. Twenty-one Star League vessels had been lost, but seventy-five drone warships had followed them into oblivion.

The drones pulled back once more to regroup, and for the next eight hours the SLDF licked their wounds. Suffering from cascade failures, two WarShips were abandoned, their crews taking to the lifeboats, but the remaining vessels increased their kill-tally, finishing off almost a dozen crippled M5s. The calm couldn't last, and as if sensing the SLDF fleet was on their last legs, almost sixty drones attacked in an effort to administer a coup-de-grace. The last eight hours of the task force were a bloody melee, with drones and SLDF vessels only a few kilometers apart. On several occasions doomed Caspars rammed SLDF vessels, and as the end neared the SLDF did likewise. In the fortieth hour of the fight, only six SLDF WarShips remained, their stocks of nuclear-tipped missiles and autocannon shells exhausted. Even so, they refused to quit, using lasers and PPCs to exact a final price from the drones. After forty-two hours of fighting the last of the task force, the SLS *Sovetskii Soyuz*, succumbed to the Caspars. Task Force Leonidas' sacrifice had destroyed 106 drones, forty percent of those deployed in the Terran system.

The Gauntlet

Approximately 150 Caspars remained in the system and most gathered to meet the fleet. The stragglers, which had shadowed the fleet since the jump points, continued their hit-and-run attacks, slowly whittling down the SLDF escorts and occasionally bagging a transport. This pressure continued though the last forty-eight hours

of the approach to Terra, steadily mounting as the ships approached Humanity's homeworld. Kerensky's forces resumed their baiting of the drones, sending out pickets that drew their attention. Several vessels fell to the Caspars, but while lone robots were being drawn into conflict with both of the fleets, they weren't focusing their attentions on one group of ships. That they would was Kerensky and Grec's greatest fear—a hundred and fifty drones against four hundred WarShips and transports would be a bloodbath (though if that meant half the task force landed unmolested, then Kerensky would accept the sacrifice), but with each arm of the assault facing only seventy-five drones, the prospect remained of almost all the troops grounding safely.

The fleet had known the last twenty-four hours of their approach would be the most dangerous. It was the critical point of their braking maneuvers, with the fleet at its least maneuverable while the drones, whose only limit to the violence of their maneuvers was the amount of stress their hulls could withstand, could operate unhindered. Admirals Grec and Brandt ordered the depth of the defensive screens increased to shield the transports as much as possible. All vessels had been at general quarters since departing the jump points, but during the thirty-six hour deceleration phase all of the vessels were at combat stations, gunners ready, fighters prepared to launch and damage control parties standing by. Messes and recreation areas were shut down—kitchen crews delivered sandwiches to duty stations—and all non-essential movement was curtailed. All shipboard displays showed "hold to" messages, warning the crew that violent high-G maneuvers were likely and would occur with no warning. The fleet weathered this maximum alert status for over a day. Then, twelve hours from Terra at the terminal and most critical phase of the maneuver, when none of the crew had slept for over twenty-four hours, the Caspars pounced.

The drones' response was asymmetric. A hundred M5s accelerated toward Admiral Grec's zenith task force while less than sixty shifted vectors toward Admiral Brandt's nadir fleet. It wasn't the ideal the SLDF had hoped for, but it wasn't as bad as they feared. The exact rationale for the drones' actions isn't clear, but post-battle analysis suggested the smaller arm of their assault was intended as a pinning force, keeping the two SLDF fleets separate while the larger arm of the drone assault bloodied the zenith fleet.

Both SLDF fleets launched fighters and assault DropShips, pushing beyond the WarShip screens in an effort to blunt the robotic assault before it came close enough to threaten the transports. Previous encounters had shown the M5 drones' poor performance against fighters—they relied on capital missiles for anti-fighter defense—and the SLDF hoped for a similar outcome as they approached Terra. Unfortunately for the Star League troops, interspersed with the M5s approaching the zenith fleet were over a hundred of the smaller M3 design, and over seven hundred Mk. 39 *Voidseeker* drone fighters, both deadly efficient at engaging the smaller craft. Similar vessels accompanied the Caspars accelerating toward the nadir fleet.

The SLDF and drone forces slammed together a thousand kilometers out from the transports, thousands of SLDF fighters becoming embroiled in a deadly dogfight with hundreds of *Voidseekers* and M3s. The drones responded with lightning speed,

TIMELINE OF THE ASSAULT ON TERRA

J-hour (16:12 TST, 23 January 2777): First automated JumpShips and DropShips jump into Terran system.

J-hour+33 minutes (16:57 TST, 23 January 2777): First of 912 manned JumpShips and WarShips arrive at the Terran jump point.

J-hour+5 hours (19:30 TST, 23 January 2777): The SLDF fleet begins to accelerate in-system.

J-hour+85 hours (22:19 TST, 26 January 2777): Forty volunteer WarShips emerge at a pirate point between Mars and Sol. They engage the SDS drone fleet, destroying forty percent before they succumb.

J-hour+167 hours (15:27 TST, 29 January 2777): Reagan SDS drones engage the SLDF fleet as deceleration operations begin.

J-hour+177 hours (02:11 TST, 30 January 2777): With the SDS drones defeated, the surviving SLDF fighters refuel and re-arm.

J-hour+178 hours (03:00 TST, 30 January 2777): SLDF engages Terran orbital defenses and ground batteries.

D-hour (J-hour+179 hours, 04:00 TST, 30 January 2777): Terran landings begin.

undertaking maneuvers no human-piloted vessel could match and acting in perfect harmony with their companions. The SLDF had numbers on their side, and a combination of adaptability and unpredictability that frequently confounded the drones. Hundreds of explosions flared, each one a fighter or drone meeting its end.

A number of Caspars fell to the fighter assault, but more than eighty percent pushed through to engage the SLDF WarShip pickets. Here, the depth of defense and determination of the SLDF force took its toll on the robots. Each M5 that beat its way past the first defensive line faced a second (and third) wall of WarShips, often getting caught in a deadly crossfire between the defensive layers. Weight of numbers and aggression worked for the drones, however, their ability to single out a target allowing them to punch through the defensive lines. Despite the best efforts of the SLDF, transports took damage and many troops perished before the M5s succumbed to defensive firepower. In this their darkest hour, some of the SLDF showed the mettle for which they were renowned; crippled SLDF vessels used their bulk as physical shields for the vulnerable transports and some resorted to ramming attacks against the drones, sacrificing their vessel and their lives for the greater good.

Grec's zenith task force bore the brunt of the losses in the first hours of "the Gauntlet"—fifteen transports carrying elements of seven divisions, along with over a hundred WarShips and six hundred fighters—but losses among the Caspars were equally severe. Almost seventy-five percent had perished in the first six hours of the fighting, becoming increasingly vulnerable as their numbers dwindled and group cohesion faltered.

Brandt's task force faced fewer M5s than the zenith battle group, but more fighter and DropShip drones. Any thoughts that they had gotten off lightly were soon dismissed—the fighter swarms punished the SLDF fighter screens, and even the small M3s proved effective pack-hunters against the SLDF vessels. The pickets and outer elements of the fleet's defenses sustained fearsome punishment, but the concentric defenses weathered

the storm and only a handful of M5s were able to push through and harass the transports. Only five transports perished, and in two of those cases there was sufficient warning for DropShips to escape with their precious cargo of troops.

The clashes would continue for several more hours, and the SLDF WarShip and fighter losses would continue as well, but the hemorrhaging of ground troops slowed and then stopped, allowing Kerensky and his officers to breathe a sigh of relief. As the fleets began orbital insertion operations, two hours above Terra, the drones were a spent force, though a new test awaited the Star League fleet.

The run-in to Terra cost the SLDF 196 WarShips and twenty-seven transports, while eighteen divisions perished in their DropShips. The SLDF had lost almost a hundred thousand troops and still the most dangerous phase of the operation remained: They had to fight their way through Terra's orbital and ground defenses and get boots on the ground. Kerensky expected the price to be high.

TERRAN SIDESHOWS

Even with the main drone threat neutralized, significant threats to the SLDF force remained. As the main fleet engaged the *Pavise* battle stations and began landing troops on Terra, another series of battles began to secure the system. Terra's moon, Luna, remained a knife held at the SLDF's back that had to be neutralized. The cities on Mars and Venus similarly became targets for the SLDF, as well as focal points for Amaris resistance. Furthermore, while the SLDF had smashed the drone WarShips guarding Terra, the two dozen vessels of the Rim Worlds fleet remained functional and safely headquartered at Aphrodite Station.

SELENE'S CHILDREN: LUNA

The most immediate concern was gaining control of the Lunar SDS stations. The weapons platforms there had provided harassing fire toward the end of the gauntlet, but a greater threat came from troops and drones stationed at various nearside bases. Several squadrons of M3s launched from Lunar facilities and harassed the fringes of the SLDF fleet as it began landing operations, destroying a number of combat DropShips and several *Vincent*-class corvettes as well as the last of the *Luxor*-class, the SLS *Van Gogh*. The destruction of this venerable vessel made clear to the SLDF commanders the threat still posed by Amaris' forces in cis-lunar space, particularly now that their guard was dropping with the destruction of the main drone threat.

Following the loss of the *Van Gogh*, two squadrons of WarShips and several aerospace wings harassed the lunar installations. The SLDF WarShips' action was decisive—they bombarded the SDS facilities from orbit, reducing many to rubble—but even the powerful vessels couldn't guarantee the destruction of each base. Marines, familiar with low-G operations, had to undertake painstaking clearance operations, verifying the neutralization of each base and the killing or capture of any Amaris troops assigned to them. This took almost a week, during which time other troops were landed to secure the ten major lunar cities.

Situated in the Mare Nubium (the Sea of Clouds), the capital, Luna City, was home to the remnants of the Terran Hegemony Office of Administration and the largest of Amaris' Lunar garrisons, making it the principal objective of the SLDF. Five thousand Amaris Empire troops occupied positions through the city, but despite their precarious position, few chose to surrender. Each city block and strato-tower had to be searched and cleared by the SLDF, with close-quarters action and low-penetration rounds the order of the day. Fatalities on both sides were relatively low—the combination of body armor and anti-penetration rounds meant that deadly hits were rare, with limb injuries the most common trauma. Lethal strikes were most commonly fluke hits to armor junctions or faceplates, or to powered melee weapons such as vibroblades. With numbers solidly working in the SLDF's favor, their victory was never in doubt, though the Empire troops held out for almost two weeks. The last stand of the Amaris garrison took place deep underground in the tunnels beneath the Office of Administration habitats, a bloody ten-hour engagement and one of the few battles where conventional high-velocity weaponry saw significant use.

The dangers of using such weapons elsewhere became abundantly clear after an incident in Monte Torro, an industrial complex on the Mare Serenitatis (Sea of Serenity). Only around a hundred Amaris troopers had been stationed there, but like many of the Empire garrisons on Luna they proved reluctant to surrender. The SLDF made a secure entry to the facility and engaged the garrison in a series of brutal firefights. Most of the troops on both sides employed sonic weapons or slug-throwers equipped with frangible rounds, but with their backs literally to the wall, one detachment of Amaris troops took the dangerous decision to use conventional rounds. A ricochet from one of these rounds struck the dome straddling the industriplex, causing a small puncture that became a crack and eventually led to the explosive failure of one of the dome panels. Monte Torro's atmosphere vented catastrophically, and though a number of the inhabitants were safely indoors or able to don pressure suits, over a thousand troops and civilians perished.

In Armstrong City in the Mare Tranquillitatis (Sea of Tranquility), Luna's principal manufacturing center and site of the largest lunar spaceport, the Amaris defenders attempted to use the population as hostages against an SLDF assault. For several days this resulted in a standoff between the two forces, but while negotiations took place, the Star League troops covertly took control of Armstrong's life support systems, reducing the O₂ saturation. The Lunarians, better adapted to lower partial pressures of oxygen, were scarcely affected. The Amaris troops, used to Terran-standard atmospheres, began to suffer headaches and fainting fits and scarcely put up any resistance when the SLDF stormed the complex thirty-six hours later.

Most of the other cities—Kepler, Imbrium, Tycho, Copernicus and New Vegas on Nearside and Korolev and Jules Verne on Farside—fell with little trouble to the SLDF. Maintaining order was slightly more problematic. Despite the presence of Amaris' troops, the Lunarians had largely been left to their own devices and resented the presence of the SLDF "occupation force." It would be several months before Kerensky reduced the military presence and Lunar life returned to normal, and several years before the Lunarians' ruffled feathers were soothed by Jerome Blake's reconstruction efforts.

KILLING APHRODITE: VENUS

Though Terra itself was the principal world of the Terran system, two others had been terraformed and were home to substantial populations. The most successful by far was Venus, a veritable garden world thanks to the efforts of the Star League's Project Aphrodite. Over two hundred million people lived on Venus and the reshaped world served as the breadbasket for its overpopulated neighbor. The continents of Ishtar Terra and Aphrodite Terra became home to vast agricultural concerns, while the islands of the Guinevere and Lavinia seas were popular vacation spots for the Terran ultra-rich.

Amaris took brutal action against SLDF troops on the world—the Military Academy of Aphros was targeted with nuclear weapons—but left most of the military infrastructure intact. Venus became a popular posting for Rim Worlds soldiers and Aphrodite Station, the orbiting former headquarters of the terraformers, was soon the principal port of the Rim Worlds Navy. The handful of vessels that had survived the war against the SLDF had little desire to face Kerensky's forces in the Terran system and instead left that task to the Caspars and their smaller kin. The flotilla nonetheless readied itself for action.

Amaris took an unusually direct interest in the defense of Venus, claiming he had the perfect counter to the Angel of the Abyss, Kerensky; he would use the rays of Sol as a weapon against the approaching SLDF vessels. Dubbing his plan Operation ICARUS, he ordered the sunshade that had helped cool Venus redeployed. Rather than being used as a shield, Amaris intended using the massive structure to focus solar energies against the approaching vessels, like a magnifying glass against an ant. What he hadn't counted on was that for all its size—the largest man-made structure ever built—the sunshade was fragile. Maneuvering thrusters allowed the sunshade to be repositioned to shield Venus (or not) as the situation demanded, but Amaris called for more significant and violent maneuvers. As his forces attempted the redeployment, gravitational stresses ripped the structure apart. While Amaris raged at his subordinates' incompetence, several of his command staff realized that the foolhardy action threatened the very survivability of Venus in its current form. Deprived of the shield, the terraformed world would warm significantly, and should any of the ground-based installations fail, Venus would rapidly become uninhabitable. *[Editor's note: After the war, ComStar refused to rebuild the sunshade or maintain Venus' atmospheric processors and as a result life soon became unbearable. From a population of 202 million during the height of the Star League, the population declined steadily though the thirtieth century, dropping to under ten thousand by the Fourth Succession War. Venus was finally abandoned in 3061. —VSD]*

The failure of Operation ICARUS was not the only disaster to befall Venus. The surprise arrival of an SLDF flotilla at the L1 point between Venus and Sol put the wind up the Rim Worlds troops and prompted an emergency undocking from Aphrodite Station where most of the vessels had been berthed. The sudden detachment of millions of tons of WarShips destabilized the massive station, which looked likely to de-orbit and crash on the planet's surface. After a seven-hour battle in Venus' near orbit, the Rim Worlds forces surrendered and the SLDF undertook operations to rescue the stricken station. Unfortunately, SDS batteries on Venus posed a significant obstacle to this plan, continuing

MURDER OR NEGLECT?

The failure of Operation ICARUS and the destruction of the sunshade set Venus on the path to disaster, but it need not have meant the end of the world. The structure could have been rebuilt, and the atmospheric processors could have been maintained; yet ComStar chose not to do so. Their official argument was that there was no longer any economic value in maintaining the world and its vast farmlands—Terra's population had been halved with the mass exodus to the Hegemony and the rest of the system's population was miniscule by comparison—but if so, they consigned trillions upon trillions of C-bills' worth of investment to the cosmic garbage heap.

Was ComStar truly so wasteful as to do this? Some groups in the Inner Sphere thought not. Instead, they postulated that the weak economic excuse covered something more profound: even ComStar no longer maintained the technological know-how to keep the vital systems functioning, but refused to admit as much, believing that to do so would be to admit their fallibility.

Other suggestions play on the idea that ComStar allowed Venus to wither and die because of something that was there, that they either discovered or placed on the world. Such concepts range from the fanciful—the discovery of alien artifacts—to the practical, such as the establishment of secret facilities. None have any basis in fact, but that hasn't prevented them being adopted by the public's imagination.

—*Eden Betrayed: Worlds Lost to the Succession Wars*, by Paige Mariel, New Earth Press, 3090

to fire on the Star League vessels. Star League fighters bombed the installations and Kerensky landed two divisions of troops to seize control of them. This occupation force found surprising allies, many of Amaris' troops. Learning of the SLDF's efforts to save the tumbling station, several regiments of Amaris' soldiers turned on the SDS crews and contributed their firepower to the assaults. After the war, a significant number of these Venus-based turncoats sided with the SLDF and left in Kerensky's Exodus.

GOD OF WAR: MARS

While Venus became a veritable garden world, Mars proved less popular as a home. Though its population peaked at seventy-one million, most of these were transient workers rather than permanent residents. Project Lowell, the terraforming project, had begun almost a century before the efforts to rehabilitate Venus, but warming and thickening the Martian atmosphere was a much greater challenge than the calming and cooling of Venus. Unlike Project Aphrodite's sunshade, there was no technological miracle to speed the process on Mars and so much of the world remained a desert, its atmosphere still too thin in the uplands to support human life unaided. The terraforming operations created massive seas on Amazonis Planetia, Utopia Planetia (together forming the Northern Ocean) and Hellas Planetia (the Hellas Sea), whose fringes—together with the Grand Canal—became the principal vegetated areas of the desert world. The Grand Canal itself, built over seventy-five years by Star League engineers, ran between the Hellas and the Isidis seas. This 1,800-km stretch of prime real estate became the playground of the rich and powerful. While Terra had a distinct "back to nature" policy, on Mars anything went and the lands around the Grand Canal were sculpted to every whim and fancy money could afford. Private fjords were carved into the bedrock, and thousand-meter statues erected. In the low gravity of Mars, structures that would have been too delicate to survive on Terra soared over the Grand Canal. Even in an era of conspicuous consumption, the cities and estates of the Grand Canal stood out.

Most of the Martian population lived within 250 kilometers of the Grand Canal, leaving much of the planet—especially the highlands with their too-thin atmosphere—almost unpopulated. These empty expanses became the home of mining conglomerates and nomads, though the Star League itself claimed ten thousand square kilometers of land southeast of Olympus Mons that were used for the War Academy of Mars and its simulated battlegrounds.

In 2766, simulation became reality when Amaris seized control of the world and the War Academy became the focus for resistance to the occupation. Frustration after a six-week siege prompted the Amaris forces to use nuclear weapons on the War Academy, reducing much of it to ruins, while many of the Grand Canal cities were ravaged by the Usurper's troops.

Amaris largely ignored Mars during the Civil War, leaving its industrial concerns to continue their operations, with garrison troops mostly limited to the Grand Canal region. Efforts to police the nomad population had quickly turned bloody (for both sides) and Amaris abandoned the attempt. The Usurper's allies among the ultra-rich were similarly left much to their own devices within their vast private domains, while those in the towns and cities that supported the great estates felt the full weight of the brutal occupation.

When Kerensky's forces reached the Terran system in early 2777, most of the Martian garrison received orders to return to Earth. Only a handful of security regiments remained, more paramilitary police than battlefield combatants. Attempts to contest the SLDF landings at Olympus Mons on 9 February 2777 were half-hearted and easily repulsed, and the Star League troops made swift progress down the eastern shores of the Northern Sea and across the Terra Cimmeria badlands. The SDS facilities in the Terra Sabaea and Tyrrhena Terra fell to the SLDF with minimal casualties, and two weeks after the landings the troops were approaching the Grand Canal.

The civilian worker population, brutally oppressed by the garrison, took heart at Kerensky's landings and began an uprising against the security forces, which Amaris' people attempted to suppress. In several cases, whole cities became battlegrounds and some would never recover. Amaris' troops were thus poorly positioned to resist the SLDF advance toward the Grand Canal, and the Star League forces ultimately faced greater opposition from the Martian rebels they attempted to disarm than from the Empire's troops. *[Editor's Note: Histories record that the Amaris Coup destroyed eleven of the cities on Mars, though the reality is somewhat more complex. Only nine were destroyed or abandoned during the Coup itself, but two more would suffer catastrophic damage during Operation LIBERATION and be abandoned in the mass exodus from the Terran system. —VSD]*

By March 2777, Mars was securely in SLDF hands and order was returning to its cities. The world became a major logistical center for the Terra campaign, the site of equipment stockpiles, medical centers and the cantonment of reserve forces. Even before the fall of North America, Mars also served as the first port of call for migrants departing the embattled Terra for the relative safety and security of the other Hegemony worlds. They sought a respite from the war engulfing their home, little realizing that they'd not escaped the horrors of war, only delayed them.

Unlike Venus, with its reliance on technology to survive, Mars weathered the intervening years well. ComStar undertook minor terraforming maintenance operations, though for commercial as much as habitability reasons. Even now, three centuries later, Mars continues to be a major mining and industrial center, though both ROM and the Com Guards used the world extensively in recent decades.

DISTANT THUNDER: THE BELTER COMMUNITIES AND JUPITER

With its intense radiation belts and relative lack of accessible resources, Jupiter and its moons proved an unpopular destination for Humanity. Most of the settlements there were established by independent miners and colonists within the Trojan Asteroid clusters at the Jovian L4 and L5 points, what today we group together as the "Belter" population. For much of their history the Belters remained apart from rest of the Terran population, but during the Star League many found employment as spacers in the burgeoning commercial fleets (and the Star League Navy) while shipyards grew up in the Trojans. Amaris had little need to interact with these small colonies in the asteroid belt or the Jovian Trojans—though the shipyards were a strategic resource and something he did attempt to control—but allowing the Belters free rein was anathema to Amaris' thinking. He appointed "military governors" and "political overseers" to monitor the colonies, and employed SDS drones to harass recalcitrant installations. Dozens died under the Caspars' fire, often for crimes as petty as contradicting one of the overseers.

Kerensky sent ships and troops into the Belter regions much as he did the rest of the Terran system. He needed to neutralize Amaris' forces there (principally the drones) and also ensure the safety of the people. Many of his ship crews had ties to the Belter population, and so this was a political as much as a military necessity. Cut off from Terra, many of the erstwhile Amaris overlords of the Belt colonies fled; most of those who didn't were escorted to the nearest airlock and ejected into space without the benefit of a space suit. Kerensky's troops thus had little to do once the drones were neutralized; on only two occasions had there been military action.

At the de facto Belter capital of Metis, Amaris' security forces attempted to hold the habitat—and by extension the Metis Consortium—hostage. They executed several prisoners to demonstrate their commitment, but that didn't dissuade the SLDF assault teams. While Star League negotiators remained visible at the asteroid-habitat's docking end-cap, marines used old mining tunnels on the far end of the asteroid to gain entrance to

Metis' mineral workings, then used the mine railway to travel the 200-kilometer length of the asteroid, surprising the Amaris forces and killing them in a brief firefight. Five hostages died, a tragic loss, but compared to the population of fifty thousand in the habitat that the Usurper's forces threatened to kill—and hearing stories from Terra of the thousands that had been killed there—few complaints were raised about the SLDF action.

The second action was even more unusual. A Rim Worlds corvette, the RWS *Achilles* (named for Hector Rowe's descendant, Maxwell Achilles Rowe), had been moored at the Mercator-Campion yards in the Andromache asteroid in Jupiter's L5 Trojans, and despite being partway through a refit limped into space when news of the approaching Star League vessels came. Its head start allowed the corvette to avoid coming under fire from the SLDF vessels, but the crew knew they'd be overhauled before they could reach a safe jump point, and so they sought refuge deep in Jupiter's gravity well. [Editor's Note: some later accounts suggest they were trying to hide in the outer atmosphere of the gas giant, but there is no mention of this in contemporary accounts. —VSD]. Instead, with their maneuvering drive and life support malfunctioning, the *Achilles* found itself stranded at the L1 point between Jupiter and Io, one of the least hospitable areas in the solar system, bombarded as it was by Jupiter's intense radiation fields. Stopping short of a formal surrender, the *Achilles* called for aid.

The SLDF ships maneuvered to dock with the Rim Worlds vessel and take off its crew, but the docking adaptors had been damaged in the ship's hasty departure from the yard, meaning external repairs would be needed to allow the operation to go ahead. However, while naval vessels could navigate the intense radiation fields, none of the vessels carried appropriately rad-shielded suits and conventionally suited crew would not survive the radiation exposure. Shuttles could take off some of the *Achilles*' crew, but not all before the life support failed. Even attaching a tow line to the stricken vessel would prove impossible without skilled engineers. Captain Nadine Durham of the SLS *Margaret Rose* offered a simple yet effective solution: The crew might not be able to survive outside their vessels, but 'Mechs could, and though lacking in the fine manipulation of suited crew (or modern battle armor), might be able to attach a tow line. Using jump packs as rough maneuvering units, two humanoid 'Mechs—a WVE-5N *Wyvern* and a BMB-12D *Bombardier*—jetted across to the *Achilles*. In a fraught 90-minute operation, they succeeded in attaching a tow line that the *Margaret Rose* and its sister ship the SLS *Tally Ho* were able to use to drag the *Achilles* into a higher orbit, where its crew were extracted and taken into custody.

Despite their willingness to aid the Belters, the Star League forces in the outer system found themselves reaping the aftermath of the Battle of Eris. They were only marginally more welcome than Amaris' troops had been and so by the end of 2777, almost all the SLDF presence in the outer system had withdrawn. Kerensky regarded the Belters as an autonomous (if not fully independent) part of the Terran population. A single squadron of WarShips remained at the asteroid Metis to deal with any remaining Caspars, but even this was withdrawn in 2780 due to lack of cooperation from the Belters. Amaris

had ordered the Trojan shipyards slighted, and drones ravaged several before the SLDF arrived, but almost half survived. In late 2783, many of these isolated yards received contracts to carry out refits and servicing of Star League Navy vessels, something the Belters initially balked at until Jerome Blake convinced them to help. This work—preparation for Kerensky's Exodus—was the last large-scale use of the Trojan yards, many of which continue to operate today.

GIANTS OF INDUSTRY: TITAN

Despite its distance from Terra, Saturn's orbit was somewhat more attractive to human habitation than that of Jupiter, with the moon Titan in particular singled out for scientific study due to its atmosphere and hydrocarbon lakes. Titan became an essential part of the terraforming of Venus and Mars, providing many of the raw materials used, and establishing multi-billion dollar industries to support projects Lowell and Aphrodite. The infrastructure on Titan could have been abandoned after the completion of the main terraforming operations, but rather than squander the investment, the installations that had fired planetary building materials into the inner system were re-purposed to meet another great demand: JumpShips. Shipyards at Mars and Luna built many of the ships employed in humankind's expansion to the stars, but it was the yards at Titan that brought mass production into play. Thanks to Titan's efforts, the cost of vessels declined from tens of billions to a few billion and eventually to a few hundreds of millions.

Because they were a corporate facility, unlike the smaller privately owned facilities in the Jovian Trojans, Amaris extended his "protection" to the Titan yards in early 2767, establishing a naval presence and garrison to secure them. The Rim Worlds fleet made extensive use of the facility after its takeover of the Hegemony, one of several yards servicing the new Empire fleet, but by the late 2770s most of Amaris' few remaining ships were berthed at Venus, leaving Titan idle. Kerensky knew his own vessels would need maintenance facilities, and he expected the yards at Luna and Mars to take significant damage in Operation LIBERATION. Titan would thus be vital to SLDF operations.

Plans for a direct assault on the complex were abandoned after news of the Rim Worlds garrison leaked out. It was believed that many elements of the orbital facility had been rigged with demolition charges, and any overt approach would likely trigger their detonation. Admiral Grec instead put forward a small-unit action that would use speed and guile to take control of the facility. Two WarShips, the assault transport SLS *Ocean* and the cruiser SLS *Unity City*, jumped into Saturn's L2 point while Titan was sunward of the gas giant, its massive body masking their jump signature. Both vessels accelerated from the jump points into Saturn's gravity well, then shut off their drives and all non-essential systems. They used Saturn's mass and the gravitational effects of its moons to slingshot towards Titan. Their slow, stealthy approach took eight days to reach the moon. Two hours out from the orbital habitats, the SLS *Ocean* released six boarding shuttles, each with a platoon of marines. Using only maneuvering thrusters, these tiny vessels accelerated ahead of the transports and then prepared to rendezvous with the shipyards.

Their orbital tracks passed just over a hundred kilometers from the orbiting complex, far enough for the "debris" not to be targeted by anti-collision systems but close enough that the shuttles' powerful drives could cross the distance in short order.

As the shuttles drifted past the complex, the WarShips—still a dozen minutes from rendezvous—powered up and carried out a high-G braking maneuver. The yards' defenses immediately went on alert, but focused on the two massive vessels a scant thousand kilometers away, little attention was paid to the small craft a hundred kilometers behind the yards. Crews were still responding to the WarShips' surprise appearance when the shuttles docked and began boarding operations. Within fifteen minutes, the main elements of the yard complex were in SLDF hands. Only two demolition charges had detonated, damaging outlying satellites; most of the yards remained intact, with less than twenty casualties on both sides. Realizing their position, with marines already forcing entry, Amaris' administrators surrendered the facility. The ground installations at Ligeia Mare and Shangri-La soon followed suit.

In the years that followed, Titan proved vital to maintaining the Star League Navy, during the campaign to liberate Terra and also in preparations for Exodus. The SLDF left the yards in good order, placing them in Jerome Blake's care, but plans for continued production were put on hold (and the yards eventually mothballed) when interstellar trade collapsed during the Succession Wars. It was only in the mid-thirtieth century with the creation of the Explorer Corps that the yards slowly came back into use, resuming their full capabilities to support the Com Guard fleet in the 3050s.

ON BRIGHT WINGS: MERCURY

Amaris had little interest in Mercury's mining operations, but had uncovered information in the computer systems of the Citadel pointing to a Hegemony Research and Development (HRAD) complex on the Sol-battered world, and he dispatched agents to uncover the marvels supposedly hidden there. When no solid information emerged, he became enraged and dispatched massive numbers of Krypteia to "uncover the truth," including torture of several high-ranking members of the Hermes Industrial Complex. They uncovered nothing resembling a secret base—and nothing connected to the Star League beyond a cache containing uniforms and food. A decade later, with the SLDF drawing close, there was still no answer to the "lost" HRAD facility on Mercury, and rants against those who had kept the vital information from him were a regular part of Amaris' ravings.

When the SLDF retook the Terran system, they included Mercury in the cleanup operations, removing the Empire garrison and restoring order. They loaded up the supply cache, then largely ignored the system's innermost world. During the Berlin trials the subject of the Mercury HRAD was raised during the prosecution of a senior Krypteia officer. Though tangential to the trial, the SLDF was asked to comment on the status of the facility. Kerensky himself replied in a note to the judges: *C'est la soupe qui fait le soldat*, a quote by Napoleon Bonaparte commonly cited as the basis for the proverb "an army marches on its stomach."

THE LANDINGS

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more."

—Henry V, Act III by William Shakespeare, 1598

"Believe me, Amaris will throw every soldier he can at the LZs. He'll try to build a wall of bodies to dishearten us and to protect his own skin. He will not succeed."

—Address to the troops of the 331st Division prior to the Terran landings by General James McEvedy

Even with the SDS drone ships scattered, the SLDF knew Terra maintained ferocious defenses that would shred the fleet before troops had chance to land. More than a hundred space-defense installations dotted the planet, together with many more anti-air batteries and fortifications. Taking on all of these would be suicide and so Kerensky's plan called for focused efforts on only one segment of the defenses—the northern hemisphere continents east of the Greenwich meridian. These wouldn't be the only defenses suppressed—orbital mechanics ensured the vessels in low orbit would come within reach of the batteries—but the sanitized area would provide a safe passage in which DropShips and 'Mechs in ablative cocoons could descend in relative safety.

At 03:00 TST on 30 January 2777, as the fleet began orbital insertion operations thousands of kilometers above the surface, hundreds of fighters, DropShip bombers and assault shuttles accelerated away from the fleet. Most were tasked with ground-attack mission, but almost a third were charged with screening the assaults from counterattack. First, though, they had to pass the ring of combat satellites encircling Terra, automated weapon and drone fighter emplacements that were the last line of defense against invasion. WarShips and DropShips launched capital missile salvos against the installations and hundreds of fighters chased the missiles in to the targets. The bloody casualties they took were a foretaste of what was to come in the assault, but their attacks prevented the battlesats from targeting the transports and ground-attack fighters. The vicious war of attrition began to bear fruit as satellites and drones died in bursts of vapor, leaving clear corridors through which later waves of DropShips could pass. Two hours after engaging the satellites, the greatest threat to transiting vessels was debris from the battles, which formed an expanding ring around Earth. Thankfully, one of Kerensky's greatest fears—that Amaris would seed Terran orbit with debris and navigation hazards—did not come to pass. Despite the AEAf's efforts at the jump points, seeding the area with debris as best they could to slow the SLDF fleet, Amaris had no desire to be trapped on Terra by a wall of space junk.

The first vessels past the orbital defenses could not afford to relax. Within minutes they were engaged by ground-based SDS systems, volleys of lasers, missiles and particle beams lancing up and into the clouds of fighters and DropShips. Jonathan Cameron

had intended these bases to operate in conjunction with the orbital facilities, a hammer and anvil to shatter the invading hordes he'd prophesied. Instead, the invaders were using them, though Kerensky's sacrifice of a portion of his troops to neutralize the battlesats had seriously degraded the intended effect. Fighters were able to take evasive action and dive against the installations, where they faced the penultimate threat.

Amaris fighter squadrons rose up to meet them like flies, chasing down the SLDF bombers as they approached their targets. Dogfights erupted between the fighter escorts and the AEAf interceptors, the Star League troops' skill and determination matched against the volume of troops Amaris' commanders threw at them. The SLDF pilots accounted well for themselves, but the cost was high. Over a thousand SLDF fighters were lost during the landings, but the Amaris losses were almost four times that.

The fighters and bombers that survived this gauntlet faced one final challenge, the air defense batteries at each installation. The tactics used here varied considerably. Some attackers relied on speed, while others used the terrain to mask their approach, and some attempted standoff attacks with missiles and lobbed bombs. All methods proved costly, but the most successful—and least survivable—was dive-bombing. Such steep approaches ensured the maximum numbers of bombs and shots struck the target, but gave the fighters the least opportunity to escape the defensive fire.

An hour into the assault, Kerensky paced the bridge of the SLS *McKenna's Pride*. If the landings were driven back or curtailed, Operation LIBERATION would be in grave danger. This was their only opportunity to get sufficient forces on the ground—some troops were already dropping onto Terra—and as a last-ditch effort he ordered several fire-support squadrons into low orbit to bombard the SDS sites. He knew the losses among the WarShips would be atrocious, but the SLDF was rapidly running out of options. The first ships were beginning engine burns to take them into lower orbit when news of the strikes began to filter through; though the initial waves had been smashed, sufficient numbers of bombers had reached their targets. The way to Terra was open and the landing craft, already descending, would not have to weather the defensive fire.

Almost forty percent of the SLDF's fighter force was lost during the landing phase of Operation LIBERATION (though pilot losses

AUTHOR'S NOTE: ON UNITS AND PLACES

Terra of the twenty-eighth century is deceptively familiar. Most of the places named here are real and these campaigns can be followed with a twenty-first century atlas. But the people and places are a far cry from the world we know. The population of Terra at this time is around 12 billion, double what it is today, and cities are larger and more crowded. At the same time, pollution and environmental damage is considerably less than in the current era. Similarly, the countries referred to here aren't nations as we understand them today. What we in the twenty-first century consider national boundaries are in the twenty-eighth century little more than state or county boundaries. Instead there are Terran Administrative Districts that form discrete governmental blocks, sometimes (such as with many European nations) corresponding with historical states, but in the case of much larger nations like China, Russia, India or the United States, to regions within the historical nations; the USA forms thirteen districts (each merging several states), the former Russia has seven (combining oblasts and autonomous republics), China fourteen (corresponding to provinces and autonomous regions) and India also (corresponding to state boundaries). More details of life on Terra can be found in *Jihad Hotspots: Terra*.

The Star League military formations referred to in the book don't (for the most part) have real-world equivalents. Many, however, are detailed in *Field Manual: SLDF* and additional information on the units and their commanders can be found there. As the field manual is set in 2765, before the start of the Periphery Uprising, some details mentioned in the Field Manual may no longer be correct after a dozen years of war. As described in *Liberation of Terra: Volume 1*, many units were shattered in the fighting in the Periphery or the campaigns to recover the Hegemony, leading to many being disbanded or merged with other formations.

were slightly less, only around twenty-five percent). It was a bloodbath, but their sacrifice had not been in vain. Thirty-two divisions were making landfall, some 150,000 troops including over fourteen thousand BattleMechs, and their survival was largely thanks to the efforts of the fighter crews. The surviving fighters boosted themselves back into orbit where they re-armed and returned to the fray. Most would stage multiple sorties, further denuding the Terran defenses or else serving as escorts to the landing craft. One squadron from the SLS *White Cloud* staged a continuous stream of fourteen sorties in forty-eight hours, a combination of determination and combat stims keeping the pilots functional. They were finally withdrawn from the line early on 2 February after pilot error during landing operations wrecked a *Gotha* and put the Bay 3 arrestor assembly out of action for over an hour.

Of the thirty European and Asian installations targeted, twenty-four were put out of commission by fighters and special forces, and the effectiveness of five more massively degraded. Six hours into the landings only one Eurasian SDS battery—the Kumbu array, high in the Himalayas—remained fully operational. It soon gained the dubious distinction of being the only SDS installation to be taken out by WarShip fire, the very vessels it was meant to guard against, when the SLS *Heidelberg* struck it with laser and autocannon fire to safeguard the Jaipur landings.

HOMEcoming (JANUARY-JUNE 2777)

Kerensky and his officers planned numerous strategies for the landing on Terra all through Operation CHIEFTAIN, but with New Earth secured and established as the SLDF HQ, the High Command focused on specific options, guided by intelligence gathered from Rim Worlds defectors and intelligence gathering missions. Resistance was expected to be fiercest in North America, where Amaris made his headquarters in Unity City, hence the decision to focus initial operations on the Eurasian landmass. In addition to military considerations, targeting Europe made political and economic sense; Geneva was the capital of the Hegemony, and much of the Hegemony's military manufacturing took place in Germany, Russia and China. The initial plans called for army group-scale landings at four points—Berlin, Moscow, Beijing and New Delhi—which would allow the SLDF to use its numerical superiority to overwhelm the forces at those locales. This option had a high likelihood of success, but would leave the SLDF in isolated pockets, requiring extensive campaigns to consolidate the rest of the regions before expansion of operations to Amaris' heartland could be considered. A second, riskier strategy proposed spreading the SLDF across the targeted areas, capturing more territory and engaging more AEAf forces. The risk of facing major opposition increased, but this plan still committed multiple divisions to a landing zone and had the added advantage of not grouping the SLDF forces into locales where Amaris could employ strategic weapons to maximum effect. Thirteen landing sites were selected, from Madrid in the west to Hokkaido in the east, and from Singapore in the south to Magadan in the north. The troops assigned to each, one

or two armies, would be responsible for seizing and holding a broad swathe of territory, ranging from 30 km² to for Seventh Army at Singapore (though the most compact single landing took place at Sandhurst, barely 3 km²) to 75,000 km² for Nineteenth Army Group along the Mongolia-China border. In his pre-landing briefing of the army commanders, Kerensky made one thing clear: No matter what Amaris and his Rim Worlds forces did, the SLDF was not to employ strategic weapons in their operations. Amaris was known to have significant numbers and had employed them in the Coup, but the General hoped that even Amaris would show restraint on Humanity's homeworld. Should the Amaris forces employ such weapons, Kerensky stated, they would be countered by fire from orbiting WarShips—equally deadly, but avoiding the radiological and chemical pollution of the other weapons.

Despite fears of up to fifty percent losses during the landings, the thirty divisions in the first wave landed with minimal opposition. A few DropShips faced attack by aerospace forces or air-defense systems, but these efforts were scattered and disorganized and by 20:00 hours, a dozen hours after the first transports grounded, troops were securing all thirteen LZs. Only one, Harbin, encountered significant AEAf resistance, which they swiftly and effectively neutralized.

THE LANDINGS



THE BATTLE FOR MOSCOW

Fifteenth Army Group assumed responsibility for the twin landings at Moscow and Kiev, designed to secure the important production centers in the Russian and Ukrainian districts. Eleventh Army landed near the town of Gagarin, 150km west of Moscow. Pathfinder troops dropped from orbit in ablative cocoons while the fighters were dealing with Amaris' aerospace defenses, and despite suffering casualties were able to secure the designated landing area. A brief probe from scouts of the Ninth Patriot Division was turned back west of Mozhayski, near the battlefield of Borodino where Napoleon's forces faced the Russian armies 965 years earlier. Initial over-flights by Amaris spotter aircraft went unchallenged, but the arrival of air-defense systems aboard the landing transports soon brought these efforts to a halt.

The lead formation in the Moscow landings was the 146th Royal BattleMech Division (the George S. Patton Division), providing both the Pathfinders and the force that screened the rest of the landings from any counterattack from Moscow. That assault never materialized and the few Patriot units between the city and the SLDF force withdrew toward their bases at Vorisholovskaya and Novospassky. The other defenders, Amaris' Thirty-Third Amaris Dragoons (officially a 'Mech regiment but backed by sufficient support regiments and militia forces for the SLDF to tag it as an under-strength division) challenged

LANDINGS—EUROPEAN THEATRE

Eastern Europe Battlegroup (15 AG)

Moscow, Russia

Eleventh Army

Kiev, Ukraine

Seventeenth Army

Northern Europe Battlegroup (17 AG)

Berlin, Germany

Tenth Army

London, England

Fifteenth Army

Southern Europe Battlegroup (22 AG)

Madrid, Spain

First Army

Naples, Italy

Sixth Army

Geneva Battlegroup (5 AG)

Geneva, Switzerland

Eighteenth Army

Paris/Lyon, France

Fifth Army

FIRST MAN DOWN

Histories of Operation LIBERATION have generally identified the 'Mechs of the 146th Royal BattleMech Division (the George S. Patton Division) as the first SLDF troops onto Terra. While this is correct with regard to large-scale formations, the first SLDF troops to reach the surface arrived almost an hour earlier; troops from the Special Forces Command, charged with ground assaults on strategic SDS batteries. Some of these operations were follow-ups to bombing missions, to ensure the facilities were offline, but others targeted complexes where air attack was deemed to have a low chance of success.

Eleven such teams braved enemy fire during the first wave of landings. Six teams made shuttle landings, escorted through re-entry and descent by squadrons of SLDF fighters. The remaining five traveled as far as near-orbit and then jumped from their transports using one-man reentry capsules. These latter missions targeted areas of particularly intense air defenses where the survival of an assault shuttle was thought unlikely. One man—who escaped his ablative cocoon at 39,000 meters and was staging the ultimate HALO (High Altitude, Low Opening) drop, exceeding the speed of sound as he fell—was much less likely to be spotted and intercepted.

Team J-11 made their HALO drop onto the Obersalzberg SDS complex on the Austria-Germany border and landed on the wooded northern slopes of the mountain, becoming the first SLDF troops to land on Terra. Above them, the mountaintop battery volleyed laser fire and missiles at the approaching DropShips and fighters already descending through the atmosphere. Approaching the complex, the team breached three layers of fences without triggering alarms, but while penetrating the fourth ring of defenses a pair of automated turrets activated. Two members of the team were killed, leaving only six for the final assault into the heart of the mountain. A four hundred meter access tunnel, now a gauntlet of weapons and traps, awaited them and only through painstaking effort did they manage to gain entry to the control center and disable the batteries. Fortunately, the base's defenses worked in the strike team's favor—the Imperial infantry charged with defending the complex found their numbers counted for nothing when the SLDF troops sealed the access tunnel. The two surviving members of J-11 escaped to a viewing gallery on the mountaintop, an opulent former teahouse, where they waited for extraction.

—*Operators and Operations*, Kane Graham-Campbell, Donegal Press, 3025

the SLDF's own probes, staging ambushes in Dorokohovo and Kubinka while leaving booby-traps in several locales. The Thirty-Third knew they couldn't hope to hold off the entire Eleventh Army, but they had no intention of doing so. Their spoiling actions were to buy time, and early in the morning of 31 January, their combat engineers demolished seventeen bridges along the Moscow River between Ruza and Kraznogorsk.

At any other time of year the sabotage would have presented a major obstacle to the SLDF, forcing their axis of advance toward south Moscow, but that January was unusually bitter and many of the rivers were frozen. Heavy units struggled to cross, but infantry and light armor were scarcely affected. Kerensky, who had arrived the previous evening to oversee the assault on Moscow, ordered the jump-capable 'Mechs of the Eightieth Royal Jump Infantry Division to cross the river and secure the opposite bank while combat engineers erected pontoon bridges to allow heavier units to cross. As expected, the Amaris Dragoons staged harassing attacks against the bridgehead forces, but any hope they had of crushing the forward elements of the 146th against the river were quickly dashed; artillery and air support soon made it dangerous for any AEA forces to break cover and instead they too withdrew into the city.

The 331st BattleMech Division (the North America Division) pushed across the river and drove north of the city, supported by the 129th Mechanized Infantry Division. They extended a cordon as far as the M8 motorway in Korolyov, but stopped short of a full encirclement. Meanwhile, the 295th BattleMech Division completed a mirror operation to the south of the city, halting at the M8 expressway. This incomplete encirclement of the city was a deliberate part of Kerensky's strategy; he wanted to leave the Rim Worlds troops an escape route. If he did not do so, he feared the fighting in the city would be catastrophic.

On 11 February, the 146th began to push into the city, supported by the Eleventh Mechanized Infantry Division. Resistance was sporadic, often little more than booby traps and sniper ambushes. The forces quickly pushed past the city's outer ring road and into the western suburbs. Here, the horror of the occupation began to become clear; the population had been abused by the administration and security services. Some of this was neglect—poor maintenance leading to shortages of power and sanitation—but much of it was sheer brutality. Since the start of Operation CHIEFTAIN the security services had taken an increasingly hardline stance against dissent, and with the arrival of the SLDF in the Terran system the Krypteia and the Thirty-Third had taken to publicly executing dissidents. Many parks and squares had become charnel houses, and their discovery drove the SLDF troops into a fury. They gave no quarter and asked for none.

The forces of the Hegemony Patriots proved of scant use against the enraged 146th, often retreating after token engagements and allowing the SLDF to take control of vast swathes of the city. The Amaris Dragoons had more spine, staging effective blocking operations and even occasional counterattacks. One of the most significant clashes occurred as Kerensky's troops moved to secure the Novoandrevsky Bridge. Tikonov Avenue became a pitched battleground when a battalion of Republican troops drove into the flank of the advancing Star League forces. For several hours the advance looked in jeopardy, but the arrival of reinforcements allowed Amaris' force to be driven back, though not before much of the area was ruined. The crossing secured, Kerensky's forces continued their progress, reaching the Arbat and Yakimanka districts in the early hours of February 15.

Now inside the inner ring road and approaching the Kremlin, the SLDF troops expected even more significant resistance, but while there were some clashes, the opposition was half-hearted. At dawn on 16 February, senior officers of the Ninth Patriot Division called for a meeting with Kerensky. Ushered through the lines, they spent thirty minutes at the General's headquarters in Bolotnaya Square. When they emerged, they announced that the Ninth Division had surrendered. The Amaris Dragoons were less obliging, but rather than surrender they attempted a breakout to the east of the city through the gap in the encirclement Kerensky had left for them. The 146th allowed them to go, but out on the plains east of the city the Rim Worlds force found they had escaped from the frying pan

into the fire; two mechanized infantry divisions blocked their escape eastwards and so they were penned in by eight angry SLDF divisions. They readied their weapons and prepared to sell themselves dearly.

Kerensky himself took the battlefield for this final encounter, his *Orion* striding to the front lines. Conflicting emotions warred within him. He wanted revenge for the desecration of his homeland, for the razing of his childhood home and for the peril his wife and children had been forced to endure for so many years. Yet he refused to stoop to the Republicans' level, to butchery and brutality. The encircled AEF troops expected a lethal bombardment or a devastating ground assault, but instead they faced silence and an enemy that just stared at them. After an hour of the nerve-jangling standoff, the AEF commander broadcast the Dragoons' willingness to capitulate, but Kerensky refused to reply. He stood there watching the enemy forces and contemplating the situation for another two hours before finally accepting the surrender. He then turned and walked away, destined for a very private reunion.

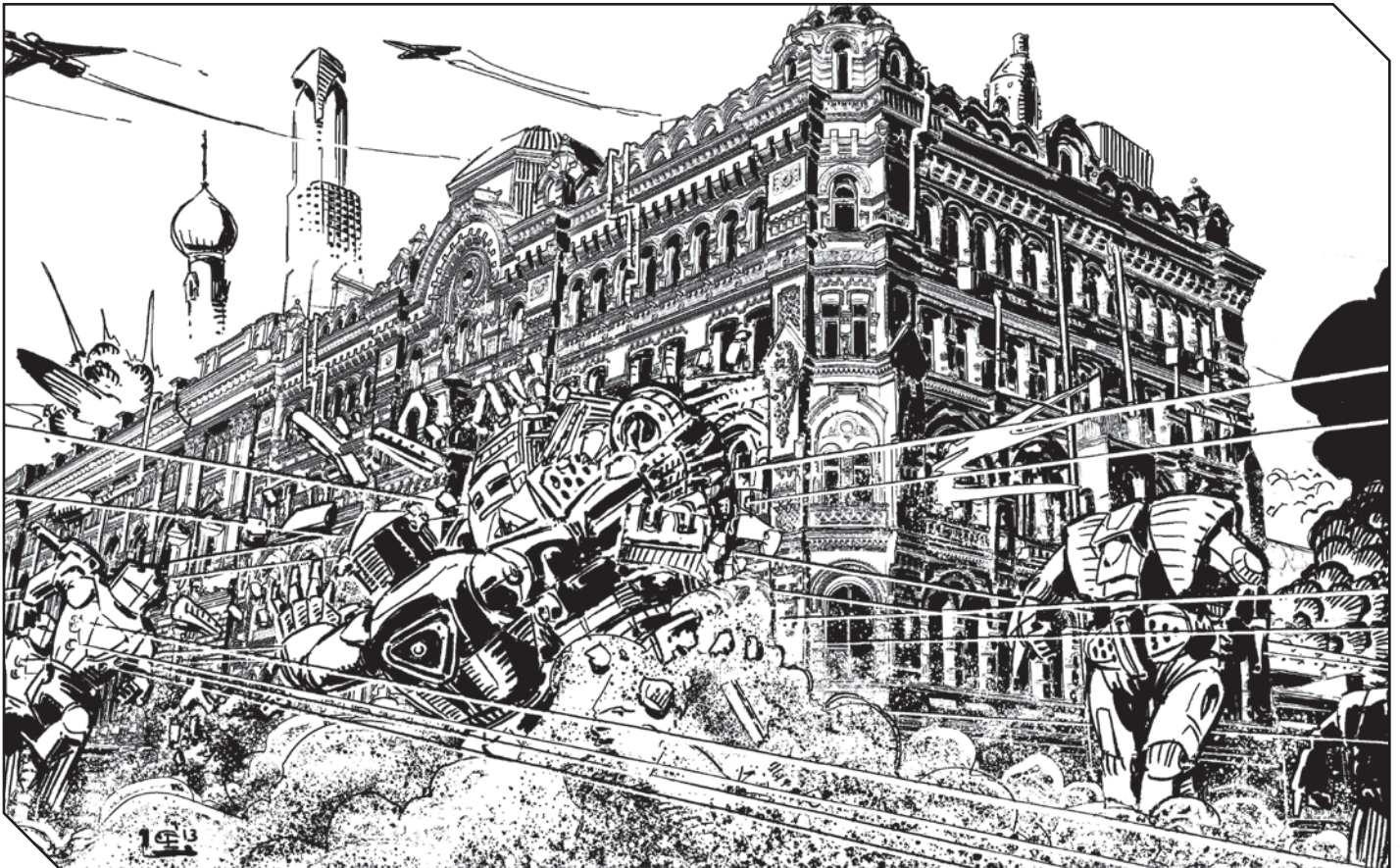
Over the next few months Eleventh Army consolidated their hold over Russia, extending their authority as far as the Urals in the east and Poland in the west. They linked up with elements of Seventeenth Army from Kiev on 19 February (conducting joint operations later in the spring as the Eastern Europe Army Group, formerly Fifteenth Army Group) and Tenth from Berlin on 21 February. Two days later, scouts sent beyond the Urals made contact with elements of Fourth Army that had landed near Astana in Kazakhstan.

Though Moscow was secure, several other cities posed problems for the SLDF. The garrison of St. Petersburg initially refused to surrender and only did so on March 17 after two weeks of intense diplomacy. Murmansk and Archangelsk, strategic ports and military bases, proved even more intractable. A two-week siege of Archangelsk eventually led to its surrender, while Murmansk, the most northerly objective in the European theatre, held out for six weeks before collapsing into anarchy and allowing the SLDF to storm the complex.

KIEV AND THE UKRAINE

Seventeenth Army landed in the Ukraine Administrative District, split between three landing zones—Kiev, Mikolaiv on the Black Sea and at Rostov on Don in southern Russia. Each landing faced negligible resistance, quickly securing their landing zones and moving out toward their targets.

Most of the Kiev task force, centered on the 116th Mechanized Infantry Division, landed south of the city near Bila Tserkva, though independent regiments also dropped into Korosten to the northwest and Chernihiv to the northeast, cutting the main transport links to Minsk and Moscow. Most of the scattered local militia chose not to oppose the SLDF, instead laying down their arms and surrendering. The few that did—and the security services who expected little forgiveness from the Star League troops—were crushed mercilessly. Approaching the city, the SLDF forces



KATYUSHA KERENSKY

Katyusha Ludmilova married Aleksandr Kerensky in 2759 in a ceremony kept secret from their closest friends and family. A former pilot, she had been discharged from the SLDF after the discovery of a heart condition (similar to that suffered by Aleksandr, though discovered too late to be effectively treated). They met while the General was touring the Moscow Veterans' Hospital in 2749, common ailments shaping their initial conversation but soon moving on to other shared interests. A friendship grew between the General and this determined young woman, and by the mid-2750s this had become a romance.

In the charged political atmosphere of the Regency, Kerensky's relationship with Katyusha kept him grounded, but it also posed risks. Political enemies would not hesitate to use his family against him and so they agreed to keep the relationship—and later, their marriage—secret. After five years they were blessed with a son, Nicholas, whom Katyusha called Kolya, and when Kerensky departed Terra to deal with the Periphery uprising Katya was pregnant with their second child, Andery.

Kerensky's foresight in keeping his family hidden was demonstrated with the Amaris Coup and the murder of the Camerons. Katyusha could have stayed hidden, safeguarding herself and her two young children, but the determined young woman insisted on fighting back. For over a decade she headed a Moscow-based underground cell, distributing anti-Amaris pamphlets and staging small acts of sabotage. When news reached the cell of the SLDF's assaults on the Hegemony, dissent turned into resistance. Though nearly captured on several occasions (and shot twice during operations), Katya proved a major thorn in the side of Moscow's pro-Amaris administration. The security crackdowns in the city had been aimed at groups like hers, but Katya dodged their efforts to capture her and on 18 February was reunited with her husband. Nicholas, a boy of two when his father left, was a young adult. Andery, thirteen, met his father for the first time.

found evidence of pre-prepared defenses but little in the way of resistance. Pillboxes were abandoned and the weapons emplacements at the Kiev City Spaceport, located in the southwestern suburbs and which the troops liberated on 3 February, had been sabotaged. The SLDF quickly abandoned its plans for a siege of the city and pushed forward through the Solomanyanski District into the heart of the city. Only one militia unit opposed their advance, a mixed-forces regiment that was soon driven back to the Dnieper River and given the option of surrender or annihilation. A few troops attempted to escape across the river—they were destroyed by SLDF fighter-bombers—but most of the unit opted for surrender. By 6 February all of Kiev west of the river was in SLDF hands and by 10 February the industrial and residential Eastern districts were likewise secured.

The Nikolaiv task force faced a markedly bloodier affair than Kiev, though SLDF planning had expected this and dispatched the 271st BattleMech Division (the Outreach Division) to head operations. Its principal objective was the port city of Odessa, a strategic space and naval complex, vital to trade and also a key military base. The 422nd Amaris Cavaliers, rebuilt after the disaster of Dieron, garrisoned the city and controlled its formidable defenses. Landing at Mikolaiv allowed the task force to ground safely and to organize themselves before pushing forward. However, it also gave the Rim Worlds forces a chance to prepare. They established a forward defensive position at Kobleve, a natural choke point east of the city, and there rebuffed early SLDF probes. Infantry and armor assaults on the position proved costly and only once the 'Mechs of the 271st pushed through en masse on 5 February was the obstacle cleared. Unfortunately for the SLDF, a significant portion of the Amaris Cavaliers withdrew in good order, fighting a series of rearguard actions along the coastal highway until reaching the outskirts of Odessa itself. Here in the Suvorovski District they established a second defensive line, this time backed by weapons batteries and ad-hoc fortifications. A new and horrific tactic also came into play; the Cavaliers seized hundreds of local residents and chained them to the weapon emplacements. The batteries could only be neutralized at the cost of innocent lives. Realizing this, General Al-Nasr ordered a halt to combat operations and a withdrawal outside the range of the batteries. With a heavy heart, Kerensky ordered the task force to press the attack regardless of the collateral damage. As with the Rim Worlds units' tactics elsewhere in the Hegemony, the SLDF could not let compassion hinder operations.

General Al-Nasr struggled to find a counter to the Cavaliers' tactics that didn't involve mass civilian bloodshed. Daring to split his force, he sent a portion looping north around the lakes that anchored the northern flank of the Amaris position, while two regiments of 'Mechs submerged themselves in the Black Sea. When the light elements struck the rear of the Amaris lines in Usatove and at the spaceport southwest of the city, the defensive positions shifted to meet the threats. No sooner had they done so than the submerged 'Mech force assaulted the city through the harbor district. Caught between hammer and anvil, the 422nd refused to crumble and fought tenaciously. Bitter street-by-street fighting raged for eleven days, forcing the Amaris troops back into a smaller and smaller perimeter and eventually into three distinct pockets. No quarter was asked or given, and fighting for the city would rumble on until 14 March, by which point several districts were in ruins. In the months that followed, the task force secured Moldova and the Crimea as well as the coastal districts of Romania, including Bucharest.

The third task force, landing near Rostov on Don at the eastern end of the Sea of Azov, faced without doubt the greatest challenge of any forces in Seventeenth Army: The Sverdlovsk Castle Brian. This immense fortification was one of twenty that existed on Terra and was largely immune to bombardment and air attack, meaning a ground assault was needed to neutralize it. That task fell to the 279th Royal Mechanized Infantry Division (the Chara Cossacks) and the Sixty-Eighth Infantry Division (the Thai Militia). Built under the northern districts of the city, the fortress had served as an arms cache in peacetime but had been taken over by the Twenty-First Amaris Dragoons once the SLDF assaults began. The supplies within the complex could allow the Amaris force and its support regiments to resist any siege for months if not years, and the supply stockpiles would allow them to keep their combat vehicles in fighting trim. The SLDF ideally wanted to seize control of the complex, but in the short term they opted for neutralizing the Amaris forces, keeping them bottled up in the fortress rather than wreaking havoc among the SLDF troops. Over a period of five days the weapon installations and outlying defensive works of the Castle Brian were destroyed or occupied

by the SLDF. Losses were light and by mid-February the 279th and its companions had begun a waiting game, erecting their own defenses around each of the complex's five gates and preparing to meet any attempt by the Dragoons to sally out. The siege lasted for eleven months, finally ending in early 2778.

Meanwhile, other elements of the task force secured Vologograd and pushed south to Tblisi and Baku, where they linked up with elements of Fourth Army pushing north from Iraq in early April. A joint operation with troops of Eleventh Army secured Minsk in late February and subsequently expanded the area controlled by the Eastern Europe Army Group with operations in Slovakia, Hungary and northern Romania.

BERLIN AND THE RUHR

A major political and industrial center, Berlin was the target of Tenth Army centered, in an ironic twist of fate, on the 149th BattleMech Division (the Erwin Rommel Division). Their role was twofold: To capture the political and industrial center of Berlin, in particular its spaceport, and to occupy the industrial centers of the Ruhr, site of the second European Castle Brian.

The initial landings took place near Magdeburg, west of the German capital, and Seelow to the east. The western task force, comprising the 149th BattleMech Division, the 210th Jump Infantry and the Fourteenth Infantry Division, landed on both sides of the Elbe and was in command of Magdeburg and its strategic crossing within hours. Three days after the landing, the beachhead had expanded to include Wittenberg and Leipzig in the south and advance elements were approaching Hannover. To the east, the 120th Jump Infantry and the 146th Mechanized Infantry swiftly occupied Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and forced a crossing of the River Spree. Approaching Berlin along both sides of the river, they encountered stiff resistance from the Second Hegemony Patriots, whose zeal made up for their lack of combat experience. Working with the Second were the Nineteenth Patriots, formed scant weeks before the arrival of the SLDF, equipped with a hotchpotch of equipment and filled with half-trained conscripts. They manned fixed defenses and weapons emplacements, but were looked on with scorn by their "experienced" companions.

The first major clash between the SLDF and Terran forces took place at Potsdam on 9 February, with elements of the Nineteenth Patriots seeking to block the advance of the 210th Jump Infantry. Initially the clash went the way of the defenders, with the SLDF force seeming to pull back after receiving a bloody nose. However, the withdrawal was a feint; a Star League detachment forded the Templiner See and struck the Patriots in the rear. Lacking the experience and leadership to deal with such a reversal, the Patriots' morale collapsed and by the end of the day most of the regiment was being ushered to a holding camp. A swift advance to Schönefeld Spaceport and the suburb of Spandau followed, securing all the land east of the River Havel for the SLDF. Tegel Spaceport fell to the advance two days later, by which time troops were pushing through Charlottenburg and Zehlendorf. A flanking attack through the Grunewald allowed the SLDF forces to

get within a few kilometers of the city center, but here the AEAF defense proved solid, destroying many of the district's bridges and forcing the SLDF into pre-planned killing zones. The Star League troops endured a painstaking routine of clearing the suburbs street by street and house by house.

Matters to the east proved equally mixed. North of the Spree, the 146th struggled to break through defensive positions in the lake country around Erkner and Rüdersdorf. To the south, the 120th made swift progress, with elements fording the Langer See to seize Köpenick on 14 February. Racing through Friedrichshagen and Fichtenau, they threatened to encircle the eastern defenders, and only a valiant and costly defense of Vogelsdorf kept the door open for Amaris' troops to withdraw.

By 20 February, the assault on Berlin was nearly complete. The 120th had crossed the Teltow Canal and seized the Tempelhof Spaceport, and with it the defenders' last hope of escape or resupply. Other forces had pushed through the Tiergarten and were bombarding the Amaris positions around Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichstrasse. By 22 February only the northern pocket remained, desperately short of food and supplies. The defending commanders refused to surrender, but cold and hunger prompted mass defections, and on 28 February an insurrection toppled the Amaris-appointed general and led to the almost immediate surrender of the pocket.

The Battle for Berlin had taken longer than expected, but progress to the west and east was ahead of schedule. Scouts in Poznan linked up with elements of Eleventh Army arriving from Moscow, and in the west a similar linkup had been made in Saarbrücken with elements of Fifth Army that had landed near Paris. The Ruhr conurbation—the cities of Cologne, Essen, Düsseldorf, Bonn and Dortmund—had been encircled thanks to the arrival of elements of Fifteenth Army, which had secured Bruxelles and Amsterdam. Occupying the cities would be a slow and dangerous task. Unlike Berlin, there was no standup opposition—the defending Tenth Patriot Division had withdrawn into the Bochum Castle Brian shortly after the landings—but saboteurs and snipers pervaded the cities and pacification took until the end of the year.

The Castle Brian, hidden under hills south of the Kemnader See, was known locally as the Kobold Works after a local legend regarding a spirit that had brought the town luck until an overly curious servant attempted to track him. The kobold murdered the man and then fled, swearing the town would now be known for its bad luck. During the good years of the Star League, the base—in part a barracks/cache but also serving as an R&D center—brought significant business to the local area as well as prompting the establishment of a host of support industries. Now it drew the shadow of war, and much of the surrounding terrain, including the university campus, was shattered by clashes between the SLDF and the Tenth Patriots. The Patriots staged a vigorous and pro-active defense, exploiting the almost two dozen gates and ally ports in the complex to strike at the SLDF troops with seeming impunity. The number of gates also proved their downfall when, on 29 April,

the SLDF troops made simultaneous assaults on nine of them. The Patriots beat off the first four attacks but lacked the numbers to counter so many assaults at the same time. With the SLDF inside the complex, their victory was only a matter of time. Over the next three weeks, the remaining Patriots were isolated and annihilated, most opting to fight to the bitter end rather than surrender.

Late March saw one of the Pathfinder units, the Seventy-Fifth Light Horse Regiment, occupying Nuremberg and crossing the Danube to seize Munich and Innsbruck. In the months to follow, Tenth Army would also take control of Prague and Vienna, as well as linking up with the Italian divisions on 10 May.

LONDON AND SANDHURST

The third European Castle Brian was located at the Sandhurst Military Academy west of London. In addition to its role as a fortress and cache, Sandhurst Castle served as a strategic command center and was the base of operations for General Gunther Juliens, Amaris' military commander for the European region. Unlike most of the landings, where civilian centers were the primary goals and the Castles secondary objectives, Fifteenth Army's eyes rested firmly on Sandhurst. London's four spaceports would be seized as strategic objectives. Two—Heathrow civil port and the military base at Northolt—were within thirty kilometers of the Castle. The Channel tunnels would likewise be seized. All other objectives were secondary until the Castle had been taken or destroyed.

The importance of the objective was reflected in the number of troops committed to the operation. Fifteenth Army comprised thirteen divisions and even with three divisions securing the Channel Tunnel, Pas de Calais and the Low Countries, the Sandhurst task force was twice the size of that assigned to Berlin and the Ruhr. The lead unit was the 341st Royal BattleMech Division (the Black Prince Division), though the 326th BattleMech Division (the Manteuffel Division) and the Eighty-First BattleMech Division (the Devils of Devil's Rock) headed independent task forces.

Unlike the other European landings, where caution and a safe LZ prevailed over a high-risk approach, General Dimitry Barrios and Kerensky determined that the Sandhurst assault would be "down the beast's throat." The 341st and its attendants would drop directly only the Academy, aiming to overwhelm its defenses. Meanwhile, the Eighty-First Battlegroup would land on the plains about 100 km west of the Academy to secure a key military base and a bioweapons research facility, while the 326th seized the spaceports.

Four regiments of 'Mechs in ablative cocoons dropped onto the Sandhurst complex on 30 January, weathering a barrage from Amaris fighters and the air-defense installations. Their casualties were light—less than two companies were killed—but over a battalion were scattered during the drop and did not land where intended. The violence and determination of the remaining three regiments almost carried the day, inflicting grievous damage on the Seventh Amaris Fusiliers and forcing the defending troops to retreat from the main Academy complex. A temporary HQ was established between the parade ground and the Lower Lake, but

all too soon the Amaris troops rallied, and supported by the Fifth Hegemony Patriots, staged a devastating counterattack. With the Castle's weapon emplacements adding to the fire against them, the SLDF troops were forced to give ground. They withdrew from their positions around the Upper Lake in an attempt to maintain their lines, but were soon encircled and in grave danger of being overrun.

A second wave of Star League 'Mechs arrived in the nick of time, landing near the Academy gates and the shooting range, from which they were able to blunt the counteroffensive. With numbers now firmly on the side of the SLDF, the boot was firmly on the other foot. By the end of the first day, the Seventh Fusiliers and Fifth Patriots had been forced into tight perimeters around the two main gates to the Castle Brian complex in wooded hills north of the Academy, King's Ride in the east and Windsor Ride in the west. By 4 February, with two of the SLDF task forces converging on Sandhurst, even these positions had been abandoned in favor of the shelter of the fortress.

The third task force, assigned to secure the spaceports, found itself under attack from an unexpected direction. Two more pro-Amaris formations, the mercenary Burning Tygers and the Seventeenth Amaris Lancers, were in London and struck at the arriving SLDF formations. Expecting little resistance, the 326th initially gave ground, but as more and more troops landed, their weight of numbers worked in their favor and prompted a counterattack. While the Seventeenth Lancers staged a hard-fought rearguard down the Great West Road, the Tygers established a second defensive position in central London. Realizing the danger to themselves and the city's millions of inhabitants, the SLDF halted their pursuit at Gunnesbury and established observation posts along the Westway, and at Hampstead Heath and Alexandra Park overlooking the Thames Valley.

The Castle Brian assault became a meat grinder with immense losses on both sides. The SLDF took the worst of it, with two divisions (the Sixty-Third Mechanized Infantry and the Seventh Jump Infantry) so badly mauled that Kerensky ordered them pulled from the line. They would eventually be disbanded. The Amaris troops knew they could not win a war of attrition, but they could make the cost of the complex eye-wateringly high. Days became weeks, and by late February the Castle was no closer to falling. The SLDF had destroyed its communications arrays, including several remote transmitters, negating Sandhurst's ability to coordinate defensive operations within Europe, but they were unable to dislodge the occupants.

Eventually, on 11 March, the SLDF changed tactics. They withdrew from the immediate vicinity of the gates, but any hope that gave the defenders evaporated when fire lanced down from the skies from the SLS *Wellesley*. Over the course of an hour-long bombardment, much of the Windsor Ride gate complex was reduced to rubble. At first it seemed the attack was counterproductive—it replaced the huge blast door with a massive pile of rubble even less likely to afford access—but closer inspection revealed the attack had broken open several wiring conduits. Though only a meter across, they afforded access deep into the complex. A small special forces

team was able to penetrate the Castle's outer defenses and plant demolition charges in the power plant and at the remaining gate. With the King's Ride door breached and the power outages causing chaos in their internal systems, the Amaris defense crumbled. The outer sections of the fort were in Star League hands within forty-eight hours, but the inner sections—the fort consisted of four concentric rings of defenses, of which only the outermost had been breached—would take another nine weeks to capture. The Amaris commander, General Juliens, committed suicide rather than be taken by the SLDF and the fortress's memory core was erased, denying the Star League units the intelligence they'd hoped to gain from the complex. All told, the Sandhurst operation cost in excess of fifty thousand lives and left the complex badly damaged (ComStar would eventually restore the facility, though even in the 3090s evidence of the SLS *Wellesley* bombardment remained in the Academy grounds).

In London sporadic clashes occurred between SLDF observers and Amaris troops during March, but neither gained significant advantage. The SLDF established cantonments on Ealing Common in the west and Queen Elizabeth II Park in the east to hamper any breakout attempts. While the battle for Sandhurst raged, there seemed little desire by the SLDF to resolve the situation in London, but that didn't prevent them planning, not did it relieve the pressures on the encircled mercenary troops. Eventually, on 15 April, the Burning Tygers attempted to escape, crossing the river at Battersea and trying to evade the SLDF pickets by traveling along the railway lines running to the southwest. They were spotted and pitched battle erupted near Kingston-upon-Thames. Bloodied, the mercenaries retreated back through Richmond Park and over Putney Bridge.

The attempted escape had unforeseen consequences: Tensions between the mercenaries and the Seventeenth Amaris Lancers increased markedly, the line troops accusing the mercenaries of cowardice. On 2 May, these tensions erupted into open hostilities between the two units. The parks of central London became battlegrounds for this miniature civil war, and the opulent mansions of Mayfair, Kensington, Knightsbridge and Belgravia that abutted them were badly damaged. The SLDF divisions in Ealing, Stratford and Hampstead observed the clashes but did not immediately intervene. Only on 5 May did they finally enter the conflict, facing scant opposition as they separated and disarmed the exhausted combatants. Only two significant engagements occurred: An attempted breakout by the Lancers south of the Thames was run down by the 326th Division and led to bitter street fighting around Elephant and Castle. Attempts to disarm a group of mercenaries camped at a wrecked sports stadium in the Highbury district turned ugly and led to a running battle along Holloway Road, culminating in a final confrontation in Highgate Woods that destroyed the last of the Tygers' 'Mechs.

Away from London, operations to secure the Channel Tunnel had gone like clockwork; both the English and French terminals were secured without contest. Demolition charges had been placed in the tunnels, but the speed of the SLDF assault prevented their detonation and after a painstaking examination by combat engineers, all four tunnels were declared open to SLDF traffic. This allowed the swift movement of troops and supplies from Britain to the Continent and permitted the rapid expansion of operations in northern France, Belgium and Holland. Troops from the Fifteenth were soon working closely with the Berlin and Paris task forces. The rest of the British Isles readily accepted the return of the Star League authority and proved notably less hostile to the troops patrolling their streets than did the people of London.

MADRID AND IBERIA

First Army, dispatched to secure the Iberian Peninsula, was the most easterly of the SLDF task forces, landing near the town of Avila, midway between the Spanish capital and Salamanca. The local security service immediately surrendered and within twenty-four hours a secure base of operations had been established and plans were in place to advance on the capital. Scarcely had they moved out on 2 February when a major obstacle was placed in their path: The weather. The troops faced intense blizzards as they sought to cross the mountain passes and much of the infantry and armor was forced to return to base. The BattleMechs of the 164th BattleMech Division (the Hannibal Division) pressed on, and on the morning of 3 February occupied the town of Las Rozas. Scouts were sent to observe the city, but until infantry support was available General Saina Kogo held back from moving into the main urban area. She knew from the fighting in the Periphery just how lethal infantry could be against unsupported 'Mechs in such an environment.

In the end she needn't have worried. When the supporting regiments arrived two days later, the SLDF forces began a cautious push into the western Aravaca district and faced no opposition. Quite the opposite—cheering crowds came out to meet them, showering the 'Mechs and vehicles with flowers and confetti. They revealed that the pro-Amaris garrison had fled south when news of the landings came through. Similar scenes greeted the troops that passed through the northern and southeastern districts, converging on the Royal Palace. By 6 February the city was in SLDF hands, though the good cheer of the locals' initial greeting soon soured. Some Amaris agents remained, with sniper attacks and booby traps commonplace, leading to stringent security checks and roadblocks through the city. This and outbreak of looting in some districts prompted the imposition of martial

CASTLES BRIAN OF EUROPE, ASIA AND AFRICA

Europe

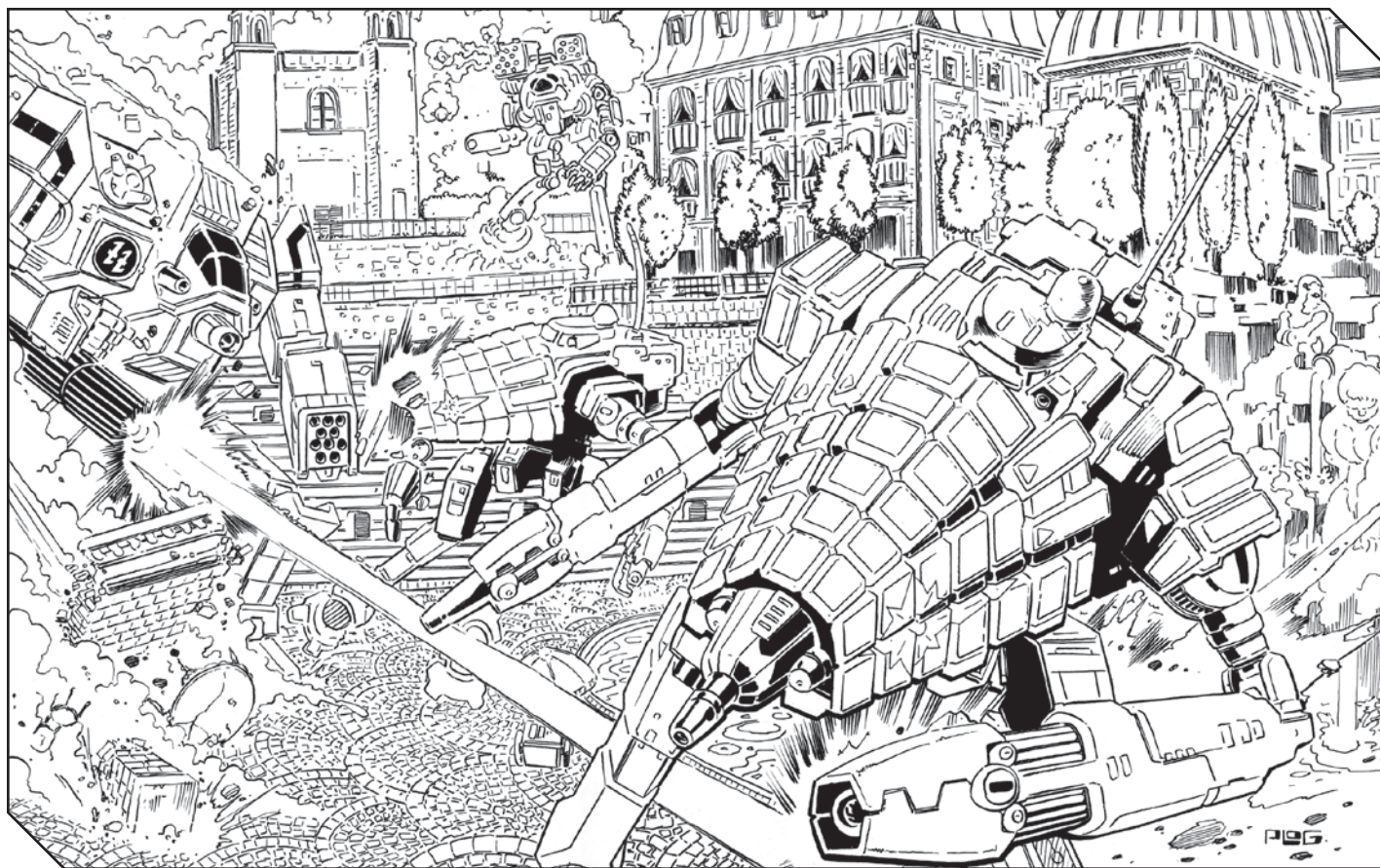
Sandhurst, British Isles
Bochum, Germany
Sverdlovsk, Russia

Asia

T'ienchen, China (Hebei Administrative District)
Takayama, Japan
Ipoh, Malaysia
Katmandu, Nepal
Columbo, Sri Lanka

Africa

Cairo, Egypt
Magadi, Kenya
Thabana, Lesotho, Azania



law and a souring of relations with the civilians, who feared they had exchanged one dictatorship for another. Yet as the security situation stabilized—reprisal attacks against collaborators remained an ongoing issue—the situation calmed and an air of normalcy resumed.

First Army took control of most of the northern Spanish cities in the first week after the landing. None proved overly problematic, though in Burgos and Santander over-exuberant celebrations turned into riots. In the south, many of the cities remained outside SLDF control. Troops airlifted from Madrid secured Gibraltar and Cadiz to prevent pro-Amaris forces escaping across the Straits of Gibraltar (the SLDF also occupied Cueta and Tangier in mid-February, their only military presence in Africa). Other troops crossed the Pyrenees, taking control of Toulouse and its strategic space industries and pushing toward Marseilles, where they linked up with Fifth Army on 9 April.

Rumors of a pro-Amaris force loose in southern Iberia plagued First Army throughout February as they consolidated their gains, including occupying Cordoba, Lisbon and Barcelona, but satellite imagery and recon flights failed to identify any large-scale formations. It was believed that the Madrid garrison had scattered, but uncertainty over their fate came to dominate the military situation in Iberia, which over the next few months became dominated by small-scale operations to capture suspected militants and remnants of the Madrid garrison.

NAPLES AND ITALY

The Italian campaign fought by Sixth Army mirrored that in Iberia. Here, the bogeymen were very real and the entire operation proved costly. The initial landings north of Naples went smoothly and Capua was established as the army's HQ. Advancing south to Naples, rebuilt extensively after the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 2604, proved an exercise in futility. The towns on the plain and the outlying districts fell easily, often without shots being fired, but the inner districts of the city proved far more troublesome.

Amaris' brutal cronies, the mercenary Greenhaven Gestapo commanded by General Antilos Legos, claimed the Italian peninsula as their personal fief and many of its cities had been left in a state of anarchy. Naples was a prime example, with factionalism and gang warfare encouraged by its Greenhaven overlords. The possibility of a place within the mercenary unit was dangled in front of each gang member, their ingenuity and viciousness in the internecine conflicts an extended audition for membership. Always brutal, the mercenaries' extreme nature had become clear in 2770 when they murdered Pope Clement. Amaris tolerated their brutality—and indulged it to a degree—as he could always count on the Greenhaves to carry out the bloodiest tasks.

Sixth Army found themselves submerged in the morass the Greenhaven Gestapo had created in Naples, one moment seeking to separate warring factions and the next under attack by both

combatants as alliances shifted. The 309th Royal BattleMech Division (the Black Charger Division) formed the core of Sixth Army, but found themselves largely powerless to halt the violence in the city. Instead, that task fell to the infantry divisions—the Forty-Ninth Mechanized Infantry (the Colony Commanders) and the Twelfth Jump Infantry—who paid a bloody price for restoring order despite their qualitative and quantitative superiority. Over a thousand SLDF troops were injured within the first week, almost half fatally, and that number showed little sign of slowing. Deploying armor and 'Mechs reduced the casualty figures, but provided focal points for gang attacks. SLDF search-and-seizure operations likewise proved unpopular, but by removing the heads of the gangs order slowly returned. By 27 February, matters were sufficiently stable for three of the divisions to begin moving northwards, pushing up the A1 and past Cassino, Frosinone and Colferro.

Constrained by the terrain, the SLDF advanced in tight formation, which proved too tempting a target for the Amaris forces. At several points SLDF units came under fire from mountainside gun emplacements and dug-in vehicles, all of which had to be cleared out before the advance could continue. Artillery and mortars were commonly employed against the troops, mostly with explosive rounds but occasionally with gas shells. Mostly these were tear gas and smoke, but each had to be treated as if it was a chemical or biological attack. NBC suits and gas masks were standard issue, but with alerts occurring daily troops soon became blasé about them. The Gestapo exploited this; five days into the march, as troops approached Ferentino, the mercenaries employed sarin and VX rounds. A number of the troops, believing this another false alarm, were slow in putting on their protective gear when the chemical hazard alarms sounded, and died agonizing deaths. It was a bitter lesson that would never leave the survivors. Kerensky's promised retribution for the use of strategic weapons was swift and deadly—WarShips pounded Gestapo positions in the mountains and around Rome—but the mercenaries withdrew into the built-up areas to foil the counterattacks. So grave was the threat of chemical weapons after Ferentino that WarShips remained in position immediately above Sixth Army to provide counter-battery fire. The eye-in-the-sky tracked every artillery launch and fired naval lasers at the weapon systems within seconds. Here too, the Gestapo began using civilian infrastructure for cover, though that did not dissuade the WarShip weapons officers, whose targeting systems were accurate to a few meters. A single building could be destroyed, leaving the rest of the village intact. There might still be loss of life, but it was deemed acceptable.

Lead elements of the Sixth reached Rome on 9 March and began to push up the Via Tuscolana. Securing the military spaceport in Quadraro, the vanguard established a forward HQ and over the next ten days pushed deeper into the Italian capital. Unlike Naples, the SLDF weren't greeted with violence and gang warfare. The population was calm, almost unnaturally so, a side effect of living in what was to all intents the Greenhaven Gestapo's capital, subject to their every psychotic whim. They had been exposed to casual violence for over a decade and the regimented warfare of the SLDF was almost a relief by comparison. The mercenaries were less obliging and fought tenaciously for their fief. Street battles were commonplace, sometimes lance-sized engagements and others involving a whole battalion, and the troopers of the Sixth were made to pay for each street they retook. The damage was catastrophic, but paled in comparison to the vandalism wrought by the Greenhaves; monuments over two thousand years old had been defaced or destroyed at their whim.

Faced with being isolated and annihilated—the SLDF was not prepared to offer them any quarter—the mercenaries abandoned the city on 19 March. Scarcely a regiment remained of their once-divisional strength, but even that force could be a thorn in the Sixth's side. Pursuit elements chased the fleeing unit into northern Italy, skirting Florence and then passing over the mountains onto the north Italian plain. Airdropped troops finally cornered the mercenaries west of Ferrara and in a pitched battle annihilated the remaining 'Mechs. Rumors at the time suggested the Star League troops executed wounded Greenhaven troops, but while they may have refused to heed surrender offers—a number of mercenaries surrendering in Rome had worn explosive suicide vests—cold-blooded murder would have been out of character for the SLDF.

Battered and bruised, the Sixth liberated Venice on 29 March and Milan on 4 April, dealing with small-scale civil unrest in each before completing the liberation of Italy with Turin and Genoa on April 20. The Sixth linked up with the troops assigned to France and Switzerland five days later and on 10 May with German troops advancing south from Munich.

SELLSWORDS AND PATRIOTS

Amaris line troops formed the largest and most proficient opposition to the SLDF, most having been upgraded from regimental to divisional strength since the Coup, but two other groups bolstered their numbers significantly: Mercenaries and the Hegemony Patriot divisions.

Mercenaries had long been a part of AEA military operations, Amaris having hired dozens of units in the run-up to Operation APOTHEOSIS. Some had finished their contracts or else been destroyed, but a number remained and played significant roles in Operation LIBERATION. The most notorious were the Greenhaven Gestapo, whom Amaris used to intimidate and brutalize opponents on Terra, but others such as the Burning Tygers, the Warriors of the Dawn (who survived the campaign and operated throughout the Succession Wars, renamed for the "grim determination" they'd shown during the battles for Terra) and Team Q all proved skilled and committed to the cause—so long as the pay remained good.

The Hegemony Patriots began as new units raised to utilize the significant numbers of Hegemony (mainly Terran) citizens volunteering to aid Amaris' cause. Driven by loyalty and fervor, the early Patriot divisions proved an effective fighting force. However, as the SLDF pressed on toward Terra, Amaris' commanders became increasingly concerned about the disparity in force strengths and pushed for more and more Patriot divisions to be assembled. Volunteers were in short supply and so these new units (the Eighth Hegemony Patriots and later) employed conscripts and cast-off equipment. Their training was lacking, along with their morale, and so most of these new units had a significantly higher number of political officers than the rest of Amaris' troops. They were fragile and useless for tasks more complex than static defense, leading some SLDF generals to nickname them "stocking-filler divisions." Yet, as is often attributed to Joseph Stalin, "Quantity has a quality all of its own," and by January 2777 there were nineteen such units.

—*Jumping the Shark*, Mervyn Holmes, Terra Press, 3085

PARIS AND GENEVA

The final European landings, and the most important politically, were in France and western Switzerland. Their principal objective was the Hegemony capital of Geneva, but the regional industrial and political centers of Lyon and Grenoble were also targeted, as was the French capital. The entire Fifth Army Group (Fifth and Eighteenth Armies) was assigned to the operation, Fifth focusing on French targets and Eighteenth on Geneva itself.

The 150th Royal BattleMech Division (the Rigil Kentarus Division) and three other divisions grounded west of Paris between Chartres and Rambouillet, while two landed north of Lyon near Macon. The principal objective of the 150th was the St. Cyr academy near Versailles. The institute had a checkered history, originally a military hospital but established as an officer training facility by Napoleon in 1808. After sojourns in Brittany and Bordeaux, it had returned to Paris in 2506 as the MechWarrior training campus of the École Militaire. It remained in use during Amaris' occupation, and removing the facility from the Usurper's control was a key part of the strategy to undermine his military position. A training battalion was assigned to the academy and, heavily indoctrinated by Amaris' agents, demonstrated fanatical opposition to the SLDF takeover, which began on 2 February. Despite their fervor, their lack of experience and numbers meant their efforts to resist were futile. The Star League forces initially tried to cripple the cadets' Mechs, disabling legs and arms so as to save the pupils, many of whom were in their early teens, but their unwillingness to compromise forced a number of more lethal encounters. Meeting with Kerensky some weeks later, Major-General Fakir Ben Hashim, commander of the 150th, revealed his horror at having to kill children during the campaign. Kerensky made it clear that the fault for this lay not with the SLDF, but with Amaris, whose poisonous influence had corrupted the children.

Away from the academy, the military operation progressed smoothly. Versailles was occupied on 4 February and SLDF forces began advancing into Paris along two axes, one down the Avenue de Paris through Viroflay and Chaville, the other looping south through Massy and Antony. The Orly spaceport fell to Star League troops on 7 February after a twelve-hour battle with militia. Soon after, elements of the 121st Dragoon Regiment were scouting up the broad boulevards of the Autoroute du Soleil into central Paris. The 197th Mechanized Infantry (the Florida Swamp Foxes), part of the northern thrust, crossed the Pont de Sèvres late on the seventh, taking control of Boulogne-Billancourt. Their probes across the Périphérique into the Passy district, part of the Sixteenth Arrondissement, became the first SLDF presence in Paris proper (the areas outside the ring-road being technically the Hauts-de-Seine province), though they were soon joined by the 150th, who crossed into the city at the Porte de Versailles, and the 213th BattleMech Division (the Carver Division), who seized the transport nexus of Gentilly, and with it a major hospital complex.

With many of the narrow streets unsuited to 'Mechs or armor, infantry played a vital role in pushing deeper into the Fifteenth and Fourteenth arrondissements. The Amaris defenders, a mix of security troops and soldiers from the Eighth Patriot Division, staged a dogged

defense, but the weight of SLDF numbers won out and the Terran troops were pushed back street by street. By 17 February the front line was along the Boulevard de Grenelle, with Amaris' armor dug in and exacting a fearsome price for the SLDF advance. To the east, the southern task force reached the Seine near Austerlitz Station on 15 February after a bloody battle at the Place d'Italie. They began to work along the banks of the Seine, capturing vital bridges, and on 19 February the Ile de la Cité. A day later, as forces pushed across the Seine into the Tenth Arrondissement to seize its strategic transport hubs, they completed the encirclement of the Hegemony Patriots. Now trapped in a pocket around the École Militaire and Les Invalides, the Amaris forces became increasingly desperate. Withdrawing into the tower complexes along the Avenue de Ségur, they forced the SLDF to mount a painstaking floor-by-floor clearance of the 50-story complex. As the SLDF operation neared its end, the Patriots played their final hand; a device, believed to be a 10-kiloton battlefield nuke, detonated at the base of the tower. The blast and the fall of the tower almost annihilated the 189th Jump Infantry Division (the New Orleans Division). Having originally intended to establish his HQ in the now-ruined Militaire, General Bram Merga instead established it in the Grand Palais on the north bank of the Seine.

With the capture of the northern suburbs and the Roissy Spaceport on 5 March, Paris was secure. Over the next few weeks the Fifth expanded its area of control to include Rouen, Rennes, Amiens, Reims, Le Mans and Dijon. Divisions operating independently of the Paris task force had already linked up with Fifteenth Army at Lille on 11 February, and Tenth north of Strasbourg on 21 February, but the completion of the Paris operation allowed them to solidify their hold on northern France.

In the south, the battle for Lyon was anticlimactic. Intelligence suggested the presence of a substantial garrison and prompted caution by the Star League forces. A careful approach to the heights on the western bank of the Rhône encountered minimal resistance. A few shots were fired, but mostly by lone partisans and over-exuberant residents celebrating their liberation. Only forty SLDF troops died during the capture of the city, fifteen of them in a transport accident in the Bron district while moving to secure the city's spaceport.

Grenoble, nestled in the foothills of the Alps, would prove a more challenging task. Easier to defend than the city on the Rhône, the Lyon garrison had withdrawn to the capital of the Dauphiné region and over the next month rebuffed all attempts to attack the city. The valley approaches provided natural chokepoints that neutralized the SLDF's numbers and the suburbs of Saint-Égrève and Meylan became killing grounds. Attempts to use narrow mountain roads to flank the defenders proved unsuccessful, though jump troops were able to use the paths to harass the defenders. Only when a third force was dropped into the upper reaches of the valley near Vif, attacking the city from the south, did the defenses crumble and the SLDF make substantial progress. With the garrison making their final stand in the old town on the shores of the Isère, a hard-fought battle during the night of 19-20 February finally ended resistance in the city.

In the months that followed, the northern divisions secured Limoges, Bordeaux and Nantes, while striking south from Lyon the eastern force secured Avignon, Nice and Toulon. On 9 April, five days after securing Marseilles, Fifth Army linked up with forces arriving from Spain and the liberation of France was complete. Yet the price of that victory left a bitter taste—almost a third of their force had been lost in the campaign—and there were rumblings of discontent among the troops.

Geneva

The capital of the Hegemony and Terra, Geneva was expected to be a tough fight and Kerensky assigned ten divisions of Eighteenth Army to capture it. Centered on the 287th BattleMech Division (the Tobruk Division), six divisions landed in a broad arc south of the city, securing Bellgarde-sur-Valserine, Annecy and Bonneville to prevent escape to the south. Two more divisions landed at Morges on the shores of Lake Geneva, securing Lausanne on 2 February and advancing to Nyon to block the northern routes from the city, and two more landed at Thonon-Les-Bains, across the lake from the Morges taskforce.

Almost entirely surrounded, Geneva became a prison for the three defending divisions, the Ninety-Ninth Amaris Dragoons, the Second Tartan Brigade and the Thirteenth Hegemony Patriots. The Dragoons and Tartan Brigade were battle-hardened veterans and fanatical supporters of Amaris who would not give up easily. The Patriots, like many of their kin raised in the last year, lacked experience and training and were poorly equipped.

The first major objective of the Eighteenth was the spaceport, northwest of the city, which was defended by the Tartan Brigade. The northern task force, comprising the 116th Mechanized Infantry Division (the Flanders Division) and the 209th Mechanized Infantry Division, pushed south along the shoreline on 4 February and made contact with elements of the Brigade near Versoix, slowly pushing them back to the spaceport over the next three days. The port's formidable defenses added to the Amaris troops' firepower, causing the SLDF advance to stall, but forces pushing from the south opened up a second front in the Vernier and Meyrin districts. Artillery platforms established across the French border in the foothills of the Jura soon added their firepower to the battle and on 10 February the spaceport was in SLDF hands, though many of its structures were in ruins. The Tartan Brigade extricated itself and redeployed around the Hegemony Congress a few kilometers to the southeast, joining the Patriot division already dug in there.

Meanwhile, the Amaris Dragoons were making a nuisance of themselves in Southern Geneva, blunting attacks through Carouge and the Parc des Acacias as well as the eastern Eaux Vives district. So dogged was their defense that many SLDF commanders assumed they were facing multiple divisions rather than just one. By 12 February, the Star League's numbers were beginning to win out and the Dragoons had been forced into a wedge of land between the Rhône and the Arve rivers. The battle for the Old Town proved particularly bloody, the Amaris troops desperate to keep the SLDF from the Rhône bridges that were their only escape

route. On 19 February, as SLDF troops forced a crossing of the Arve onto the Rue des Deux-Ponts and broke through to the Rhône, the Dragoons abandoned their positions and staged a fighting withdrawal across the river, destroying the Pont du Mont-Blanc and Pont de la Coulouvrenière. Attempts to demolish the Pont d'Île failed, affording the Star League forces a means of pursuit, but the Dragoons raced north through the rail yards and linked up with the other divisions at the Congress.

With the remnants of three divisions dug in around the Hegemony capitol complex, dislodging them without destroying the structures was going to be difficult. Rather than a devastating assault, the SLDF opted to starve the defenders out. Lasting almost four months, the Siege of Geneva was marked by probing attacks by both sides and a steady reduction in the size of the Amaris pocket. The parklands around the Congress buildings were churned into muddy quagmires and council chambers became barracks, daubed with graffiti and littered with debris. The chamber where the Star League treaty had been signed centuries earlier was defaced and used as a latrine. As winter became spring, the Amaris troops grew increasingly desperate. Unlike the SLDF, who now held almost all of Europe and were able to bring in fresh supplies, the Usurper's troops had subsisted on those they carried and the small stockpiles within the Congress. Even cutting down to half rations only allowed these supplies to last until late April, after which point hunger became the Amaris troops' greatest enemy. The SLDF realized this and broadcast messages offering the encircled troops warm beds and good food if they surrendered. A steady trickle of soldiers took the offer, particularly from the Patriot Division, and after crossing to the enemy lines found themselves housed in an internment camp near Annecy. By early June, this trickle had become a torrent and with their forces hemorrhaging troops, the Amaris commanders decided on a breakout attempt. Striking north through Chambésy and Bellevue, their move caught the SLDF unprepared. Most of the Amaris force was contained, but several companies broke through the lines and fled north. Pursued by the 279th Light Horse Regiment and the 74th Royal Dragoon Regiment (the Dogs of Dogarish), and under constant air attack, the Amaris companies were cornered as they attempted to cross the Saint-Cergue Pass. Trapped on the plateau meadows with no means of escape, they capitulated and were followed on 10 June by the forces at the Congress. The Battle for Geneva, and with it the main battle for Europe, was over.

MAGADAN

The most northerly and the most easterly of the SLDF landings, Magadan was vital to Kerensky's plans. Six mechanized infantry divisions and one BattleMech division of Twelfth Army were tasked with securing it, though the operational plan called for four divisions to land at Magadan itself and three more to ground at Yakutsk, some 1,200 km to the west. Linking the two sites was the Kolyma Highway, known locally as the Road of Bones. Renowned for its treachery and danger, the Road of Bones was perpetually being washed away by spring melts of the surrounding boggy

permafrost in the Kolyma Range and had been little maintained during Amaris' reign. Fortunately for the SLDF, landing in midwinter meant the ground would be frozen and thus passable to the heavy armor and 'Mechs. Unfortunately for the SLDF, the temperature—down to -70 centigrade on some legs of the route in February—made frigid Moscow appear balmy.

Spearheaded by the 229th BattleMech Division (the Chara Division), the Magadan landings went largely unopposed. Only thirty security troops were based in the mining town, and faced with thousands of SLDF troops, they quickly capitulated. Of more pressing concern was finding accommodation for the fifteen hundred MechWarriors and over twenty thousand infantry; with a population of just over a hundred thousand, Magadan couldn't cope with the influx. Instead, troops were quartered on DropShips at the commercial spaceport while barrack blocks were assembled. The troops soon came to appreciate these quarters when they were sent out to secure the Road of Bones or, even worse, sent to one of the high-Arctic camps guarding the Bering Strait. An unstated objective of the Twelfth was to secure the high Arctic rail link and trans-oceanic tunnels that crossed the straits, but it soon became clear that that Amaris' agents had sabotaged the links. The SLDF established a fighter base at Lavrentiya in the high Arctic to defend against probes by Amaris' forces in Alaska, deploying one of the mechanized infantry divisions to guard it. Additional troops were sent to Anadyr, further north along the Sea of Okhotsk, and to Pevek, well above the Arctic Circle on the East Siberian Sea. Compared to these locales, Magadan was a warm metropolis.

None of these bases faced significant military threat—cold and isolation were more pressing concerns—but small pro-Amaris security detachments had to be disarmed. Pevek caused particular concern in this, as rather than the small security force found in Magadan, some five hundred armed guards were present in the town—almost ten percent of its official population. The reason for their presence soon became apparent; a forced labor camp, extracting metals such as uranium, had been constructed some fifteen kilometers inland. Populated by a mix of political prisoners and hardened criminals, the camp was a dumping ground and its inhabitants treated as subhuman. Most were malnourished and suffering from the cold, and many also showed signs of radiation poisoning. In a case of rough justice, General Adam Xevak imprisoned the disarmed guards in the camp and shipped the previous inmates south to Magadan for treatment. Many of those rescued remained in critical condition for months, but some volunteered to aid the SLDF in the campaign against Amaris.

Yakutsk was in many ways similar to Magadan—isolated and frigid—but located on the Lena River and with a larger population and more diverse economy than the port city, it seemed a diverse and thriving center by comparison. Two areas of the town were important to the SLDF—the bridge across the Lena River that linked the city to the Road of Bones and also carried the maglev freight line that ran to Alaska, and the military research center attached to the university. Unlike Magadan, Yakutsk also served as the headquarters of the East Siberia Defense Regiment, originally

LANDINGS—ASIAN THEATRE

North Asia Battlegroup (20AG)

Magadan, Siberia

12th Army

Harbin, Manchuria

13th and 16th Armies

Japanese Battlegroup (2 AG)

Hokkaido, Japan

8th Army

Kyushu, Japan

20th Army

China Battlegroup (19AG)

Ulan Bator, Mongolia

2nd and 19th Armies

Indian Battlegroup (21 AG)

Jaipur, India

9th and 14th Armies

Central Asian Battlegroup (4th AG)

Astana, Kazakhstan

3rd and 4th Armies

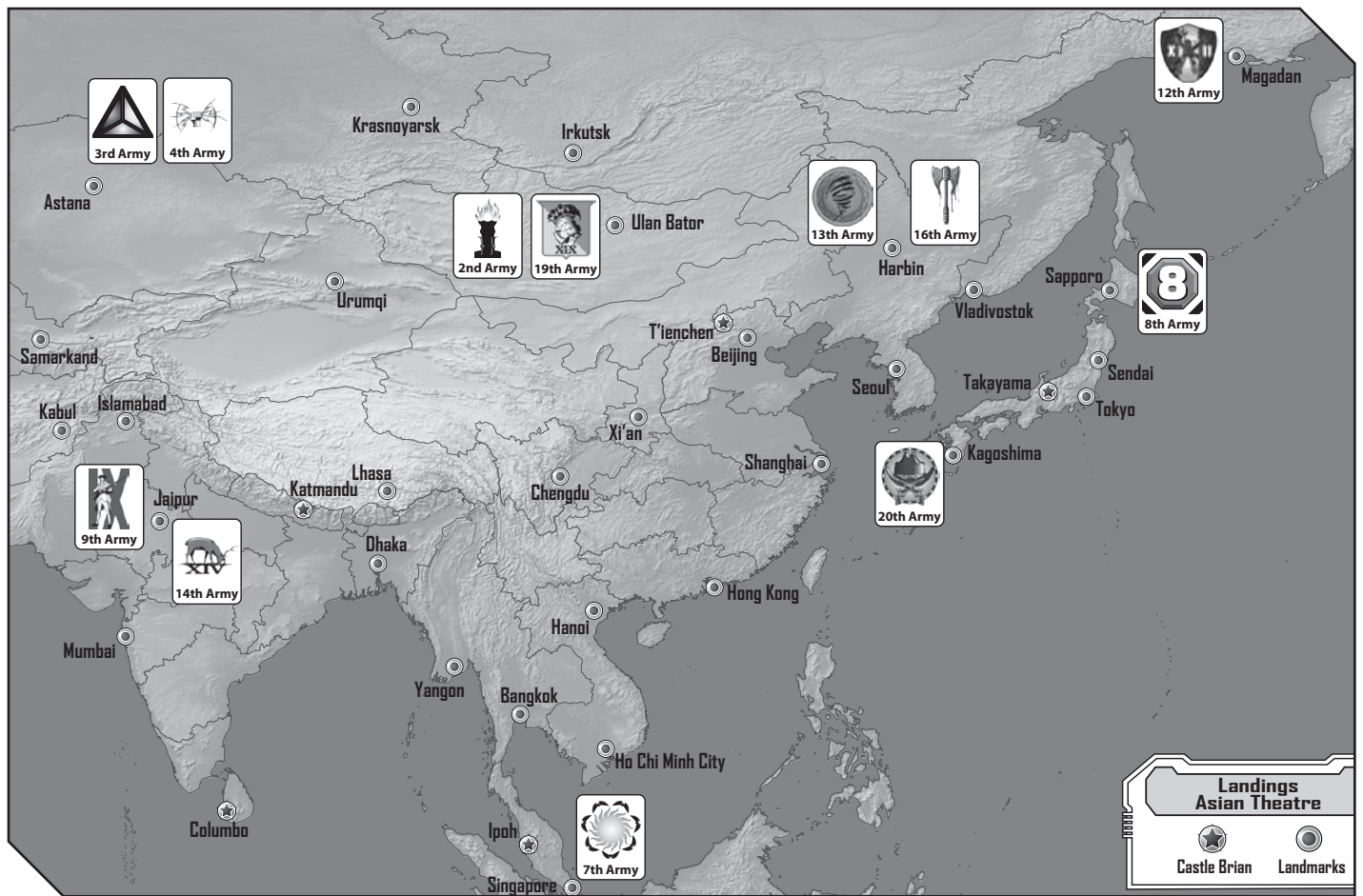
Malaysian Battlegroup (24AG)

Singapore

7th Army

a commercial security unit that had been suborned by Amaris' cronies and conscripted into his armed forces. Lacking real combat experience, they were grossly unprepared—despite having been warned by Amaris' high command—when 'Mechs of the 118th Mechanized Infantry Division staged a combat drop into the heart of the town, seizing the bridge and quickly forcing their way north to secure the spaceport. The defenders' ineptitude was almost comical; in less than three hours, the arriving SLDF troops had crippled or destroyed half the regiment and forced the remainder to surrender.

In the weeks that followed, the Twelfth secured much of western Siberia and linked up with both the Ulan Bator and Harbin task forces. As the weather improved, the thawing ground proved as much of an enemy as the cold had been, severely hampering ground movement and prompting the use of aircraft and sub-orbital DropShip flights to travel between garrisons. Kerensky knew this would be a major obstacle to his plans to attack North America across the Bering Straits, and so he set SLDF engineers to work improving the transport infrastructure. In many cases that meant improving existing routes like the Road of Bones, but it also involved new bridges and tunnels. Over the next year, the Star League Corps of Engineers would construct over two thousand kilometers of roads and assemble sixteen new bridges, many of which remain in use in the thirty-first century.



HARBIN

With a population of over five million, Harbin was a key industrial center within the Manchuria Autonomous Region. Known for its grain production, petrochemical refining and alloy processing, and also the manufacturing site of several BattleMech designs, Harbin would be an excellent base of operations in Northern China. It was also the site of the Harbin Technology Center, responsible for developing computer systems and armor composites for the SLDF's royal units.

A combined-arms brigade served as the garrison for the city and was not expected to pose a serious threat to the five divisions of Thirteenth Army dispatched to occupy the city. They reckoned without one key factor: the local militia had access to strategic weapons.

The initial landings thirty kilometers west of the city by the 308th BattleMech Division (the Punjab Pass Division) were uncontested, the few troops in the outlying villages fleeing when news of the imminent landing became clear. When several battalion-strength units fled the spaceport before the advancing SLDF could engage them, the Star League officers grew overconfident. The 133rd Jump Infantry Division surged into the complex, moving to secure the launch pads and terminal buildings in what they thought was the easiest victory of the campaign to date.

The detonation of a tactical nuclear device destroyed four regiments outright and gutted five others. The complex was ruined and the remaining Star League forces were badly shaken. Their prey had teeth. The immediate reaction was to pull back from any more booby traps and out of the range of any nuclear-armed artillery, but Major-General Latricia Bao instead ordered the 308th to press on. Withdrawing would give the Amaris troops what they wanted; only an aggressive advance would keep them off balance. Combat engineer attachments accompanied the BattleMechs, and mobile artillery and anti-air batteries provided defense against artillery and missile strikes. As would later happen with chemical weapon attacks on the Italian task force, WarShips took up position above Harbin to provide imagery and fire support as needed. Their orders prohibited firing on the city, but any units on the plain not emitting SLDF identification were fair game.

Several strategic rounds were subsequently fired from within the city, but all were engaged and destroyed by the air defenses and their launch sites bombarded by the SLDF's own artillery. A deadly game of cat and mouse—lots of cats and the mouse blind—ensued in the streets of the city, as the SLDF chased down the demi-brigade. The Xiangfang and Qunlixang districts bore the brunt of the fighting and by 5 February the remnants of the defenders were

backed up against the Songhua River. A battalion escaped across the Songhuajiang Bridge into the government district, but most fought and died on the southern shore. The fleeing unit attempted to rig one last booby trap at a major road intersection, but the combat engineers detected and disarmed it. Hard-pressed by the SLDF, they attempted to escape north of the city and must have felt relief when their pursuers pulled up shortly after leaving the city limits. Most never realized their mistake as the Star League WarShips volleyed shot after shot into the fleeing formation. There were no survivors.

To the south, Sixteenth Army landed near Shenyang and took control of the city in a three-day operation led by the 168th BattleMech Division (the Czar Peter Division). The garrison offered no surprises and seemed reluctant to engage the SLDF troops. Within a week, most had surrendered, leaving the region's financial capital solidly in SLDF hands. By the end of February, Changchun, Vladivostok and Pyongyang were also under Star League control. During March, the rest of the Korean Peninsula was been liberated and the armies advanced towards Beijing and Tianjin.

Outside Beijing seven SLDF divisions faced off against the Eighth Amaris Fusiliers and the Third Hegemony Patriots as well as dozens of regional militia forces. The Amaris troops proved surprisingly resilient and in a series of engagements lasting nine days they surrendered less than twenty kilometers to the Star League troops. Attempts to flank them were rebuffed and though the SLDF took Tianjin on 6 April, Beijing remained out of their reach.

The arrival of four more divisions from Harbin in mid-April finally shifted the balance of power—the SLDF secured the spaceport and most of the eastern suburbs on April 15 and reached the city center on 19 April. The Amaris troops staged a measured withdrawal southwest toward Fangshan, then veered west into the mountains, heading up the valley of the Dashi River. Then they vanished. At first the SLDF observers thought the terrain obscured the troops, but when spotter plane overflights failed to detect them too, it became clear they had escaped. Troops from the Fifty-Ninth Jump Infantry Division (the King's Own Jump Troops) scouring the valley eventually found what had happened. Concealed deep in the valley was a massive gate bearing the insignia of the Star League Corps of engineers. It didn't appear on any of the SLDF schematics for installations in the region, but when efforts to breach the door proved ineffectual, General Ekaterina Thorskilden came to the conclusion that this was an entrance to the T'ienchen Castle Brian located in the mountains some fifty kilometers to the north.

Rather than attempting to capture the castle complex, the SLDF established an orbital overwatch of the known entrances while the ground forces consolidated control over the coastal provinces of Shandong and Jangsu, liberating Shanghai on 29 May after skirmishing with militia at Nanjing.

HOKKAIDO AND KYUSHU

Japan was a major target for the SLDF, being home to several major arms manufacturers as well as the Takayama Castle Brian. Two armies were assigned the operation, the Eighth and Twentieth. The original plan had been for both to land in Hokkaido and advance

southwards though the country, but last-second intelligence of troop concentrations on the island of Kyushu prompted the diversion of the Twentieth there and the new plan called for the forces to converge on the fortress from north and south.

Hokkaido and Northern Honshu

The landings in the wilds of Hokkaido were, as expected, uncontested. By the end of the first day of operations, the SLDF positions were secure and divisions were pushing south to liberate Sapporo. They did so on 2 February, small-scale clashes with security services and moderate levels of civil unrest being the only challenges to their presence. News soon reached them that Amaris agents were operating in the area but had headed south towards Hakodate shortly after the landings began. The Twenty-Eighth Light Horse spearheaded the pursuit, closely followed by the 194th Mechanized Infantry Division. At Hakodate they gained intelligence that the Amaris troops were heading for the crossings to Honshu, the Seikan Tunnel and the Tsurugu Straits causeway. The pursuit became a race, the SLDF fearing the Terran forces intended to sabotage the crossing. As the Light Horse approached, their fears were realized—demolition charges dropped the first several kilometers of the causeway—but the tunnel appeared intact. What followed was a madcap dash through the 54-km tunnel, light 'Mechs and armored cars racing to overtake the saboteurs. Firefights erupted at several points, but the 'Mechs pushed through, leaving infantry and combat engineers to deal with the obstructions. Emerging into northern Honshu daylight, the Twenty-Eighth shattered the last Amaris position moments before they could detonate charges placed around the tunnel mouth. A painstaking examination of the tunnels over the next two days removed the remaining booby traps and on 5 February, the Seikan Tunnel was declared open to SLDF traffic.

The Eighth pushed south, taking control of Aomori early on 7 February and Akita a day later. By 19 February advance troops were probing Sendai, where they faced their first significant military challenge. Local militias proved an effective roadblock to the scouts despite their lack of experience and poor equipment. The advance southward was delayed three days while assault troops moved down through Morioka, Kitakami and Ichinoseki. Even when faced with this much larger force, the militias refused to withdraw and staged a dogged defense along the line of the Hirose River. These defenses were eventually breached on 23 February, but the militia withdrew to a secondary defensive line along the Natori River, anchored at their eastern end by the city's small spaceport. It took until 1 March for this defensive line to be broken, SLDF artillery spotters on Mount Taihoku calling in accurate fire on the militia positions. The militia tried to withdraw again, only to find the SLDF had managed to secure the heights of Mount Agatro and establish their own blocking force at Iwanuma. The militia made a single futile—and bloody—attempt to break through the Star League lines, but on 3 March finally agreed to surrender. In their subsequent debrief by the SLDF, the militia, whose determination had earned them considerable respect, revealed the reason for their efforts. Amaris propaganda had portrayed the returning SLDF troops as vengeance-hungry barbarians, whose only

desire was to kill and destroy. The militia sought to buy time for their families to escape the city—hundreds of thousands did, fleeing into the mountains—but their experiences had shown how honorable and restrained the SLDF actually were. Most of the Sendai Militia were later paroled and some served as guides for the SLDF forces. The Eighth established the city as their main HQ on Honshu and set about restoring the damage inflicted in the recent fighting. It would be April before most of the population returned home, by which point several of the SLDF had been pushing south for ten days.

Advancing south though Sugawara and Sakura, the 316th Royal BattleMech Division (the Rio Grande Division) and the 131st BattleMech Division (the Hercules Division) reached Utsonomiya on the outskirts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Region on 2 April. With a population of just under fifty million, it was the largest city on Terra and talking control of it would be a challenge. Two Amaris units were believed to be in the Kanto region, the 197th Amaris Cavaliers and the Seventy-First Amaris Dragoons, but it was unclear if they were in the city and if so, where. With 14,000 square kilometers to search, occupying the city was to be a long and drawn-out process.

Kyushu and Southern Honshu

Rumors of troop concentrations on Kyushu proved correct and Twentieth Army found themselves hot-dropping into a battle raging north of Kagoshima. An Amaris unit, the Fifth Amaris Legionnaires, had been exercising with a local militia force when news of the landings came through. The militia were ordered back to base as the Legionnaires prepared to meet the SLDF, but rather than heeding those orders the militia turned on their erstwhile partners. By the time the units of the 382nd BattleMech Division (the Westmoreland Division) landed on the shores of Kagoshima Bay, both Terran units were bloodied and the melee made it hard to distinguish friend from foe. Dispatching regiments to secure the spaceport at Kirishima and establishing an observation post on Mount Ontake overlooking the coastal plain, the SLDF task force bludgeoned both into submission. In nineteen hours of brutal fighting the Legionnaires were shattered, their remnants isolated on the slopes of Mount Kinpusen, where they would eventually surrender on 4 February. The militia, despite being on the receiving end of the SLDF's intervention, was in much better shape and having eventually been identified as a "friendly" force had withdrawn to Kagoshima's port district.

The militia revealed that a second Amaris unit, the Twenty-Second Amaris Chasseurs, had been based at Kokura Arsenal in Kitakyushu in the far north of the island. Several swift SLDF regiments were dispatched northwards while heavier forces seized Izumi, Oita and Saga. The 300th Dragoon Regiment liberated Nagasaki, a major port and infamous as a target of the atomic bombings in World War II some eight centuries earlier, and many of the towns along the peninsula. Further north, the Amaris troops had left the Arsenal but had dug in around the strategic Shimonoseki crossing to Honshu. Four divisions advanced on their position while two more pushed east to the Aquarius Arcology complex built in the Inland Sea.

The Shimonoseki crossing proved a hard-fought engagement, the light Amaris division having secured the high ground on both sides of the straits and established several rings of fixed defenses and weapon installations. Despite being outnumbered, the Chasseurs beat back numerous attempts to secure the southern approaches to the bridge, also collapsing several tunnels to prevent their use by the SLDF. One undersea tunnel remained operational, but its access points were near those of the bridge and equally well guarded. The contest became a war of attrition, with infantry particularly hard hit, and an engagement expected to last a few days soon turned into several weeks. On 19 March, as the SLDF staged another push up the Kanmonkyo Bridge Expressway, a flanking force was able to push through the southernmost railway tunnel under the straits, believed destroyed by the Chasseurs but reopened by Star League engineers. Striking the rear of the Chasseurs positions on the North Shore, they captured the Amaris command post and with it the detonators for the explosives on the bridge, the enemy's last line of defense. By 22 March only a small pocket of resistance remained in the massive container port.

The arcology, which dominated the Inland Sea end of the straits, proved no less of a challenge despite there being no Amaris troops present. In fact, only a few hundred people were in the installation, but there were thousands of drones. Most of those were dumb robots used for manufacturing, but some were for defense. General Gal Vlasic considered bypassing Aquarius, but with the largest spaceport south of Osaka and vast manufacturing facilities, it was a valuable prize to the SLDF—and one they wanted to deny Amaris' forces. A direct approach to the arcology prompted a hostile response from drones and weapon emplacements. Later attempts employed electronic warfare to degrade the performance of the automated systems, but even so it took a week to gain access to the complex and another ten days to shut down the remaining security systems and allow the platform's use by the SLDF. It proved invaluable in the later stages of the campaign against the bridge, serving as a command center and maintenance yard as well as a port through which supplies flowed from the ships in orbit.

By early May, the Twentieth had pushed through southern Honshu, taking control of Hiroshima, Osaka, Kyoto and Nagoya. They were well placed to strike into the Japanese Alps toward the Castle Brian at Takayama. Recon detachments pushed deep into the mountains, but Twentieth held back from full-scale assault until matters in the east had been resolved and Eighth Army joined them.

Tokyo

Tokyo became a quagmire for the SLDF, its size and population density making it a treacherous battleground. Initial advances into the city had not encountered significant resistance, but as the Eighth sought to cross the Tone River at Sakai they came under attack by elements of the Seventy-First Amaris Dragoons. The Usurper's troops soon pulled back, but they had destroyed over a company of SLDF 'Mechs and vehicles while losing only two of their own. Further clashes in Shiraoka and Kasukabe proved similarly bloody, though here the SLDF inflicted more substantial casualties and the losses were more or less even.

An eastern flanking move through Ushiku captured the Narita spaceport for the SLDF on 19 April. Using that as a base, they pushed into Chiba and along the northern shores of Tokyo Bay. Local militias proved a nuisance and slowed the advance, but on 23 April the eastern thrust linked up with the main advance at Adachi. Thrusts through Edogawa into Sumida Ward gained a foothold across the Arakawa River but were blunted by the 197th Amaris Cavaliers, whose counterattack drove the SLDF back across the river.

On 3 May, a western flanking attack though Sayama, Inagi and Kawaski reached the western shores of Tokyo Bay and completed the encirclement of the city. The port of Yokohama and the Haneda spaceport, the latter jutting out into the bay, soon followed and probes through Shinagawa and Meguro revealed weaknesses in the Amaris troops' defenses. A concerted drive from north, east and west finally overwhelmed the Amaris defenses and the Usurper's troops were driven back into an elongated pocket from Shibuya to the Chiyoda district. Battle raged along the Aoyama Dori and Shinjuku Dori, which formed the northern and southern flanks respectively, and on 27 May a thrust at Shinanomachi split the pocket in two—one centered on Yoyogi Park and the Meiji Shrine at Shibuya and the other around the Imperial Palace in Chiyoda.

Threatening to execute Duke Naruhito, the noble leader of the Japanese District, the Cavaliers sought to bargain their way to freedom from the Chiyoda Pocket. On Kerensky's direct orders

the deal was refused. Rather than execute their most valuable bargaining chip, the Amaris troops murdered Naruhito's nineteen year-old daughter, Meiko, leaving her bloody body to be recovered by the SLDF. In response, SLDF special forces raided the compound during the night of 2 June, swimming the moat while the Cavaliers were distracted by fresh assaults on their defenses. After snatching the duke and his family, the commandoes fought their way clear, killing several members of the Cavaliers' command staff. The Amaris commander, General Reynaud Zahn, was among those injured. Deprived of their leadership and their hostages, the Cavaliers surrendered the next day.

The situation in Shibuya, where the remains of the Seventy-First Dragoons had holed up, was less horrific, though the once-beautiful park and its monuments were now desolation. A lack of food and ammunition hampered the defense, but the Dragoons were determined not to surrender. When news of the surrender at the Imperial Palace reached them, the Dragoons attempted a breakout. The SLDF blocked the move a kilometer north, the streets of Shinjuku becoming the final battleground in Tokyo.

Consolidating their control over the city took another five weeks but in early July Eighth Army resumed its advance though Honshu, one thrust pushing through the Minami (southern) Alps and approaching Nagano from the south, the other striking through Maebashi and Tokamachi to take control of Niigata on the Sea of Japan.



ULAN BATOR

Chosen because of its isolation, the Gobi Desert straddling the Mongolian and Chinese borders was an ideal landing site. Far from any military bases—especially SDS installations—Second and Nineteenth Armies were able to land in a 750-kilometer arc from Erenhot in the east to Ejina in the west, forming up without interference from Amaris troops or local militias. Like Siberia, the weather was harsh but the troops were able to strike out in several directions. The Second, which formed the westerly arm of the landings, sent divisions south into western China and north toward Ulan Bator and Irkutsk. The Nineteenth struck south towards Gansu, Ningxia and Shanxi provinces, heading for Xi'an and Chengdu.

Both forces moved swiftly through the desert, but found scant welcome in the scattered communities. When they arrived in Ulan Bator on 4 February, the reception for the First Jump Infantry Division (the Hellraisers From Heaven) and the Thirty-Ninth Royal BattleMech Division (the Denebola Division) was no warmer than the weather. A pro-Amaris militia proved a thorn in the side for the SLDF, hampering their efforts to advance to Lake Baikal and the trans-Siberia maglev (they would eventually reach the Russian city on 5 March, three days before troops from the Kazakh landings). There were few stand-up fights—and there had been no military resistance to their takeover—but the local inhabitants acted as if this was an occupation rather than liberation, with small-scale terrorist incidents plaguing the Star League force in the weeks after their arrival. Nonetheless, Ulan Bator provided a substantial spaceport—named after Mongolia's best-known figure, Genghis Khan—as well as power and shelter. The SLDF's relationship with the local authorities was chilly, but the soldiers established a more solid relationship with the Buddhist monks of the Gandantegchinien Monastery, who revealed that many of those now living in the city had been Periphery citizens who collaborated with Amaris and traveled to Terra to be part of his new empire. Most were disillusioned with Amaris, but having experienced the Freedom War also had no love for the SLDF. Attempts to foster ties with the community slowly gained traction during March and as spring arrived, so did a slight thawing in the relationship with the local citizenry.

By comparison, the trek southwest by the 159th BattleMech Division (the Wellington Division) and the Ninth Mechanized Infantry Division (the Pride of Puget Sound) brought vast swathes of territory under SLDF influence but little in the way of people, resources or industry. Climbing onto the Tibetan Plateau, they reached Lhasa on 11 March, where they remained until late April, then pushing over the Himalayas and descending into Nepal on 2 May. Throughout their advance they encountered only scattered resistance. That was about to change, as the Kathmandu Valley was the site of a Castle Brian. A single Amaris division, the Second Fusiliers, had taken up residence there, having withdrawn from Dhaka in the early days of the landings. With the fortress's systems at their back, the Fusiliers put up stiff resistance to the arriving Second Army troops, halting their advance at the Manohara River west of Bhaktapur. The spaceport was tantalizingly close, within

sight across the river, but the SLDF divisions lacked the manpower to dislodge the Amaris troops. Instead, both Star League divisions settled into defensive positions, probing the Fusilier positions but otherwise waiting on reinforcements. Those came on 17 June with the arrival of elements of Ninth and Fourteenth Armies, which had grounded at Jaipur.

Western China became a morass of local infighting and the divisions from Nineteenth Army found themselves bogged down. They initially faced little organized resistance, but the regional instability made it difficult to maintain supply lines. DropShips could deliver essential supplies almost anywhere, but there were no stockpiles and the army lived an almost hand-to-mouth existence. Rather than push on to Chengdu, they focused on securing Xi'an, one of the oldest and most celebrated cities in China, whose industry and communication links would serve them well. The first SLDF divisions reached the outskirts of Xi'an on 19 March and were heartened to see vast crowds coming out to greet them. Their relief turned to dismay when it became apparent that the throngs were chained together and had been driven from the city expressly to slow the SLDF advance. Adding to the horror were the vests worn by some in the crowds—explosives that detonated randomly, sowing chaos and carnage. This was the work of the 201st Amaris Lancers, whose reputation for cruelty preceded them. They callously used the city's population as human shields, hampering the SLDF advance and ability to fire at the Lancers while attacking with seeming impunity. The SLDF had little choice but to push forward, and they secured the river crossings and spaceport by 25 March. Crossing into the city, they found a charnel house. Tens of thousands had been killed in cold blood, and many more used as shields. If the horror of innocents being killed in the crossfire wasn't enough, the piles of corpses throughout the city struck at the hearts of the Star League soldiers. They desperately wanted revenge on the Lancers, but couldn't take it without exacerbating the situation. The 201st were eventually pushed from the city on 9 April, but hopes that their ejection would allow airstrikes and orbital artillery to crush the Amaris forces were dashed when the Lancers took more than ten thousand hostages.

The exact casualty figures for Xi'an have never been established, but it is believed a third of the eight million inhabitants were murdered outright or killed when used as human shields. The Lancers would repeat their crimes in other Chinese cities, earning those who survived a prominent place in the Geneva war crimes trials that followed the conflict. The demoralized Nineteenth Army halted in Xi'an, providing disaster relief to the brutalized inhabitants, and would remain there until the summer.

JAIPUR

Like Ulan Bator, the Jaipur landings comprised multiple armies, the Ninth and Fourteenth, intended to take control of a large swathe of territory. Despite their size and population density, the Indian districts were not expected to pose major issues for the SLDF, as only three front-line Amaris units were known to be present—one in Dhaka, one in Mumbai and the other in New Delhi.

The ease of the landings at Jaipur in Rajasthan seemed to support that belief, with no attempts to challenge the landings or the SLDF's initial advance Northward from their LZ at Malpura. Jaipur had been selected as the group's first target for two reasons: Its economic and industrial importance to the region and the presence of a major military training camp that had been helping establish new Hegemony Patriot Divisions. Only a handful of BattleMechs were present in the training grounds, but eleven infantry and armor regiments were undergoing training. Spurred on by *zampolits* and their training officers, trainees from these units staged a bloody and futile defense of the approaches to Jaipur, brushed aside as the SLDF swept into the spaceport complex in Surajpura on 1 February. A succession of defensive lines established further north proved marginally more effective, but only when pressed back to positions along Bhawani Singh Road did the Amaris defenders succeed in stemming the advance of the Star League forces. A flanking attack from the west on 7 February captured the military academy and threatened to roll up the western end of the Terran lines. They withdrew deeper into the city, establishing a defensive line from the railway station to the zoo along Ashok Marg. That position held for another thirty-six hours, but the continuing pressure from the west pushed the forces out of the station district and in the early hours of 9 February the militia withdrew into the Old Town.

The ancient walls proved a major obstacle to the SLDF ground forces, but less so to aerial attacks. Precision bombing missions drove the defenders back from several sections of the wall that the SLDF then broke through. The narrow, winding streets of the Old Town were poorly suited to twenty-eighth century warfare and both armor and 'Mechs were relegated to support roles on the main north-south avenues as infantry waged a bitter street-by-street battle through the residential districts. The victors were never in doubt, but the nineteen-day battle for the city was almost twice as long as expected. On 18 February the last of the militia escaped to the shores of the Man Sagar Lake where, exhausted, they surrendered to the SLDF. A few companies escaped further north, holing up in the sixteenth-century Amber Fort, where they remained besieged by the Star League army for a further four weeks. Hunger and disease eventually prompted a rebellion against their *zampolits*—several of whom were thrown from the ramparts—and the final surrender of the Jaipur forces.

Headed by the 151st Royal BattleMech Division (the Ulysses S. Grant Division) commanded by General Lauren Hayes, elements of Ninth Army advanced north toward New Delhi while Fifteenth BattleMech Division (the Bryant Division) advanced east to Agra. Both faced stiff resistance as they crossed out of Rajasthan, but the opposition wasn't Amaris' troops. Haryana Province and Uttar Pradesh had risen up in revolt. Unfortunately for the SLDF, the insurrection didn't discriminate between SLDF and Amaris forces

and so the troops faced a major peacekeeping operation before they could reach New Delhi and dislodge its defenders, the Twenty-Ninth Amaris Chasseurs. Reaching the city on 10 March, they sparred with the Chasseurs in Gugaon, but the Amaris troops withdrew northwards to the spaceport. Despite air attacks by the SLDF and intense pressure by ground forces, most of the Dragoons began boarding DropShips, leaving a small detachment of troops to screen their withdrawal. Five DropShips boosted away from the port, heading northeast. SLDF fighters shot two down, but the three others escaped, grounding near Isfahan after a sub-orbital hop.

At the same time, the 349th Royal BattleMech Division (the King Henry Division) and five other divisions pushed south through Rajasthan and into Gujarat. They took Surat on 9 March, and two days later were approaching Mumbai. The Eighth Amaris Dragoons staged a forward defense at the Vaitarna River and steadily gave ground until they were backed up against Vasai Creek. They established defensive positions at the Thane and Varsava crossings and demolished the Airoli and Vashi bridges to the south. The Dragoons doggedly maintained their positions for five days, but were eventually forced to give ground in the west that opened the door for the SLDF to cross into Mumbai, driving the Amaris troops steadily southwards, eventually pinning them between the spaceport and Mahim Bay. The Dragoons surrendered, but the SLDF faced a new threat. The city's population, brutalized by the Amaris force, staged a series of violent protests and many wanted to see the Dragoons lynched. When the SLDF prevented this, the city erupted in open revolt.

Though Ninth and Fourteenth Armies didn't yet know it, most of the Indian districts had risen up, with Rajasthan, Gujarat and the Punjab the notable exceptions. To some extent they were throwing off the yoke of Amaris' oppressive regime, but that soon turned to settling old scores and regional rivalries that had been suppressed under the Star League and Amaris' regime. The Indian sub-continent slipped inexorably into civil war.

ASTANA

The central Asian landings in Kazakhstan were in many regards like those in Siberia—to achieve strategic goals rather than to defeat concentrations of Amaris troops. Astana, the first major objective, liberated by the Twenty-Sixth Royal BattleMech Division (the Graham Division) on 3 February, was a major hub for regional commerce and the petrochemicals industry but offered little the SLDF needed for the campaign against Amaris. It did, however, provide a secure base of operations from which the division and its consorts could strike northwards, securing the Trans-Siberia maglev and the Russian trans-Ural territories. Within weeks, their zone of control extended north to Noyabrsk, east to Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk (where they would link up with the Mongolian task force on 8 March) and west to Yekaterinburg, where they met scouts from Eleventh Army on 23 February.

Of more strategic significance was a locale some 800 kilometers to the southwest across the grain farms of the steppes. There, a little to the east of the desiccated remains of the Aral Sea, was Baikonur, Terra's oldest spaceport from which Sputnik 1 and Yuri Gagarin had been sent into orbit. Inherited by the People's Union of Kazakh when the USSR was dissolved in 1991 following the Second Soviet Civil War, Baikonur had grown to become Terra's largest launch center, a position it worked to expand as spaceflight moved into the fusion-powered era. By 2050, it was the principal spaceport for heavy lift operations—other facilities in Asia and the Americas handled passenger launches, but two-thirds of the freight launches and landings passed through Kazakhstan. The importance of the complex waxed and waned in the centuries that followed, but in the twenty-eighth century it remained the largest and busiest spaceport complex. As such, it was a strategic objective for the SLDF, and one Amaris hoped to deny them.

The 101st Jump Infantry Division (the Screaming Eagles) spearheaded the assault on Baikonur, supported by the 173rd BattleMech Division (the New Earth Division) and two mechanized infantry divisions. They pushed into the spaceport complex from the northeast, securing many of the landing pads (including the historic "Gagarin's Start," pad 1/5, part of the city's spaceflight museum) and pushing south to the main shipping hub. Here they came up against the Fourth Amaris Legionnaires, who had been assigned to guard the complex but—grossly outnumbered—settled for slighting it. In a two-day running battle, almost a quarter of the port complex was wrecked before the surviving Amaris troops were driven off toward the Aral Sea, where they were hunted down by the 135th and aerospace strikes. Fortunately, much of the key infrastructure remained intact or was easily repairable, allowing the SLDF to begin using Baikonur on 21 February.

Another detachment of Fourth Army moved south from Kazakhstan, securing Tashkent and Samarkand in the Uzbekistan District, and Ashgabat in Turkmenistan. Two divisions advanced through northern Afghanistan, liberating Kabul on 24 March and reaching Islamabad a week later. Two further divisions, the 166th Mechanized Infantry Division (Red Diamond Division) and the 168th Jump Infantry Division, thrust into Iran. They occupied Tehran on 8 March and reached Isfahan three days later. There they surprised the recently arrived Twenty-Ninth Amaris Chasseurs, overrunning their positions in a bloody ten-hour engagement. Pushing west, they secured Baghdad and Damascus, reaching the Mediterranean Sea on 2 April before pushing north into the Caucasus where they linked up with Seventeenth Army at Baku on 11 April.

SINGAPORE

The city of Ipoh, north of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, was the site of a Castle Brian, but intelligence acquired by the SLDF suggested the nearest Amaris troops, the Nineteenth Amaris Dragoons, were based in Singapore. Rather than simply attacking the Castle

Brian, General Nguyen Huong instead split his forces, sending two divisions to secure the fortress, another to Kuala Lumpur and the remaining three divisions to contain the Amaris force in Singapore.

This containment force comprised the 250th BattleMech Division (the Stalingrad Division), the Twentieth Mechanized Infantry Division and the Sixtieth Jump Infantry Division, all of whom grounded in a compact landing zone near Kulai. They advanced to the Johor Strait, where they found the northern and western causeways demolished and the Dragoons dug in to oppose any crossings. Using jump troops and LAMs, the SLDF battlegroup pressed the defenders, but failed to secure a foothold in the first week of February. Air attacks on the defenders' positions maintained the pressure and destroyed supply stockpiles near the spaceport. Attempts by the Amaris troops to use their own fighters proved disastrous—most were shot down before they could engage the SLDF troops—and the single squadron that survived remained grounded at the spaceport. On 8 February, the same day the Japanese had assaulted the island during the Second World War eight centuries earlier, the SLDF succeeded in establishing a beachhead at Sembawang, slowly pushing the Dragoons back in a blitz of artillery and air strikes. Within forty-eight hours the western half of the island was in SLDF hands but their casualties, particularly in the Twentieth Mechanized Infantry Division, were mounting and the field hospital in Pasir Ris struggled to cope with the influx. By 19 February, the Dragoons were contained between the Singapore River and the harbor, their only avenue of escape being onto the small Sentosa Island. Star League success seemed assured, but what followed turned the SLDF win into a Pyrrhic victory. In the early hours of 20 February, the Dragoons made a successful breakout towards the Changi Spaceport and were only just halted short of the launch complex. They pushed north through Pasir Ris, seeking to ford the strait, and the running battle with the SLDF wrecked much of the district. Among the destroyed buildings was the SLDF hospital, and after hearing that news, the SLDF showed the Dragoons little mercy. The few survivors were imprisoned and later charged with war crimes, but the post-war tribunal ruled the hospital's destruction a horrific accident rather than a war crime and acquitted the defendants.

To the north, Kuala Lumpur had fallen without a shot being fired and the task force was extending its control through the urban areas along the Malaysian coast. At the Castle Brian matters proved more complicated. A Hegemony Patriot division, the Sixteenth, was in residence but proved inept at securing the complex, and by 7 February the SLDF had gained access and controlled most of the facility. By 10 February, the Patriots had been ejected, but pinning them down proved impossible and they fled northwards up the Malay Peninsula, pursued by the 218th BattleMech Division (the Quentin Divisions). They reached Bangkok on 2 March and established defensive positions, but were ejected and destroyed ten days later by the combined Seventh Army.



CONSOLIDATION (JULY 2777-JUNE 2778)

The rest of 2777 and the first half of 2778 was a time of consolidation. Efforts were made to reestablish civilian infrastructure and economies, but with the situation remaining volatile, the SLDF became the *de facto* government and provider of sustenance for substantial portions of the population. This placed a massive strain on the military, still fighting in the east and preparing to expand the conflict to other Terran territories, but the necessity of doing so prompted a major revision of Kerensky's schedule.

In Eastern Europe, Seventeenth Army pushed south into the Caucasus where they linked up with Third Army, and into Turkey and the Balkans. Istanbul was liberated on 11 July after sporadic fighting and Sofia a week later. The SLDF reached Greece in mid-August and by the end of the month had secured Athens. Transylvanian Romania and Hungary proved more challenging, with partisan bands opposing SLDF and pro-Amaris troops alike. They would remain a hotbed of discontent until the final liberation of Terra. The siege of the Sverdlovsk Castle Brian continued through 2777 and finally came to an end on 19 January 2778 after eleven months of sporadic fighting. In the end, the realization that Amaris was doomed ended the resistance, collapsing the morale of the Twenty-First Dragoons and prompting their surrender.

In northern and central Europe, Tenth Army expanded its control to include Denmark and Austria, defeating the pro-Amaris garrison of Vienna on 25 June and seizing Copenhagen and the Øresund Bridge to Malmö on 7 July. Prague and Bratislava followed within days. The other part of the Northern Europe Battlegroup, Fifteenth Army, secured Ireland and Iceland during July, followed by Norway and Sweden in early August. France continued to simmer, but the largest issue here was Fifth Army itself. Angry and frustrated at their losses, with few outlets for their aggression, there was a raft of disciplinary incidents and troubles with civilians that kept the MPs busy throughout 2777. General Merga defused the issue by throwing his troops into a series of exercises to hone them for the assault on North Africa (which would ultimately be abandoned).

To the south, Sixth Army solidified its hold on the central Mediterranean, liberating Sicily in late July and securing Malta and Crete in early August. None had substantial numbers of AEF defenders, though the Greenhaves had ravaged large areas of Sicily, including flattening the HQ of the rival Illician Lancers (who were working with the SLDF). With Spain still unusually quiet, First Army occupied the Balearic Islands as well as Corsica and Sardinia, also landing troops in the Canaries to secure airfields for recon missions across West Africa and over the Atlantic Ocean.

China and India were quagmires for which there was no easy solution. The civil unrest in India required a major policing operation that Nineteenth Army was ill equipped to handle. Restoring order was thus a slow process and it would take until early 2788 to bring the north under control. Much of southern India, including Chennai and the districts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, remained in revolt until after Amaris had been defeated. The coastal provinces of China came under SLDF jurisdiction during the summer of 2777, but gaining control inland proved a slow and arduous process. In the west and central districts, the 201st Lancers perpetrated atrocities that stymied the SLDF and exacerbated civil unrest. The Lancers were finally brought to justice outside Wuhan in November, annihilated almost to the last man. The few survivors were a major focus of the Geneva trials. Despite this, Amaris agents provocateur continued to foment unrest and the SLDF was forced to commit steadily more resources to the region. The difficulty restoring order eventually prompted Kerensky to abandon the efforts (as well as the campaigns in Africa and South America) in favor of finishing the war with Amaris, pushing into North America.

The Asian Castles Brian proved another sticking point for the SLDF. Taking the T'ienchen complex took four months of assaults and thousands of casualties. The Eighth Amaris Fusiliers and the Third Hegemony Patriots refused to capitulate, and Sixteenth Army eventually had to undertake a painstaking clearance operation through the hundreds of miles of tunnels linked to the fortress. Kathmandu remained a stalemate until July when a combined force from Second, Ninth and Fourteenth Armies shattered the defenders and gained control of the fortress. Takayama in Japan proved intractable. Breaching the defenses proved impossible and the Amaris forces there (the Eighth Amaris Legionnaires and the mercenary Warriors of the Dawn) remained buttoned up, staging occasional raids but otherwise willing to wait out the SLDF. The siege of the Castle Brian was still ongoing in the summer of 2778 when Kerensky ordered preparations for the assault on North America to begin,

PREPARATIONS (JULY 2778-JANUARY 2779)

Kerensky had intended securing Africa and South America before moving on Amaris' North American bastion. The bloodbaths in India and China caused him to abandon those operations and to focus on the "main event." The foothold around Tangier and Ceuta would remain the SLDF's only African presence until the end of the war, though the SLDF acted as if plans for the Africa and South America assaults were underway in order to misdirect Amaris' spies in Europe and Asia. So-called "paper divisions" were assembled in Iberia, Italy and Turkey, complete with signal traffic and supply convoys to confuse AEA agents, but most of the troops headed east and north to the jump-off points for the Bering crossing.

Plans to assault North America through the Icelandic and Bering Strait tunnels proved impractical—Amaris had sealed them all—and the focus turned to a ground assault across the Bering Straits, a DropShip assault proving likewise impractical due to the operational North American SDS systems. The transport infrastructure in Siberia proved essential to the build-up, establishing barracks and supply depots across East Asia. Though Kerensky considered an assault in the summer of 2778, the lessons learned by the task forces in Siberia pointed to a winter offensive being more likely to succeed, when the land on both sides of the straits would be frozen. This was of particular importance in Alaska, which did not have the benefit of the SLDF corps of engineers to improve its infrastructure. For their part, Amaris' officers knew where the assault would likely come and used the time to build up the defenses of the Pacific Wall, making ready for the onslaught.



ENDGAME

"The story of the human race is war."

—Sir Winston S. Churchill

"The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. In His way we now put an end to the Evil that has afflicted us for so long."

—Chaplain Captain Wyndham Khatib, quoting Exodus, 15:3

SECRETS

Bless him, Alex is still an optimist. After all these years, after all the funerals and memorials he's attended, after seeing firsthand the hell these assholes have inflicted and after the brutality his entire family had to endure, he still somehow believes in the nobility of Man. And somehow after all these years of getting the shit beat out of them, living on minimal rations, seeing the mangled and bloated bodies of their comrades, their friends and even sometimes their own families lying in the middle of streets and fields, and with only an occasional few weeks of "R&R" in the bombed-out debris of a once-great city to help them relax, he expects every single one of the men and women under his command to share that outlook.

I don't know how he can do it, but he does. He's always had that ability to keep his eyes in the sky. I can't. After a decade and a half of constant war, occupation and reconstruction, after losing well in excess of a million men and women, we can't well punish those same men and women for expressing their emotions in the only way they can any more.

Much as I don't agree, Alex is probably right about keeping the Goons protected until they can be found guilty and hanged publicly. There's a few officers here in the HQ who feel the way I do, and we're taking care of the problem. Zalman's making the rounds of the camps with a couple of JAGs and making quiet personnel changes. We're not going to hang anyone out to dry who doesn't deserve it. These brave men and women have been punished enough in this war; a reprimand and reassignment, or other non-judicial punishments, taken care of at the unit level is more than sufficient to deal with most of the problems. Truscott's going to make sure Alex gets the information he needs to know.

—General Aaron DeChavilier, *Personal Diary*, 17 December 2778

By the dawn of 2779, Europe and Asia—the latter Terra's largest and most heavily populated continent—were largely in SLDF hands, though at a bitter price. The already weakened SLDF armies that landed suffered upwards of thirty percent additional casualties in Europe and Asia, with many whole divisions reduced to the point that they were no longer viable combat organizations. Before looking toward the next stage of Terran liberation, Kerensky disbanded thirteen more divisions, adding their survivors as replacements to the remaining battered and exhausted formations. Tens of thousands of SLDF soldiers, crewmen, spacemen, pilots and MechWarriors were convalescing in field hospitals on Terra alone—many for their fourth or fifth times during the long war against Amaris, and more than half of whom would never be fit to fight again. This, in addition to at least as many SLDF dead, buried in quickly erected military cemeteries near each of the major invasion sites.

The situation among Terra's civilians was no better. Millions of wounded overwhelmed hospitals and clinics across Europe and Asia, where damage done by the invasion, coupled with the vagaries of the Amaris occupation, ruined two continents' infrastructure—including health care and emergency services systems. Refugees left homeless by the fighting packed into sports arenas and malls, while emergency rooms and clinics popped up in school gymnasiums and empty office buildings to treat the millions more injured.

In the middle were the POWs: Tens of thousands of AEAF soldiers, mercenaries, conscripts and Amaris agents taken prisoner. The scene in liberated cities like Moscow and London were mirrors of those on worlds that had been long oppressed by the Amaris Empire. Collaborators (suspected and actual) were dragged out of their homes and beaten—or worse—while members of the Amaris-led government, and especially their HSF and OPD agents, were tortured and executed in public.

Kerensky's armies did what they could to mitigate the damage, but the rest of Terra was still an Amaris fortress, the liberation of which would cost many more lives. Nevertheless, the General ordered his armies to put an end to civilian-on-civilian violence. Moreover, he instructed them to segregate all AEAF prisoners and government officials into specially erected POW camps, where they could be kept safe until the courts could determine their fate. Of course, those orders only concentrated the most heinous war criminals in one place, where exhausted and emotionally scarred SLDF officers regularly looked the other way at abuse perpetrated on prisoners by their own men, as well as civilian authorities allowed to "assist" in the supervision of the prisoners.

When he heard rumors of continued SLDF abuse directed at the POWs, the General instructed the JAG Command to oversee the POW camp system and put an end to the systematic mistreatment of prisoners, to include the prosecution of SLDF personnel for misconduct and criminal activity. Meanwhile, he prepared his armies for the next phase of the Liberation of Terra.

Given the length of the European and Asian campaigns, and the number of casualties suffered, the SLDF command staff had already considered postponing or even eliminating the invasions of Africa and South America in favor of putting a quicker end to the war by securing North America (and by extension, either capturing or killing Stefan Amaris). That possibility became a reality by mid-2778. Though Amaris still had significant forces positioned in Africa and South America, the Usurper's headquarters were based in North America and a larger percentage of Terra's population was living under Amaris' thumb there than in either Africa or South America.

The SLDF began to prepare for this new invasion in the summer and fall of 2778, giving its armies some time to rest and train before transitioning into the new operation. More importantly, this gave technicians and engineers the time they needed to effect repairs on battered equipment now long overdue for retirement. Kerensky's armies could not yet rely on the industrial might of Europe or Western Asia to provide them new equipment, but at least the factories could help them rebuild and refurbish existing tanks, 'Mechs and fighters.

Meanwhile, Kerensky's strategists began planning the operation. North America was a virtual fortress, defended by scores of regular and conscript regiments as well as countless SDS batteries. Amaris' troops had already destroyed the cross-Pacific transit tunnels. And while the SLDF could have staged the same kind of wide-scale orbital insertions that it did when assaulting Europe and Asia, it simply could not afford to suffer those levels of casualties and have any hope of defeating Amaris' North American garrisons.

Instead, Kerensky approved a less risky but potentially much longer multi-stage invasion that would begin with a two-pronged assault. Ground forces in Asia would cross the Bering Strait into North America while a second force staged an orbital insertion into Central America, where far fewer SDS batteries could be brought to bear against the landing force. The two forces would each turn towards Unity City in the Pacific Northwest, where they would rendezvous for the final assault on Stefan Amaris' capital.

But before SLDF troops could land safely in North America, they would have to destroy the many SDS batteries scattered throughout the Pacific to secure reentry corridors to the West Coast. To do this, an invasion force would target Australia and the Philippine Islands before conducting an island-hopping campaign to take them to North America.

Unfortunately, preparations for the invasion would last through the New Year, meaning the invasion of North America across the Bering Strait would begin in the dead of winter amid the bitter cold of the near-Arctic winter climate. Rather than postpone the invasion any further, however, Kerensky decided to press the attack beginning in January 2779.

AUSTRALASIA (JANUARY 2779-MAY 2779)

The Australasian Campaign, though a secondary effort for the SLDF, was nonetheless a critical step in the eventual relief of the North American continent. The most critical goal of the campaign was securing the dozens of SDS batteries scattered throughout the Pacific Ocean that threatened important reentry corridors to North America. It would also keep the SLDF engaged, moving towards a single common goal while keeping Amaris' forces under pressure—in the process freeing hundreds of millions more citizens.

The Indonesian and Philippine island chains represented a significant challenge. While a few islands dominated each chain, both of them contained hundreds of islands, many of which were home to active volcanoes. Numerous SDS batteries were scattered throughout the chains, which—coupled with their mountainous terrain and lush rainforests—made orbital assaults out of the question. Instead, Kerensky assembled every surviving SLDF CAAN battalion and regiment, including the survivors of Carver V's garrison, and assigned them to Seventh, Eighth and Twentieth Armies. Meanwhile, the SLDF dragooned every naval cargo ship in Southeast Asia that it could to make those crossings.

The attack on Australia was far more conventional. Landing zones on the western coast would lead to the rest of the sparsely populated continent, and ultimately to Melbourne with its nearby Castle Brian.

WINNER TAKES ALL

The SLDF's all-out assault on Terra dominated the year 2777. Each of the SLDF's twenty armies and twenty WarShip fleets played some significant role in Operation LIBERATION, though not every division or WarShip was so tasked. Republican holdouts continued to resist the SLDF on dozens of Hegemony worlds, while the SLDF navy actively pursued Amaris' surviving WarShip squadrons across the Terran system worlds. And, of course, the SLDF had completely bypassed four major star systems—Epsilon Indi, Terra Firma, Thorin and Zollikofen—each defended by an SDS as well as significant ground forces.

Those remaining four systems were thorns in General Kerensky's side, but their importance paled in comparison to that of Terra. So while Kerensky focused the majority of his surviving forces on Terra, he kept a watchful eye on those last four systems—Thorin, which lay within a single jump of Terra, in particular. The greatest fear was that Amaris would order SDS drones from these star systems to reinforce Terra. This prompted the deployment of SLDF intelligence-gathering ships into all four systems, as well as the dedication of two "patrol fleets"—one based at Epsilon Eridani and the other at New Earth, each consisting of two bare squadrons of WarShips—that could respond immediately to threats massing in any of the star systems (or, in the worst-case scenario, reinforce the SLDF fleets attacking Terra).

Luckily the worst never occurred, and once Kerensky's fleets secured the Terran star system, Admirals Brandt and Grec focused on one task: Repairing as many WarShips as they could in order to remove the threat posed by the four remaining SDS-defended star systems and their hundreds of drones. The damage inflicted by the Terran drones was terrible. Many of the WarShips that survived could not be repaired and were scuttled or turned into makeshift orbital stations. Admiral Grec prioritized those that were repairable and placed them under the command of Admiral Marina Akkayev-Cameron, whom he tasked with ending the SDS threat once and for all.

The admiral first targeted Thorin, which possessed the largest remaining drone fleet, attacking in November of 2777. Her rapidly thinning Fourth Fleet (once again able to count on the NIKE jammers that provided the SLDF no real advantage at Terra) put an end to the Hegemony's Space Defense Systems once and for all over the course of the next eight months. January of 2778 saw the elimination of Zollikofen's SDS, March the destruction of Terra Firma's fleet, and

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finally, after more than three months of repairs and refits following the Terra Firma action, the elimination of Epsilon Indi's SDS.

Fourth Fleet lost dozens more ships and took more than ten thousand casualties in the process. Still fighting the terrible campaign on Terra, General Kerensky could not afford to spare the ground forces needed to liberate those four worlds. Instead, he tasked what was left of the SLDF Navy to place those worlds under blockade.

Unfortunately, the SLDF's elimination of the four Space Defense Systems prompted resistance movements on each world into action. Assuming Kerensky would soon follow up with a ground assault, resistance cells on all four worlds began campaigns of terror and harassment against the Republican garrisons. Those garrisons responded with oppressive attacks against the resistance cells, who soon realized that no SLDF assistance was coming. Save for a few orbital strikes or fighter attacks against large Republican formations, the Star League had no way of preventing the mass slaughter of the true Hegemony patriots that had held out for so long.

In just a few short weeks, the AEF garrisons accomplished more than they had in almost twelve years of occupation. They destroyed or imprisoned the majority of resistance fighters, while what few remained withdrew even further underground. Emboldened by the SLDF's apparent indifference, the Republican garrisons clamped down even harder on civilian populations. The SLDF Navy retained some presence in each of the systems, and in fact fought several running battles with the remnants of Amaris' own navy—a brief campaign that in reality allowed dozens of DropShips full of Republican and Amaris supporters to escape during late 2778 and early 2779.

What was left of the Republican garrisons on all four worlds ultimately surrendered after the broadcast of Stefan Amaris' own surrender on 29 September 2779. Only a handful of Republican "true believers" continued to resist. The citizens of these four worlds never forgot what they saw as the crime that General Kerensky perpetrated on them, however, and were among the most vocal of Kerensky's detractors in the years leading up to the Exodus—calling for his resignation and imprisonment for crimes against Humanity.

ISLAND HOPPING

In the final months of 2778, Twentieth Army moved from Japan to Taiwan to be ready for its assault on the Philippines. Seventh and Eighth Armies meanwhile took up position in Singapore to strike the Indonesian Islands. All three armies were ready to attack by the first week in January. Prior to that, Seventh Army quietly pushed troops across the Singapore Strait over the last weeks of December, securing numerous ports on the islands of Borneo, Java and Sumatra with CAAN battalions.

The first official attacks occurred on 4 and 5 January 2779. Amaris' forces controlled fifteen major and minor former SLDF bases in Indonesia, but possessed just two regiments of troops, of which four battalions were mercenary (the remaining two were Patriot formations), spread across the islands. The invasion fleets struck all three major islands on 4 January and were virtually unopposed. Republican aerospace fighters launched several nuclear strikes, however, which crippled or destroyed more than two dozen freighters loaded with Twenty-Sixth Infantry Division men and equipment in the South Java Sea.

Eighth Army meanwhile crossed the Java Sea to land on the eastern reaches of Borneo and the island of Sulawesi, and Twentieth Army set out for the Philippines. The defenders on each island retreated to their bases, especially the SDS batteries located on the islands. Though typically positioned on mountaintops, on the Indonesian islands the tallest mountains were volcanoes; on Sumatra the two trios of batteries were instead positioned near Lake Laut Tawar and around Palembang, the latter a major metropolitan area. A dozen more SDS batteries were scattered across Sumatra, Java and the rest of the Indonesian Archipelago, in nearly every case with Republican defenders having built additional "depth" to their positions by creating human shields in and around the batteries.

The SLDF employed special forces teams to take the batteries intact, but resorted to massive assaults when that wasn't possible. Seventh Army suffered heavy casualties in attacking the Lake Laut Tawar facilities, falling prey to hidden attackers and booby traps while moving through the low mountains surrounding the lake. They eventually drove the defenders into the mountains after destroying the batteries with attack after attack from the air. Meanwhile, the rest of the army eliminated the defenders on Java and in quick succession hopped from island to island towards East Timor.

Eighth Army suffered the same difficulties in the mountainous and heavily rainforested island of Borneo. Here, the mercenary Cutler's Vagabonds not only used human shields but also terrorized the population into fighting their battles for them, holding family members hostage or otherwise inducing individuals to conduct terrorist attacks against the SLDF invaders.

Twentieth Army meanwhile poured into the Philippine Archipelago, first targeting the northernmost major island of Luzon—location of one of three groups of SDS batteries (additional batteries were located on Leyte and on Mindanao). The Twentieth suffered some losses prior to landing after weathering two Amaris air strikes while crossing the South China Sea. A handful of fighters broke through in each attack despite heavy SLDF patrols, sinking five transports and damaging several others. Once Twentieth Army landed, it faced just a regiment of assorted defenders, who once again focused their efforts around the SDS batteries while employing human shields to provide for additional defenses.

The three SLDF armies spent an average of six weeks on each of the main islands, though after just a few weeks the Star League forces were largely able to surround and cut off the Republican defenders and retask the bulk of their own troops into new island assaults. By the end of January, invasion forces were on New Guinea and moving on to the

Solomon Islands as well as the Mariana and Marshall islands, each chain possessing a trio or more of SDS batteries as well as orbital tracking and communications stations that Amaris' forces could use to track SLDF WarShips and DropShips in orbit. CAAN units played key roles in every new assault, with CAAN battalions teaming with one or two infantry battalions and a company or two of special forces troops to form landing task forces that could quickly strike enemy emplacements and attempt a rapid knock-out. Where additional efforts were required, aerospace fighter squadrons and airborne troops operating from the Asian mainland or forward bases in the Philippines would strike hard and drop additional forces to reinforce the attacks. DropShips then brought in heavier armor and BattleMech companies and battalions to deliver the final blow.

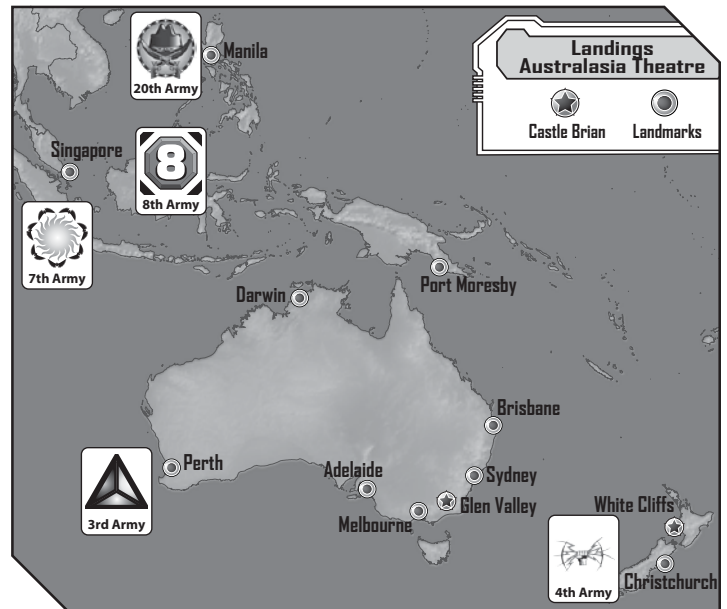
LANDINGS - AUSTRALASIA

Pacific Battlegroup (2 AG)

Sumatra, Indonesia
 7th Army
Borneo, Indonesia
 8th Army
Luzon, Philippines
 20th Army

Australia Battlegroup (4 AG)

Perth, Australia
 3rd Army
Christchurch, New Zealand
 4th Army



By the end of February Seventh Army, supported by just eight battalions of volunteer troops—the remnants of five full brigades of volunteers recruited at the beginning of the war—landed on Hawaii to clear the final SDS batteries that could threaten DropShips inbound for North America's western shores.

AUSTRALIA

The assault on Australia began on 3 January with two regiments of the 123rd Jump Infantry Division landing in the desert mountains of Western Australia amid the cover of night and a brewing storm. Tasked with neutralizing the SDS batteries located in the Hammersley Mountain Range and the surrounding desert highlands—hundreds of kilometers from their landing zones—the two regiments spent three days carefully moving into position before launching their attacks. On the morning of 7 January they struck, quickly overwhelming defenders at five sites and outright destroying two more by calling in select orbital strikes when Republicans at those batteries put up more of a defense than expected.

The last two of the 123rd's surviving regiments, each supported by a battalion of CAAN troops, made combined airborne and naval landings that secured positions a hundred kilometers north and south of Perth (located on Australia's southwestern coast). With the most threatening SDS batteries eliminated, these two positions would serve as landing zones for Third Army the next day. In the course of a few hours, the entirety of LXIX Corps made a quick suborbital hop from India and was on the ground in Western Australia, attacking Perth. Meanwhile, General Jack Lucas waited patiently until LXIX Corps could open up additional landing zones on the continent for the rest of his Third Army.

The 205th Division (the Alamo Division) pushed directly east from its initial grounding points just south of Perth, passing through the Dundas region in just half a day and pushing on down Australia's southern coast, facing little organized opposition

as it raced along at full speed. Inspired by the 205th's eastbound march, General Lucas ordered the 2537th Jump Infantry Regiment, supported by a battalion of CAAN troops and a mixed battalion of LAMs and scout 'Mechs, to stage a landing well in advance of the 205th, just outside Adelaide—a city within easy striking distance of Melbourne. Their intent was to secure landing zones for XVII Corps, which would allow the 205th to focus its energies on Australia's inland.

The 2537th-led task force quickly secured Adelaide's outskirts, but faced counterattack before they could take possession of the whole city. The defending Republicans had positioned elements to the east of Adelaide on the Murray River, where they could easily respond to SLDF attacks anywhere between Adelaide and Melbourne. The Amaris force, led by the second battalion of the 53rd Amaris Fusiliers, cut into the SLDF lines, isolating and destroying the southeasternmost companies before wading into the rest of the 2537th. Unequipped to fend off heavy BattleMechs and armor, especially those supported by local Republican fighters, the SLDF forces retreated into the city. This did little to stop the Amaris troops, who simply demolished anything in their way. The 2537th made a stand in the city center, but a series of terrorist attacks against their positions prevented them from holding Adelaide; less than a third of the task force retreated successfully into the sea, mostly on dragooned civilian ships.

The 205th Division continued at breakneck speed in its 2,600-kilometer advance across Australia's south coast, reaching Adelaide forty hours later with two mixed regiments of its fastest elements to crush the 53rd Amaris Fusiliers. Those forward elements then spread out as the remainder of the division arrived. The 205th Division secured drop zones for XVII Corps and scouted the wide plains to the east. XVII Corps finally landed on 9 January, having



been given the monumental task of securing Melbourne, cutting off the Glen Valley Castle Brian located some 250 kilometers east-northeast of the city, and then eliminating the SDS batteries surrounding that fortification—all of which lay deep in the heart of the Great Dividing Range of mountains.

At the same time, XXXIII Corps secured a foothold on Australia's northern coast near Darwin and began pushing inland. LXVI Corps likewise struck on 9 January, making combined CAA and airborne landings north of Brisbane; this assault succeeded where the similar Adelaide assault failed. Over the next ten days, LXIV Corps pushed out from its initial landing zone to strike the SDS batteries located in the northern reaches of the Great Dividing Range.

With the bulk of the island continent's civilization focused on its coastal regions—only the population of the New South Wales and Victoria districts in southeastern Australia extended significantly inland—Third Army's campaign was one of brief but intense battles, followed by mad dashes to the next objective. Inland, General Lucas's troops found a desert region that Amaris had largely ignored; throughout more than decade of occupation, the Republicans permanently stationed no troops within Australia's interior, instead punishing those Aboriginal and other Outback settlements that failed to show the appropriate respect by conducting occasional raids on them.

XVII and LXVI Corps both pushed hard towards Australia's southeast corner, the former facing concerted defenses in Melbourne as well as the Castle Brian and SDS battery garrisons, who had already blown passes and destroyed the easiest approaches. Once SLDF fighter squadrons established operating bases in Adelaide and Brisbane in the last week of January, Third Army began to make better headway; the bulk of the ground forces concentrated on the coastal regions, liberating Melbourne and Sydney by the final week of the month and linking up in Canberra by 30 January.

In the mountains, Third Army relied on the 123rd Jump Infantry Division, reinforced by four battalions of highly mobile 'Mechs and vehicles pulled from throughout XVII Corps, to eliminate the Amaris defenses. The southeast Australian SDS batteries were silenced by the beginning of February through a combination of airborne assaults and concentrated fighter-bomber attacks (those in the northeast were similarly captured or destroyed by LXVI Corps).

The Castle Brian would take much longer to crack, however. Naval bombardment of the Castle began as soon as the SDS batteries were eliminated, ending only when its commander surrendered after two weeks of constant battering. In the meantime, Fourth Army—reduced to little more than a single corps after the long Hegemony campaign and initial landings on Terra—hopped across the Tasman Sea to liberate New Zealand.

Just a battalion of Republican regulars, plus Patriots, were responsible for the two islands, with the majority headquartered in and around the White Cliffs Castle Brian, some sixty kilometers from Christchurch. Fourth Army focused first on eliminating New Zealand's SDS batteries before raining hell down on the Castle Brian as the bulk of the corps swept the two islands of the handful of Amaris forces that simply could not find easy cover from the SLDF assaults. Sergeant Ginder Norstunford, a non-commissioned officer of the AEAF's 7184th Patriot Battalion, surrendered the Castle Brian just two days into the bombardment; after leading a mutiny of Terran citizens pressed into Patriot service and killing their Rim Worlds officers, the sergeant spent hours attempting to signal their surrender until an SLDF radio operator finally heard it during one of the lulls in bombardment.

GOLD COAST

Third Army began wrapping up matters on the Australian continent by mid-February, providing its men and women a couple of weeks of R&R before looking towards their next assignment: Landfall on North America's western shores. With the Australasia campaign winding down and most of the Pacific Ocean cleared of SDS batteries, Kerensky could finally bring in additional troops to help speed the end of the war. With army groups steadily working their way towards Unity City from Alaska and Mexico, Third Army would make landfall in the California district's so-called Gold Coast.

Before embarking on that task, Third Army underwent a shakeup. General Kerensky personally relieved a noticeably exhausted General Jack Lucas of command, reassigning him to the SLDF command group and granting him convalescent leave to his homeworld of New Earth. After more than a decade of accepting and completing some of the riskiest invasion assignments, many of Third Army's veterans were suffering from various physiological and mental infirmities due entirely to this incredible operations tempo. Kerensky needed someone fresh who could lead the army just a little bit farther through the teeth of the Amaris tiger, and promoted Major General Bart Gaffey, deputy commander of Fourth Army (and former Third Army officer) into the role.

General Gaffey had a mere two weeks to prepare his army for its next operation, which would launch in the second week of March.

NORTH AMERICAN LANDINGS (JANUARY 2779-JUNE 2779)

Every bit of intelligence gathered from orbit, from scouts already on the ground and from resistance groups continuing to harass the Republican occupation force told General Kerensky that the campaign to liberate North America would be the most difficult and bloody yet. The Usurper's forces controlled three Castles Brian (the fourth North American Castle Brian, Mount Baker, located just outside of Unity City and which served as a secondary headquarters for the SLDF, was all but destroyed in the months after the Coup by repeated nuclear and orbital strikes). They also controlled hundreds of lesser bases and fortresses across the continent.

Given the tremendous defenses still active in North America, and especially the SDS batteries and fortifications that surrounded Unity City in expanding concentric circles with radii measuring in the hundreds of kilometers, a direct assault on the former seat of the Star League was impossible—or at the very least would result in more SLDF casualties than Kerensky's armies could sustain. Kerensky instead approved a plan that traded time for lower casualty and materiel losses. It began with a two-pronged approach in which SLDF army groups would land in the far northern and southern reaches of the continent. Additional landings would take place once the Pacific had been cleared and after the European armies staged a jump across the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap onto Canada's Labrador coast.

CONFESSION

We had to relieve Jack Lucas today. It wasn't my choice, but we had to.

Throughout CHIEFTAIN, we'd all been hearing rumors coming out of Third Army's AoR. Probably all the way back to Errai, but definitely after Northwind and Lockdale. No better or worse than any other army, of course, but the occasional whisper of POWs not being provided full rations, or appropriate facilities, or stories of Jack's outbursts at civilian leaders and even some of his own officers. A few of these turned into official complaints, but the [Inspector General investigators] cleared them all long before they ever came up to my level. This is a war, after all, and when you don't have enough food or facilities for your own men, you can't be expected to provide better for POWs.

My favorite was the complaint lodged by some damned civilian aid agency. Of course their particular version of the story was very different from what really happened, but on two separate occasions they claimed they were fired upon by Third Army. As a matter of fact they were, but they failed to indicate that in the first instance their convoy was stopped at a critical intersection during a Goon attack. Well, their trucks were blocking Jack's guys from counter-ing, so Jack's guys took out two trucks, *after* giving their drivers the time to clear out, and rolled through to hit the Goons. The second instance occurred when one of their convoys tried to roll through a roadblock without stopping and presenting ID. Of course they were fired on!

The fight for Terra has been hard on us all, including Third Army and Jack himself. During their ops in the Middle East, and then Australia, some Third Army personnel let their emotions get the best of them. Hard evidence of five different massacres of Goons and HSF/OPD agents by Third Army members finally made their way up to the High Command. Unfortunately, Jack knew and didn't do a thing about it other than slap some wrists and give a few more talks to his army. As soon as Alex heard that, he blew his top.

So Jack had to go. Officially, he's reassigned to [the] Planning and Strategy [Sub-command]. Unofficially, I don't think Alex will ever give him anything to do again. I hate to lose him. I don't think we had a better army commander in the fight. Bart [Gaffey] is good. [He] used to be Jack's Chief of Staff back during the Rim Worlds campaign, so at least he knows the army. I don't know what will happen to Jack, though. He deserves better.

—General Aaron DeChavilier, *Personal Diary*, 12 February 2779

LANDINGS - NORTH AMERICA

Northern Coast Battlegroup (15 AG)

Seward, Alaska
11th Army
Anchorage, Alaska
17th Army

Northern Inland Battlegroup (20 AG)

Seward, Alaska
12th Army
Fairbanks, Alaska
13th Army
Fairbanks, Alaska
16th Army

Mexico Battlegroup (21 AG)

Coatzacoalcas, Mexico
9th Army
Guadalajara, Mexico
14th Army

Southeast Battlegroup (22 AG)

Jacksonville, Florida
1st Army
Charleston, South Carolina
6th Army

Northeast Battlegroup (17 AG)

Long Island, New York
10th Army
Halifax, Nova Scotia
15th Army

California Battlegroup (4 AG)

Los Angeles, California
3rd Army
Honolulu, Hawai'i
4th Army

The northern assault would bring a full army group across the Bering Strait. Amaris' troops had already destroyed the crossing bridges that connected Asia and North America via maglev across the strait, as well as the undersea tunnels that similarly linked the two continents. On the other hand, neither of those approaches would have been particularly useful in moving an assault force across without bottling them up for Amaris' troops to mow down. This northern assault instead used a combination of airborne and seaborne landings to secure footholds on the continent, enough to bring in a true invasion force by DropShip.

Twelfth Army, already positioned in Siberia, traveled east while Eleventh Army moved up from central Asia, the two linking up in

Chukotka in October 2778 for their strike across the Bering Strait. Behind them, the remainder of Fifteenth and Twentieth Army Groups trained in the Siberian wastes to prepare them for combat in the dead of winter.

Meanwhile, Twenty-First Army Group wrapped up their operations on the Indian sub-continent. From staging areas there, their invasion force loaded into DropShips and followed a course that kept them out of the line of fire of as many Pacific Ocean SDS batteries as possible as they boosted halfway across the planet. They would land in southern Mexico, where only a handful of SDS batteries on the narrow subcontinent could possibly threaten the invasion force. Fourth Army Group, currently finishing up operations in Australasia, would eventually make landings on North America's west coast, but could divert south if the Twenty-First needed reinforcements.

In Europe, Seventeenth Army Group would target Iceland and then make the jump to Greenland—each of which possessed only minimal garrisons—as Twenty-Second Army Group prepared for a far riskier cross-Atlantic strike. Neither of these secondary invasions would begin before spring, however, by which time Kerensky hoped his SLDF armies in North America would have drawn the majority of defenders from the east coast.

HARSH ALASKA

Operation ANCHORHEAD, the invasion of North America across the Bering Strait, was originally scheduled for 7 January, but harsh weather conditions, especially high winds and rough seas, prevented the SLDF from making landings by air or sea for more than a week. SLDF scouts, having infiltrated the Alaska District months earlier, hunkered down in temporary shelters erected just after the New Year until weather forecasts finally called for a long enough break in the storms on 15 January to begin the invasion. These scouts marked nineteen landing zones to be used by SLDF airborne troops—marker beacons for two more failed in the harsh -20C environs, while scouts aborted marking five other locations because of the presence of Republican coastal patrols in this remote region.

The invasion began at 0330 local time with the touchdown of a regiment each of troops from the Ninth Jump Infantry and the 322nd BattleMech divisions, supported by three battalions of jump-capable 'Mechs that sailed across the Bering Sea on the decks of cargo ships and fishing trawlers. These initial strike forces, which landed at positions up and down the western face of Alaska's Seward Peninsula, were further supported by three full aerospace regiments, which flew a combined total of more than six hundred sorties that day intercepting Amaris fighters and ground forces that tried to push the invasion back into the sea.

Amaris had a full BattleMech regiment, the 88th Amaris Fusiliers, stationed on the peninsula, backed up by a brigade of armor and infantry. They were all alerted to the landing within an hour and mobilized soon thereafter, with the first engagements met by 0630. Amaris, too, possessed a strong fighter presence

in Alaska, but only two wings on the peninsula itself; these fighters accounted well for themselves, eliminating five of the initial landing forces in concert with their ground-bound brethren. They were overwhelmed by the SLDF's own air superiority, however, and even after additional Republican fighter squadrons from elsewhere in Alaska added their firepower to the fight, the defenders could not turn back the Star League landing.

Starting at dawn, SLDF engineering companies arrived on-shore to transform the Alaskan ice sheets and frozen tundra into makeshift landing fields for the fleet of aerodyne DropShips that would transport the bulk of Eleventh and Twelfth Armies' armor and infantry onto the continent. (The use of spheroid DropShips was ruled out, because of fear of the Alaskan SDS defenses and the lack of suitable landing zones—the spheroids could technically land on the ice or permafrost, but their engines would ruin the landing zones, into which their landing gear would likely sink and be frozen.)

Hundreds of DropShip sorties were needed, with the DropShips themselves flying at wavetop altitudes to avoid SDS fire. The first landing zones were opened by 1130, but after half a day of landings and takeoffs most deteriorated—with one DropShip getting mired in the icy runway. Some BattleMechs arrived by DropShip—primarily *Leopard*-class transports—but the majority would have to arrive either by heavy ocean transport or via the massive spheroid 'Mech carriers, both of which required the capture of dedicated sea or DropShip port facilities.

For the first two weeks, the two SLDF armies slowly built their strength in Alaska. Armor, supported by what few 'Mechs had made the crossing, were their primary weapons—even equipped for the bitter cold, most of the SLDF infantry could not venture far away from their temporary camps without their logistics trains available to provide them shelter from the deadly near-Arctic environment. Moreover, powerful storms whipped up unexpectedly, postponing further landings for hours or days at a time. During that time, the SLDF managed only minimal expansion of their foothold on the Seward Peninsula, where they typically traded shots at range with Amaris troops. The two armies pushed towards Nome, but the combination of weather, difficult terrain and inferior position prevented

CASTLES BRIAN OF AUSTRALASIA AND THE AMERICAS

Australasia

Glen Valley, Australia
White Cliffs, New Zealand

North America

Hilton Head, South Carolina
Gunnison, Colorado
Tacoma, Washington
Port Alfred, Quebec

South America

Manaus, Brazil (Amazonia Administrative District)
Curitiba, Brazil (Parana Administrative District)
Tinogasta, Argentina



THE ICEMAN

Dmitri “Icy Bart” Gutronov retired as a Master Sergeant from the SLDF Reserve just two months before the Coup after serving more than half of his twenty-five year career stationed in Alaska. There, he was a part of the 2212th Special Forces Battalion, a unit tasked with a unique mission: Search and rescue. While the men and women assigned to the battalion also served in OpFor roles or carried out espionage and sabotage missions, their primary role was to search for and rescue SLDF personnel trapped behind enemy lines or stranded in remote regions. Every active SLDF army possessed at least one of these units, while similar reserve platoons, companies and battalions scattered across the Hegemony meant there were always some of these highly skilled operators available to help rescue lost and stranded civilians.

While a part of the 2212th, Gutronov specialized in Alpine and Arctic operations that took him to each of Terra’s continents several times, but he worked primarily in the wilds of Alaska and Siberia, rescuing dozens of lost and stranded amateur explorers every year. After his retirement, he moved to his ancestral homeland of Siberia, falling back on his training after the Coup and disappearing into the Siberian steppes. He never touched his retirement to avoid leaving an electronic trail—a prescient move, as HSF agents tracked down and imprisoned or killed tens of thousands of SLDF veterans in this way.

Gutronov lived in anonymity among the scattered peoples of Siberia throughout the Occupation of Terra, herding and trading his service as a skilled handyman to survive. Nevertheless, he also pursued an active one-man resistance campaign, randomly sabotaging communications or transportation lines, or even ambushing isolated convoys. He would regularly travel hundreds of kilometers from his home to stage these attacks, and almost always did so solo. After his attacks, he regularly combed through the rubble and took what equipment and supplies he needed, leaving the rest to be found by local resistance fighters or civilians. Within the HSF and AEA intelligence circles, he was known only as “the Iceman,” given that the few times surveillance caught sight of him he was literally seen fading into the snow and ice.

No one knew his true identity until after Kerensky’s landings, when a former 2212th officer,

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the SLDF from capturing the coastal city, even with aerial superiority on their side. They did, however, expand further east and north, which proved a prescient move as Amaris ordered a series of nuclear strikes on SLDF landing zones in the final weeks of January. The four strikes that penetrated the air cover each destroyed a landing zone and wiped out thousands of SLDF troops, in the process either destroying or seriously damaging almost two dozen DropShips.

Star League units pushing east broke off of the Seward Peninsula by the end of the month and, after moving more than a hundred kilometers inland, were able to open up several more landing zones while the forces still on the peninsula focused their efforts on Nome. They finally pushed the Republicans out of the city and off the peninsula by the second week of February, but not before destroying Nome’s seaport and leaving the spaceport in ruins. What was left of the spaceport, however, was enough ferrocrete to safely land spheroid DropShips and thus bring in heavy ‘Mech forces.

The steadily growing SLDF force in Alaska finally began moving in mid-February. Special forces and dedicated mountain troops had already dealt with the Alaskan polar defense SDS batteries while the remainder of Eleventh and Twelfth Armies pushed through the icy and mountainous wilderness, often stopping for days at a time to let a storm blow past. Eleventh Army moved to the southeast, with the ultimate goal of moving down North America’s west coast. Meanwhile, Twelfth Army pushed inland to the east, reaching Fairbanks by the end of the month with a mixed armor and BattleMech regiment. They caught the garrison there almost entirely by surprise—Republican reconnaissance flights had picked up Twelfth Army in Alaska’s interior but missed the force that was moving (relatively) rapidly through the thick snows and windswept wastes.

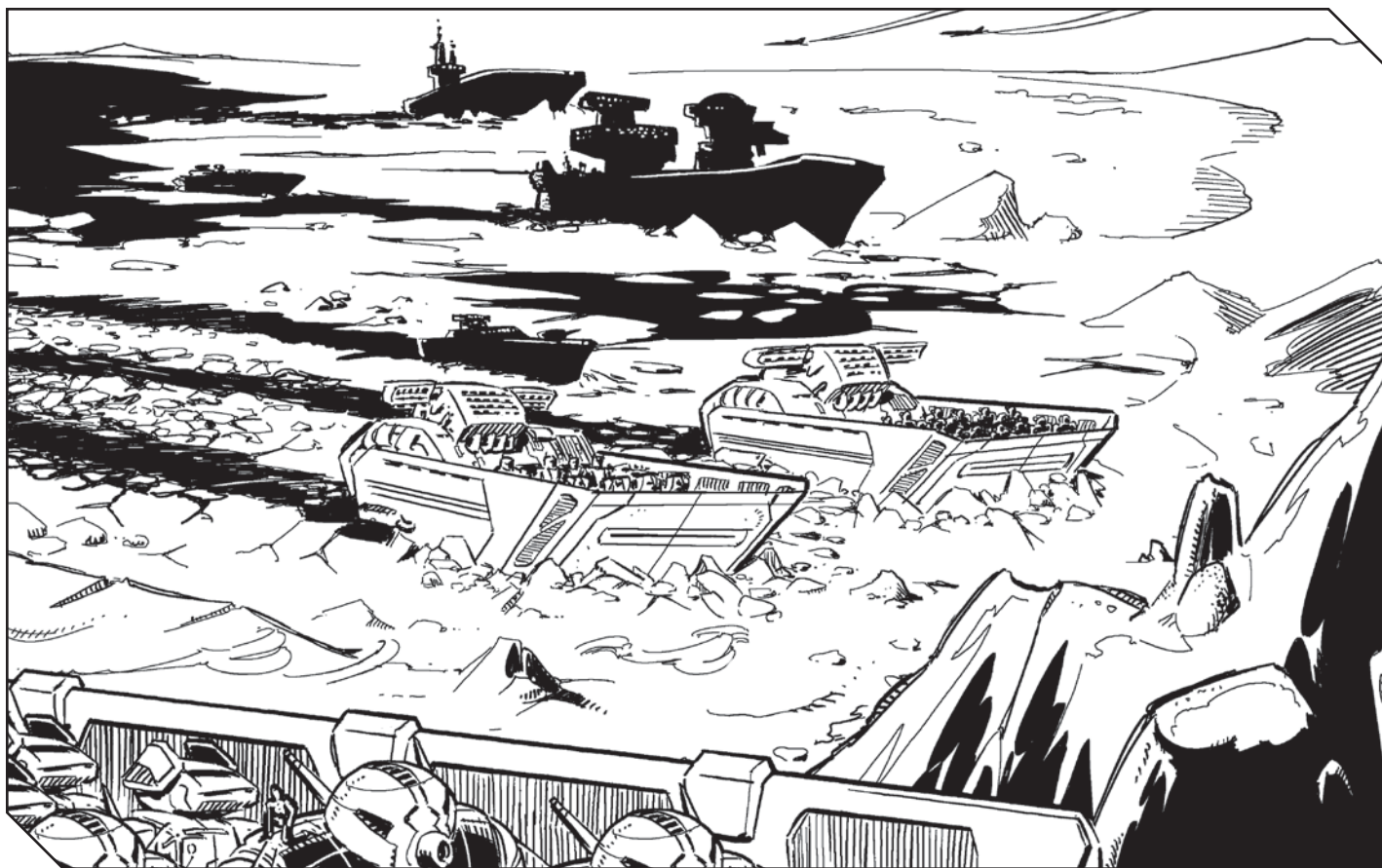
The capture of Fairbanks was the turning point of the Alaskan campaign, and allowed the SLDF—which was struggling to move two army groups onto the continent—a true foothold and a northern base of operations. Scores of DropShips made multiple flights in and out of the city on a daily basis (or as weather allowed), transporting the bulk of the two army groups into the city; they also picked up the many companies and battalions strung along the thousand-kilometer stretch between the original landing zones and Fairbanks and moved them into the city.

With Twelfth Army leading the way, Twentieth Army Group moved southeast from Fairbanks along the Tanana River, which ultimately brought it into the Canadian Yukon district. Meanwhile, Eleventh Army pushed generally south across the frozen wilderness and, after finding passage through the Alaskan Range, reached Anchorage a week after Seventeenth Army seized it in a bold combined airborne and seaborne assault. The two armies pressed on from there, relying heavily on Pathfinder units make their way through the Alaskan mountains; the heavier forces then leapfrogged ahead via DropShip once suitable new landing zones could be either captured or set up.

By mid-March, the two army groups were officially moving southwest along the Alaskan coast and through British Columbia, having spent three long months battling the terrain and weather far more than Amaris troops. Indeed, for the first time in the Terran campaign, the SLDF had sustained more environmental casualties than those inflicted in combat.

MEXICAN LANDING

As Fifteenth and Twentieth Army Groups fought the bitter cold and Amaris’ forces in Alaska, Twenty-First Army Group targeted Mexico’s southernmost region. There, the continental landmass was barely two hundred kilometers wide. Though this meant a more than five thousand kilometer march north to Unity City for Twenty-First Army Group, the narrow landmass meant fewer SDS batteries that could target inbound DropShips. Mexico (and all of Central America) also possessed a strong resistance movement that could provide support to the landing armies. Just as in Alaska, the SLDF would have to



cross rugged terrain and face severe weather, albeit at far more moderate temperatures than their comrades to the north.

As with the Alaskan invasion, the first troops to land in Mexico were special forces teams that infiltrated by sea in November of 2778, their task to contact the resistance cells operating in the Mexican mountains and deserts. In concert with those resistance cells, they would scout out and designate landing zones while disabling the nearby SDS batteries. With more than a month to prepare, the assault and LZ teams were in place and ready to go just after the New Year. Hegemony Security Forces in Oaxaca discovered one of the teams on 1 January, who fought a running battle in the city that left the entire team dead or critically wounded. Worried this would bring too much attention to the region, Kerensky ordered immediate reconnaissance raids and aerial attacks on targets in Africa and South America, hoping to convince the Republicans that SLDF landings on those continents were forthcoming.

The Oaxaca action did bring some additional HSF attention to Mexico and Central America—regions with a historically active independent streak—but no additional military forces. Nevertheless, the heavier HSF presence made it more difficult for the SLDF teams to move out and stage their pre-landing attacks. HSF officers stumbled onto two more teams, who quickly and quietly eliminated the Amaris agents before carrying out their assignments on 5 and 6 January. They disabled four of the SDS batteries that could directly oppose the invasion, which came just after midnight on 7 January. The 245th BattleMech Division (the Marne Division) landed on the plains south of Coatzacoalcos in the Veracruz district, though only after weathering fire from SDS batteries to the east and fighter interceptors that killed nearly a brigade of troops. The 151st Royal BattleMech Division (the Ulysses S. Grant Division) made more successful landings along the coast directly south of the 245th, and pushed across the foothills to the north to help support their weakened comrades as additional Ninth Army landings diverted west to alternate zones near Acapulco until the SDS batteries could be silenced.

Lieutenant General Taz Ang (whom Gutronov had known a decade and a half earlier as a lieutenant) knocked on his door and asked for his help in planning and conducting the Alaskan campaign. The former Master Sergeant spent months preparing SLDF special forces troops for the campaign ahead. He trained them for infiltration, scouting and anti-SDS missions in the Arctic conditions, and even led them across the Bering Strait. He remained with the SLDF throughout the Alaskan campaign as a planner and their lead scout, his actions earning him the Star League Medal of Valor and two Hegemony Medals, before retiring back to his Siberian cabin after the capture of Unity City.

—Peter Martell, *Unsung Heroes of the Occupation*, Far Star Media, 2794

The 245th struck east to end the SDS threats and block any potential counterattacks from Central and South America. Meanwhile, the 151st pushed west along the coast and positioned itself to strike into the heart of Mexico—and its capital, Mexico City. Once the 245th Division eliminated the SDS batteries, the remainder of Ninth Army arrived at the two original landing zones and, after some reorganization, moved west in two corps formations along the Caribbean and Pacific coastlines. The 151st's assault through the mountains and onto the plateau containing Mexico City came early in the third week of January. Rather than put up a direct fight, the defenders sabotaged every approach they could, cutting power and other services in the overcrowded metropolitan area before withdrawing to let the SLDF deal with the masses.

Outside of the city, Amaris' forces turned to the very guerrilla tactics the resistance had used against them for so long, but on a far grander scale. They directly attacked isolated companies and battalions, and harassed stronger forces, before cutting bridges, destroying roadways and blocking passes behind them. They continued their delaying tactics, using the members of the 44th Patriot Regiment recruited from throughout the region to help them stage and conduct their attacks.

Fourteenth Army, waiting on the final SDS batteries to be cleared out of the Pacific Ocean, had yet to enter the North American battle. In early February, the army staged a limited assault into Mexico. The 106th Royal Jump Infantry Division landed near Guadalajara (northwest of Mexico City) and moved to intercept the withdrawing Amaris troops. The battle was joined near Celaya, and lasted less than an hour. The 106th then turned back to the northwest to secure Guadalajara and Republican defenses in the Sierra Madres overlooking the city.

Their work allowed the rest of Fourteenth Army to stage simultaneous landings on the Baja Peninsula and in the Sonora district as Ninth Army continued to push north through central Mexico. Amaris fighters and quick reaction forces stationed in California, Arizona and along the Rio Grande staged continuous attacks against the advancing SLDF armies, briefly halting Fourteenth Army's advance along the narrow Baja and western Mexico shores. They were unable to stop Ninth Army from pushing through Mexico's expansive northern deserts.

NEW LANDINGS

March of 2779 saw the Star League Defense Forces make several more landings on the North American continent. The presence of SLDF armies in Alaska and Mexico prompted Amaris himself to redeploy most Republican forces from the east coast to British Columbia and to the Mexican border. Even after Fifteenth Army struck all-but-undefended Iceland and Greenland in February, just a single Amaris division remained stationed on the eastern seaboard. This prompted First and Tenth Armies to make coordinated strikes in March—the former hitting Florida by way of the Azores and Bermuda, the latter landing on Long Island. Meanwhile, Fifteenth Army pressed on to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Both Ninth and Fourteenth Armies in Mexico pushed hard to the border. Ninth Army branched east somewhat to cross the Rio Grande into Texas to relieve pressure on First Army as it moved off the Florida Peninsula and headed west along the Gulf of Mexico. Ninth Army encountered heavy resistance around Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Houston, while Republican forces attacked south from Charleston to slow First Army. The two SLDF armies nonetheless linked up north of New Orleans by mid-month, allowing Ninth Army to turn back westward and speed into California while First Army looked north and northwest, creeping up the Atlantic Coast and into the Mississippi River Basin.

Tenth Army meanwhile focused its energies on pushing west, around the southern side of the Great Lakes, while just two divisions moved south along the Atlantic Coast to meet First Army in Virginia late in the month. The two armies then turned directly west to cross the Appalachian Mountains. The 138th BattleMech Division (the Stonewall Jackson Division) encountered heavy Amaris opposition in the mountains above Charlottesville and, already heavily understrength after the long Hegemony Campaign, was all but destroyed by a combination of the Eighty-Fourth and Eighty-Ninth Amaris Dragoons regiments, supported by several Patriot battalions, less than a hundred kilometers from where its namesake died nine centuries earlier.

The Amaris Dragoons quickly left their ambush positions and pressed north towards Cumberland to strike again at First Army forces pressing through the mountain passes there. Though not as successful as at Charlottesville, the Republicans accounted well for themselves and largely stopped the SLDF advance. Counterattacks by the Seventieth Infantry Division, supported by the 114th Hussar Regiment, dislodged the Dragoons, which sacrificed the Patriot forces to cover their withdrawal from Cumberland and retreat deeper into the mountains.

Both First and Tenth Armies spent the better part of three weeks hunting the Amaris troops hiding in the Appalachians (though at the same time they also pushed more than half their forces west towards the Mississippi River). The two Amaris Dragoons regiments, steadily losing men and equipment to the stronger SLDF armies, led First Army on a cat-and-mouse chase through the Appalachian foothills in eastern Kentucky, trapping pursuing SLDF companies in dead-end valleys as often as they were themselves trapped. Split in two and separated by dozens of kilometers, the surviving Amaris Dragoons forces were finally destroyed along the Cumberland River near Loyall and on the Kentucky River near Hazard. Though survivors who escaped into the foothills would remain enough of a problem that First Army had to permanently station several regiments—really over-strength battalions by this time in the war—in the region, the two armies were free to continue their western advance.

The rest of Tenth Army pressed across a wide swath of territory extending from Lake Erie in the north to Knoxville in the south, focusing on important industrial cities like Pittsburgh and Detroit, followed by the Chicago megalopolis—all of which Amaris had already pillaged, in the process transforming industrial parks into

rubble piles and hazmat puddles. Fifteenth Army paralleled their comrades in pushing across Canada north of the Great Lakes. First Army meanwhile sped through the more agrarian southern region, crossing the Mississippi (for the second time, this time headed west) by the end of the month, continuing on through the desert southwest and then up towards the central Rocky Mountains.

UP AND DOWN THE COAST

Bottled up on the Baja Peninsula and along Mexico's west coast, Fourteenth Army was slowed by concerted Republican efforts to block their advance in and around Los Mochis on the mainland and on the peninsula, where the peninsular mountain ranges serve as a natural barrier. Fourteenth Army was initially opposed by heavy Republican fighter cover from California and Nevada, but the superior SLDF numbers steadily whittled away at the Amaris air forces before focusing their attacks on the Republicans blocking their advance. By the second week of March, Fourteenth Army was again pushing north, reaching the California border within days to support Third Army's landings.

Third Army landed on a wide stretch of California coast, stretching from Ensenada in the south to past the Los Angeles megalopolis in the north. By landing literally on top of more than a brigade of Republican defenders—who were entirely unprepared for the assault—General Gaffey's Third Army assumed firm command of southwest California. Republican fighters based east of the Transverse Ranges in the California and Nevada deserts put up a strong defense, but it was the SDS batteries in the mountains above Los Angeles, and those further north in central California, that inflicted the most casualties on Third Army.

Third Army headed north into the Central Valley and along the Pacific Coast, while Fourteenth Army advanced along the western side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the Central Valley and Ninth Army along the eastern desert side, eventually to link with the armies pressing west across North America. Facing three armies advancing abreast through California, Amaris' defenders simply could not hope to stop the SLDF in the open fields of the Central Valley. They withdrew north to Clear Lake, Redding and Lake Tahoe, where they could take refuge in the mountains to gain the benefit of the high ground and cover from constant SLDF aerial attacks. Meanwhile the remains of Fourth Army, after liberating the Hawaiian Islands in March, landed behind the three SLDF armies, providing them support and, when needed, stepping onto the line to relieve a beleaguered division or corps.

The three SLDF armies battled hard in northern California and into the Oregon district, but Amaris' forces very successfully fought a slow withdrawal that prevented Kerensky's armies from surrounding and defeating them. Even seaborne landings at Eureka and Crescent City, as well as large-scale airborne attacks that landed whole divisions around Grant's Pass and Medford in Oregon, failed to place enough SLDF troops in the Republicans' rear to create a breakout, resulting only in excessive Star League casualties. Even First Army adding their guns to the mix as they passed through the Rocky Mountains did little to speed the campaign against the ever-concentrating Republican armies. Fourteenth Army reached the Columbia River first, followed closely by Third Army, both taking up positions along the river's southern banks. It had taken the combined SLDF armies ten weeks to press through northern California and across the mountains of Oregon to reach the Columbia River—a hard border to the south and east of Unity City that Amaris had instructed his armies to hold at all costs. With some two hundred kilometers yet to advance before reaching Unity City itself, the ultimate objective was frustratingly within reach.

At the same time, Fifteenth and Twentieth Army Groups pressed southward from Alaska through the Coast Mountains. Though it was later in the year and they faced more moderate temperatures, the ice and snow of the winter continued to plague the SLDF advance and would soon turn into the deluge of the spring melt. Despite facing even

HEARTBEAT

In the years following the Reunification War, First Lord Nicholas Cameron, himself a veteran MechWarrior who had fought in that war, demanded that his interstellar military be able to respond effectively to any contingency, a directive that shaped the way that the SLDF expanded in the decades immediately following. Cameron, through Commanding General Nicholas Kinnol, implemented numerous changes designed to build a military force that was loyal no longer to any particular nation but instead to the Star League itself. Many of these changes were systematic, such as policies designed to end political appointments and promotions. Others were largely cosmetic, but just as important.

Having served for more than two decades in front-line and rear-area SLDF assignments, and commanding soldiers hailing from each of the Star League's member-states, Cameron knew well that a soldier would often risk his own life simply for the chance to win decoration. Pride was a useful tool, and if mere decorative baubles could help him shape a loyal, professional military, Cameron would take full advantage of that.

The SLDF soon debuted numerous personal awards and decorations that every service member could potentially earn, during combat and peacetime, for outstanding service as well as bravery. As a part of that, the SLDF created combat qualification badges for nearly every specialty; the BattleMech Combat Assault Badge (BCAB) was created for MechWarriors, and could only be earned by participating in an actual orbital or high-altitude drop, during wartime or time of contingency, that resulted in combat with an enemy. The brushed metal badge, worn on the MechWarrior's left chest—which, when combined with its vague heart shape, earned it the informal name of "Silver Heart"—was earned after the first such combat drop, with additional drops being represented by the addition of stars and other appurtenances.

Thousands were awarded retroactively to Reunification War veterans, and for several decades the Silver Heart represented a badge of honor among SLDF MechWarriors, who could rarely earn it during peacetime. That changed during the long century of peace, when the SLDF began to award a basic bronze version to MechWarriors who took part in five exercise drops. Earning this basic badge was a feat, to be sure, but one that diluted its original intent—especially as many divisions ran these exercises several times each year, under conditions that rarely simulated actual combat, for the express purpose of qualifying their MechWarriors for the badge.

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This almost automatic practice came to an end with Aleksandr Kerensky's appointment as Commanding General. The era of the "lazy" peacetime SLDF was over, replaced with a renewed emphasis on capability and competence. While many of his MechWarriors voiced opposition, they eventually came to see the brewing storms on the horizon, followed closely by the awarding of the BCAB in record numbers during the wars in the Periphery and later the Hegemony. By the end of the Amaris Civil War, more than two-thirds of the surviving active SLDF MechWarriors had earned the badge, many several times over—with a select few sporting badges that indicated more than thirty combat drops.

—Gela Nonns, *History of the Star League Defense Forces*, ComStar Archives, 3022

fewer defenders than the armies approaching from the south, the northern army groups continued to be slowed by the terrain and climate, but were within sight of Vancouver Island (in the west) and Kamloops (in the east). With Unity City now largely surrounded, Kerensky's armies could begin the final stage of removing Stefan Amaris from power.

APPROACHING UNITY CITY (JUNE 2779-SEPTEMBER 2779)

The Star League Defense Forces now held a roughly 200-kilometer radius around Unity City, but while Kerensky still possessed greater numbers, the simple fact was that his armies were fighting at strengths that would have rendered them unsuitable for battle in any other situation—less than forty percent strength in many divisions. Meanwhile, Amaris' most loyal forces were fighting a life-or-death battle, concentrated within a small area where they held the superior terrain. Further complicating the SLDF's advance was the fact that to the east and south of Unity City, the Columbia River and its tributaries were engorged and raging from the melting snows.

Fifteenth Army, which had entered the continent via Newfoundland, and Sixth Army, which had arrived behind First Army in Florida, were now both on the front lines and took primary roles, as did Second and Nineteenth Armies, recently arrived from Asia. This gave the remainder of Kerensky's exhausted armies the chance to catch their breath before the final push. Given how close they were to the finish, however, they almost uniformly objected and continued their attacks, looking simply to end the war as soon as possible.

BATTLE FOR VANCOUVER

The so-called Battle for Vancouver Island was joined on 3 June 2779 when Seventeenth Army slipped a regiment onto the island, which lay just off the west coast of Canada and just to the north of Puget Sound, by boat across the islands and open water of the Johnstone Strait. That force eventually grew to three regiments, which used the cover of the Vancouver Island mountain ranges to move southeast and establish a beachhead on the island's eastern-central shores—the only significant level ground on Vancouver Island. Nineteenth Army, arriving on the North American continent from mustering points across Asia, landed its first troops on the island by DropShip on 7 June and immediately rushed to the southeast to strike at the city of Victoria.

Amaris had four mixed battalions of 'Mechs, armor and infantry in and around Victoria, and another complete brigade across the Strait of Georgia on the Canadian mainland in the city of Vancouver itself. Unfortunately, the remainder of the SLDF's Fifteenth and Twentieth Army Groups were still making their way through the mountains north of Vancouver, with Amaris' own armies putting up a strong defense that prevented the SLDF from advancing *en masse* on Vancouver, allowing troops within Vancouver to support the defense of Vancouver Island.

What was expected to be a short battle in a longer campaign transformed into a month-long series of battles that saw Republican troops regularly repositioning throughout the mountains above Victoria, preventing a Star League assault on the city as well as any attacks south across the Salish Sea into the Washington district that would directly threaten Unity City. Vancouver Island transformed into a microcosm of the entire northern campaign, with mixed companies of Republican BattleMechs and tanks, often in prepared positions, concentrating their fire on an SLDF advance through narrow terrain while Republican infantry higher up in the mountains called in indirect fire or set off mines and other booby traps. The SLDF had only a relatively narrow stretch of flat land along which it could advance in strength, and faced a mass of Republican troops combined with heavy defending artillery positioned in the southern part of the island (as well as on islands to the east in the Strait of Georgia, where they could easily hit targets on Vancouver Island as well as those advancing across the mountainous archipelago that made up Canada's western coast). Moreover, Amaris possessed a strong fighter force in the region, which could quickly react to any of the battlefields surrounding Unity City. The SLDF paid a steep price for every attack pressed as the summer of 2779 dawned.

Despite their advantages, the Republican forces simply could not hope to maintain the stalemate forever. While the two SLDF army groups continued to poke and prod for weaknesses on land, they also attacked from the ocean, hoping to find a chink in Amaris' armor either on Vancouver Island or south of there on the Olympic Peninsula, which lay directly west of Unity City. The Olympic Peninsula's coastline had been one of the first regions bolstered by additional Republican fortifications, heavy batteries and defenders following the SLDF's first landings on Terra, and was honeycombed with defenses. Though Kerensky never seriously considered a major landing there, he nonetheless kept probing the coastline, searching for weak points as well as to prevent those defenders from being redeployed elsewhere on the attack line.

Inland, Twentieth Army Group pressed hard along a wide front, but also faced difficult mountainous terrain. The First Battle of Kamloops, in early June, ended in a stalemate, as did the second battle. The third battle, beginning on 28 June, was a three-day affair that drove the defenders back to towns like Ashcroft and Merritt ahead of massive waves of SLDF BattleMechs and armor. Amaris' forces regrouped in those two locales as well as near Princeton to fight another delaying battle, a particularly successful one that cost many lives on both sides as Sixteenth Army pressed south from Camchin down the narrow Coquihalla River valley.

Frasier Canyon became the final dam before the SLDF flooded into Vancouver on 15 July. With that breakthrough came a simultaneous Amaris retreat from Vancouver Island, which ultimately trapped almost a division of the Usurper's forces in Vancouver itself after the SLDF quickly cut off the southern escape routes. Sixteenth and Nineteenth Armies, unwilling to destroy Vancouver to root out its deeply entrenched defenders, surrounded the city and maintained constant pressure as the rest of Fifteenth and Twentieth Army Groups pressed south past Bellingham and into the Puget Sound area six weeks later. Though close, they were not at Unity City yet.

CROSSING THE COLUMBIA

Soon after the SLDF landed on Terra, Amaris' generals determined the Columbia River would be their southern and eastern defensive barrier around Unity City and, just as on the Olympic Peninsula coast, began to build additional fortifications and fighting positions all along that important waterway. By the time the SLDF pushed out of northern California (and across the Rocky Mountains), the Republicans possessed a strong line of defense peppered with bunkers and other emplacements that would let them savage anything and anyone that approached the river. By the time Amaris' California and Rocky Mountain garrisons came trickling across the safety of the Columbia, every bridge across and tunnel below the river had already been rigged for demolition. The Republican defenders checked these demolition charges multiple times each day to ensure SLDF engineers didn't deactivate them—a prescient move, as resistance cells and special forces teams managed to clear or partially clear four different bridges in the days before the SLDF reached the river. Their heroic efforts did little good, however, as the Republicans simply re-rigged those bridges for demolition.

Fourteenth Army reached the Columbia first, arriving in the Portland area the second week in June and beginning a three-week siege of the urban sprawl south of the river that ended with the Republicans withdrawing north across the Columbia and destroying the five river crossings in and around the city. The Republicans further had massive numbers of troops and artillery batteries in the hills and mountains overlooking the river, both upstream and down, which shelled any concentration of SLDF troops near the river, foiling more than a dozen concerted efforts to cross the river in that time. Five more SLDF armies soon took up station along the Columbia River, reaching from its Pacific Ocean exit all the way northeast to Lake Chelan (First Army remained in reserve, ready to respond either in the Pacific Northwest or elsewhere on the continent).

Tenth and Fifteenth Armies, after moving west across the entire North American continent and crossing the Rocky Mountains, met at Spokane and turned southwest towards the Columbia's easternmost stretch within the Washington District. Banks Lake prevented the two armies from easily pressing any further west, bottling them up to the east. The two SLDF armies responded by changing their tactics; while Tenth Army engaged the garrison holding the area around the town of Grand Coulee, Fifteenth Army dropped a brigade behind the lake to catch the defenders from behind.

Though facing a numerically superior enemy, the Republicans held the line on the Columbia River. The SLDF, now stalled, had little choice but to continuously probe the Columbia for weaknesses. SLDF artillery and orbital strikes continuously weakened Amaris' defenses even as opposing fighter squadrons engaged each other nearly twenty-four hours a day in an attempt to gain aerial superiority. Twice in June and once in early July, the SLDF managed limited breakthroughs where the river narrowed southeast of Yakima, but in each case the combination of heavy Republican artillery and the destruction of an upstream dam put an end to the crossing—as well as the SLDF's attempts to covertly build up bridgeable sites further downstream. Moreover, an already devastated Portland suffered even greater damage as roaring flood waters wiped nearly a quarter of the city off the map.

Tenth Army was the first to finally cross the Columbia River in force, pressing across under the cover of heavy artillery and orbital barrages that allowed its engineers to erect

IN THE NIGHT

Today I saw my first actual Star League BattleMech since I was a girl, and I cried harder than I ever have. Coop and I moved down from Lake Chelan before dawn to make contact with the SLDF. We'd been hiking for days to get there, and nearly got caught twice. But it was worth it. The Major wanted to make sure [the SLDF] would know where the Republicans were and what the best passes through the [Cascade] mountains were. We were actually picked up by a patrol before we could make it to the [front] lines, which surprised us. We'd all been sneaking around those mountains for years, and even wearing rad-suits the [Republicans] never saw us. I think we must have scared them, because I swear this one sergeant was about to shoot us both, and even after they stripped our weapons and we gave them the code word he kept that shaking rifle pointed at us.

No matter. They took us back to their encampment and that's where I saw them, lit up like Olympic gods on high. I just couldn't help myself. They weren't wearing the patch of the [Royal Black Watch Regiment], but it was just like I was visiting Grandmother again. The war is almost over, and I can finally make her proud.

It took a while before we could talk to someone who wanted to hear what we had to say, but I think we finally got the message through. We'll lead some of their scouts back into the mountains and show them what the situation is. I don't really like it, but the Major wants us to take them to the Black Lodge. We'll have to wear rad-suits to get there, but she says they'll be able to get some good intel off the bodies of the [Republican] officers we stuck in there, which is probably why we put them there in the first place. With all that radiation, no one ever goes there.

We can also give them a good view of the Sound from nearby. I don't know how much good that'll do, but they want to see it. They won't be able to see much, but they didn't grow up here. They didn't see it destroyed by Amaris, but maybe they lost friends here just like I did, or family. I just want to get them through the mountains so they can end this war. I think the Major probably wants me to go back with them and help them through the Snoqualmie Pass. She says it'll be hard for them to go through even if they know where all the guns and mines are, but she hasn't seen all the [SLDF] 'Mechs and tanks they've got here. There's a *Highlander* just like Grandmother piloted with probably fifty kill marks on it. I've never seen one of the [Republicans] with that!

—Colleen Schmitt, Personal Diary, 30 June 2779

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Stefan Amaris assumed control of the Terran Hegemony through a combination of threats, power brokering and bribery. But in order to maintain control, he had to step up his bribery in order to buy the loyalty of his agents. While many of his military personnel at the outset of the occupation were loyal natives of the Rim Worlds Republic, the Usurper hired more and more mercenaries to keep the Hegemony in line and, of course, to defend it against the Star League Defense Forces.

It was no surprise to Amaris, then, when many of those same mercenary forces, as well as Patriot units raised from Hegemony citizens drafted against their will, retreated from battle or surrendered. What did surprise him was that many of his supposedly loyal units began to do the same. After years of living large on the profits of occupation, they simply did not want to give up their lifestyle—especially their leaders. Where the average grunt could take whatever money or valuables were available and disappear into the civilian population, officers (especially commanders) and other notable members of those units didn't have that option. This was particularly true in the many AEF units that committed the worst of the war's crimes.

In the confusion of the war, and especially while whole regiments and divisions were recalled from the front to reinforce defensive lines deep within the Terran Hegemony, some whole units made a run for it. Those that did often jumped through uninhabited Hegemony systems until they ended up in one of the other five Star League member states, where often they were captured by those nations' militaries. A handful of the worst criminals were turned over to the SLDF for prosecution by the Capellan, Federated Suns and Lyran nations, while others were stripped of their equipment and valuables, some imprisoned and the rest allowed to simply vanish.

The closer the SLDF advanced to Terra, the fewer opportunities the remaining Republican troops had to easily escape, though that did not stop the worst offenders. The more desperate matters in the Hegemony grew, the more likely they were to try to escape. While likely tens of thousands of Republican soldiers, government officials and supporters simply disappeared in the confusion during and after the war, only a handful of whole units actually managed to evade capture (or destruction) by the Star League Defense Forces or the member states. Historians identified the remnants of five Republican regiments that somehow managed to disappear, including their supposed fates.

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several temporary bridgeheads east of Yakima. Though one bridge failed within the first hour due to poor anchorages (a side effect of the many massive floods), enough armor and 'Mechs were able to cross to force the defenders into retreat and further open up additional crossings. The Amaris troops pulled back to the Rattlesnake Hills to set up a second line of defense, but while Tenth Army surged forward with just the Fourteenth Infantry Division to hold the defenders in place and the 146th Mechanized Infantry Division turned south to clear out the Kennewick area, the 149th BattleMech Division (the Erwin Rommel Division) led what remained of IV Corps around the south of the Rattlesnake Hills and up through the Yakima Valley. Yakima fell on 26 July, leading to a new standoff in the Cascade Mountains—particularly in the major passes that led directly to Puget Sound and Unity City itself. Fifteenth Army finally managed to cross the Columbia near Wenatchee and likewise began pressing into the Cascades, while Sixth Army soon crossed south of Kennewick and turned west along the river to relieve pressure on the armies surrounding Portland.

Amaris' defenders were nonetheless able to hold out around Portland for three more weeks before Third Army finally broke the stalemate with a daring operation on 20 August that combined an airborne assault, a river crossing and a CAAN attack from the Pacific Coast north of the river. Over the course of the next week, Third Army pressed a continuous attack west of Portland against the Amaris defenders there as well as new regiments moved south from Unity City. In the process, Third Army relieved enough pressure for Ninth and Fourteenth Armies to cross as well and press forward. Immediately turning northwest, Third Army cleared the Pacific Coast around Aberdeen, allowing Kersky to land Second and Nineteenth Armies there for the final press on Unity City.

By the first of September, the three advancing Star League armies had passed Mount Saint Helens and were approaching southern Puget Sound while Fifteenth Army was pushing through the Stevens Pass and Tenth through the Snoqualmie Pass. On 3 September, the newly landed Second Army pressed east from the Pacific Coast, with two companies from the Ninth Mechanized Infantry Division (the Pride of Puget Sound) climbing the mountains just west of Olympia to gain a view of the entire Puget Sound, including Unity City. The end of the war was nigh.

UNITY CITY

The Puget Sound region was a wasteland compared to its glory days prior to the Coup. The multiple nuclear strikes, combined with a month of nearly constant orbital bombardment of the Mount Baker Castle Brian south of Tacoma, left the region a low-level radioactive hellhole. While much of the fallout fell within the Cascades, and in fact Amaris had ordered a cleanup of Unity City, melting snows brought that radiation back into Puget Sound, prompting many of those who had remained in the area after the Coup to leave their homes for Vancouver or Portland—or cities even further afield. Relatively small cities like Olympia, Seattle and Tacoma were virtual ghost towns, with nature reclaiming much of the region over the previous thirteen years.

As the SLDF was breaking through the final lines of defense surrounding Unity City, more and more of the Republican defenders either attempted to run or simply surrendered, hoping for leniency from their opponents. Numerous DropShips and other transports launched from the Unity City area on a daily basis; some headed northeast into the Canadian wilds while many more DropShips simply made a run for it, attempting to break orbit and find some JumpShip out of the system. The SLDF tracked and intercepted most of those, though some did manage to escape the Terran system by flying at wavelap altitudes into the middle of the Pacific Ocean and, using the cover of massive aerial battles and the SLDF intercepting other retreating ships, suddenly climbing out and angling into deep space.

Those defenders who remained in and around Unity City were the die-hards, figuratively and literally. Many would fight to the death, leading suicidal charges or detonating bombs strapped to their 'Mechs or packed into their tanks as they rushed into

the SLDF ranks. The battered and exhausted Star League armies likewise gave no quarter, often not even accepting the surrender of enemy units lest one of those surrendering soldiers was equipped with a suicide bomb or other booby trap—a tactic that quite a few Amaris troops used in those final days.

Kerensky and DeChavilier took to observing the Unity City campaign from the mountains above Olympia, the deep scars inflicted at Mount Baker and Fort McKenna in Tacoma still visible more than a decade after the Coup. With their artillery thumping away at the base of the mountains and occasional orbital strikes lancing down into particularly troubling enemy positions, the SLDF would not stop their advance. By 10 September, Third Army was at the southwest reaches of Unity City, while Sixteenth Army had crossed Puget Sound and was approaching from the north. The Republicans' suicidal stands had delayed the inevitable by a few days, but their futile sacrifices could not stop the Star League Defense Forces from their ultimate objective. Kerensky himself took charge of the Twenty-Sixth Royal BattleMech Division (the Graham Division) and led Third Army onto the Kitsap Peninsula and into Unity City itself.

The attack was bittersweet and emotional for the General, who wept after seeing up close what Stefan Amaris and his supporters had done to the once-magnificent city. Unity City's remaining defenders never thought twice about taking refuge in the most culturally significant and architecturally notable buildings in the Inner Sphere and using them as shields from the Twenty-Sixth's guns. Libraries, museums, theaters and government buildings were all left devastated in the attack, as were massive building complexes and mansions—most left empty to rot after the Coup or in the multiple purges following Amaris' ascent to power—that once housed hundreds of thousands of government workers and officials.

As word that Kerensky himself in his olive drab *Orion* was leading the SLDF assault on the city spread among the Republicans, a strange energy swept through the mixed regular, mercenary and Patriot forces led by the Seventh Amaris Dragoons. Some, frightened by the mere thought of the demi-god Kerensky leading the holy assault, dropped their arms and hid. Others, believing that the death of Kerensky would put an immediate end to the war and prompt their Emperor to reward with untold power and riches those responsible for taking the man down, rushed into the streets to stalk the General. Twice Kerensky was overwhelmed by Amaris defenders, and twice his bodyguards led by Major Absalom Truscott rushed headlong into the fray to eliminate the opposition at point-blank ranges. After Truscott's unit had suffered too much damage to continue, Lieutenant General Antonius Zalman dispatched Major Elizabeth Hazen and the last few surviving members of the Royal Black Watch Regiment to take charge of the General's security.

The battle for Unity City raged for three days before elements from the 168th BattleMech Division (the Czar Peter Division) reached the Court of the Star League grounds from the north. A cursory sweep of the Court confirmed what citizens still residing within Unity City had been telling SLDF intelligence officers for the past week—Stefan Amaris was not there. The battle continued, however, with General Patrick Scoffins—commander of the Amaris Empire Armed Forces—leading a spirited withdrawal to Unity City's spaceport. Surrounded and with no other options open to him, Scoffins personally surrendered to General Kerensky on 16 September, prompting most of his few remaining subordinates to do the same. He and his men and women were taken into custody, their safety guaranteed by Kerensky as a condition of their surrender, with Scoffins and his surviving senior staff questioned at length by SLDF intelligence officers.

The war against Amaris was not yet over, however. It soon became apparent to Kerensky and his senior staff that Amaris had fled Unity City long before Operation LIBERATION ever launched. The Usurper maintained the illusion of leading from Unity City by keeping his commanding general and chief of staff in the Star League capital while he and his family resided within the Imperial Palace—the secluded residence built by Richard Cameron in the Canadian wilderness before the Coup—protected by the elite of the AEA, led by the Fourth Amaris Dragoons.

23rd Amaris Dragoons

The Twenty-Third Amaris Dragoons were stationed in the Rim Worlds Republic during the Coup. After the occupation of the Hegemony and Kerensky's turn towards the Rim Worlds, the Twenty-Third abandoned their posts in their homeland and instead traveled to what they assumed was their new home in the Hegemony. Amaris instead branded them cowards and traitors and ordered them imprisoned. A brief firefight with the Nineteenth Patriot Regiment broke out on the planet Summer, leaving the Patriots damaged and the Twenty-Third enemies of the state. They took what supplies they could and left the planet. They were seen heading into the Draconis Combine, where it is assumed they found employment with House Kurita.

141st Amaris Dragoons

Something of a troubleshooter unit, the 141st saw action on a number of different Hegemony worlds during and after the Coup. The 141st was on Terra during the Coup, ultimately helping the Fourth Dragoons secure the Puget Sound area by putting an end to the SLDF resistance at Mount Baker. They later traveled to Caph to similarly end the SLDF resistance there, only to return to Terra to deal with a growing resistance movement in North America's desert southwest, all within the first year after the Coup. Throughout the remainder of the Occupation, the 141st jumped across the Hegemony to deal with other hot spots or allegations of disloyalty among the AEA. With the coming of Operation CHIEFTAIN, the regiment focused primarily upon countering the SLDF's raids and supply runs deep into the Hegemony, returning to Terra as soon as the SLDF struck New Home. Given its apparent loyalty to Amaris, it was ironic that the 141st completely pulled off of Terra near the end of the European campaign in 2778. Three of five DropShips managed to avoid the SLDF blockade and rendezvous with a pair of JumpShips on the edge of the system. They were spotted in several Capellan systems, and in fact landed on Spica to raid caches of supplies there, before apparently continuing on rimward. There were no confirmed sightings of the 141st anywhere after Spica, though rumors of a former Republican unit taking up residence on an uncharted world once used by Amaris to train elements of the Secret Army, and which preyed upon former Rim Worlder planets, were prevalent in the late twenty-eighth and early twenty-ninth centuries.

38th Amaris Fusiliers

The Thirty-Eighth Amaris Fusiliers led the effort to secure the world of Castor for Stefan Amaris during the Coup. They built a strong Patriot force on the planet through a combination of threats and other strongarm tactics, at the same time imprisoning prominent govern-

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ment and business personalities accused of disloyalty to their new Emperor. Hundreds of thousands of prominent citizens were so imprisoned, with tens of thousands never seen again—along with their valuables. When the Thirty-Eighth received the recall order from Terra in January 2775, they instead left the Hegemony. They landed on Ariel, Jiddah and Cranston in the Free Worlds League, taking food and supplies, but made no further confirmed appearances. It is assumed the regiment eventually made contact with former Secret Army allies in the Magistracy of Canopus or Taurian Concordat, and likely fought in at least the First Succession War.

2nd Mexican Legion

Terra itself in many ways fed the rapid expansion of the AEAFF both before and after the Coup. The Mexican Legion (later designated the First Mexican Legion) were like-minded citizen volunteers and “morally ambiguous” individuals with military or paramilitary training recruited largely from Mexico in the months leading up to the Coup. This regiment, along with the Second and Third regiments raised after the Coup, remained within the Terran system throughout the Occupation, concentrating their energies on the campaign to eliminate the resistance movement. The First Regiment was eliminated shortly after the SLDF captured Mexico City, while the Third Regiment held out into early 2780 in Africa. The Second Regiment lost more than half of its forces making stands in Milwaukee and Madison in the Wisconsin District before making a fighting withdrawal across North America to join the Columbia River defense. Reduced to less than three companies after the SLDF pushed across the Columbia, the survivors of the Second Mexican Legion pulled back and retreated from Terra. They apparently traveled rimward of the Capellan Confederation, likely ending up in the Taurian Concordat.

Darabont's Damned

Largely responsible for the rape and devastation visited on Zollikofen, Darabont's Damned watched from afar as the SLDF crushed every Republican force that stood in its way. The mercenaries also watched the SLDF all but ignore their adopted world (and its SDS), and instead press on towards Terra. While Kerensky focused nearly the entire SLDF on Terra, the mercenaries decided to cut their losses and flee rather than wait for Kerensky to turn his attention towards them. Darabont's Damned pulled off Zollikofen in March of 2777 and headed roughly coreward, jumping back and forth across the Lyran and Combine borders along the way to better obscure their route, and ultimately disappeared into the Periphery. Based on what is known of the mercenary band's makeup, it is likely that they hired out their services to House Marik as the Dark Spirits during the First Succession War after spending more than a decade in private security service.

THE USURPER'S REDOUBT

Amaris had managed to keep the location of his Imperial Palace largely secret by the simple fact that it was located in a remote and sparsely populated area in central Canada annexed by Amaris' Hegemony government as a combination “training site” and “nature preserve.” Just a few years after the Coup, the region's tourist-based businesses had already largely dried up and posed no significant roadblocks to the annexation. Secreted near Lake Louise, Amaris' estate was built to blend in with the landscape, including a private spaceport and the fixed defenses eventually installed to protect the Imperial Palace grounds. It was virtually invisible to anyone save those who knew what they were looking for.

Having taken up near-permanent residence in the Imperial Palace before Operation CHIEFTAIN began, Amaris ruled from afar, communicating with his advisors electronically and even using body doubles at times to give the illusion that Unity City was his home. He went so far as to order the AEAFF units remaining in Unity City to be repainted in the colors of his bodyguard units, further perpetuating the illusion. Though it became obvious to those in Unity City once the invasion of Terra began that Amaris was rarely present, only a limited few within the Usurper's government and military knew the location of his palace. It was Amaris' chief general, Patrick Scoffins, who provided Kerensky the location in exchange for a gentleman's promise of protection for those AEAFF soldiers who surrendered.

As soon as he learned the location of the Imperial Palace, Kerensky ordered General DeChavilier to personally organize and lead a force to surround and isolate it. Kerensky himself would lead a second assault force to secure the redoubt and take the Usurper into custody. With just hours to plan and prepare, the two generals turned to their most successful army to lead the attack into the lion's teeth, while their two freshest armies would provide the strength for the final strike—DeChavilier would lead Third Army's Twenty-Sixth Royal BattleMech Division (which similarly had the honor of accompanying Kerensky into Unity City) in the initial assault. Kerensky would be at the head of Second Army's Ninth Mechanized Infantry Division and Nineteenth Army's 328th Royal BattleMech Division (the Lion Hearted Division). Second and Nineteenth Armies would also both provide combat support to the operation, landing additional forces in a wide ring around the Imperial Palace in case the Usurper or any of his local garrison attempted to escape. Meanwhile, SLDF WarShips in orbit focused their every sensor on a hundred-kilometer radius around the palace—a location that Fifteenth Army had passed within just a few dozen kilometers of during their long westward march across Canada months earlier. Admiral Joan Brandt would oversee naval support in orbit over the palace once the attack commenced, while Colonel Stephen McKenna—a young up-and-comer who'd made a name for himself during the extensive Operation LIBERATION aerial campaigns—would provide the assault force close air support.

Combining intelligence gained from General Scoffins's interviews with orbital imagery and other sensor data, the two generals built perhaps the simplest operations plan they'd seen in decades. Scores of DropShips launched from spaceports and temporary landing zones throughout the Puget Sound area just before 0200 local time on 29 September, many boosting into low orbit and holding over central Canada to drop hundreds of BattleMechs on and around the Imperial Palace grounds, while others landed in a fifty kilometer-wide radius around Amaris' redoubt.

DeChavilier landed on the palace grounds with three full-strength Twenty-Sixth Division BattleMech regiments (accomplished only by reassigning MechWarriors and machines from throughout Third Army into the division). He immediately secured its spaceport, allowing for the Twenty-Sixth's DropShips to land and disgorge supporting armor and infantry forces. DeChavilier's attack dropped into the midst of Amaris'

most elite and loyal bodyguard units—led by the Fourth Amaris Dragoons—who, despite being on alert, were slow to mobilize their entire force. Weapon turrets and other defensive measures designed to fight an opponent approaching from outside the four hundred square kilometer palace grounds were largely useless against the Twenty-Sixth, who tied up the defenders long enough for Kerensky to drop with his assault force.

Kerensky and DeChavilier together at the head of three brigades of BattleMechs made quick work of the three opposing BattleMech regiments, in the process suffering more mechanical failures than actual combat losses. With the palace grounds overrun and every road and maglev line into and out of the region almost literally crawling with SLDF forces, Amaris and his most loyal subjects had nowhere and no way to run. The palace itself lay at the center of a large, walled circular park, both the walls and the palace covered with turrets and other weapon emplacements. Concentrated fire from the several hundred SLDF BattleMechs surrounding the garden wall made quick work of those defenses, allowing the two generals to rush with their bodyguard lances to the palace gate; while DeChavilier and the two generals' bodyguards destroyed the turrets and pillboxes on the palace itself, Kerensky broke through its gate and into the vaulting foyer.

The last hopes of the enduring Amaris Empire had crumbled with the sight of "the Devil Kerensky"—as Amaris had years previously taken to calling the General—smashing through the Imperial Palace gate in his *Orion*. The guards within the palace itself dropped their weapons and surrendered to Kerensky, who called in the Twenty-Sixth's infantry to clear the building of any potential surprises. The two generals and several of their bodyguards—including Zalman, Hazen, Truscott and Captain Jerome Winson—followed the commander of Amaris' own security team through the palace's fifteen meter-tall corridors to his Emperor's private suite.

There, a disheveled Amaris emerged with a jewel-encrusted laser pistol in his hand; the same weapon, it would later be determined, with which he executed First Lord Richard Cameron almost thirteen years earlier. He laid it at the feet of Kerensky's BattleMech in surrender. Amaris and his family then walked out of the palace's front gate, Kerensky and his coterie of BattleMechs behind—an image that would be broadcast across the Inner Sphere and Periphery within minutes, followed closely by a tri-vid of Emperor Stefan Ukris Amaris I personally surrendering to General Kerensky and ordering officers and members of the government as well as the armed forces of the Amaris Empire to immediately and unconditionally surrender to the Star League Defense Forces.

In exchange, Kerensky extended the same terms to Amaris and every other surrendering Republican as he had throughout the campaign: They would be treated fairly and their safety would be guaranteed. Amaris and his family would remain on the grounds of the Imperial Palace, within guest quarters secured by the Ninth Mechanized Infantry Division, until a tribunal could be convened.

The long war was finally over—at least for most of the SLDF and the Inner Sphere. Holdouts would continue to fight on Terra and elsewhere in the Hegemony for months, but as one the Human Sphere could breathe a sigh of relief and begin to focus on the long road to recovery from the most terrible war in Humanity's history.

SURRENDER

I don't think I've ever seen or heard Alex like that. When that sonuvabitch walked out the door, all I wanted to do was vaporize him. I twitched and I know Liz [Hazen] raised her 'Mech's arm at him, but Alex was motionless. Still. I didn't see a single flinch or even a hint of anything. He said three of the most emotionless words I've ever heard him speak: "Hold your fire."

I knew he wanted Amaris alive so he could stand trial, but it took me a second to really grasp what I was seeing. We'd all built up different images and stereotypes of the man, mostly from what we'd seen and heard. Even the few of us that had the displeasure of having met him. I know what I thought of him, but in that moment I actually saw the truth for the first time in years. He looked like us. Hell, he looked worse than us. Even the worst head cases in the hospitals looked better than he did. It didn't look like he'd shaved or bathed in days, and he'd probably been wearing the same clothes for months. His robe was ripped and stained, what hair he had was gray and messy, and I think he was barefoot. If you didn't know who you were looking at, you could have mistaken him for a beggar.

Alex didn't have to say a thing. I knew this piece of shit had to be put in front of a tri-vid so that everyone could see him. I swear he was talking to himself, rambling on about something. His people needed to see this. When he started shuffling off, I told the team at the front gate to be sure to record it and send it out everywhere as soon as they could.

When we finally sat down with him and Alex laid out the terms, I don't think the piece of shit even knew what was going on. He sat there with a smile on his face as his wife tried to brush out his moustache and braid his hair into something she thought was presentable. He thought he was somehow still in control or, hell, I don't know. He didn't care about anything other than he'd get his own private suite. He even offered up his wife and kids, as if we'd want to touch them. He stared into the tri-vid and read the prepared speech, and as soon as he was done he demanded that his porter bring him a bottle of some damn thing and his dinner.

—General Aaron DeChavilier, Personal Diary, 30 September 2779

AFTERMATH

"Believe me, nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won."

—Arthur Wellesley, *Letter from the Waterloo Battlefield*, June 1815

NO SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Kerensky vowed not to stoop to Amaris' level. The erstwhile Emperor would not be murdered, but would face a fair trial to account for his crimes. Kerensky's insistence on this played well with the Terran people, who saw in it an opportunity for vengeance, but less well with the SLDF, who believed the Usurper's crimes were so clear and unequivocal that execution was the only option. Kerensky, who believed that executing Amaris would betray the very ideals of the Star League and the Camerons, refused to heed the protests even when his deputy, Aaron DeChavilier, warned him of unrest among the troops.

Amaris and his family were held in luxurious quarters, albeit under close guard, which further rankled the SLDF. They saw their sworn enemy being treated honorably and afforded the luxuries he'd denied their people. Amaris showed little remorse, but at times he seemed detached from reality and scarcely aware of his surroundings, prompting some in the SLDF medical corps to fear he might plead insanity. Kerensky insisted, however, that the victors would be held to a higher standard and should treat even their nemesis with honor. Kerensky stuck to his principles, at least until a fateful day in November.

Six weeks after Amaris' capture, reconstruction efforts were slowly starting and SLDF engineering crews reached the Court of the Star League in Unity City. A two-week painstaking clearance of the complex removed booby traps left by withdrawing RWR troops and shored up unsound structures. On 11 November, the crews reached the Throne Room, and satisfied that the great doors weren't trapped, unsealed the chamber for the first time since 2766. The sight that greeted them prompted revulsion and an uncharacteristic lapse of military discipline; recordings of the devastation were "accidentally" released to the media. Images of hazmat-suited SLDF troops picking their way between the putrefied bodies of the murdered Camerons—whose remains had lain where Amaris' troops had murdered them almost fourteen years earlier—shocked the entire Inner Sphere, and the wave of revulsion prompted mass calls for summary justice against Amaris. Even then Kerensky resisted, though the General need to take great care whom he assigned to guard the prisoners, as even the SLDF were caught up in the murderous rage.

The fall of Amaris' Star Palace retreat on 29 September marked the end of the Usurper's reign but not the end of the conflict. Many former Rim Worlds troops did not capitulate, instead claiming the news of Stefan's surrender (and even his broadcast) was a fabrication by Kerensky, or else fearing reprisals for their actions. While a carnival atmosphere pervaded the general population in the first weeks after Amaris' capture, behind the scenes military mop-up operations continued into the autumn (the last Amaris troops officially laid down their arms on 12 November, though scattered clashes continued into the new year, the final pitched battle taking place near Lawrence, Kansas on 11 February 2780). Rumors abounded of small pro-Amaris units and some lone soldiers remaining active into the early years of ComStar's reign over Terra. November 12 became known as Victory Day, celebrated on Terra until the reign of Primus Conrad Toyama but quickly abandoned on the former worlds of the Terran Hegemony.

Kerensky was victorious, but the Hegemony—and Terra in particular—was a shambles, its economy, infrastructure and government in ruins. More than a hundred million people were dead, five hundred million were wounded and well in excess of a billion were homeless. The joy of liberation was tempered with hardship and anger. Those who had sided with the Amaris government (or were accused of having done so) found themselves ostracized and, in a number of cases, subject to vengeance attacks. These ranged from stones through windows and the daubing of fish-bone motifs on doors (a play on the Rim Worlds' shark insignia) to physical violence and even murder. Vigilante attacks saw many collaborators beaten, their hair cut off and in some cases a T (for traitor) branded onto their foreheads. In the most extreme cases, the victims were hanged, shot or beaten to death. The SLDF struggled to maintain order—it was an army, not a police force—and Kerensky had little choice but to impose martial law. This could only ever be a short-term solution; Kerensky knew that if Terra and the Hegemony were to survive, both would need capable administrators. The SLDF and relief agencies could provide material support for the shattered worlds, but only civil government could hope to manage the fate of billions.

PROTECTOR OF THE REALM

Upon his defeat of Amaris, Kerensky's broadcast to the people of Terra announced his resumption of the role of Protector of the Realm. In effect, he became head of the Hegemony and the Star League, though both were in a terrible state after almost fifteen years of conflict. He called on the people of the Hegemony and the Inner Sphere—he deliberately excluded the Periphery, whose independence he had tacitly agreed to in the months after the Amaris Coup—to pull together and repair the material and social divisions that afflicted the realm. He invited the House Lords to Terra "to help guide us away from the memories of these devastating times" and a council session was scheduled for the fall of 2780. In the meantime, the SLDF would serve as the *de facto* government of the Hegemony, though Kerensky enacted elections for a new Terran Parliament, intending to install a government that could unify humankind's homeworld and bring peace and healing to the shattered planet.

The move backfired badly. The Terran elections on 3 May 2780 installed a radically anti-Amaris government whose members swiftly enacted legislation (the Berlin Protocols) that barred anyone who had held public office or served in the police or armed forces under Amaris from doing so on the new Terra. Even the efforts of moderate former Director General Jens Pinera, who had celebrated his centenary during the Occupation, could not rein in the backlash. Similar situations occurred on other worlds, with rabidly

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anti-Amaris groups taking control and threatening to further exacerbate the splits in society. In essence, these moves rejected anyone who had experience in government, law enforcement or civil administration—they had served under Amaris and thus were, in the public eye, tainted. The result was chaos that only served to exacerbate the situation.

The flames of discontent were further fanned when the provisional Terran authorities announced war crimes trials for those who had supported Amaris. Kerensky had always intended for there to be trials, but the anger and bitterness of these trials made them more like a witch-hunt. Kerensky's standing orders largely exempted troops from the trials, though officers could be held accountable for their actions during the conflict and those accused of specific atrocities could be tried. Many courts chose to ignore these prohibitions, angry at Kerensky for denying them the opportunity to deal with Amaris themselves, which prompted many Rim Worlds troopers to fear for their lives. Many sought refuge with the SLDF, creating tensions between the military and civilian governments.

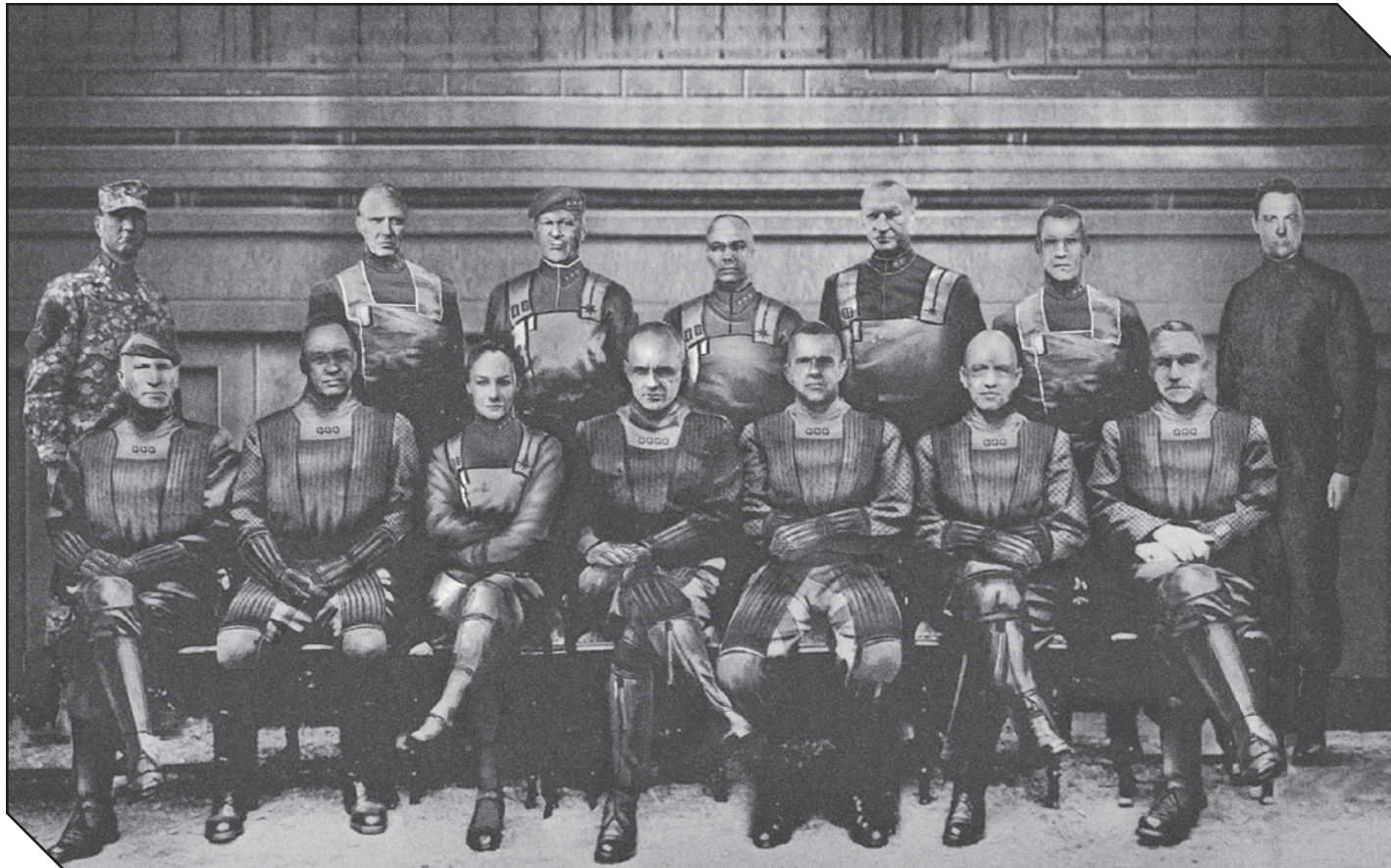
THE GENEVA WAR TRIALS

While Kerensky sought clemency for the Rim Worlds and Hegemony troops who had sided with Amaris, he could not protect—nor did he desire to—those whose decisions had been responsible for the pain and suffering of the Hegemony. On 7 June 2780, scarcely a month after its formation, the Hegemony Congress instituted a series of war trials to be held on Terra and all Hegemony worlds to punish those accused of war crimes during Amaris' reign. Those to be tried were principally military and political figures of the Hegemony and Rim Worlds Republic, but included a smattering of civilians and foreign parties accused of war crimes during the campaigns. Efforts by refugees from the Rim Worlds Republic (now mostly occupied by the Lyran Commonwealth) and some Terrans to include Kerensky and the SLDF were summarily dismissed, but their attempt showed the hatred directed toward the General.

On 25 November Kerensky flew to the Court and personally witnessed the atrocity. He walked into the devastated Throne Room, where SLDF medical technicians were still working to identify the bodies, and ordered the room cleared. He remained there for thirty minutes—SLDF rumor later suggesting that he spent that time standing over the bodies of Elise and Amanda Cameron—then marched out stony-faced. Rather than returning to Geneva, he flew to Amaris' retreat and ordered Stefan, his family and aides marched into the courtyard. Awaiting them was a hastily assembled firing squad. The imminent threat of death caused Amaris to collapse to his knees, sobbing. Kerensky ordered the Usurper hoisted to his feet and strapped to a post. Then, after the prisoners were offered blindfolds—none accepted—he gave the order to fire.

"There will be no sympathy for the devil," the SLDF commander is said to have muttered as he departed, ordering the bodies preserved and shipped to the *McKenna's Pride* until their ultimate fate could be decided.

—*Twists of Fate: A History of the Amaris Coup*, by Piers Rankin; ComStar Press, 2915



MALICE AFORETHOUGHT

The “de-Amarisification” of Terra and the Hegemony after Kerensky’s victory was unlike anything the Inner Sphere had faced before. The conflicts of the Age of War were attritional, with no clear victor emerging, but in the Star League Civil War there was a distinct set of winners and losers, and elements of both sides sought to apportion blame for what had happened. There were historical precedents for what followed—the de-Nazi-fication of Germany after the Second World War, the anti-Communist pogroms that followed the assassination of Oleg Tikonov and the civil war that ensued—but here the people of the Hegemony failed to learn the lessons of the past.

The courts appearing in the Hegemony to try war criminals were modeled on those held in Nuremberg in 1946-1947 and functioned effectively. The compulsory classification of the population into one of four “guilt bands”—also a feature of the de-Nazification of Germany—fared less well. Local courts were required to assess the culpability of the local citizenry and assign them to one of four bands: “complicit” for the those who wholeheartedly supported Amaris (principally politicians and business leaders), “followers” for the second tier who worked with the Amaris authorities (principally bureaucrats), “involuntary followers” for those who worked within the system but did so unwillingly, and “uninvolved” for those who had nothing to do with the Amaris regime or actively fought against it. Unfortunately, the level of evidence required for these classifications fell far short of that demanded by the legal system and people found themselves condemned by hearsay and the score-settling of vindictive neighbors. There was little redress and little nuance; the industrialist who secretly bankrolled a resistance cell would still find himself condemned as complicit with the Occupation. The classification also ignored political realities on Terra. For all his sins, Amaris was legally elected as Director-General, but the classification system condemned anyone who had, at any time, served in the Usurper’s government.

The decision to bar those from the first (and in many areas, second) categories effectively decapitated the Hegemony’s political and economic institutions. This too aped post-WWII Germany, but whereas Europe of the 1940s had the Allied powers and the Marshall Plan to maintain and rebuild their society, nothing was put in place by the victors of the Star

The tribunals comprised a mixture of SLDF and Hegemony government officials, drawing extensively from the JAG corps and the Department of the Attorney General. Their first action was to release a list of thirty-seven “major war criminals” sought for prosecution—Amaris’ closest confidants and military and political advisors. The trial of these figures included General Patrick Scoffins and General Peter Bridge, commander of Amaris’ redoubt at the Star Palace, as well as notables such as the Usurper’s uncle and cousin Petter and Rifkin Amaris, businesswoman Aisling Connor, Hegemony Congress chair Philippa Dante and media mogul (and head of the Krypteia) Samir Njari. Most of those on the list were in SLDF or Hegemony custody; three, including Director Lissa Outerbridge, were in hiding or missing (and presumed dead), but would be tried in absentia. Despite the precedent Kerensky had set with Amaris, summary justice would not be part of this process. Each of the accused was assigned a defense council and time to review the charges against them. All those on the Major Criminals list faced four charges—genocide, war crimes, crimes against the Star League and crimes against Humanity.

These prosecutions would be the showcases of the trials, but they were far from the only events. Regional courts were to be established on each Hegemony world (and in Terra’s case, each continent) to try the lesser accused. Terra had begun establishing the second-tier courts alongside the show trials, but only a handful of outlying worlds had courts in operation by the start of October when the Star League Council met, though thirty courts were operating by summer 2781.

Scheduled to last three months, the showcase trials had begun on 21 August and were reaching their climax when the House Lords began to arrive. Of the thirty-seven accused, nineteen had been found guilty of all charges and sentenced to execution by hanging. Fourteen more were found guilty of some charges and sentenced to imprisonment, including Aisling Connor and Rifkin Amaris. Three were acquitted, including Ivan Chekov, who had proved lethal against the SLDF but who had opposed the mistreatment of New Earth’s population, though he was subsequently lynched. In the final case, that of Peter Bridge, the verdict was “not proven,” a peculiarity of Hegemony law that amounted to “We think you’re guilty but the evidence isn’t conclusive.”

The eighteen executions—Njari committed suicide in custody—took place in Geneva on 9 October. The entire Star League Council was invited to attend and witness, but only Aleksandr Kerensky, Prince John Davion and Coordinator Minoru Kurita were present.

FATEFUL DECISIONS

The following day, 10 October, the Star League Council met in Unity City for the first time in sixteen years, with the heads of each Inner Sphere and Periphery state present as well as Kerensky (as Protector of the Realm), General Aaron DeChavilier (as acting head of the SLDF) and Jens Pinera, head of the Hegemony Congress and *de facto* Director-General. Lords Kurita and Steiner immediately objected to DeChavilier’s presence, but Kerensky insisted, stating that as Terra and the Hegemony remained under military authority his presence was warranted. The House Lords then switched their objection to the centenarian Pinera, who had served as Director-General of the Hegemony during Richard Cameron’s minority, claiming he was tainted by association with Amaris. Though old and infirm, Pinera pointed out that he’d resigned from office in 2762 when Richard achieved his majority and had been living in retirement in Bogotà for almost twenty years. His age and experience made him one of the few Terran politicians not corrupted by Amaris’ influence, he argued, and he was damned if the Council were going to make decisions about the Hegemony without its people being represented.

Such squabbling typified the first days of the council, whether it was over the right to attend, the order of presentations, the seating plan or the lunch menu. For all Kerensky’s grand hope for the future, it soon became apparent that the House Lords cared little for the Hegemony or the Star League. Their concerns were themselves, and hampering the activities of their rivals.

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Only one major point was agreed on in those first few days: That the communications infrastructure of the Star League, so vital in the governance of modern realms, should be maintained even while the council debated other matters. At the suggestion of Nicoletta Calderon, the council sponsored the restoration of the Star League Bureau of Communications. Though supporting a Star League institution rankled, Calderon made clear the importance of a neutral communications agency (and indirectly a repository of technology), and of the House Lords only John Davion abstained in the vote. Jerome Blake became the head of the resurrected agency as Minister of Communications. Elements of the agency remain active in modern times, though under a new name they assumed in early 2786: ComStar.

By 18 October Kerensky was growing frustrated with the House Lords and visibly bristled at their petty arguments and games. At the same time, he came under public pressure to proclaim himself ruler of the Hegemony and First Lord of the Star League. The people expected him to be their savior, to repair all the damage the Amaris Civil War had inflicted, but his honor code forbade him from usurping the reins of power. This stance, one of the facets of his personality that so endeared the General to the people, was the chink in his armor the council sought.

The afternoon council session began with the usual bickering, but then Archon Robert Steiner stood and proposed a motion that he knew would win the backing of his peers. His proposal, arguably one of the most significant decisions in history, would have ramifications so far-reaching that even today we are dealing with their consequences. He called for Kerensky to be stripped of his role of Protector and ordered the demilitarization of the Hegemony and the return of the SLDF to a peacetime basis. The council vote was unanimous, though afterwards several House Lords expressed their regret at their shortsighted action. In removing Kerensky and pushing their own agendas, they destroyed any hope for the Hegemony and the Star League—and, though they didn't yet realize it, doomed themselves to the Succession Wars and ultimately the Clan Invasion and the Blakist Jihad.

The council stopped short of stripping Kerensky of his military rank—he remained Commanding General of the SLDF—fearing that to do so would provoke a revolt among the military. It was a well-justified fear. The news of what they *had* done caused a massive public outcry, even in nations like the Free Worlds League and the Draconis Combine, which cared little for the Star League. The SLDF seethed, but held itself in check. Kerensky met the pronouncement with icy calm. Upon the council announcing their decision, the General stood and motioned John Davion to silence before the complete decision could be read out. Kerensky coldly regarded each of the House Lords, then removed his robe of office and ripped it in half. He stripped it of insignia, ribbons and decorations and threw them on the table. Then he turned and left the chamber. Throughout the entire humiliation, he had not said a word. Some of the House Lords, like Robert Steiner, looked smugly at his retreating back. Others, like Barbara Liao—who would later liken the decision to a crime that doomed the Inner Sphere—were heartbroken.

Kerensky's silence didn't continue. Two days later, as he prepared to depart Terra for the SLDF headquarters on New Earth, he requested the presence of the House Lords in Throne Room. None dared decline. The five lords entered the chamber, restored after the massacre, fearful of what might happen next. Kerensky entered a few moments later, the massive security doors swinging shut behind him, and he sat on the First Lord's throne. In his hand he held the pistol Amaris had used to murder Richard Cameron in this very chair. For a ghastly moment the House Lords feared they had pushed Kerensky too far and that he was about to forcibly restore the Star League, starting with them.

They were relieved when the General instead pleaded with them to obey the honors of war and to treat the Republican and pro-Amaris Hegemony forces with leniency. The lords listened and agreed—the policy Kerensky outlined was little different to what he had enforced during his Protectorship, and there was little desire to change the status quo. Those accused of war crimes would still stand trial, but the rank and file of the Amaris forces would receive clemency. With that, Kerensky departed Terra. He would return only once more before Operation EXODUS.

The High Council's deliberations continued for another ten months, but the five House Lords failed to agree on any significant points. Meanwhile, Terra and the Hegemony continued to suffer the after-effects of war. The key sticking point was who would become First Lord. No Cameron heirs remained and the House lords had forcibly removed Kerensky from the picture. That left themselves, and each sought to advance his or her own position, initially via diplomacy but later through bribery and threats. No consensus was reached (though there were rumors of a pact between Robert Steiner and Barbara Liao to stymie the efforts of Kenyon Marik) and on 12 August 2781 the council decided to abandon their deliberations. Their proclamation dissolved the High Council, though it stopped short of actually disbanding the Star League (an important point in their later claims to the First Lordship). In reality, though, the Star League was dead. All that remained was for the vultures to pick over its carcass.

League Civil War to restore the broken Hegemony. That would fall to ad-hoc efforts by the SLDF and later the Ministry of Communications. However, both the SLDF and the Ministry relied on broken Star League and Hegemony institutions for operational support and funding. Maintaining the status quo was itself a major struggle, so rebuilding became a near impossibility.

As a consequence, the Hegemony descended into anarchy, slowly at first while the SLDF maintained order but faster and more violently once they were left to their own devices. None of the Houses admitted it, but the records that survive from the era suggest orchestrated campaigns to destabilize planetary (and national) governments for their own ends. The Houses, preparing for war, did not want the Hegemony to recover; they wanted it to die so they could pick over the corpse. That may not have been the House Lords' intention when they met in 2780-81, but by 2783 almost all the Houses were enacting plans to seize vast swathes of the Hegemony—including, they hoped, Terra itself.

—*A History of Folly*, by Ana Cordray, University of Tharkad Press, 2874



"After long months of intense negotiations, we have reached an impasse on the question of who should become the next leader of the Star League. It is our opinion that the inability to find a new First Lord makes any further decision-making impossible. Therefore, we officially dissolve the High Council on this day, August 12, in the year of 2781."

—Proclamation disbanding the High Council and ending the Star League

FURTHER AFIELD

In the immediate aftermath of the Amaris Civil War, the Hegemony worlds saw a significant influx of aid, with relief agencies and businesses collaborating to deliver the material. Space was donated on commercial vessels and donation centers sprang up across the Inner Sphere. Even the Periphery realms contributed aid, viewing the suffering of the Hegemony as akin to the mistreatment they had received during the Freedom War. People too were a vital part of the effort, with volunteer corps assembling to aid in relief efforts and reconstruction. Some were motivated by the desire to help the unfortunate, others by guilt at the way their own governments had handled the situation.

The SLDF served as facilitators for these efforts, as the Hegemony government had not been restored, and it soon became apparent that a variety of different plans would be needed. Some worlds had suffered little infrastructure damage and simply needed supplies and a respite to re-start their own governments and economies. Others had been so ravaged that life was barely sustainable. In these

cases, difficult decisions had to be made—whether to evacuate the population or leave them in place while efforts were made to patch up the infrastructure. In many cases a middle path was chosen, with some people being evacuated but others remaining. A few planets were abandoned, their populations moving to other Hegemony worlds or taking up offers of refuge among the former Star League member-states. These abandoned systems became known as the "lost worlds." They would not be the last, with the Succession Wars adding significantly to their number.

Working in the SLDF and the relief agencies' favor was the timescale of the operation to liberate Terra. The first worlds freed from Amaris' influence, those furthest from Terra, were liberated in 2772 and thus had almost a decade's worth of restoration by the time the High Council disbanded. Others, among them Humanity's homeworld and several planets closest to it, were only just starting to see the benefits of the relief operation.

Almost six billion Terrans chose to abandon their homes in the difficult years after the end of the civil war, seeking out new lives elsewhere in the Hegemony on worlds less ravaged by conflict. Accomplished in under five years, this mass migration was one of the largest in human history and yet, because of the cataclysmic events that preceded and followed, it scarcely rates mention in the histories. Ironically, those who chose to stay on Terra would regain many of the Star League's lost glories under ComStar, while those who fled elsewhere in the Hegemony found themselves embroiled in the Succession Wars, their worlds the spoils of the Hegemony's collapse.

In the wake of the council's disbanding, relief efforts slowed markedly as the member-states removed government-level support. Jerome Blake coordinated relief operations and private agencies continued to work with local authorities, but resources fell short and without any political will to see its government reformed, the Hegemony was effectively dead. The member-state governments realized this. In fact, they were counting on it.

In the summer of 2783, news reached Kerensky that recruiters from the Federated Suns had been talking to SLDF forces with a view to their joining the AFFS. Soon, similar reports emerged from each of the former Star League military regions, each with a similar offer, part of their massive military build-ups that had begun during the later Star League and were now accelerating with the removal of any Star League authority. Only the Terran Hegemony, without a functioning central government, wasn't trying to suborn the SLDF. Kerensky protested to the House Lords, who responded by calling for his resignation as Commanding General. He ignored the command—the High Council had disbanded and thus had no authority to issue orders to the SLDF—but realized that the SLDF's position was rapidly becoming untenable.

CRISIS IN THE SLDF

Kerensky arrived back on New Earth, the SLDF's operational HQ, on 28 September and immediately immersed himself in the plethora of administrative tasks needed to keep the SLDF functional. He congratulated the troops on a job well done and warned them that the task ahead, though challenging, would lead to a better Inner Sphere. He called upon the SLDF to treat the Republicans and all who had work with Amaris fairly and though he made no reference to the ongoing war crimes trials, he acknowledged that the former enemy comprised both villains and heroes. Some of the Republicans were already working with the SLDF and more would do so as the level of their persecution in the former Hegemony increased. As they had done after the Rim Worlds campaign, the SLDF accepted these new recruits, though the standard legal provisos remained.

Kerensky tolerated the situation the High Council had put him in, but others of his officers were less accepting. A number within the High Command were furious at the General's treatment (and the High Council's inaction during most of the military campaign) and advocated a more pro-active approach to the situation. On 5 October, General DeChavilier informed Kerensky that much of the SLDF was prepared to take on the High Council and place Kerensky on the Star League throne. Kerensky declined, stating dryly that so long as there was a Star League, he would remain loyal to it. He acknowledged that the Star League was dying, but that while he could seize control by force, he had no desire to rule. DeChavilier argued that made him the ideal candidate, but Kerensky had little desire to expose his family to political life. So effective was his security around them that the existence of his family wasn't publicly known until the Clans returned to the Inner Sphere in 3050.

Despite the General's refusal, anti-Council sentiment ran high among the troops and a cabal coalesced to plan for such an eventuality. They called the operation CASE RED and planning accelerated after the 12 August pronouncement. Even then Kerensky refused to act, though his diaries, retained by the Clans, show his inner conflict. Chief among the cabal was General Lauren Hayes, whose advocacy of intervention in Inner Sphere would soon lead to a rift with Kerensky when he outlined his plans for the future: Exodus.

The Houses' attempts to suborn SLDF formations seem to have been the catalyst for the Exodus plan, a decision to remove the SLDF from the political and military equation and to create a bastion far from the Inner Sphere where they could reside. By mid-September 2783 a draft plan had been established and Kerensky worked with DeChavilier to refine it. Almost all the discussions occurred within the SLDF, but Jerome Blake, the Minister of Communications and the prime architect of reconstruction within the Hegemony, was consulted on the operation in the late autumn. The discussions between Kerensky and Minister Blake were cryptic, but it became clear that their goals were complementary. Blake sought to preserve the Hegemony and its people but needed supplies to do so. Kerensky could supply some of those (and, he suspected, manpower, as not all the SLDF would agree to Exodus).

THE BLOOD OF INNOCENTS

Kerensky oversaw the death of Amaris and his family but hundreds—if not thousands—bore the blood of the Amaris family. None of Amaris' legitimate progeny survived, but rumors persist of bastards escaping the net the Usurper and his Krypteia sought to throw over them. More solid information exists concerning the fate of members of Amaris' extended family, in particular his uncles, aunts and cousins. Some threw their lot in with Amaris' but others did not; members of the Amaris clan were as much rivals as allies.

One who did support the Usurper was his cousin, Rifkin Amaris, a 'Mech designer best known for the SAM-RS2 *Matar* fiasco. At war's end, Rifkin attempted to flee Terra under an assumed name but was apprehended and convicted at the Geneva War Crimes Trials. Sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, his incarceration lasted only eleven months before his lynching by fellow inmates. Another supporter of Stefan was his uncle, Petter, Cynthia Amaris' youngest brother and Rifkin's father who was appointed Minister for Education in the Usurper's regime. Petter Amaris was among those tried and executed at war's end.

At the other end of the spectrum were those who disdained—and, in one case, actively opposed—Amaris' political games. Cynthia's other sibling, Charlotte Amaris, had been disowned by the family over (rumors suggest) a scandal concerning elements of the family fortune. She was a vocal, if erratic, critic of the Amaris family until her death (a result of complications from alcohol abuse) in 2757. Her son, Mikael, took criticism of his cousin to a new level and became involved with the Rim Republican Army. The Krypteia undertook several operations to apprehend this "black sheep" but he eluded them. Mikael refused to cooperate with the SLDF, or to take part in the attempts to form a government during the SLDF occupation, maintaining a low profile, but he did resurface as a key figure in the resistance to Operation ALMARIC, the Lyrans' conquest of the Republic. Though Mikael was slain on Apollo in 2786, his descendants continue to play a role in Apollo society, albeit renamed as the Helius family.

Natalia Gorienko was a cousin on Amaris' father's side (and thus not technically an Amaris) who worked as a financier on Apollo. She kept a low profile throughout Stefan's reign, particularly after the outbreak of war, but was picked up by the SLDF during their occupation of the Rim Worlds Republic. Held in protective custody during the occupation, she disappeared when Kerensky's forces departed for Terra. Some evidence exists that the SLDF helped her assume a new identity, but it is unclear whether she accompanied the SLDF or remained in the Rim Worlds Republic and/or Lyrans' Commonwealth.

—*Twists of Fate: A History of the Amaris Coup*, by Piers Rankin; ComStar Press, 2915

EROSION OF THE SLDF

The sheer scale of the Periphery Uprising and the Star League Civil War was unprecedented. In fourteen years of fighting, seventy percent of the SLDF was lost—some three thousand regiments along with over 1,800 WarShips.

Total SLDF Force Strength by Year

Unit Type	2764	2766	2777	2780
BattleMech Divisions	125	86	46	40
Infantry Divisions	325	231	108	95
Independent Regiments	304	231	136	117
WarShips*	2,243	1,861	1,006	414
Regiment Equivalent	4,354	3,084	1,522	1,350
Army % of 2764 force	100.00	70.83	34.96	30.59
Navy % of 2764 force	100.00	82.96	44.85	18.45

* Excluding reserve.

The various phases of the conflict showed marked similarities. A third of the total SLDF perished, was disbanded or defected during the Periphery Uprising (the figure was closer to 45 percent of the actual troops sent to the conflict). The campaigns to liberate the Terran Hegemony (excluding Terra) cost a further third (half the participants). Removing the final yoke of Amaris from Terra itself cost a further four percent (ten percent of the participants). Naval losses were comparatively light in the Periphery Uprising (though their losses in the Coup were catastrophic), but increased dramatically during Operations CHIEFTAIN and LIBERATION as a consequence of the SDS systems.

Forces Fighting Periphery Uprising (2765-November 2766)

Unit Type	Taking Part	Destroyed	Disbanded	Joined Rebels	Garrison duties
BattleMech Divisions	87	30	9	0	38
Infantry Divisions	217	76	17	1	108
Independent Regiments	205	61	6	6	99
WarShips	1,020	127	132	16	1,223

Disbanded units were folded into existing formations or, in the case of naval vessels, stripped for parts and then scuttled. Units on garrison duties were not assigned to the combat theatre or (during Operations CHIEFTAIN and LIBERATION) were on rear-echelon security duties.

Forces Defending Against Coup (December 2766)

Unit Type	Taking Part	Destroyed
BattleMech Divisions	3	1
Infantry Divisions	6	6
Independent Regiments	7	7
WarShips	84	53

Campaign to Recapture Hegemony—Operation CHIEFTAIN (2772-2776)

Unit Type	Taking Part	Destroyed	Disbanded	Garrison duties
BattleMech Divisions	82	43	0	4
Infantry Divisions	218	108	0	13
Independent Regiments	212	96	1	19
WarShips	1,792	589	292	105

Battle for Terra—Operation LIBERATION (2777-2779)

Unit Type	Taking Part	Destroyed	Disbanded	Garrison duties
BattleMech Divisions	41	1	2	4
Infantry Divisions	111	4	25	13
Independent Regiments	115	6	11	19
WarShips	909	319	273	97

The force that departed with Kerensky still featured around a thousand regiments, while 170 joined ComStar and the Houses gained control of 128.

Fate of the SLDF

Unit Type	Exodus	ComStar	Joining House/ Becoming Mercs*
BattleMech Divisions	32	6	4
Infantry Divisions	76	11	8 (+19) ‡
Independent Regiments	63	16	32
WarShips	402	12	0
Proportion of Survivors	77.7%	12.7%	9.6%

*In most cases only one or two regiments from each division joined the Houses.

‡ Elements of some units disbanded earlier in the conflict also joined the Houses. These figures appear in parentheses.

PLANNING FOR EXILE

It is a testament to the respect for Kerensky within the SLDF that details of the Exodus plan did not leak to the Houses until after it had been executed. The General outlined the plan to two hundred senior officers in a meeting on Terra on 14 February, 2784. He would not fight the Houses, nor did he wish to see the SLDF corrupted by them and used contrary to the tenets of the Star League. The SLDF embodied the Star League, and it would live as long as they did. Rather than be corrupted by the Inner Sphere, he proposed an Exodus to a distant refuge where this spirit could be nurtured.

The audience wholeheartedly approved of Kerensky's intentions and many vowed to follow him. Some, however, stated they would not join the General in exile and so the decision was made to poll each member of the SLDF, giving them the option of joining the mission or not. The poll was carried out in intense secrecy during late February and early March, and by mid-March more than eighty percent of the SLDF had agreed to Kerensky's proposal. Those who chose to stay had different reasons, but a core coalesced around Lauren Hayes, wanting to remain involved with Inner Sphere affairs. Other troopers simply returned home, giving up the military life, though in some cases whole units opted to join the five Great Houses where they would fight—and in most cases die—in the Succession Wars.

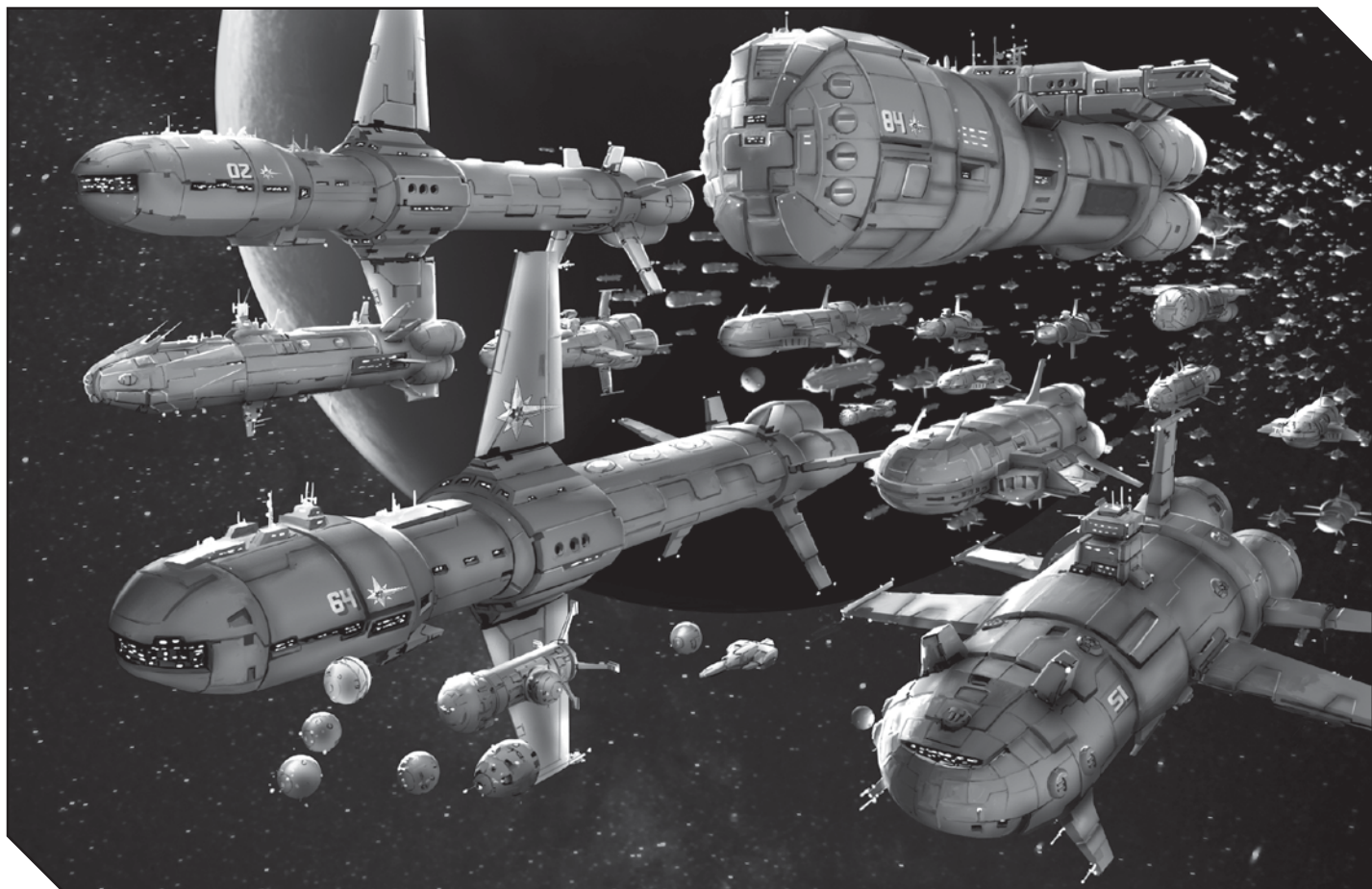
Kerensky wasn't keen on leaving Hayes and her SLDF force alone in the Inner Sphere and brokered a meeting between Hayes and Jerome Blake. Kerensky knew Blake would need military force to protect the HPG network and an agreement was reached for Hayes' troops to fall under the authority of the Minister of Communications. This force would prove vital to Blake's plans.

DISPOSING OF THE USURPER

One of the last serious issues facing Kerensky before he departed the Inner Sphere was what to do with Amaris' remains. After the Usurper's execution he'd ordered the remains preserved aboard the *McKenna's Pride*, knowing that a formal burial site would become a place of pilgrimage for those committed to Amaris' cause. On the other hand, he didn't want to bury the remains in an unmarked grave, or incinerate them and scatter the ashes in space, or take the body on the Exodus. To do so would play into the hands of those who claimed Amaris had escaped and that tales of his execution were a lie fostered by General Kerensky.

The final resting place of the lord of the Rim Worlds was both public and unglamorous. At the suggestion of a trooper in Kerensky's retinue, he donated the body to the University of New Samarkand's medical school. Amaris thus served as a learning tool for several generations of Combine doctors before the remains were disposed of in 2863 when maintaining the ancient cryogenics chamber in which they were stored became too impractical and costly.

—*Twists of Fate: A History of the Amaris Coup*, by Piers Rankin; ComStar Press, 2915



Meanwhile, preparations proceeded apace for Exodus. That this was done without news leaking to the Great Houses was a staggering achievement—even the troops who joined House militaries remained cagey about the General's plans until after he'd departed the Inner Sphere. Some troopers maintained secrecy by severing ties with their families, while others committed their nearest and dearest to Kerensky's plan. All across the Inner Sphere and Periphery many families have tales of relatives who disappeared with Kerensky, sometimes taking whole branches of the family with them. In many such cases the lost family members were honored as followers of Kerensky (at least until the return of the Clans), but in some cases—notably in the shattered Hegemony—they were reviled as traitors who abandoned their kin.

Not all the preparations for Exodus could be concealed from the intelligence agencies of the Houses; the sheer volume of supplies being purchased caused localized economic booms. Shipyards and foundries worked overtime and the SLDF's acquisition of transports raised some eyebrows. Wasn't the SLDF supposed to be de-mobilizing? Queries were met with canned answers such as "restocking" or "rebuilding caches" while gathering troops and WarShips were "on maneuvers." Some suggested Kerensky was preparing a military operation, but only the Draconis Combine—accused of complicity with the Amaris regime—took these claims seriously.

By the start of July, all the preparations were complete and on 8 July 2784 Kerensky issued a one-word broadcast: Exodus. The message flashed out across the HPG network, prioritized by Blake's staff, reaching vessels around more than fifty worlds. As one, the fleets began to move.

Each convoy took a different path, but all headed broadly spinward. They ignored hails from House military vessels and responded curtly to space traffic control communications, quickly making it clear that their actions would dictate what was happening in local space and not vice-versa. Thousands of vessels were on the move—a core of transports, escorted by WarShips and combat DropShips, all surrounded by a halo of fighters—and as the convoys pushed into the Draconis Combine it seemed the rumors of war were well founded.

Coordinator Minoru Kurita became increasingly concerned as the SLDF moved through his realm, but he ordered his people to remain calm and his military to hold their fire. Provoking a conflict with Kerensky would be disastrous and the Coordinator believed Kerensky's honor would lead him along a different path. He was correct, and the people of the Combine breathed a sigh of relief as the SLDF convoys veered away from the Combine capital of Luthien. Instead, they converged on New Samarkand, the old capital, with 1,349 transports and 402 warships arriving there between 2 October and 1 November. The vessels brought with them over a thousand regiments of troops and their dependents. All told, six million people accompanied the General and more joined at New Samarkand.

Kerensky authorized shore leave on the world and the Combine population was stunned to see civilians among Kerensky's entourage, particularly children. The presence of families made clear that Minoru Kurita's belief that Kerensky would depart the Inner Sphere was correct. The Coordinator would not, however, learn of this until after the Exodus; Kerensky exercised tight control over New Samarkand's HPG and space traffic during his stay there.

On 2 November, Kerensky ordered the transports to begin loading up. On 5 November the first vessels of the combined Exodus Fleet jumped from New Samarkand and began the long voyage into the Deep Periphery. Their trail remained evident for hundreds of light-years, but eventually disappeared beyond Gutara V, the fleet's fate unknown to the Inner Sphere until their descendants chose to return 260 years later.

LEGACIES: THE SUCCESSION WARS, COMSTAR, AND THE CLANS

The war against Amaris and the collapse of the Star League is one of the major historical turning points that directly shaped the modern universe: The Succession Wars, the Clans and ComStar.

The greed and ambition of the House Lords led to the Succession Wars that dominated the Inner Sphere from 2786 until 3050. Ambition has historically been seen as the main cause of the Succession Wars, each House seeking to supplant the Cameron dynasty. Yet with the Star League formally dissolved at the end of the 2780 council, these claims of First Lordship were little more than bravado, a pretext for the rapaciousness and brutality that followed. With the Amaris Civil War prompting an Inner Sphere-wide economic collapse, some historians suggest that the land-grab in the Hegemony, begun as an attempt to secure the riches and technologies of the former realm, became the straw that broke the camel's back. All these worlds were in desperate need of aid—many were in ruins—and rather than acquiring massive quantities of new resources, the Houses instead found themselves even deeper in a quagmire. War against their neighbors—especially now that the Star League wasn't around to act as policeman—seemed the only option. The ensuing centuries of warfare would bring destruction far in excess of the Age of War, rivaled only by the Jihad. Even those not directly targeted in the 200-plus years of conflict that followed suffered nonetheless, caught up in the wider economic and political collapse.

Kerensky's decision to take most of the SLDF into exile played a significant role in this. With the SLDF at his back, he could have re-imposed the Star League by force but, tired of war and dispirited by the High Council's stance, chose not to do so. However, he knew that to remain impartial would condemn the SLDF to a slow death, denied the resources they needed to survive, and he feared the military might of the Star League forces would be suborned by the Houses and used against the other realms. Kerensky knew he could either fight or capitulate, but found neither option satisfactory. Some units did defect, but most remained loyal to the General as he outlined his third way: Exodus.

ComStar and the Com Guard

One of only two points of agreement between the High Council (the other being the dismissal of Kerensky) was the establishment of the Ministry of Communications under the aegis of Jerome Blake. While the Council bickered, Blake set about restoring the HPG network. As the sole representative of the Hegemony and Star League authorities, he became the *de facto* head of the reconstruction authority. The High Council refused to get involved, telling Blake to act as he saw fit, and Kerensky was happy to delegate this work while providing logistical support to the minister.

When the High Council disbanded, taking with it the Star League, the Ministry of Communications remained, but Blake realized its role would have to adapt. He soon decided that efforts to restore the Court of the Star League would be a waste of resources and ordered the work halted, sealing the court in the spring of 2783. Kerensky's Exodus plan, revealed to the minister later that year, both confounded and aided Blake's plans for the future. The withdrawal of the SLDF would leave a power vacuum into which the Houses would surge, hampering the ministry's efforts. Conversely, with no High Council or SLDF, Blake would have few restrictions on his actions and he soon developed a plan to establish a new Hegemony.

He called the plan Operation SILVER SHIELD, a three-stage process to build a new Hegemony realm. The first step was to persuade former High Council members to respect the Ministry of Communications as a neutral body, something he achieved on a grand tour during 2786 and formalized by the Communications Protocol of 2787. The House leaders accepted that ComStar, as the Ministry had been renamed in 2786, was a neutral agency accorded sovereign rights, its territory (including all HPG stations) inviolate. In addition to this, Blake established the ComStar Letter of Credit (commonly abbreviated as C-bill in 2789) as a replacement for the Star League dollar as the standard currency for commerce between the interstellar nations. Finally, he planned to establish a new Hegemony from the remnants of the one he'd been charged with maintaining. His initial plan was to use the Ministry's *de facto* possession to dissuade predation by House forces, but by subtly manipulating the provisions of the Communications Protocol he laid the groundwork for a new Inner Sphere state. Similarly, when he first contemplated the plan in the early 2780s, Blake considered using mercenaries for this military operations, but when Kerensky briefed him on the Exodus plan a new possibility emerged.

Not all of the SLDF accepted Kerensky's proposal. Those who wanted to remain active in the Inner Sphere coalesced around Lauren Hayes, commanding general of the 151st Division. Kerensky and Hayes met repeatedly and eventually reached a compromise; those who wished could remain with Hayes' force, but Hayes herself would obey the last vestige of the Star League, the Bureau of Communications headed by Jerome Blake. These forces were the secret deal between Kerensky and Blake, agreeing to work in the best interests of the Star League. To Blake, this meant to secure Terra and surrounding worlds against predation by the Houses and after

Kerensky departed. Blake knew a complete restoration of the Hegemony was impossible—the Houses were nibbling away at the edges of Hegemony space even before Kerensky left—but he planned on seizing a sizeable portion with the troops Kerensky had gifted him.

Some eight divisions remained operational, with materiel for as many again. This force would become the progenitor of the Com Guard. In the face of Great House rapaciousness, the First Circuit abandoned plans to secure a broader swathe of worlds in March, fearing that to do so would put them in direct competition with the Houses and invite a conflict that ComStar couldn't win. Yet seizing Terra on its own was both practical and justifiable, and Blake persuaded Hayes to pursue the limited-gains operation. On 25 June 2788, Hayes's forces secured Terra in a surprise military operation, defeating House scouting forces and SLDF forces opposed to the takeover. Shocked at this decisive action and fearful of just how potent Blake's forces were—even with Blake maintaining a pretense that the forces employed were mercenaries rather than SLDF troops—the Houses backed off and Terra's neutrality was assured. In early July, a small detachment raided New Earth shortly before the Lyran Commonwealth attacked it. The raiders seized all military hardware and equipment from the SLDF's former HQ. Loading their spoils aboard a fleet of DropShips, ComStar engineers placed demolition charges to destroy the equipment and facilities they could not carry off. Most of Hayes' forces disbanded shortly after Silver Shield, their equipment placed in caches across the mother world and returning to light only after the Com Guard's public unveiling in the wake of the Fourth Succession War.

However noble at first, the intentions of Blake and Hayes were soon corrupted. After Blake's death in 2819, Conrad Toyama set about converting ComStar from a secular organization into a religious one and in doing so sowed the seeds for the techno-religious Word of Blake faction. Rumors of outside influence in this descent are likely overblown, but ComStar did shift from becoming the "last bastion of light and technology" into an agency of destruction and discord, deliberately hampering technological research in the Successor States and meddling in politics to maintain their position. Just as the Inner Sphere failed to recognize the SLDF in the form of the returning Clans, those who accompanied Kerensky into exile did not associate the corrupt, militaristic ComStar with the Bureau of Communications they had left behind.

The Succession Wars

Kerensky's self-imposed exile removed the damping rods on the Great Houses (latterly known as the Successor States) and led directly to the Succession Wars. Even in the later years of the Star League, the ambitions of the Houses ran contrary to the will of the Star League government and peoples, their opposition to Simon Cameron's policies a classic example. None were brave enough to outright defy the First Lord, but persistent rumors suggest governmental or industrialist involvement in Simon's murder on New Silesia. The installation of a child First Lord played into their hands as much as it did into Stefan Amaris'.

DIGESTING THE HEGEMONY

For the Hegemony worlds and their people, the years after the Liberation were a slow and agonizing death, the Hegemony's central government and SLDF being unable to support them and their neighbors looking on with avarice. Even before Kerensky enacted Operation EXODUS, the Great Houses sought control of worlds, often under the guise of "relief efforts" and "reconstruction advisors." The General rebuffed many of these efforts, but when it became clear that the Houses were also trying to suborn the SLDF and Kerensky settled on the Exodus plan, his opposition became less focused. The five Great Houses took the opportunity to slowly nibble away at the edges of the former Hegemony. Over the next three and a half years before the outbreak of the First Succession War, some sixty-seven worlds were under various Houses' *de facto* (if not legal) control. Most of these takeovers faced little opposition from the local population, many of whom were relieved at the return of central control, and the largest conflicts were between the Houses themselves. Some worlds, such as Towner, became the focus of military action even before the official outbreak of hostilities. A number of worlds that had been held jointly by the Hegemony and the Great Houses were quietly absorbed too, mostly after Kerensky's departure, but in some cases even while the SLDF remained.

The full reckoning of the Hegemony worlds seized by the Houses before the First Succession War is:

Lyrans Commonwealth (14)

2783: Sabik, Zebebelgenubit, Syrma†, Galatea‡; 2784: Alchiba‡, Menkent‡, Mizar‡, Summer, Wyatt; 2785: Milton, Lyons, Cor Caroli‡; 2786: Nusakant, Afleir.

Draconis Combine (9)

2783: Moore‡, Nashira‡, Telos IV; 2784: Murchison, Pokhara, Mara‡; 2785: Lambrecht, Al Na'ir; 2786: Helen.

Federated Suns (12)

2783: Towner, Ozawa, Mirach‡, Schedar‡; 2784: Elbar‡, New Rhodes III, Mallory's World‡; 2785: Galatia III, New Florence, Ronel; 2786: Addicks, Hean.

Capellan Confederation (15)

2783: Ningpo‡, Slocum‡; 2784: New Canton, Aldebaran, Tikonov‡, Yangtze‡, Zurich, Arboris, Azha; 2785: Nanking, Bex, Genoa, Terra Firma(*), Capolla; 2786: Outreach.

Free Worlds League (17)

2783: Chertan, Dieudonne‡, Dubhe‡, Wasat; 2784: Berenson, Wing‡, Zion‡; 2785: Bordon, Connaught, Denebola, New Dallas, Marcus, Callison‡, Talitha, Van Diemen IV; 2786: Castor, Tyrning(*).

JOINTLY ADMINISTERED WORLDS

Peacemaking had long been part of the Hegemony's foreign policy, and across the Inner Sphere a number of contested worlds had been placed under Hegemony authority. These worlds would become flashpoints of the First Succession War.

Free Worlds League and Capellan Confederation: Andurien, Capolla, Carbonis, Claybrooke, El Giza, Fletcher, Fujidera, Gomeisa, Hamilton, Holt, and Mosiro.

Lyrans Commonwealth and Free Worlds League: Alorton, Denebola, Millungera, Preston, Saltillo, Savannah, Sheridan, Sierra, and Stewart.

Draconis Combine and Lyrans Commonwealth: Engadin, Gram, Halesowen, Kiesen, Lovinac, Minakuchi, Setubal, Stanzach, Sulafat, The Edge, Unzmarkt, and Vorarlberg.

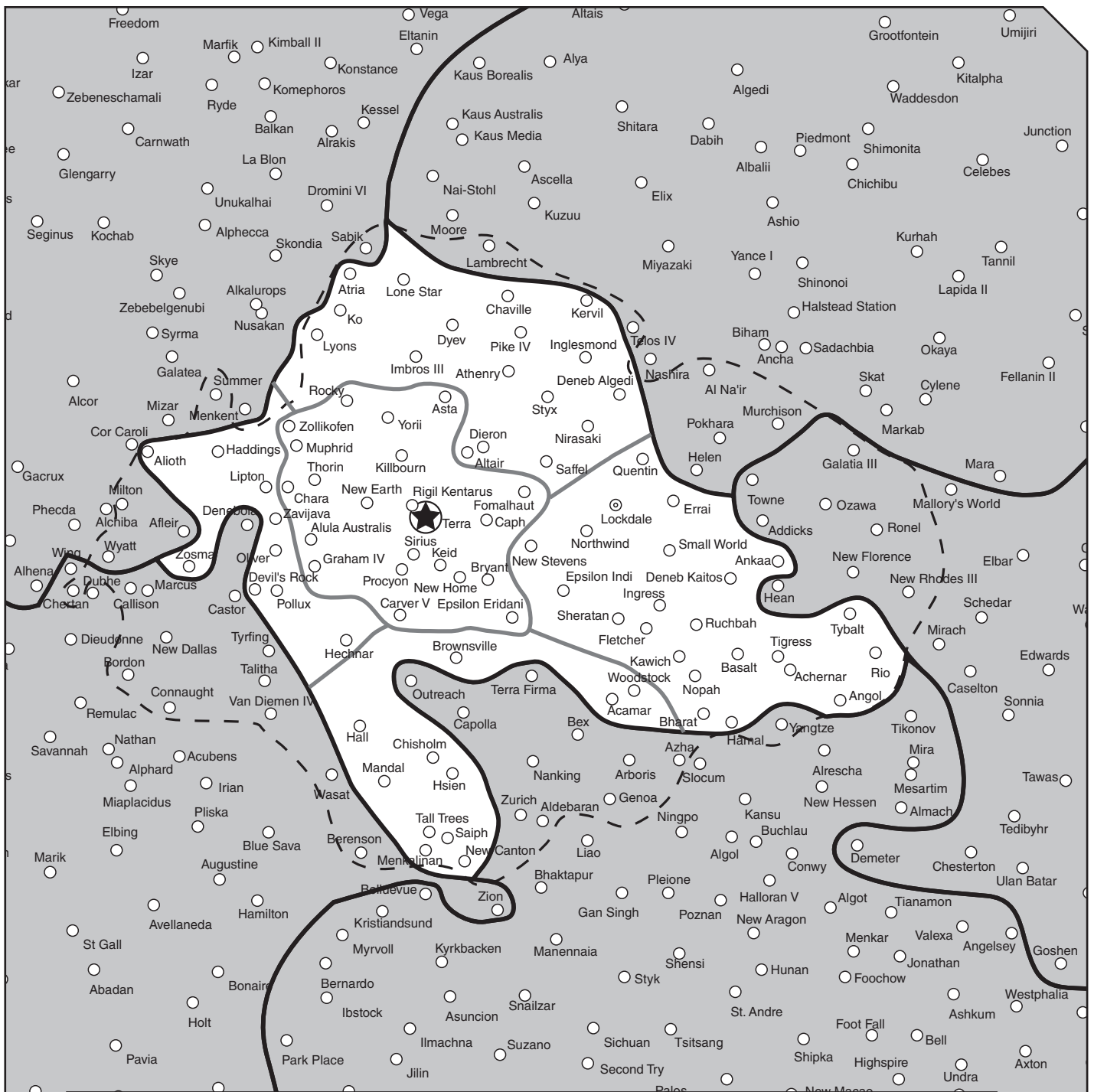
Federated Suns and Draconis Combine: Delacruz, Deshler, Fellanin II, Homam, Huan, Kesai IV, Misery, New Mendham, Sadalbari, and Valentina.

Capellan Confederation and Federated Suns: Andro, Jaipur, Mandaree, Midale, Narellan, Robsart, Stein's Folly, Valexa, and Wappingers.

(*) Denotes a Hegemony regional capital

(‡) Denotes a world held jointly with the Terran Hegemony seized (except Tikonov) by the AEA

(†) Denotes a member-state world seized by the AEA and later recaptured



PLANET KEY

- ★ NATIONAL CAPITAL
- ⊙ DISTRICT CAPITAL
- ⊙ PROVINCE CAPITAL

Terran Hegemony Great House Annexations (2783 to 2786)

LEGEND



LEGENDS OF THE FALL

Hundreds of stories followed the fall of the Star League and Kerensky's departure from the Inner Sphere. Though many stories are unique—the Jessica Trees of Alarion or the Ronin of New Samarkand—many follow the broad themes outlined below.

The Golden Age

Most of these tales romanticize the Star League era, making it a golden age rather than one of self-aggrandizement and backbiting. Much of this is understandable—compared to the horrors of the Succession Wars, the people wanted to remember the League as a beacon of hope—but in becoming an ideal (of the House Lords' desires to rule the Inner Sphere, and later the Clans' desire to rebuild lost glories) it abandoned the principles and hopes of Ian Cameron and Albert Marik. Rather than embodying the best of Humanity, it became an excuse for the worst. The Succession Wars, the Clan Invasion and even the Jihad all used aspects of the Star League for justification. Will future attempts to bring Humanity together be any more successful? Will the Republic of the Sphere one day fall prey to divisiveness and the ambitions of human beings? History suggests that is likely, and it will take strong and visionary men and women to keep it true to its ideals.

The Once and Future King

A number of tales pre-date the Clan Invasion cast Kerensky and the SLDF as secret guardians of the Inner Sphere, modern-day King Arthurs ready to return and aid the Inner Sphere in its hour of greatest need. The lie was put to this tale with the return of the Clans, but before the truth of the Clans' origins sank in, some House Lords prayed for Kerensky to come and rescue them from these barbaric invaders. Even now, forty years and more after that chaos, some believe Kerensky will one day return to save them from the Clans/Word of Blake/local governments, refusing to heed the Clans' own assertion that they are the descendants of the Exodus Fleet.

The tales of a schism within the Clans in their earliest days, leading to the annihilation (and possibly escape) of Clan Wolverine, play a role in this, with claims that the Wolverines/Minnesota Tribe are the true heirs of Kerensky. Still others believe this missing force joined with ComStar and contributed in its descent from a neutral agency into a malignant theocracy.

If the actions of the High Council in the run-up to the Amaris Civil War were self-serving, their policies during the conflict were even more so. They sought every advantage they could, no matter the cost (a major factor in the Periphery Uprising), and began a military buildup that continued until the outbreak of open war in the late 2780s. It seems likely for all their posturing they would have tolerated an Amaris-led Hegemony, regarding it as far weaker than a Cameron-led one, though they were not willing to accept Amaris as their overlord in a re-formed Star League. When Kerensky announced his intention to liberate Terra, they were freed from the need to oppose Amaris directly, but neither did they truly want the Star League or the Hegemony to be saved. That became crystal clear after Operation LIBERATION when the High Council failed to agree to any policy on the Star League or Hegemony beyond the formation of the Ministry of Communications under Jerome Blake. They wanted the riches of the Star League, but they didn't want the restrictions it imposed.

What they hadn't taken into account was the wider impact of the Hegemony's fall. Two hundred years of cooperation had integrated the economies of the Inner Sphere, and when the Hegemony collapsed, the shockwaves reverberated around the Inner Sphere. Economic interdependence caused corporations within the House realms to falter as their partners in the Hegemony and other states foundered or were prevented from trading by border hostilities.

Securing the riches of the Hegemony thus became essential for the Great Houses' own survival. House militaries recruited a number of SLDF formations, using them to further bolster their military build-up, but the great prize was the worlds and industries of the Hegemony. Even before Kerensky's departure, the Houses had begun to nibble at the edge of the Hegemony; that process accelerated after the Exodus and in the early months of the First Succession War (see *Digesting the Hegemony*, p. 118). All the Houses participated in the land grab (though the Federated Suns' effort was half-hearted), with Terra their ultimate goal, for its technologies and riches but also its prestige.

The First Succession War began innocuously with border clashes between the Draconis Combine and Lyran Commonwealth in 2785. Sometimes called the Phony War, these early clashes fell into two groups—conflicts over Hegemony worlds desired by two (or more) of the Houses, and border clashes akin to that of the Third Hidden War during the reign of Simon Cameron. The latter were often “false-flag” operations, the participants attempting to conceal their identities despite them being clear to all the combatants. The raids were designed to test defenses and to provoke, and they escalated through 2786. By the end of the year, the pretense of limited war was abandoned following Minoru Kurita's declaring himself First Lord that December. That act marked the official start of the First Succession War and was swiftly followed by the other House Lords doing likewise. As each of the Houses turned on each other, the pace of their operations against the Hegemony accelerated. ComStar's seizure of Terra in 2788 stymied the House Lords' ambition and ensured the human homeworld's neutrality. Yet removing that prize (which the various House Lords would likely have used to reinforce their claim to the First Lordship) forced the lords to look elsewhere for their triumphs. Only total victory over their enemies would suffice. Who first used strategic weapons is unclear—each of the Houses claims it was their enemies—but soon nuclear, chemical and biological weapons were employed profligately alongside conventional forces. By 2800, all of the Hegemony worlds save Terra had been seized by the Great Houses or abandoned. By far the largest winners were the Draconis Combine and Capellan Confederation, seizing forty-five and thirty-eight worlds respectively. The Federated Suns fared worst, losing all but one of its gains from the Hegemony along with a number of its pre-war holdings to its neighbors.

Continued on p. 121

Whereas in the Age of War principally military targets were attacked, this new war saw industrial sites, infrastructure and civilian populations targeted. The casualty figures soon dwarfed the hundred million lost in the Amaris Civil War, and the repercussions reached far beyond the conflict zones. Worlds not involved in the fighting found themselves deprived of vital trade and many colonies failed, adding to the death toll. Even in the Periphery, which escaped the direct impact of the First Succession War, worlds suffered similar fates, denied access to trade and medicines from the Star League.

By 2821, exhaustion set in and a series of accords ended the First Succession War. Tensions remained high and the peace would be short-lived; the Second Succession War began in 2828, and though less brutal than its predecessor, it further ravaged the Inner Sphere. At the time naked ambition seemed at fault for the renewed hostilities, but records unearthed during the reformation of ComStar in 3052 implied that the order, under the leadership of Primus Toyama, had served as an agent provocateur. The Second Succession War lasted until 2864, but the warring powers scarcely had a chance to take a breath before the Third Succession War began in 2866. Unlike the previous two, this was a low-intensity conflict more akin to the Age of War. It would continue until the alliance between the Steiner and Davion families brought high-tempo conflict to the fore once more in what became known as the Fourth Succession War and the War of 3039 (called by some the Fifth Succession War, though that name is not in widespread use). The Succession Wars would not truly end until 3050 when, as history turned full circle, the descendants of Kerensky returned home.

The Clans

Kerensky's Exodus provided the SLDF with a unifying goal, though divisions soon emerged on the journey. The *Prinz Eugen* revolt was the highest-profile incident, but far from the only one, and tensions within the fleet simmered. The Clans maintain that the fleet's arrival at the Pentagon on 24 August 2786 was according to the General's plan, but others have suggested the situation within the fleet forced them to stop (if Kerensky ever had a specific destination in mind).

Though the worlds they settled were harsh, the early years were good for the colonists. They were at peace and had the opportunity to build and recover. However, soon old rivalries emerged and with them factional infighting resumed. By 2800, Kerensky found himself fighting open revolts, but hoped to restore order and with it hope for the future. It was not to be; he suffered a heart attack and died on 11 June 2801 while planning the campaign for Eden.

In a mirror of the situation in the Inner Sphere, the SLDF leadership bickered over what to do with the General's legacy. Each general advanced his or her own claim and began offering bribes and threats. Kerensky's eldest son, Nicholas, attempted to bring order but was soon dismissed and decided to stage his own exodus, taking those loyal to him to a new refuge on the world of Strana Mechty. The Pentagon soon degenerated into the genocidal conflict known as the Pentagon Civil War, the ferocity of which dwarfed even the First Succession War. Meanwhile, Nicholas' people prospered and the General's son re-forged society into a new form supposedly free from such petty concerns: The Clans.

The Clans began the reconquest of the Pentagon in 2821 and were quickly victorious. However, frictions within their hierarchy soon caused trouble; Clan Wolverine was annihilated in 2823 and Clan Widowmaker fell in 2834 after their Khan, Cal Jorgensson, killed ilKhan Kerensky. Factionalization would remain a part of the Clans' psyche, with loyalty to the Clan put above all other concerns, though eventually a degree of cohesion emerged in the form of two competing philosophies. The Wardens felt the Clans should remain aloof from the affairs of the Inner Sphere, watching and guarding it against external threats, while the Crusaders felt it was their duty to re-impose the Star League on the Inner Sphere by force. The latter eventually prompted the return of Kerensky's descendants to the Inner Sphere in 3050, though the two factions remained at odds and some Clans eventually threw their lot in with the Inner Sphere.

The Enemy Without

Not everyone idolized Kerensky. Though the Exodus has been heavily romanticized and in some cases turned into a religion—I'm looking at you, One Star Faith—not all looked favorably on the General's actions. Across the Inner Sphere, but with particular focus on the former Hegemony worlds, there was a sense of abandonment, a feeling that Kerensky fled and left them to their fate. In extreme cases, this antipathy turned to hatred, with Kerensky and his followers branded traitors to the people of the Inner Sphere. The arrival of the Clans and the revelation of their heritage reawakened these ancient hostilities; many of the worlds around Terra have become vocal opponents of the Clans and those who deal with them (particularly after Clan participation in Stone's coalition).

The Lost Heirs

Kerensky's actions ensured that few rumors circulated about Amaris' survival, but as with Richard Cameron's daughter—which I mentioned earlier—rumors circulated that one or more of Amaris' children had survived. There is little evidence concerning the Usurper's legitimate children, but ComStar's records confirm that several bastard children did survive their sire's fall, the descendants of some eventually serving in the order. That Amaris' line survived in part when the Cameron line did not is perhaps the final indignity of the Star League Civil War.

Had a Cameron heir survived, as the rumors surrounding Amanda Cameron's fate suggest, then perhaps the Star League and Hegemony could have been saved and the war not been in vain. I should point out that even now there are those who refuse to abandon hopes for a restoration of the Cameron line. Some go as far as to suggest that Kerensky knew there was a legitimate heir but concealed the child's existence, allowing the Star League to fall (or in some versions avoiding a new war between the SLDF and the member-states). Whether such stories add to the portrayal of Aleksandr Kerensky as a hero or a villain depend somewhat on the outlook of the reader, but if even fractionally true, could they hint at some generations-long scheme perpetuated by the Great Father?

—*Hopes, Fears and Lies*, by Sean White, Harvard Press, 3082

INNER SPHERE - 2822



Lyran Commonwealth

Tamar Pact

- 1) Trelshire
- 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

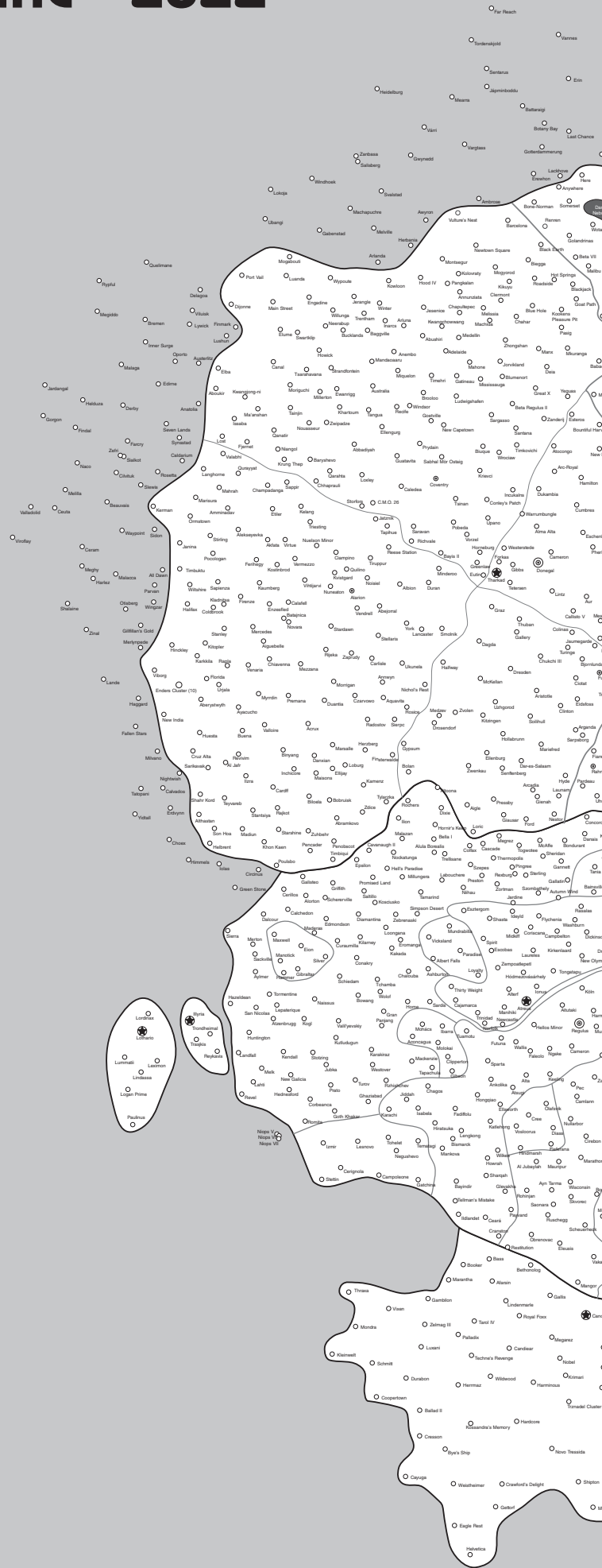
- 1) Tikonov Commonality
- 2) Chesterton Commonality
- 3) Sama Commonality
- 4) Capella Commonality
- 5) Sian Commonality
- 6) St Ives Commonality
- 7) Andurien Commonality

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) Regular 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

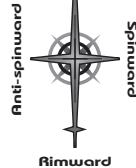
120 LIGHT YEARS OR 36.8 PARSECS

Region capital District capital National capital

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

Map compiled by COMSTAR.
From information provided by the COMSTAR EXPLORER CORPS
and the STAR LEAGUE ARCHIVES on Terra.

Coreward



Spinward

Rimward

TIMELINE OF THE END OF THE STAR LEAGUE AND IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

- 2777** (23 January) Operation LIBERATION begins
(30 January) start of Terran landings
- 2779** (15 January) Invasion of North America across the Bering Straits
(3 September) liberation of Unity City
(29 September) Stefan Amaris captured
(12 November) Hostilities end
(25 November) Amaris and family executed
- 2780** (21 March) Cardinal Vladimir Kosiv of People's Union of Kazakh elected Pope
(10 October) Star League Council meets for the first time since the Coup
(14 October) Star League Council names Jerome Blake as Minister of Communications
(18 October) Aleksandr Kerensky stripped of post as Protector; SLDF ordered back to base
- 2781** (12 August) High Council disbanded; remaining Star League institutions (except the Ministry of Communications and the SLDF) cease operation
- 2782** (9 February) Jerome Blake urges appointment of an overseer for reconstruction; the council, having abrogated their authority six months earlier, tells him to act as he sees fit
- 2783** (12 April) Court of the Star League sealed on Jerome Blake's orders
- 2784** (14 February) Kerensky briefs senior officers on Operation EXODUS
(8 July) Kerensky issues Exodus order and SLDF departs bases
- 2784** (5 November) SLDF fleet departs the Inner Sphere, many of the remaining ships pledge their support to Jerome Blake
- 2785** (22 May) Lyran Commonwealth launches surprise attack on Bolan, the first action of what will become the First Succession War
(19 August) Prinz Eugen Revolt in the Exodus Fleet
- 2786** (7 June) Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery raids Lyran world of Skondia
(24 August) Exodus Fleet arrives at the Pentagon Worlds
(28 December) Minoru Kurita proclaims himself First Lord of the Star League
(31 December) Archon Jennifer Steiner declares herself First Lord and declares war on Draconis Combine; official start of the First Succession War
- 2787** (30 January) Kenyon Marik declares himself First Lord
(Mid-year) General war between the Great Houses
- 2788** (13 March) Curtailed plans for Operation SILVER SHIELD presented to First Circuit and approved
(25 June) Operation SILVER SHIELD launched, all hyperpulse generator stations throughout Inner Sphere shut down
(28 June) Jerome Blake announces ComStar's seizure of Terra and its neutrality in the Succession Wars
(3 July) ComStar forces raid Star League Defense Force bases on New Earth, seizing all military equipment
- 2789** At the suggestion of Minoru Kurita, ComStar founds the Mercenary Review Board
- 2791** ComStar Archives Branch established to preserve knowledge
- 2796** (19 July) Minoru Kurita assassinated on Kentares IV; his heir Jinjiro Kurita orders the massacre of 50 million civilians in revenge
- 2801** (14 May) General DeChavilier killed during unrest on Eden; Kerensky responds heavy-handedly and DeChavilier Massacre ensues, all-out war erupts on Eden
(11 June) Aleksandr Kerensky suffers a heart attack and dies
(4 August) Nicholas Kerensky calls for Second Exodus to Strana Mechty
- 2802** (February) Pentagon Civil War begins
- 2810** Nicholas Kerensky founds the Clans
- 2811** After House Liao attempts to bribe ComStar technicians, ComStar's ROM division founded as an intelligence gathering and security service
- 2819** (15 May) Jerome Blake dies; Conrad Toyama becomes Prime Administrator (Primus) of ComStar
- 2821** (16 May) Peace Accord of Bella I signed by Lyran Commonwealth and Free Worlds League, one of several accords that ends the First Succession War
(2 July) The Clans begin Operation KLONDIKE to retake Pentagon Worlds
- 2834** (7 October) IlKhan Nicholas Kerensky killed by Clan Widowmaker Khan Cal Jorgenson during Widowmaker Trial of Refusal, Jerome Winsen elected ilKhan



RULES ANNEX

The following rules allow the complexities of Operations CHIEFTAIN and LIBERATION to be simulated in regular campaign play. These rules are for use with *BattleTech* games of all kinds, omnibus rules for which can be found in *Total Warfare (TW)*, *TechManual (TM)*, *Tactical Operations (TO)*, *Strategic Operations (SO)*, and *A Time of War (AToW)*.

Creating Operation CHIEFTAIN 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. *Notable Personalities* provides optional rules that allow the most significant commanders and leaders of each nation to interact within Periphery Uprising and Operation CHIEFTAIN scenarios.

The last section, *New Combat Units*, provides descriptions and game information for a variety of combat units that were used by the Star League Defense Forces and the Amaris Empire Armed Forces during the campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony.

SPECIAL CASE RULES

The following *BattleTech* volumes contain rules relevant to play in the Late Star League era:

Historical: Operation Klondike contains details of Royal variants on common designs (these also appear in *Record Sheets: Operation Klondike*).

Historical: Reunification War contains details of weapons of mass destruction.

Jihad Hot Spots: Terra contains details of Castle Brian fortifications.

Historical: Liberation of Terra, Volume 1 details special abilities of notable SLDF and Rim Worlds Republic/Amaris Empire Armed Forces units and leaders, as well as complete rules and unit design specifications for the SLDF's Space Defense System.

In addition, subsequent sourcebooks—including *Era Report: 2750*, *Field Manual: SLDF* and the *2750 Field Report* PDF-exclusive series—will allow players access to more immersive rules for setting games in this era.

CREATING OPERATION CHIEFTAIN SCENARIOS

Gamemasters and players can use the rules in the following pages to generate scenarios set within the Late Star League era, during the latter years of the twenty-eighth century—specifically, operations CHIEFTAIN and LIBERATION during the years 2775 to 2779—up to the final collapse of the Star League. These years were particularly grueling on the Star League Defense Forces (and, of course, the Amaris Empire Armed Forces), having already fought during the Periphery Uprising (known as the Freedom War in the Periphery) and the Amaris Coup (Amaris' conquering of the Terran Hegemony) before engaging in the Star League Civil War that culminated with Operation CHIEFTAIN.

BEFORE YOU START

The Late Star League 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 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 involved players should agree on the setup and any special case rules that will be included. Remember also the two “prime directives” in 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 should follow all of the general rules for creating scenarios in *TW* when designing scenarios and campaigns set during the Late Star League era.

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLES

The Random Unit Assignment Tables in this section should be used instead of those provided in the Creating Scenarios rules (starting on p. 256, *TW*) to provide for era-specific unit choices. Likewise, they should replace the Assignment Tables starting on p. 130 in *A Time of War*. The Random 'Mech and Vehicle Assignment Tables in this book are designed specifically to determine the composition of any Operation CHIEFTAIN-era force.

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.

Assigning 'Mechs and Vehicles

After determining the weight classes of the combat units in each force (see p. 265, *TW*), use the Random Unit Assignment Table: SLDF/RWA, pp. 132-133, to determine the specific designs to be used.

If using vehicles, aerospace fighters and/or DropShips, simply roll on the corresponding column of the appropriate table (SLDF or RWR). If using BattleMechs, players will roll randomly to determine which BattleMech column to roll on: Roll 1D6, applying the modifier for that unit type from the BattleMech Random Assignment Modifiers table.

SLDF: On a result of 2 or less, roll on Column A; on a result of 3-4, roll on Column B; on a result of 5 or more, roll on Column C.

RWR: On a result of 2 or less, roll on Column A; on a result of 3-4, roll on Column B; on a result of 5 or more, roll on Column C.

FORCE COMPOSITIONS

Star League Forces

The SLDF comprised a wide range of units, but in their broadest sense units fell into one of three categories: line units, Royal units and volunteer brigades. To determine a unit's category, roll 1D6 and consult the Random SLDF Unit table. If specific units are being used, skip this step.

In addition, the SLDF in the later years of Operation CHIEFTAIN was a far cry from the standardized organization it was prior to the Amaris Coup and the Periphery Uprising. Where lances and companies were once commonly comprised of a single design, years of heavy combat losses—combined with scavenging and short-run purchases of new equipment—returned the SLDF to the patchwork combat organization of its Reunification War birth. For battles fought during the final stages of Operation CHIEFTAIN, once the weight class of a lance has been determined for Royal or SLDF line units, roll individually to determine the specific design of each 'Mech or vehicle in the lance. If a specific nationality is required for members of volunteer brigades, consult the Random SLDF Nationality table.

SLDF Royal Units: By this point in the war, the SLDF Royal units have suffered heavy losses in equipment and personnel, requiring replacements from any source possible. To simulate this, when determining vehicles for Royal units, roll an additional 1D6. On a result of 1-3, the standard variant *must* be selected; on a result of 4-6, either the Royal or standard variant may be selected.

Amaris Empire

The Rim Worlds Army, later styled the Amaris Empire Armed Forces, was both more and less consistent than the SLDF. It was not as regimented—lances and companies comprised the mix of forces—but it drew troops from only two primary sources: The Rim Worlds Republic and the Terran Hegemony (though Amaris also made significant use of mercenary troops). Most Amaris units should use the standard RWR tables and unit modifiers for unit generation (whether RWA/AEAF or mercenary), but one unit per company can be determined as if it was an SLDF line unit (using the SLDF rather than RWA tables), reflecting access to SLDF factories and caches within the Hegemony.

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 new *A Time of War* character created for the Late Star League era. In this case, use these tables instead of the Random Assignment Tables in *AToW* (see pp. 130-135, *AToW*). Base the character's equipment rating on the character's current regiment (or the regiment in which the character last served).

If the character has not served with the SLDF, assume he has a 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 towards this total). Decrease by one level for every two of the following: 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 (B for non-SLDF characters) or below C.

Assigning Pilots

Once the players have determined the 'Mechs and other battlefield units they will be using, they should assign pilots to each. The players may make direct use of the Random Experience Level table and the Random Skills Table (Expanded) (see p. 73, *TW*).

If playing elements from a specific unit, consult the rules provided for that unit (see *Operation CHIEFTAIN Militaries*, *HLoT1*, p. 150); each unit (and sub-unit) is given a rating of Elite, Veteran,

Regular or Green. If playing an Elite unit, the controlling player should add a +4 modifier to the Random Experience Level roll and a +2 modifier to the Random Skill Rating roll. If playing a Veteran unit, add +2 to the Experience Roll and +1 to the Skill Roll. If playing a Regular unit, apply no modifiers, and if playing a Green unit, apply -2 to the Experience Roll and -1 to the Skill Roll.

Star League Forces: The SLDF has been fighting for more than eight straight years by the mid-point of Operation CHIEFTAIN, with casualties far exceeding the influx of new recruits. As a result, though steadily shrinking in size, the SLDF is a far more experienced military force than its RWA/AEAF opponents. In any battles occurring in the years 2775 and 2776, apply a +2 bonus to all Random Experience Rating Table rolls and a +1 bonus to all Random Skills Table rolls for all SLDF pilots. In the years 2776 through the end of the war, these increase to a +3 bonus to all Random Experience Rating Table rolls and a +2 bonus to all Random Skills Table rolls. These bonuses are in addition to any other appropriate modifiers.

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 that can be called upon. Use the following guidelines, in conjunction with the rules for Maintenance, Repair, Salvage and Customization beginning on p. 166 of *SO* to determine each force's repair abilities.

Royal Fighters

The SLDF's Royal units were the Inner Sphere's best-equipped force, making use of cutting-edge technologies and in greater quantities than other formations. For BattleMechs, this is represented by the SLDF's A column, which contains many of the advanced Royal designs produced for the SLDF. Vehicles with a Royal variant are indicated by a superscript "R" (R). Fighters with Royal equivalents are similarly marked, though the unit designations are somewhat more complex. The list below provides the equivalency between the standard model and the Royal variant.

Standard	Royal
<i>Light</i>	
THK-63 Tomahawk [45]	THK-63b Tomahawk [45]
SB-28 Sabre [25]	SB-27b Sabre [25]
TRN-3T Trident [20]	TRN-3Tb Trident [20]
RGU-133 Rogue [40]	RGU-133Eb Rogue [40]
ZRO-114 Zero [35]	ZRO-116b Zero [35]
<i>Medium</i>	
IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65]	IRN-SD1b Ironsides [65]
HCT-213B Hellcat II [50]	HCT-213C Hellcat II [50]
GTHA-500 Gotha [60]	GTHA-500b Gotha [60]
LTN-G15 Lightning [50]	LTN-G15b Lightning [50]
<i>Heavy</i>	
CHP-W5 Chippewa [90]	CHP-W5b Chippewa [90]
TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100]	THB-36b Thunderbird [100]
STU-K5 Stuka [100]	STU-K5b Stuka [100]
AHB-443 Ahab [90]	AHB-443b Ahab [90]
HMR-HD Hammerhead [75]	HMR-HDb Hammerhead [75]
RPR-100 Rapier [85]	RPR-100b Rapier [85]
EGL-R6 Eagle [75]	EGL-R6b Eagle [75]

The following rules will help to simulate all these vicissitudes. First, for each individual combat unit and vehicle, roll 2D6 on the Random Quality table below (applying any faction-specific modifiers listed on that table), and apply the same modifiers as when rolling on the Random Experience Level table for the unit. This will provide the quality level of the unit to be repaired. Next, determine the technician's skill level by rolling on the Random Experience Level table (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 rules for Obtaining Replacement Parts, 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 beginning on p. 181.

Star League: At this point in the war, the SLDF has exhausted its strategic reserves and no longer has a nearly limitless logistical train to draw upon. While the SLDF has developed a chain of suppliers to provide ammunition, spare parts and other consumables, there are limits to the quantity of these supplies available as well as how quickly they can be delivered. Whenever possible, the SLDF must salvage and scavenge what they can from the battlefields, or even turn to local manufacturers and tradesmen to manufacture or modify parts to keep their 'Mechs, tanks, fighters and other vehicles operating. On the other hand, the Star League possesses a highly skilled technical pool that has learned to work under less than ideal conditions, with each company typically assigned its own tech team (while additional technical teams are standing by at the regimental level to assist with battle repairs).

Most regiments' best maintenance facilities are still on their DropShips, which—except for rare instances—are typically far removed from the battlefields. That leaves most techs with portable field repair gantries—of which there are limited numbers (typically only a handful per battalion formation)—to accomplish much of their maintenance and repair needs. That is, unless their regimental commander authorizes the movement of their DropShips closer to the battlefield.

Of course, that's easier said than done. The typical 'Mech and aerospace fighter carrier has little additional mass for carrying replacement parts, let alone for all 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, is needed for that logistics chain. But that also 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)? And if one or more DropShips relocate, what happens to the field base set up around the DropShips? Moreover, is a suitable landing zone even available close by—few hard-packed surfaces capable of supporting a landing DropShip (and then letting it take off again) exist in most mountain, jungle and arctic landscapes.

On the other hand, the SLDF will have more and more access to factory-level facilities as it delves deeper into the Hegemony towards Terra. However, most of these facilities will require some amount of repairs, and even then will likely be devoted to the mass construction (or refurbishing) of SLDF materiel rather than making repairs.

There are also more mundane issues to deal with. The SLDF has limited manpower and time. There are only so many techs that can work on a single unit at once, and a counterattack could happen at any time. Those are just some of the issues the Star League player(s) will have to deal with.

Rim Worlds/Amaris Empire: The Amaris Empire (the occupied Terran Hegemony) can draw upon the industry and many of the logistical reserves once claimed by the Star League Defense Forces. Every AEAFF garrison force has a sufficient stock of repair and replacement parts available to them at the start of any campaign on the planet they are defending, but that stock will dwindle quickly. They also have general access to their world's industries, though not necessarily to those facilities' highly trained and skilled workers (at least if they don't want to risk sabotage).

RANDOM SLDF UNIT TABLE

1D6	Nationality
1-4	SLDF line unit
5	SLDF Royal unit
6	Volunteer Brigade (Roll on Random Member State nationality table)

RANDOM MEMBER STATE NATIONALITY TABLE

2D6	Nationality
2	Lyrans Commonwealth
3	Free Worlds League
4	Roll on Territorial State Nationality Table
5	Draconis Combine
6	Lyrans Commonwealth
7	Federated Suns
8	Capellan Confederation
9	Free Worlds League
10	Roll on Territorial State Nationality Table
11	Draconis Combine
12	Capellan Confederation

RANDOM TERRITORIAL STATE NATIONALITY TABLE

1D6	Nationality
1-3	Rim Worlds Republic
4	Outworlds Alliance
5	Taurian Concordat
6	Magistracy of Canopus

BATTLEMech RANDOM ASSIGNMENT MODIFIERS TABLE

Formation	Modifier	Table
Royal unit	-3	SLDF
SLDF line unit	+0	SLDF
SLDF Volunteer Brigade	+1	SLDF
Member-state forces	+2	SLDF
RWR Line unit	+1	RWA
RWR Republican Guard*	+0	RWA

*Amaris Dragoons and Amaris Guards Regiments

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

Nation	Modifier
SLDF Line	-4
Royal SLDF	-2
SLDF Volunteer	-3
AEAF Regular	+2
AEAF Mercenary	+1
AEAF Patriot	-1

On the battlefield, the AEAf forces face the same limitations and qualifiers that the SLDF does, though with the added complication that DropShips may not be readily available (at least military DropShips with integral repair facilities). Hegemony Patriot units and other dedicated garrison forces have no integral DropShip support at all, and often only have hand-me-down equipment and what maintenance equipment they could scrounge from their assigned worlds. Meanwhile, mercenary forces have a mish-mash of support capabilities depending entirely upon their bank accounts, the skill of their logisticians, and just how much they stole or otherwise "acquired" from the Hegemony's planetary populations.

Customization

Numerous customized combat vehicles were used by the Star League as well as the Amaris Empire during Operation CHIEFTAIN, though later in the campaign as the SLDF progressed, far fewer factory-customized units remained operational. On the other hand, wide-scale patchwork repairs were the norm on the battlefield, resulting in numerous "field-customized" units in every regiment. Within the ranks of the AEAf, factory-customized units were available, though often they were sabotaged in some way by factory workers who opposed the Occupation. Players and gamemasters looking to insert an additional level of excitement and randomness may employ customized battlefield units. Use the following rules, in conjunction with Customization (see SO, beginning on p. 188), to customize your units for play.

Star League: At the beginning of the war, the SLDF's soldiers were the best of the best, supplied with the best equipment possible. After the loss of the Terran Hegemony, and especially as the war dragged on, customization of a skilled and dedicated pilot's (or crew's) 'Mech, vehicle or fighter was no longer an option. After more than eight years of fighting, only those units customized prior to the Coup *and* still operational were found on the SLDF's rolls (determined either by whether a unit has survived a continuous Operation CHIEFTAIN campaign, or randomly as outlined below). The customizations allowed are outlined below.

The guidelines for customizing SLDF units appear on p. 146, *HLoT1*. There is a 16 percent chance (1-in-6) that a Royal lance/platoon commander's unit can be customized, a 33 percent chance (2-in-6) that a Royal company commander's unit can be customized, a 50 percent (3-in-6) chance that a battalion or regimental commander's unit can be customized, and a 67 percent chance (4-in-6) that any higher commander's unit can be customized. There is also a 16 percent chance (1-in-6) that a single additional unit in each battalion can be customized.

On the other hand, one unit in each SLDF lance (or aerospace company) may be a "FrankenMech" (p. 189, *SO*). There is an additional 16 percent chance (1-in-6) that a second unit in each lance (or aerospace company) may be customized as a FrankenMech.

Amaris Empire: Stefan Amaris' soldiers can make the refits outlined above as if they were pre-war SLDF regular units, unless otherwise specified, using the equipment and facilities at hand (see p. 188, *SO*). All Amaris Dragoons and Amaris Guards units may apply customization as if they were pre-war SLDF Royal units.

Pre-Existing Damage

The war in the Periphery followed by the campaign to liberate the Terran Hegemony was a tremendously expensive proposition for everyone involved, SLDF and AEAF alike. Just a few years into nearly a decade and a half of unrelenting war, the SLDF in particular experienced significant shortfalls in spare parts, replacement personnel and equipment, adversely affecting its ability to keep its 'Mechs and vehicles in operational order.

Unless otherwise indicated, all regiments—Star League and AEAF—may begin a scenario with pre-existing damage (for AEAF units, only if they have been in battle already). First, roll 2D6 for each individual regiment with elements in the battle; on a result of 10 or greater, that regiment's combat units may suffer from pre-existing damage. Modify this roll by +1 for every year that nation's forces have been fighting the war (to a maximum of +6); SLDF Royal units, as well as Amaris Dragoons and Amaris Guards units, gain a -1 bonus to this roll.

If the roll indicates that pre-existing damage is possible, roll 1D6 for each combat unit ('Mech, vehicle, conventional or aerospace fighter) and apply the appropriate result from the Pre-Existing Damage table below to determine what damage, if any, each suffers.

Units that receive pre-existing damage suffer the indicated amount of damage and critical hits, determining the locations and any critical hits randomly against the affected units. For BattleMechs, use the Front/Back column to determine the locations of all damage. 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 chart) before rolling the hit location of any damage. No unit may take to the field if it has suffered any critical damage that would render it inoperative or immobilized; 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 simply apply an additional 5 points of damage to a random location.

PRE-EXISTING DAMAGE TABLE

1D6 Roll	Pre-Existing Damage
1	No pre-existing damage.
2-3	Light 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.
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).
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).

There is also a chance that any units with pre-existing damage that employ ammunition-based weapons may not have a full combat load. Roll 1D6 for each 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 (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 Star League (including member-state) units gain a -1 bonus 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 looking to fight an Operation CHIEFTAIN campaign should first generate all the units available to each involved force. They can then apply any pre-existing damage to the various units, as appropriate. This will be the condition each unit is in prior to the start of campaign play. Once the initial pre-existing damage is applied, no further rolls for such damage will be made through the end of the campaign (unless reinforcements are received). All units must then accomplish regular maintenance, as well as repair battle damage, as appropriate.

RANDOM NEGATIVE DESIGN QUIRK TABLE

2D6 Roll	Design Quirk
2	Sensor Ghosts
3	Difficult Ejection
4	EM Interference
5	Ammunition Feed Problem
6	Poor Cooling Jacket
7	Non-Standard Parts
8	Poor Workmanship
9	Unbalanced
10	Poor Life Support
11	Weak Legs/Weak Undercarriage
12	Hard to Pilot

Design Quirks

After so many years of hard combat, many of the SLDF's war machines are literally falling apart. Players who want to add one more level of realism can take the concept of pre-existing damage and poor maintenance one step further and apply negative design quirks to simulate the general poor condition of many SLDF 'Mechs, tanks and fighters.

For each unit fielded, roll 1D6. On a result of 1-3, that unit receives a Negative Design Quirk (see pp. 196-199, SO). Randomly roll to determine which quirk to apply on the Random Negative Design Quirk table, below (rerolling any quirk that does not apply to the unit, such as Exposed Actuators on an aerospace fighter).

RECORD SHEET SOURCE TABLE

Abbreviation	Source
RS3039	Record Sheets: 3039 Unabridged
RS3050U-C	Record Sheets: 3050 Upgrade, Clan and Star League
RS3058U-C	Record Sheets: 3058 Upgrade, Clan and Star League
TR3075	Technical Readout: 3075
RS3075u	Record Sheets: 3075
3085u-PP	Record Sheets 3085: Project Phoenix
RSOK	Record Sheets: Operation Klondike
WD	Wolf's Dragoons
HistRW	Historical: Reunification War
HLoT1	Historical: Liberation of Terra, vol. 1
HLoT2	Historical: Liberation of Terra, vol. 2
TR3057r	Technical Readout: 3057 Revised
XTRPrim1	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 1
XTRPrim2	Experimental Technical Readout: Primitives vol. 2
RS3060u	Record Sheets: 3060 Upgrade Unabridged

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: STAR LEAGUE DEFENSE FORCE

Light Units (20 to 35 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (0-)

2	FLC-4Nb Falcon [30] (RSOK)
3	HER-1Sb Hermes [30] (RSOK)
4	Mon-66b Mongoose [25] (RS3075u)
5	LCT-1Vb Locust [20] (RSOK)
6	OTT-7Jb Ostscout [35] (RS3075u)
7	HER-1Sb Hermes [30] (RSOK)
8	THE-Nb Thorn [20] (RSOK)
9	SL-1G Sling [25] (RSOK)
10	STG-3Gb Stinger [20] (RSOK)
11	SPR-4F Spector [35] (RS3058U-C)
12	HSR-200Db Hussar [30] (RS3075u)

B (1-4)

TLN-5W Talon [35] (RS3058U-C)
HSR-200D Hussar [30] (RS3050U-C)
PNT-9R Panther [35] (RS3039)
FS9-H Firestarter [35] (RS3039)
FFL-3A Firefly [30] (WD)
MON-66 Mongoose [25] (RS3050U-C)
SDR-5V Spider [30] (RS3039)
MCY-99 Mercury [20] (RS3050U-C)
SPR-4F Spector [35] (RS3058U-C)
TLN-5V Talon [35] (RS3058U-C)
NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (RS3058U-C)

C (5+)

HSR-200D Hussar [30] (RS3050U-C)
FFL-3A Firefly [30] (WD)
MCY-99 Mercury [20] (RS3050U-C)
THE-N Thorn [20] (RS3050U-C)
WSP-1A Wasp [20] (RS3039)
LCT-1V Locust [20] (RS3039)
PNT-9R Panther [35] (RS3039)
STG-3R Stinger [20] (RS3039)
JVN-10N Javelin [30] (RS3039)
NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (RS3058U-C)
SDR-5V Spider [30] (RS3039)

Vehicles

Cobra Transport VTOL [30] ^V (RS3075u)
Beagle [15] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Rotunda [20] ^W (RS3050U-C)
Vector VTOL [22] ^V (HLoT2)
Cyrano [30] ^V ^R (RS3050U-C)
Lightning [35] ^H ^R (RS3050U-C)
J. Edgar [25] ^H (RS3039)
Ripper [10] ^V ^R (RS3050U-C)
Nightshade [25] ^V ^R (RS3050U-C)
Chevalier [35] ^W (RS3060u)
Gabriel [5] ^V (RS3050U-C)

Aerospace Fighters (20 to 45 tons)

TRN-3T Trident [20] ^R (RS3050U-C)
SWF-606 Swift [25] (RS3050U-C)
ZRO-114 Zero [35] ^R (RS3050U-C)
THK-63 Tomahawk [45] ^R (RS3050U-C)
SPD-502 Spad [30] (RS3050U-C)
SB-28 Sabre [25] ^R (TR3075)
TRN-3T Trident [20] ^R (RS3050U-C)
F-10 Cheetah [25] (RS3039)
RGU-133E Rogue [40] ^R (RS3050U-C)
ZRO-114 Zero [35] ^R (RS3050U-C)
SB-28 Sabre [25] ^R (TR3075)

Medium Units (40 to 55 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (0-)

2	WVE-5Nb Wyvern [45] (RS3075u)
3	WVR-7H Wolverine II [55] (RSOK)
4	KTO-19b Kintaro [55] (RS3075u)
5	SHD-2Hb Shadow Hawk [55] (RSOK)
6	GRF-2N Griffin [55] (RSOK)
7	CRB-27b Crab [50] (RS3075u)
8	HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (RS3039)
9	PXH-1b Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3075u)
10	STN-3Lb Sentinel [40] (RSOK)
11	CRB-27 Crab [50] (RS3050U-C)
12	LNK-9Q Lynx [55] (RS3058U-C)

B (1-4)

SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (RS3039)
STN-3L Sentinel [40] (RS3050U-C)
WTH-1 Whitworth [40] (RS3039)
CRB-27 Crab [50] (RS3050U-C)
KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (RS3050U-C)
PXH-2 Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3085u-PP)
CDA-2A Cicada [40] (RS3039)
ASN-21 Assassin [40] (RS3039)
GRF-2N Griffin [55] (RSOK)
KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (RS3075u)
STY-2C Starslayer [50] (RS3058U-C)

C (5+)

WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (RS3050U-C)
PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3039)
GRF-1N Griffin [55] (RS3039)
WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (RS3039)
HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (RS3039)
SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (RS3039)
DV-6M Dervish [55] (RS3039)
ASN-21 Assassin [40] (RS3039)
CRB-27 Crab [50] (RS3050U-C)
STN-1S Sentinel [40] (RS3039)
KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (RS3050U-C)

Vehicles

Zephyr [40] ^H ^R (RS3050U-C)
Ballista [55] ^T (HLoT2)
Thor [55] ^W (RS3050U-C)
Chaparral [50] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Turhan [50] ^W (RS3075u)
T12 Tiger [55] ^H (HistRW)
Kanga [50] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Maxim [50] ^H (RS3039)
Vali [40] ^W (HLoT2)
Goblin [45] ^T (RS3039)
LVT-4 Hovertank [50] ^H (XTRPrim2)

Aerospace Fighters (50 to 70 tons)

HCT-214 Hellcat II [50] ^R (RS3050U-C)
IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] ^R (RS3050U-C)
SL-26 Samurai [50] (RS3039)
HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] ^R (RS3050U-C)
GTHA-500 Gotha [60] ^R (RS3050U-C)
LTN-G15 Lightning [50] ^R (TR3075)
IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] ^R (RS3050U-C)
GTHA-300 Gotha [60] ^R (RS3050U-C)
F-90 Stingray [60] (RS3039)
HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] ^R (RS3050U-C)
LCF-R20 Lucifer [65] (RS3039)

Heavy Units (60 to 75 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (0-)

2	EXT-4Db Exterminator [65] (RSOK)
3	OST-2Cb Ostroc [60] (RS3075u)
4	BMB-12D Bombardier [65] (RS3050U-C)
5	TDR-5Sb Thunderbolt [65] (RSOK)
6	ARC-2Rb Archer [70] (RSOK)
7	WHM-7A Warhammer [70] (RSOK)
8	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (RS3050U-C)
9	MAD-2R Marauder [75] (RS3075u)
10	GLH-2D Galahad [60] (RS3075u)
11	CHP-1Nb Champion [60] (RSOK)
12	EXC-B2b Excalibur [70] (RS3075u)

B (1-4)

CHP-1N Champion [60] (RS3050U-C)
GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (RS3050U-C)
LCN25-05 Lancelot [60] (RS3050U-C)
WHM-6Rb Warhammer [70] (RS3075u)
GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (RS3050U-C)
MAD-1R Marauder [75] (RS3075u)
EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (RS3058U-C)
CRD-2R Crusader [65] (RS3075u)
BMB-12D Bombardier [65] (RS3050U-C)
BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (RS3050U-C)
CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (RS3058U-C)

C (5+)

FLS-8K Flashman [75] (RS3050U-C)
BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (RS3050U-C)
OTL-4D Ostsol [60] (RS3039)
GLH-2D Galahad [60] (RS3075u)
WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (RS3039)
TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (RS3039)
ON1-K Orion [75] (RS3039)
LCN25-01 Lancelot [60] (RS3050U-C)
CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (RS3058U-C)
GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (RS3050U-C)
ST-8A Shootist [70] (RS3058U-C)

Vehicles

Burke [75] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Pollux [75] ^T (HLoT2)
Von Luckner [75] ^T ^R (RS3039)
Burke [75] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Magi [70] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Manticore [60] ^T (RS3039)
Bulldog [60] ^T (RS3039)
Demon [60] ^W ^R (RS3050U-C)
LB-X Carrier [60] ^T (HLoT2)
Padilla [75] ^T (RS3058U-C)
Marksman [65] ^T (RS3050U-C)

Aerospace Fighters (75 to 100 tons)

CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] ^R (RS3039)
RPR-100 Rapier [85] (RS3050U-C)
TRB-D46 Thunderbird [100] ^R (TR3075)
STU-K5 Stuka [100] ^R (RS3039)
AHB-443 Ahab [90] ^R (RS3050U-C)
HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] ^R (RS3050U-C)
RPR-100 Rapier [85] ^R (RS3050U-C)
EGL-R6 Eagle [75] ^R (TR3075)
AHB-443 Ahab [90] (RS3050U-C)
EGL-R6 Eagle [75] ^R (TR3075)
RPR-100 Rapier [85] (RS3050U-C)

Assault Units (80 to 100 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (0-)

2	AS7-D-H Atlas II [100] (RS3075u)
3	NSR-9J Nightstar [95] (RS3058U-C)
4	STK-3Fb Stalker [85] (RSOK)
5	CRK-5003-1b Crockett [85] (RSOK)
6	RFL-3N-2 Rifleman II [80] (RS3075u)
7	HGN-732b Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
8	KGC-000b King Crab [100] (RS3050U-C)
9	THG-11Eb Thug [80] (RS3050U-C)
10	BLR-1Gb BattleMaster [85] (RS3075u)
11	STK-3H Stalker [85] (RS3039)
12	SHG-2H Shogun [85] (RSOK)

B (1-4)

PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (RS3058U-C)
AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (RS3039)
EMP-6A Emperor [90] (RS3058U-C)
PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (RS3058U-C)
LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (RS3058U-C)
THG-11E Thug [80] (RS3050U-C)
STK-3F Stalker [85] (RS3039)
AS7-D Atlas [100] (RS3039)
BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (RS3039)
HGN-732 Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
KGC-000 King Crab [100] (RS3050U-C)

C (5+)

LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (RS3058U-C)
STK-3F Stalker [85] (RS3039)
THG-11E Thug [80] (RS3050U-C)
STC-2C Striker [80] (RS3058U-C)
AS7-D Atlas [100] (RS3039)
BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (RS3039)
HGN-732 Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
KGC-000 King Crab [100] (RS3050U-C)
EMP-6A Emperor [90] (RS3058U-C)
VTR-9B Victor [80] (RS3039)
CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (RS3039)

Vehicles

Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Fury [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Fury [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Alacorn Mk. VI [95] ^T (RS3058U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Alacorn Mk. VI [95] ^T (RS3058U-C)
Fury [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T ^R (RS3050U-C)

DropShips

Leopard/Leopard CV ^A (TR3057r)
Fortress ^S (TR3057r)
Overlord ^S (TR3057r)
Union ^S (TR3057r)
Triumph ^A (TR3057r)
Dictator ^S (TR3075)
Lion ^S (TR3057r)
Mule ^S (TR3057r)
Achilles ^A (TR3057r)
Lee ^S (HLoT2)
Titan ^A (TR3057r)

*This is a four-legged (quad) BattleMech. ^AAerodyne ^HHover ^SSpheroid ^TTracked ^VVTOL ^WWheeled. ^RRoyal variant available for SLDF Royal units.

RANDOM UNIT ASSIGNMENT TABLE: RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC

Light Units (20 to 35 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (1-2)

2	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (RS3050U-C)
3	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (RS3039)
4	THE-N Thorn [20] (RS3050U-C)
5	SDR-5V Spider [30] (RS3039)
6	TLN-5V Talon [35] (RS3058U-C)
7	STG-3G Stinger [20] (RS3039)
8	NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (RS3058U-C)
9	LCT-1V Locust [20] (RS3039)
10	FS9-H Firestarter [35] (RS3039)
11	HER-1S Hermes [30] (RS3050U-C)
12	OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (RS3039)

B (3-4)

NTK-2Q Night Hawk [35] (RS3058U-C)
MON-66 Mongoose [25] (RS3050U-C)
WSP-1A Wasp [20] (RS3039)
OTT-7J Ostscout [35] (RS3039)
STG-3R Stinger [20] (RS3039)
FS9-H Firestarter [35] (RS3039)
JKR-8T Jackrabbit [25] (RS3075u)
MON-66 Mongoose [25] (RS3050U-C)
THE-N Thorn [20] (RS3050U-C)
JKR-9R Jackrabbit [25] (RS3075u)
SPR-4F Spector [35] (RS3058U-C)

C (5-6)

THE-N Thorn [20] (RS3050U-C)
HSR-200D Hussar [30] (RS3050U-C)
FS9-H Firestarter [35] (RS3039)
LCT-1V Locust [20] (RS3039)
WSP-1A Wasp [20] (RS3039)
SDR-5V Spider [30] (RS3039)
PNT-9R Panther [35] (RS3039)
MCY-99 Mercury [20] (RS3050U-C)
FFL-3A Firefly [30] (WD)
MON-66 Mongoose [25] (RS3050U-C)
JKR-9R Jackrabbit [25] (RS3075u)

Vehicles

Cobra Transport VTOL [30] ^V (RS3075u)
Beagle [15] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Ignis [30] ^T (RS3075u)
Hipparch [30] ^H (HistRW)
Nightshade [25] ^V (RS3050U-C)
J. Edgar [25] ^H (RS3039)
Lightning [35] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Cyrano [30] ^V (RS3050U-C)
Ripper [10] ^V (RS3050U-C)
Vector VTOL [22] ^V (HLoT2)
Gabriel [5] ^V (RS3050U-C)

Aerospace Fighters (20 to 45 tons)

SWF-606 Swift [25] (RS3050U-C)
SB-27 Sabre [25] (TR3075)
CNT-1D Centurion [30] (TR3075)
F-10 Cheetah [25] (RS3039)
THK-63 Tomahawk [45] (RS3050U-C)
TRN-3T Trident [20] (RS3050U-C)
ZRO-114 Zero [35] (RS3050U-C)
RGU-133E Rogue [40] (RS3050U-C)
SPD-502 Spad [30] (RS3050U-C)
ZRO-114 Zero [35] (RS3050U-C)
SWF-606 Swift [25] (RS3050U-C)

Medium Units (40 to 55 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (1-2)

2	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (RS3039)
3	KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (RS3050U-C)
4	PX-4R Phoenix [50] (RS3075u)
5	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (RS3039)
6	WTH-1 Whitworth [40] (RS3039)
7	PX-3R Phoenix [50] (RS3075u)
8	GRF-2N Griffin [55] (RSOK)
9	CRB-27 Crab [50] (RS3050U-C)
10	PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3039)
11	KY2-D-02 Kyudo [45] (RS3075u)
12	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (RS3050U-C)

B (3-4)

LNK-9Q Lynx [55] (RS3058U-C)
STN-3L Sentinel [40] (RS3050U-C)
PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3039)
WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (RS3050U-C)
GRF-1N Griffin [55] (RS3039)
PX-3R Phoenix [50] (RS3075u)
WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (RS3039)
CRB-27 Crab [50] (RS3050U-C)
HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (RS3039)
SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (RS3039)
KTO-19 Kintaro [55] (RS3050U-C)

C (5-6)

STN-3L Sentinel [40] (RS3050U-C)
WTH-1 Whitworth [40] (RS3039)
GRF-1N Griffin [55] (RS3039)
DV-6M Dervish [55] (RS3039)
PX-3R Phoenix [50] (RS3075u)
TLS-1B Talos [50] (HistRW)
WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (RS3039)
PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (RS3039)
PX-4R Phoenix [50] (RS3075u)
HBK-4G Hunchback [50] (RS3039)
SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (RS3039)

Vehicles

Turhan [50] ^W (RS3075u)
Kanga [50] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Zephyr [40] ^H (RS3050U-C)
Thor [55] ^W (RS3050U-C)
T12 Tiger [55] ^H (HistRW)
Turhan [50] ^W (RS3075u)
Maxim [50] ^H (RS3039)
Chaparral [50] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Ballista [55] ^T (HLoT2)
LVT-4 Hovertank [50] ^H (XTRPrim2)
Chaparral [50] ^T (RS3050U-C)

Aerospace Fighters (50 to 70 tons)

GTHA-300 Gotha [60] (RS3050U-C)
LTN-G15 Lightning [50] ^R (TR3075)
F-90 Stingray [60] (RS3039)
IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (RS3050U-C)
HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] ^R (RS3050U-C)
GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (RS3050U-C)
SL-25 Samurai [50] (RS3039)
HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (TR3075)
LTN-G15 Lightning [50] ^R (TR3075)
HCT-213B Hellcat II [50] ^R (RS3050U-C)
IRN-SD2 Ironsides [65] (RS3050U-C)

Heavy Units (60 to 75 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (1-2)

2	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (RS3050U-C)
3	CHP-1N Champion [60] (RS3050U-C)
4	LCN25-01 Lancelot [60] (RS3050U-C)
5	CRD-2R Crusader [65] (RS3075u)
6	WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (RS3039)
7	ON1-K Orion [75] (RS3039)
8	ARC-2R Archer [70] (RS3039)
9	MAD-1R Marauder [75] (RS3075u)
10	AEM-01 Dragoon [75] (HLoT2)
11	EXC-B2 Excalibur [70] (RS3058U-C)
12	EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (RS3050U-C)

B (3-4)

CTS-6Y Cestus [65] (RS3058U-C)
EXT-4D Exterminator [65] (RS3050U-C)
FLS-8K Flashman [75] (RS3050U-C)
CRD-2R Crusader [65] (RS3075u)
TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (RS3039)
WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (RS3039)
ARC-2R Archer [70] (RS3039)
OSR-2C Ostroc [60] (RS3039)
CHP-1N Champion [60] (RS3050U-C)
LCN25-01 Lancelot [60] (RS3050U-C)
GLH-2D Galahad [60] (RS3075u)

C (5-6)

ST-8A Shootist [70] (RS3058U-C)
BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (RS3050U-C)
BMB-12D Bombardier [65] (RS3050U-C)
OSR-2C Ostroc [60] (RS3039)
ARC-2R Archer [70] (RS3039)
TDR-5S Thunderbolt [65] (RS3039)
CRD-2R Crusader [65] (RS3075u)
OSR-2C Ostroc [60] (RS3039)
WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (RS3039)
CPLT-C1 Catapult [65] (RS3039)
CHP-1N Champion [60] (RS3050U-C)

Vehicles

Pollux [75] ^T (HLoT2)
Von Luckner [75] ^T (RS3039)
Marsden II [60] ^T (RS3075u)
Manticore [60] ^T (RS3039)
Merkava Mk. VIII [75] ^T (RS3075u)
Von Luckner [75] ^T (RS3039)
Marksman [65] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Demon [60] ^W (RS3050U-C)
Magi [70] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Burke [75] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Padilla [75] ^T (RS3058U-C)

Aerospace Fighters (75 to 100 tons)

VLC-5N Vulcan [80] (TR3075)
EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (TR3075)
CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (RS3039)
TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (TR3075)
VLC-5N Vulcan [80] (TR3075)
RPR-100 Rapier [85] (RS3050U-C)
AHB-443 Ahab [90] (RS3050U-C)
EGL-R6 Eagle [75] (TR3075)
AHB-443 Ahab [90] (RS3050U-C)
HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (RS3050U-C)
STU-K5 Stuka [100] (RS3039)

Assault Units (80 to 100 tons)

2D6 BattleMechs A (1-2)

2	PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (RS3058U-C)
3	STK-3H Stalker [85] (RS3039)
4	STC-2C Striker [80] (RS3058U-C)
5	GOL-1H Goliath [80] * (RS3039)
6	LGB-7Q Longbow [85] (RS3058U-C)
7	BNC-3M Banshee [95] (RS3039)
8	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
9	RMP-4G Rampage [85] (ISP2)
10	BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (RS3039)
11	EMP-6A Emperor [90] (RS3058U-C)
12	RMP-5G Rampage [85] (ISP2)

B (3-4)

HGN-732 Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
CRK-5003-1 Crockett [85] (RS3050U-C)
THG-11E Thug [80] (RS3050U-C)
AS7-D Atlas [100] (RS3039)
BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (RS3039)
AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (RS3039)
STK-3F Stalker [85] (RS3039)
RMP-4G Rampage [85] (ISP2)
VTR-9B Victor [80] (RS3039)
EMP-6A Emperor [90] (RS3058U-C)
KGC-000 King Crab [100] (RS3050U-C)

C (5-6)

PLG-3Z Pillager [100] (RS3058U-C)
THG-11E Thug [80] (RS3050U-C)
STK-3F Stalker [85] (RS3039)
BNC-3M Banshee [95] (RS3039)
GOL-1H Goliath [80] * (RS3039)
VTR-9B Victor [80] (RS3039)
RMP-2G Rampage [85] (ISP2)
BLR-1G BattleMaster [85] (RS3039)
HGN-732 Highlander [90] (RS3050U-C)
AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (RS3039)
CP-10-Z Cyclops [90] (RS3039)

Vehicles

Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Fury [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Fury [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Puma [95] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Alacorn Mk. VI [95] ^T (RS3058U-C)
Fury [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Rhino [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)
Fury [80] ^T (RS3050U-C)

DropShips

Achilles ^A (TR3057r)
Union ^S (TR3057r)
DroST Ila ^A (HistRW)
Triumph ^A (TR3057r)
Jumbo ^S (HistRW)
Buccaneer ^A (TR3057r)
Gazelle ^A (TR3057r)
Lion ^S (TR3057r)
Buccaneer ^A (TR3057r)
Dictator ^S (TR3075)
Leopard CV ^A (TR3057r)

*This is a four-legged (quad) BattleMech. ^AAerodyne ^HHover ^SSpheroid ^TTracked ^VVTOL ^WWheeled. ^RRoyal variant available for SLDF Royal units.

RUNNING NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

The following rules allow players to take the notable personalities from this book and plug them into their campaign play. The rules cover a wide gamut of options, reflecting the disparate nature of the characters in this sourcebook. Some may have rules exclusive to a *BattleTech* board game, some may have rules only appropriate for roleplaying using *A Time of War*, while others may have a mix. Players are encouraged to use whichever rules are the most applicable for the type of game they're playing, adjudicating as necessary if a given character rule does not explicitly state every situation that might be covered.

Additional information on generating and using special skills and abilities assigned to notable personalities can be found under Notable Personalities in Non-RPG Campaign Play—Campaign Traits, *Masters and Minions: The StarCorps Dossiers*, pp. 246-252. Rules for high-power NPCs appear in *A Time of War Companion*, pp. 234-240.

STAR LEAGUE DEFENSE FORCE

Admiral Janos Grec: Coming out of retirement to aid Kerensky's campaign to retake the Hegemony, "the Professor" has peerless insight into naval strategy and tactics, though his field command skills are somewhat rusty. He gains +3 to any Strategy Skill Checks involving naval combat, but only +1 for any Tactics or Initiative rolls. He also gains +1 modifier to all Administration Skill Checks. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Grec conforms to the Heroic Officer template.

Major General Lauren Hayes: Hard-nosed and opinionated, Lauren Hayes prefers to lead from the front whether on the battlefield or in the political arena. These traits have earned her the respect of her troops and the ire of her fellow commanders. She gains a +1 bonus to all Tactics Skill Checks and a +2 bonus to Initiative rolls for all units under her direct command when she is on the battlefield in her 'Mech (if she is commanding from a remote HQ, the only benefit is a +1 Initiative bonus). All friendly troops within 10 hexes of her position gain a +2 bonus on Morale Checks while her 'Mech remains functional. If Hayes is injured or her 'Mech destroyed, all friendly units within 10 hexes of her position automatically succeed at Morale Checks but suffer a -1 penalty to to-hit rolls. Her opposition to the Exodus plan means she suffers a -2 penalty on all social interactions with pro-Exodus officers and gets a +2 bonus with all anti-Exodus officers. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Hayes conforms to the Heroic Officer template.

General Jack Lucas: Despite his family's disapproval of his chosen profession, the Jesuit education provided by and values he learned from his father gave Jack Lucas the tools for success as a soldier and commander. He is a principled man, at least when it comes to dealing with those who share his convictions, but has no sympathy or patience in dealing with dishonorable criminals—automatically any member of the AEA or Amaris' government

unless proven otherwise. He is something of a chameleon, putting on whatever face or personality is needed in a given situation, especially when dealing with and motivating his subordinates; he gains a +3 bonus to all CHA-based Skill and Attribute checks. He also gains a +2 bonus to all Strategy and Tactics Skill checks, and provides a +2 Initiative bonus to any force he directly commands on the battlefield, but when making Protocol checks, does not gain his +3 CHA bonus and instead suffers a -1 penalty. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Lucas conforms to the Heroic Officer template.

RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC/ AMARIS EMPIRE

Aisling Connor: The darling of the business classes, Connor mixes beauty with an icy ruthlessness. She gains a +1 bonus on any Social Skill checks with media or business figures and +2 on Protocol checks. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Connor conforms to the Corporate Mogul template. She has the Attractive and Gregarious traits.

General Antilos Legos: Coldly intelligent and brutally sadistic, Antilos Legos is a staunch believer that the ends justify the means. All troops under his direct command gain a +1 Initiative bonus, +1 to any Morale Checks, and may use Overrun Combat. Additionally, in any scenario where the Greenhaven Gestapo is defending, they may begin with up to a quarter of their troops in hidden positions. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Legos conforms to the Made Man template. He has the Compulsion (Sociopath) trait.

Minister Samir Njari: Charismatic, determined and ambitious, Samir Njari's primary skills are influencing the options of others and gathering information. He gains a +1 bonus on all Social Skill checks with Hegemony or Rim Worlds residents (rising to +3 in controlled media environments such as tri-D or rallies), and +2 on all Investigation or Perception checks. He also gains +2 on any Acting Skill Check when attempting to manipulate others or to hide his own emotions. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Njari conforms to the Spymaster template.

Director Lissa Outerbridge: At first seeing association with Stefan Amaris as a means to exact revenge against her enemies, Lissa Outerbridge wormed her way into the Usurper's inner circle and took hold of the accompanying power and wealth she had so long coveted. Her mix of intelligence, political acumen, greed and moral ambiguity allowed her to build an organization that had the express mandate to punish or "re-educate" subjects who opposed or were disloyal to the Amaris Empire—a designation she had the power to make. In the process, she and her organization gathered the "dirt" on countless powerful individuals throughout the Inner Sphere, which she used to further Amaris' goals as well as her own. She gains +2 to all INT-based Skill or Attribute checks, a +1 bonus to all WIL-based Skill or Attribute

checks, and a +3 bonus to all Connections and Enemy rolls, while the connections (and enemies) that she makes have an effective level of +2 more than they normally would be. She has the Poor Reputation trait at a level of -5, but also multiple Alternate IDs after 2778, which she used to help her avoid capture following the liberation of Terra. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Outerbridge conforms to the Master Politician template.

General Patrick Scoffins: Despite coming from humble means, Patrick Scoffins managed to escape illiteracy and poverty to become one of the most powerful men in the Human Sphere. He is an honorable, intelligent and driven man, whose natural tendency to want to aid his fellow human beings is tempered by the intense hatred he feels towards the Cameron family and the Star League for “crimes perpetrated” upon the Rim Worlds Republic during and after the Reunification War. To him, the assassination of Richard Cameron and the overthrow of the Cameron government is the means to enact justice, after which he genuinely hopes to bring peace and civility to the Star League. Unfortunately the road to this peace lies along a path of war, victory in which requires less-than-honorable efforts; so while he does not approve of the many unsavory individuals and actions associated with Amaris, he accepts them as a necessity. He is looked down upon by most of Amaris' Inner Circle, who would likely move against him were it not for Amaris' support and the fairly widespread loyalty he enjoys within the AEA. Scoffins is a Fast Learner, and is Fit and Patient. He gains a +1 bonus to all INT- and WIL-based Skill or Attribute checks, and a +2 bonus to all Strategy checks. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Scoffins conforms to the Heroic Officer template.

COMSTAR

Jerome Blake: His combination of determination and intelligence makes Blake the ideal leader for ComStar. He gains a +3 bonus on all Administration checks, a +2 on any Science checks and a +4 on any INT Attribute checks. He also gains a +2 bonus to any skill rolls involving technology (+4 if this relates to HPGs). However, though an inspiring leader, his social skills are less well developed: Prior to 2785 he suffers a -1 penalty on all Social Skill checks, save when discussing technology or business. After 2785 he suffers no penalties to Social checks. He has the Tech Empathy and Introvert traits. If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Blake conforms to the Corporate Mogul template.

Conrad Toyama: Charismatic, zealous and determined, Toyama is a natural politician and leader. In ComStar's early years (before 2812) he shows zealous loyalty toward Blake (gaining a +2 bonus to all Social Skill checks when arguing for Blake's cause, but a -2 penalty to resist any suggestions by Blake himself), but later becomes more his own man (he gains a +1 bonus to all Social Skill checks and does not suffer the penalty against Blake). If using the High-Power NPC rules in *A Time of War Companion*, Toyama conforms to the High Lord template.

STAR LEAGUE SPACE DEFENSE SYSTEM

The Space Defense System was the ultimate defensive weapon in the SLDF's arsenal prior to the Amaris Coup. Star League strategists never dreamed that the system could be suborned from the inside, that it could fall into the hands of someone who conquered the Star League from within and that the SLDF would have to face down the very guns meant to safeguard their homeland from an invading enemy fleet. The SLDF's first experiences in dealing with the system were proof of the very capabilities SDS proponents had long touted—that only overwhelming numbers could hope to defeat the system. Those predictions came true, and cost the SLDF dozens of irreplaceable WarShips that were desperately needed if Amaris was ever to be removed from power and the Hegemony released from his tyrannical grasp.

Those first battles highlighted the necessity of finding some way to defeat the system without wasting irreplaceable lives and valuable ships in the process. The capture of Nirasaki and the discovery of technical data hidden by SDS designers led the SLDF to develop a jammer that could theoretically disable the drone ships, or at least degrade their performance.

Project NIKE was born from these theories, which in turn begat a hodge-podge “system” of powerful multi-band transmitters, computer controllers and massive cooling systems. The end product was designed to generate a tremendous amount of wideband electromagnetic radiation in an effort to jam the communications circuits used by the SDS drones to coordinate their efforts. These prototype jammers were built with whatever equipment the Project NIKE engineers could cobble together from liberated manufacturers and scavenge from damaged vessels—in many cases including the hulks of disabled SDS drones themselves. Speed was of the essence; only once the system could be proved a success would the project engineers worry about creating a standardized system for manufacture.

The prototype jammers looked like nothing more than an engineer's nightmare, and could fill a WarShip's cargo hold (while externally attached antenna arrays made the ships appear leprous). They required tremendous amounts of electrical energy, often overtaxing the parent ship's reactor, and generated significant excess heat, both of which adversely affected internal systems. Moreover, the wideband jamming signals (coupled with poor shielding and transmission line connections that could not stand up to heavy action) interfered with communications and computer systems onboard the ship.

Despite these problems, which disabled several of the ships in which the system was installed, Project NIKE was a success. Each battle gave the NIKE team additional information on how to tweak the system for better performance, and to ultimately build something resembling a standardized system from off-the-shelf components.

The very first Project NIKE SDS Jammer prototype systems were installed into twenty of Fourth Fleet's WarShips for the assault on New Home in early 2775. After that battle in March, the NIKE team pieced together a number of "standardized" systems that would first be spec-ed out to manufacturers, who would provide the components needed to assemble scores more of the jammers, before being installed into Twelfth Fleet ships for the next SDS assault in May.

PROTOTYPE SLDF SDS JAMMER

The Prototype SDS Jammer conforms to all the rules governing the SLDF SDS Jammer, as outlined on p. 163 of *HLoT1*, with the following exceptions. The jammer only generates a +3 ECM modifier (for the sole purpose of determining if an SDS drone also in the jamming field can network with an ATAC-equipped unit). Any SDS drone unit within the jamming field will fire on the closest WarShip equipped with an active SDS Jammer, with all possible weapons within range and arc, even if other valid targets are closer and possess a lower TN; SDS drones must fire on the jammer-equipped ships as long as they have a chance of hitting (a TN of 12 or lower) and the heat capacity to do so, and must fire with all possible firing arcs at active jammer-equipped ships before declaring fire on any other targets (fire at other targets is a secondary priority for the system, and it will not fire at those targets if it does not have enough heat capacity to do so).

The Prototype SDS Jammer also adversely affects its parent WarShip. So long as the jammer is active, all attacks are made at a +2 penalty to the target number and the WarShip gains +300 heat. Further, every turn that the jammer is active, roll 2D6; on a result of 2 or 3, either a power spike or continued interference damages a critical system. Roll 1D6 to determine the system affected and apply the effects of that critical hit: 1 = CIC, 2 = Control, 3-4 = Engine, 5 = FCS, 6 = Sensors.

The Prototype SLDF SDS Jammer becomes available in March of 2775 and no more are produced after May 2775, though ships equipped with the system continue to use this prototype, with all these listed effects, until replaced at the end of the war.

In June of 2775, limited numbers of pre-production SDS jammers become available; these conform to all standard rules for the SDS jammer, though SDS drones are still required to exclusively target ships with active SDS jammers. After January of 2776, SDS drones are no longer required to exclusively target the active SDS jammers.

VECTOR

Mass: 22 tons

Movement Type: VTOL

Power Plant: LTV 125 Fusion

Cruising Speed: 129 kph

Maximum Speed: 194 kph

Armor: Mitchell Argon Ferro-Fibrous

Armament:

Starflash Plus Small Pulse Laser

2 Sorenstein Medium Lasers

Primary Manufacturer: General Motors

Primary Factory: Outreach

Communications System: IrComm ICM-3200b

Targeting and Tracking System: Garret D6a II

OVERVIEW

In 2708 the SLDF released a request for proposals for the "next-generation combat support VTOL." Unfortunately, the hundreds of different bureaucrats, politicians and generals involved in drafting its requirements created a dizzying array of mutually exclusive and contradictory specifications that only resulted in a series of submissions that could never pass muster and were summarily rejected. That RFP languished for more than two decades until Commanding General Rebecca Fetladra's office reissued the RFP, this time with a more realistic series of requirements compiled by Major General Aleksandr Kerensky. Fourteen months later, General Motors' Vector won the competition.

CAPABILITIES

The Vector project was intended as a state-of-the-art combat VTOL and to simplify the SLDF's logistics. Design requirements called for three main configurations, each filling a different role (and taking the place of one or more VTOLs already in service with the SLDF) but sharing a common supply chain. Moreover, by using a more expensive fusion engine and array of energy weapons at the outset, designers negated the need for a constant source of petrochemical fuels and ammunition.

All configurations were built around the same airframe, a highly maneuverable and speedy craft that easily could dodge most enemy fire directed its way while dashing into and out of target zones. The Vector sported three and a half tons of ferro-fibrous armor, arrayed so that it could survive a direct hit from the front delivered by almost any weapon on the battlefield and still carry out its mission. Its central bay housed the mission-critical equipment (or cargoes), while the Vector's weapons were mounted in a nose fairing and on its short wings.

The primary, and by far most-produced, configuration was a dedicated infantry air assault transport. This Vector carried a full platoon of infantry as well as a relatively heavy arsenal of laser weapons. The nose-mounted Starflash small pulse laser, which was tied into the helmet-mounted sights worn by the pilot and gunner, enabled the Vector to lay down suppressive fire against infantry. Together with the VTOL's two wing-mounted medium lasers, Vector crews could also make directed attacks or strafing runs against massed targets.

DEPLOYMENT

Tens of thousands of Vectors were built in the twenty-eighth century on three different Hegemony worlds. It became the SLDF's standard VTOL combat transport by the middle of the century, with every infantry brigade possessing at least one battalion of Vectors (with airborne and other specialized formations fielding even more). Vectors were typically assigned on a three-to-one basis: three transports for every one of a different configuration. Of course, in aerial scout and attack formations, the other configurations were far more numerous.

The Vector never completely replaced all the specialized airframes it was designed to supersede, but with the coming of the Periphery Uprising and Amaris Civil War, it more than proved its viability time and again. Where other craft languished on the ground because of the shortage of replacements parts or fuel, Vectors continued to fly—often only because another was cannibalized for parts. The SLDF almost literally flew its Vectors to pieces during the long war against Amaris. Combat losses, combined with the loss of the Vector production lines during the war, left few surviving examples afterward, all of which were scrapped by the end of the next century.

VARIANTS

GM produced three additional Vector configurations for the SLDF. The first two were dedicated electronics platforms—one a scout, the other a dedicated electronic warfare craft—which replaced the infantry jumpseats with either a Beagle Active Probe (in the Vector Scout) or a Guardian ECM Suite (in the Vector EW). Both shared the same primary weapons loadout as the transport, adding a small laser to the nose fairing and Target Acquisition Gear on a mast-mount. Both of these were found in quantity in every SLDF division, as was the Attack Vector, which replaced the payload with a single nose-mounted medium laser and a pair of wing-mounted SRM 4 launchers.

Type: **Vector**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Movement Type: VTOL

Tonnage: 22

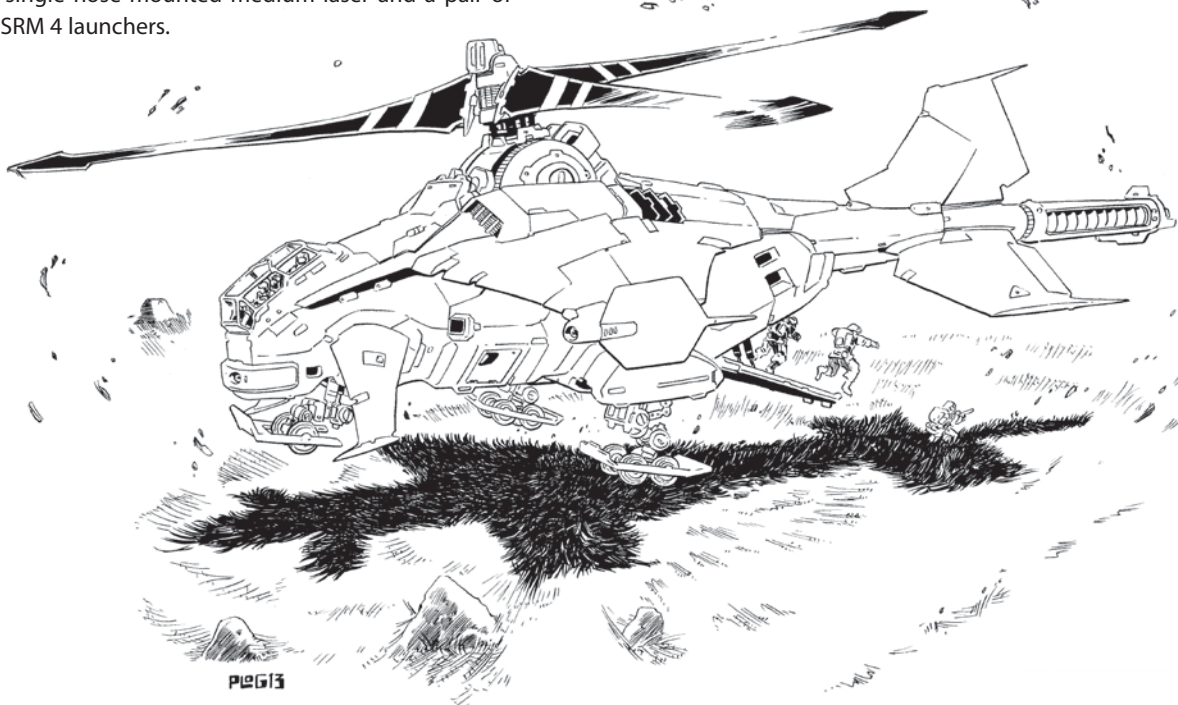
Equipment

		Mass
Internal Structure		2.5
Engine:	125	6
Type:	Fusion	
Cruise MP:	12	
Flank MP:	18	
Heat Sinks:	10	0
Control Equipment:		1.5
Lift Equipment		2.5
Power Amplifier		0
Turret:		0
Armor Factor (Ferro):	62	3.5
	<i>Internal Structure</i>	<i>Armor Value</i>
Front	3	18
R/L Side	3/3	18/18
Rear	3	6
Rotor	3	2

Weapons and Ammo

	Location	Tonnage
Small Pulse Laser	Front	1
2 Medium Lasers	Front	2
Infantry Compartment	Body	3

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Easy to Maintain, Improved Communications



VALI

Mass: 40 tons

Movement Type: Wheeled

Power Plant: Torrence Motors 140 Turbine ICE

Cruising Speed: 43 kph

Maximum Speed: 64 kph

Armor: Horden Ferro Plate

Armament:

1 Simco Mk. III Arrow IV Launcher

Primary Manufacturer: Veridian Dynamics

Primary Factory: Ozawa

Communications System: Tordar ArgentComm 5

Targeting and Tracking System: Talon Technologies MAGNUS D

OVERVIEW

The state of the art advanced rapidly during the Reunification War, which saw the deployment of numerous new technologies retrofitted onto existing combat vehicles. Those few entirely new designs to debut during the war were largely replaced in the decades following, though a handful survived the post-war rearmament programs to remain in service throughout the twenty-seventh century, or longer. The Vali was one of those expedient wartime designs that went on to claim a long service life, despite the appearance of more modern competitors.

The original Vali debuted during the final years of the Reunification War, as the SLDF was concluding its campaign in the Taurian Concordat, after the SLDF High Command requested a close support field artillery piece that mounted the Arrow IV missile system. Veridian Dynamics, a Federated Suns-based corporation that had expanded into the Hegemony to take advantage of wartime manufacturing contracts, responded by offering a design that mated the Arrow IV to an existing battlefield recovery vehicle.

CAPABILITIES

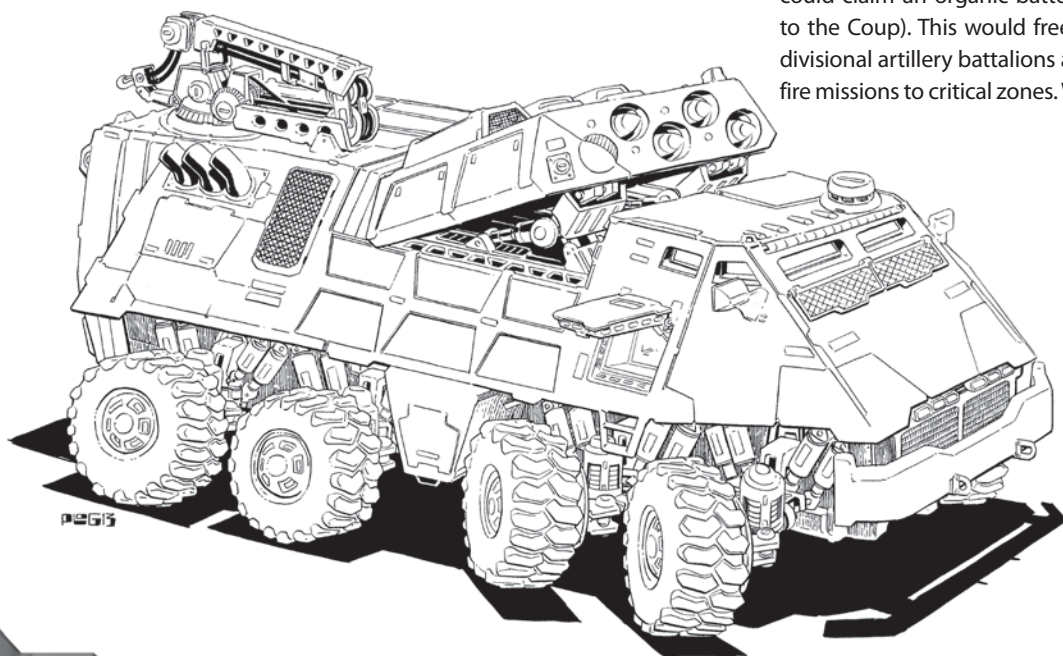
Veridian based the Vali on its widely successful RR-4 recovery vehicle. This cut development time drastically and allowed engineers to focus entirely on integrating the Arrow IV launcher, which was mounted in a simple superstructure that also housed the crew and ammunition. The Vali was accepted for limited production mere months later, and despite competing with other, more advanced designs, proved to be the most popular offering.

SLDF crews appreciated its reliability, its ease to maintain compared to tracked vehicles and its spacious crew compartment. Though its wheeled chassis meant it could not get everywhere that BattleMechs or heavy armor could travel, it possessed more than enough speed and mobility to keep up with the line of advance. Complaints voiced by Vali crews—most significantly its limited ammunition stores—were addressed after Veridian received a full-scale production contract in 2600.

This “modern” Vali was protected by four tons of ferro-fibrous armor, more than enough to protect the vehicle against small arms and even counter-battery bombardment. Five tons of ammunition were provided, giving the Vali the ability to continuously maintain fire for more than four straight minutes. Most importantly, reloading was easily accomplished via large doors in the rear of the vehicle; a crew without access to additional equipment could load the vehicle by hand using just the Vali’s own reloading hoist, though a dedicated support vehicle (based on the same chassis) could cut reloading times by a third or better by simply lifting out the empty missile magazines and dropping fresh ones in.

DEPLOYMENT

The SLDF’s goal at the turn of the twenty-seventh century was to provide every one of its regiments a battery of Valis that could trail the front lines to provide close fire support (a goal it could never fully meet, though every regular army BattleMech and armor regiment could claim an organic battery of at least two artillery pieces prior to the Coup). This would free the much longer-ranged guns of the divisional artillery battalions and regiments to provide concentrated fire missions to critical zones. With the massive expansion of the SLDF



following the Reunification War, Veridian was guaranteed contracts that kept the vehicle in constant production for more than half a century, even after the debut of the Chaparral and the Padilla—two more advanced Arrow IV carriers designed to operate on the front lines with assault and cavalry units. The Vali nonetheless remained the most cost-effective option for most regiments, priced at less than half the Chaparral's cost and one-sixteenth the Padilla's price tag.

The Vali received continuous upgrades throughout the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth centuries, keeping it in service throughout the SLDF's campaign to liberate the Hegemony. Given their proximity to the front lines, Vali batteries suffered the worst losses of any SLDF artillery units, though ammunition shortages also regularly left Vali batteries unable to commit to battle, with quite a few abandoned in place for the Successor States to take possession of after Kerensky's Exodus and the start of the Succession Wars.

VARIANTS

The prototype Vali that debuted during the Reunification War was largely the same as the twenty-seventh century model, though without the additional protection of ferro-fibrous armor and carrying just fifteen rounds in its magazine. Most of these were either retired or assigned to reserve units, where they were eventually transferred to the militaries of the member states.

Type: **Vali**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Movement Type: Wheeled

Tonnage: 40

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure		4
Engine:	220	10
Type:	ICE	
Cruise MP:	4	
Flank MP:	6	
Heat Sinks:	0	0
Control Equipment:		2
Lift Equipment		0
Power Amplifier		0
Turret:		0
Armor Factor (Ferro):	71	4
	<i>Internal Structure</i>	<i>Armor Value</i>
Front	4	20
R/L Side	4/4	20/20
Rear	4	11

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Tonnage
Arrow IV System	Front	15
Ammo (Arrow) 25	Body	5

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Easy to Maintain, Fast Reload, Trailer Hitch

BALLISTA

Mass: 55 tons

Movement Type: Tracked

Power Plant: PowerTech 165 HighLift

Cruising Speed: 32 kph

Maximum Speed: 54 kph

Armor: Quantum Heavy Plate

Armament:

1 Hegemony Arms DAT/91 Sniper Artillery Cannon

3 KKL/h-12 Machine Guns

Primary Manufacturer: Rivverson Technologies

Primary Factory: Nanking

Communications System: Dushen Electronics Collective DEC/ML-5WB

Targeting and Tracking System: Kallon Set DC-5

OVERVIEW

Many of the military technologies and vehicles that the Star League nations depended upon following the Reunification War in fact originated during the Age of War. BattleMechs such as the *Archer* and the *Orion* were not the only "ancient" designs to continue serving the Star League-era armies centuries after they were first introduced. The Ballista self-propelled artillery tank and its clones could still be found serving in the artillery forces of every Star League member-state during the Amaris Civil War, and in fact throughout the Succession Wars, some three hundred years after the very first "modern" Ballista rolled off its production line on Nanking.

CAPABILITIES

Rivverson Technologies took full advantage of new technologies and manufacturing processes in the last decades of the twenty-fifth century to develop a modernized self-propelled artillery piece for the Terran Hegemony. Compared to the artillery pieces used during the Age of War, this Ballista was lighter, faster, better armored, carried more ammunition and could operate with a smaller crew. It utilized a Sniper artillery gun, which was light enough to be carried by a tank but could deliver a relatively heavy shell at long ranges. Most importantly, the Ballista mounted its gun in a turret, giving it the almost unprecedented ability to direct fire into multiple zones of attack without having to reposition the entire artillery piece. Organized into batteries of four or six guns, the Ballista could devastate an enemy formation or fortification with a continuous five-minute barrage before reloading. It also had the mobility to very effectively "shoot-and-scoot"—fire a handful of rounds and immediately relocate to avoid return fire from enemy artillery.

Its seven-and-a-half tons of armor was enough to survive aerial and counter battery strikes, or even the first volley from a direct enemy attack, and possibly give it the chance to retreat to safety. Three hull-mounted machine guns—two fore and one aft—provided its crew the additional ability to respond to enemy infantry that discovered their position.

The vehicle itself was powered by a reliable and low-cost internal combustion engine that most armor crews were already skilled at maintaining and repairing. Though only able to push the Ballista to a top sustained speed just over fifty kph, its horsepower and tracked suspension allowed it to cross almost any kind of terrain with ease.

DEPLOYMENT

The Ballista was the progenitor of at least a dozen different virtual clones produced across the Inner Sphere and Periphery, all except the Ballista itself debuting at various times during the twenty-sixth century (and at least two Periphery versions built long after the end of the Reunification War). The SLDF took possession of hundreds of Ballista clones when it formed prior to the Reunification War, though the logistical nightmare of operating so many different models meant that most were retired as soon as possible to be replaced with “genuine” Ballistae after the war.

The Ballista remained the standard SLDF mobile field artillery piece until the more mobile and better armored Sniper and Marksman supplanted it in the twenty-eighth century. Nevertheless, the Ballista continued to serve in SLDF artillery batteries, and especially in reserve and garrison units, throughout the Amaris Civil War. It and its clones lived on for centuries more—seeing action in the Exodus Civil War as well as each of the Succession Wars.

VARIANTS

Despite, or perhaps because of, its nearly ubiquitous use, the Ballista saw no major upgrades to its weapons or performance. Apart from occasional updates that installed modernized engines and electronics to increase reliability and decrease operating costs, the Ballista of the 2770s was still very much the same machine that debuted three centuries earlier.

Type: **Ballista**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Movement Type: Tracked

Tonnage: 55

Equipment

		Mass
Internal Structure		5.5
Engine:	165	12
Type:	ICE	
Cruise MP:	3	
Flank MP:	5	
Heat Sinks:	0	0
Control Equipment:		3
Lift Equipment		0
Power Amplifier		0
Turret:		2
Armor Factor:	120	7.5

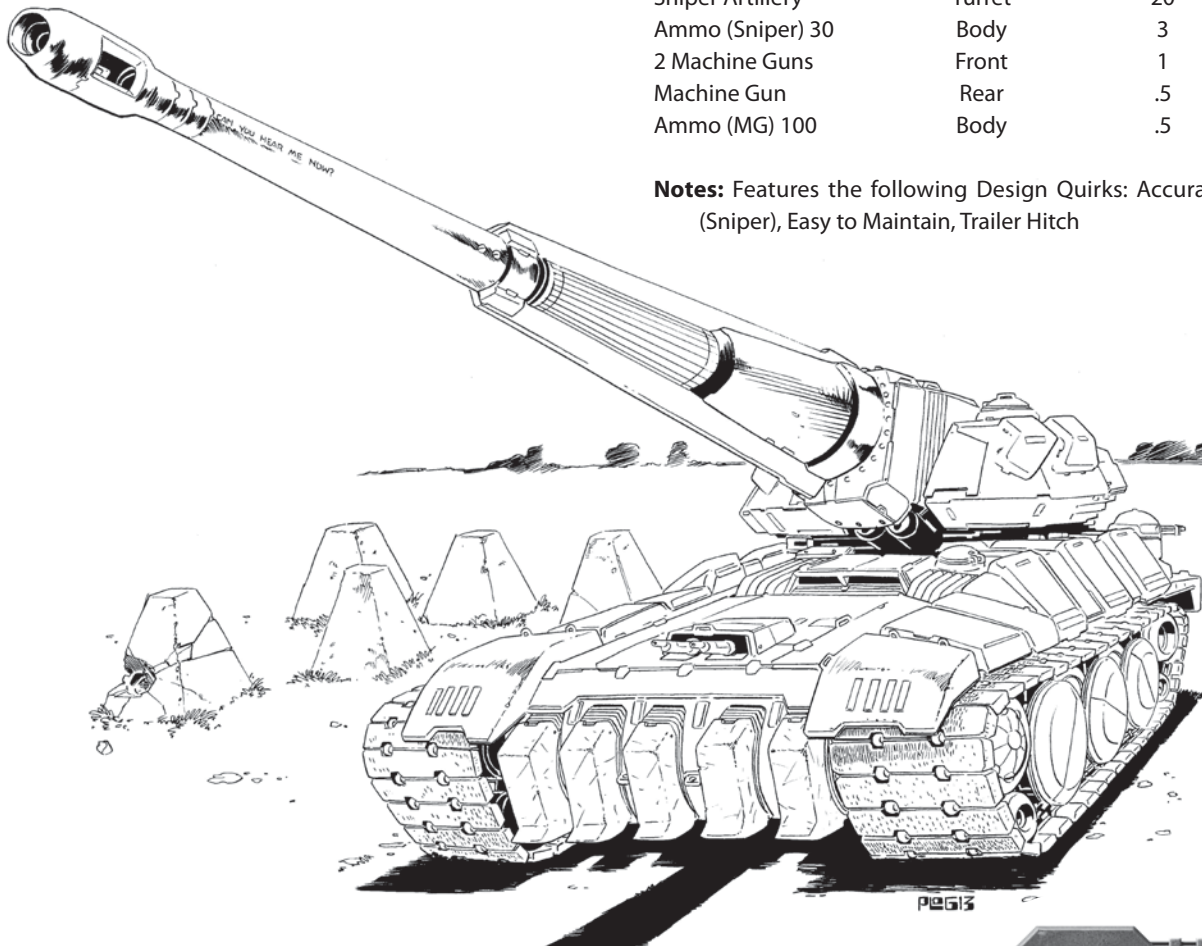
	Internal Structure	Armor Value
--	--------------------	-------------

Front	6	25
R/L Side	6/6	25/25
Rear	6	15
Turret	6	30

Weapons and Ammo

	Location	Tonnage
Sniper Artillery	Turret	20
Ammo (Sniper) 30	Body	3
2 Machine Guns	Front	1
Machine Gun	Rear	.5
Ammo (MG) 100	Body	.5

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Accurate Weapon (Sniper), Easy to Maintain, Trailer Hitch



LB-X CARRIER

Mass: 60 tons

Movement Type: Tracked

Power Plant: GM 180 Fusion

Cruising Speed: 32 kph

Maximum Speed: 54 kph

Armor: Aldis Heavy Ferro-Fibrous

Armament:

2 Defiance Ravager LB 10-X Autocannon

3 Drago KwL/7 LRM 5 Launchers

Primary Manufacturer: Drago, Ltd.

Primary Factory: Skye

Communications System: Initrode Widecom

Targeting and Tracking System: RCA Instatrac Mark VI

OVERVIEW

The SLDF lost tremendous amounts of men and materiel in battling Amaris, neither of which could be easily replaced. Cut off from the Terran Hegemony, Kerensky's armies had to turn to other sources to recoup those losses. While replacing trained soldiers was a problem that haunted Kerensky throughout the war, he could at least turn to manufacturers in the Star League member-states to supply the weapon systems needed to win the war.

Unfortunately, the SLDF had neither the deep pockets it once claimed nor the time to fully evaluate new prototypes. Under Kerensky's orders, the SLDF bought wholesale from just about any manufacturer that could produce a working product. For BattleMechs and aerospace fighters, Kerensky's logisticians relied heavily upon manufacturers used by the five Great Houses, but when it came to tanks and other support units, "anything goes" was very much the concept of operations.

CAPABILITIES

Drago, Ltd. was one of many smaller manufacturers of civilian vehicles, construction equipment and other machinery to which the SLDF turned. Companies like Drago that had never produced combat vehicles were provided design specifications and detailed plans by SLDF engineers that they could work from. With so many different companies involved, the SLDF would never be able to standardize logistics for these new purchases. Logisticians could only hope that by ordering additional spares at the outset and routing entire production runs to a single division they could avoid the worst of the inevitable supply problems.

The "Weapon Carrier, Tracked" was perhaps the most notable of these simplified vehicles produced during the Amaris Civil War. It hearkened back to a series of simple armored vehicles used during the Age of War and the Reunification War (and revived again during the Succession Wars), but was built using modern technologies. Specifications called for a sixty-ton tracked vehicle with thirty-four metric tons of free mass to mount weapons and equipment, and

further that it be powered by a 180-rated fusion engine to provide a more than fifty kph sustained top speed. Six and a half tons of ferro-fibrous armor gave these tanks above-average protection—far greater than their forebears ever sported.

Most of these base chassis would be delivered without weapons to a different company for fitting of armaments and final assembly—often directly to the weapon manufacturers. The SLDF purchased more than a dozen different configurations of these tanks, though by far the most popular was a model that mounted a pair of LB 10-X autocannons fed by a four-ton magazine, supported by a trio of LRM 5 launchers drawing from a two-ton shared magazine. These weapons were mounted to the fore in a simple casemate structure, which of course limited the vehicle's utility, but also significantly shortened construction times and especially cut down on mechanical problems. Each of the weapons possessed a limited traverse, though targets outside their firing arc could be engaged by simply traversing the whole vehicle—rarely a problem at any but point blank ranges.

DEPLOYMENT

The SLDF bought these weapon carriers, as well as other "obsolete" armored vehicles like the Turhan and the T-12 Tiger tanks, *en masse* from dozens of different manufacturers across the Inner Sphere, assigning them to every operational armored brigade as they fought their way into the Terran Hegemony. Unfortunately, given the wide variance in quality of manufacturing, a large percentage of these tanks required some significant maintenance before they could be put into service (a fact almost universally shared by mass-produced tanks of this class).

Typically, Weapon Carriers, Tracked served in second-line roles, providing ranged fire support or sitting in ambush, and almost always in large numbers. SLDF and Republican units alike quickly realized that, while individual weapon carriers could be easily defeated, *en masse* they could quickly eviscerate an opposing force. Unfortunately, their heavy use meant many were lost in combat, while just as many were lost to mechanical problems (and cannibalized for parts to keep others in service). While many manufacturers kept producing the weapon carriers into the Succession Wars, the eventual loss of technology forced those surviving manufacturers to revert to more primitive standards—such as those still built by Quikscell today.

VARIANTS

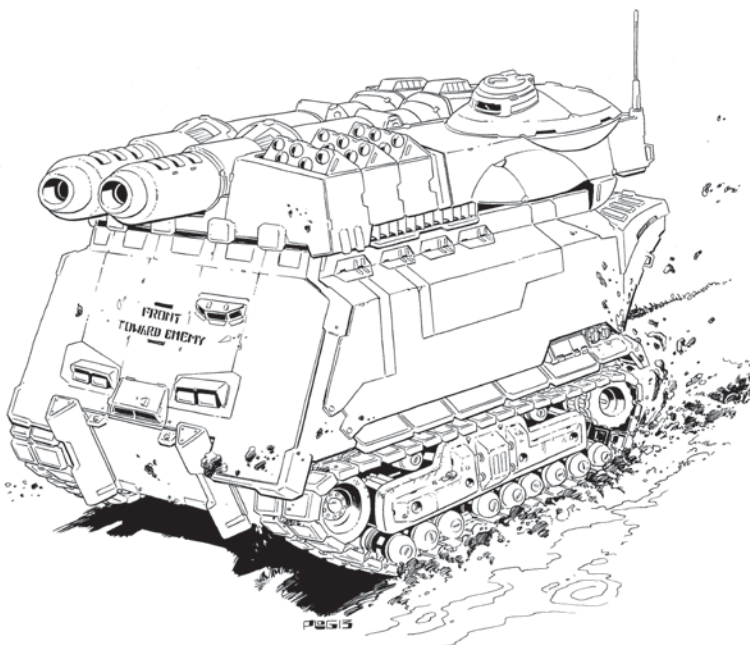
The SLDF ordered the production of numerous other models. One that proved a relative failure mounted a trio of Ultra AC/5s, backed up by a single LRM 5; though it could generate a significant amount of fire, its lack of a "knock-out" weapon meant these were among the first tanks to be cannibalized for parts. A far more successful model became the ultimate in ambush tanks, feared by MechWarriors and tank crews alike, mounting a pair of the heaviest autocannons produced, backed up by a single LRM 5.

Type: **LB-X Carrier**
 Technology Base: Inner Sphere
 Movement Type: Tracked
 Tonnage: 60

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure		6
Engine:	180	10.5
Type:	Fusion	
Cruise MP:	3	
Flank MP:	5	
Heat Sinks:	10	0
Control Equipment:		3
Lift Equipment		0
Power Amplifier		0
Turret:		0
Armor Factor (Ferro):	116	6.5
	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Front	6	35
R/L Side	6/6	35/35
Rear	6	11

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Tonnage
2 LB 10-X AC	Front	22
Ammo (LB-X) 40	Body	4
3 LRM 5	Front	6
Ammo (LRM) 48	Body	2

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Trailer Hitch, Difficult to Maintain, Poor Workmanship



POLLUX ADA HEAVY TANK

Mass: 75 tons
Movement Type: Tracked
Power Plant: GM 225 Fusion
Cruising Speed: 32 kph
Maximum Speed: 54 kph
Armor: Grumman-5 Ferro-Fibrous
Armament:
 Hegemony Arms DAT/96 Sniper Artillery Cannon
 Blankenburg LB 10-X Autocannon
 Maxell DW Medium Laser
 Starflash Plus Small Pulse Laser
Primary Manufacturer: Hadley, Inc./General Motors
Primary Factory: Pollux
Communications System: QingShi CommStar 7
Targeting and Tracking System: Sylix Systems GSL "Evil Eye" series II

OVERVIEW

The Star League's deployment of the Space Defense System within the Terran Hegemony prompted the design and construction of numerous related weapon and sensor systems. The SDS was more than just a space-based system, and included a vast number of ground-based batteries, sensors and communications nodes, each of which would need to be protected from a wide variety of potential threats, especially those posed by enemy fighters and assault ships.

Hadley, Incorporated won the SLDF contract to build automated air defense turrets for ground-based SDS batteries, but after the governments of dozens of Hegemony worlds left unprotected by the SDS complained, soon won a second contract to produce a dedicated air defense artillery (ADA) tank for the SLDF. First Lord Jonathan Cameron appeased the masses by pledging to assign batteries of these ADA tanks to each Hegemony world, in the process providing the SLDF the dedicated anti-aircraft platform it had sought since the Reunification War.

CAPABILITIES

Hadley was already building the GAD-14 automatic air defense turret by the hundreds when the SLDF approached its board with Cameron's follow-on request. It was a possibility the company couldn't pass up, even if it didn't have experience in building vehicles. It turned to General Motors, one of the largest combat vehicle manufacturers in the Inner Sphere, to develop and build this new tank's chassis while its own engineers focused on adapting the GAD-14 turret for a crewed tank.

The GAD-14 mounted two primary weapons: a Sniper tube artillery gun modified to fire specialized flak ammunition as well as an LB 10-X autocannon, allowing each turret to engage airborne targets as well as make indirect and direct attacks against ground-based targets. Additional lasers and machine guns provided for heavy point-blank defensive fire from these turrets.

While the GAD-14 could not be easily mounted to a tank, Hadley's designers used it as a basis. They reduced the size of the turret, retained the dual Sniper/LB-X autocannon configuration, though in the process modifying both guns—especially the long Sniper gun—and their mounts to allow for the best possible elevation. The automatic loading mechanisms were drastically modified to fit within the turret and to provide crew controls and access, while a single medium laser was mounted for close-range defense.

Hadley's engineers had to go one step further and attach a sensor pod, as this new tank would not be able to pull sensor feeds from the SDS networks. They evaluated a number of different systems, including the famed Garrett systems, but ultimately chose Sylx Systems after failing to secure the Garret system. After several years of work, Sylx delivered the "Evil Eye" system that could simultaneously track and engage scores of airborne or ground-based targets with tremendous precision.

General Motors provided a number of different chassis options to Hadley, which settled on one equipped with a 225-rated fusion engine. The tank would provide a total of six tons of ammunition storage for the two main guns, as well as a front-mounted Starflash Plus small pulse laser for close-in defense. The completed Pollux Air Defense Artillery tank mounted a total of six tons of ferro-fibrous armor.

DEPLOYMENT

As soon as it began receiving Pollux ADA tanks in the early twenty-eighth century, the SLDF quietly assigned them on a 50/50 basis to existing SLDF ADA units as well as to newly forming planetary ADA batteries. The SLDF managed to obscure this fact from the Hegemony government for years by publicizing the delivery of a handful to a world, immediately followed by prominent training exercises featuring the garrison Polluxes operating side-by-side with regular army units. This shell game ended in 2718 when Commanding General Fredasa was called out on the practice by the governor of Ankaa, herself a former SLDF regular and reserve officer.

The bulk of Pollux ADA tanks produced for the next two decades were delivered to the garrisons, with the SLDF itself receiving relatively few, after which annual purchases were reduced to minimal levels. In the years leading up to the Periphery Uprising, however, General Kerensky quietly transferred many of the ADA tanks, and even whole batteries, into the regular army, where they were used extensively in the Periphery before returning home—to do battle against the invader they were designed to defend against.

VARIANTS

Hadley produced no known variants of the Pollux ADA tank.

Type: **Pollux**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

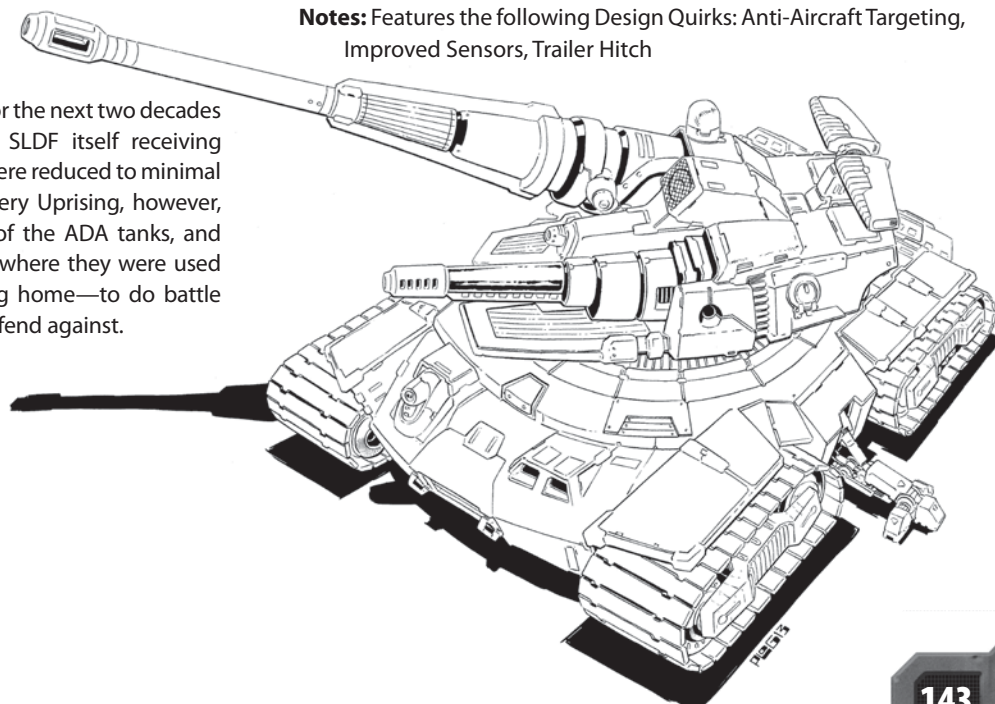
Movement Type: Tracked

Tonnage: 75

Equipment		Mass
Internal Structure		7.5
Engine:	225	15
Type:	Fusion	
Cruise MP:	3	
Flank MP:	5	
Heat Sinks:	10	0
Control Equipment:		4
Lift Equipment		0
Power Amplifier		0
Turret:		3.5
Armor Factor (Ferro):	107	6
	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Front	8	24
R/L Side	8/8	24/24
Rear	8	11
Turret	8	24

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Tonnage
Sniper Artillery	Turret	20
Ammo (Sniper) 30	Body	3
LB 10-X AC	Turret	11
Ammo (LB-X) 30	Body	3
Medium Laser	Turret	1
Small Pulse Laser	Front	1

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Anti-Aircraft Targeting, Improved Sensors, Trailer Hitch



AEM-01 DRAGOON

Mass: 70 tons

Chassis: KruppTech 770

Power Plant: Nissan 280 XL

Cruising Speed: 43 kph

Maximum Speed: 64 kph

Jump Jets: Corwin Consolidated Model 3H

Jump Capacity: 90 meters

Armor: PanzerFerro Type 7F

Armament:

1 Blankenburg Technologies 200 ER PPC

2 Krupp 120 KgK 78 L/66 LB 10-X Autocannon

Manufacturer: Krupp Stellar Technologies, Inc.

Primary Factory: Terra

Communications System: Krupp-COMM 650 with Guardian ECM

Targeting and Tracking System: KBC Hypersight Model 5

OVERVIEW

Stefan Amaris was nothing if not a thinker, however misguided. Styling himself a renaissance strategist, he crafted a vision for the Amaris Empire Armed Forces based on many of the ideas and concepts he picked up during his years on Terra. Prime among his reforms for the future was creating a series of standard combat platforms for his military.

The idea of fielding a relatively few different combat vehicles ('Mechs, tanks, fighters, etc.), each with multiple mission-specific configurations, had percolated through the SLDF (as well as many other militaries) since before the Age of War. Unfortunately, the dual realities of lengthy interstellar travel times and political patronage meant that would not easily happen.

Amaris' coup gave him the freedom to explore this concept, among others. In January 2767 he directed Terra's military contractors to submit proposals for a heavy BattleMech that could replace the dozens of different models currently in service with a single base frame. Three manufacturers offered proposals within just a few months, with Krupp Stellar Technologies awarded the contract.

CAPABILITIES

Though it had produced only a single BattleMech—the *Lancelot*—for the SLDF, Krupp had remained a key producer of heavy machinery for centuries. Its R&D divisions were always working to stay ahead of their competition, and already had several concepts in various stages of development when Amaris made his call.

The design selected was a seventy-ton biped that Amaris himself dubbed the *Dragoon*. Like the *Lancelot*, the *Dragoon* relied on an extralight fusion engine to free up mass. With a respectable top speed of sixty-five kph, the 'Mech could mount better than thirty-eight tons of weapons and equipment—far more than most other 'Mechs in its class.

Moreover, the *Dragoon* utilized common modular subsystems—much like Mitchell Vehicles' *Mercury*—that could be easily swapped out after suffering damage or failure. Likewise, weapon and equipment housings were mounted to the chassis using universal attachment points. Though these simple developments cut maintenance and repair times significantly, complete reconfiguration of the *Dragoon* was not possible in the field and could only be done by the factory or in depot.

The standard *Dragoon* was a capable frontline combat BattleMech that carried a single ER PPC backed up by paired LB 10-X autocannon. While the *Dragoon* could not deliver effective punches due to its lack of lower arm actuators, its kick could be devastating and its ninety-meter jump range made it a threat to anything it faced. A Guardian ECM Suite rounded out its mission critical systems.

DEPLOYMENT

Krupp debuted its *Dragoon* prototypes to Amaris in early 2769, and delivered the very first production models to the Fourth Amaris Dragoons almost two years later. Krupp opened two new production lines dedicated to the *Dragoon* (and its multiple configurations), but never reached the tremendous output it once claimed with the *Lancelot*. The *Dragoons* were assigned primarily to Amaris' elite Dragoon and Guards regiments, though a handful were gifted to mercenary units that had proven their skill and absolute loyalty (often through acts later prosecuted as war crimes).

While the SLDF did make use of captured and salvaged *Dragoons*, after the Liberation of Terra Kerensky ordered all surviving specimens scrapped and Krupp to retool its production lines. A relative handful survived the post-Liberation purge, but not the first two Succession Wars.

VARIANTS

Krupp produced three other mission-specific *Dragoon* configurations in at least some quantity. The close-assault *Dragoon-02* carried a powerful 350-rated XL engine, which increased its top speed by over thirty percent; it retained the ER PPC for ranged fire, but traded its remaining weapons and jump jets for an alpha-strike package of an AC/20 and five medium lasers, backed up by a single small pulse laser.

The *Dragoon-03* was a ranged support 'Mech. Based on the stripped-down chassis of the -01, it carried a trio of Artemis IV-equipped LRM 15s, each provided with two tons of ammunition (most, but not all, of which was contained within the CASE-protected left torso magazine); a single medium laser and paired medium and small pulse lasers once again gave the 'Mech a powerful punch against any enemy targets that attempted to close under the missiles. The final -04 chassis, also based on a stripped -01, was a unique design that carried a gauss rifle as well as an ER PPC, but relied on a quintet of SRM 4 launchers and a pair of medium lasers to deliver a withering short-range fusillade.

Type: **Dragoon**

Technology Base: Inner Sphere

Tonnage: 70

Equipment

Internal Structure

Engine:

280 XL

Walking MP:

4

Running MP:

6

Jumping MP:

3

Heat Sinks:

11 [22]

Gyro:

Cockpit:

Armor Factor (Ferro):

206

Mass

7

8

1

3

3

11.5

*Internal
Structure* *Armor
Value*

Head

3

9

Center Torso

22

33

Center Torso (rear)

10

R/L Torso

15

24

R/L Torso (rear)

6

R/L Arm

11

20

R/L Leg

15

27

Weapons and Ammo Location Critical Tonnage

ER PPC

RA

3

7

LB 10-X AC

RA

6

11

Ammo (LB-X) 20

RT

2

2

Ammo (LB-X) 10

CT

1

1

Guardian ECM Suite

LT

2

1.5

LB 10-X AC

LA

6

11

Jump Jet

RT

1

1

Jump Jet

CT

1

1

Jump Jet

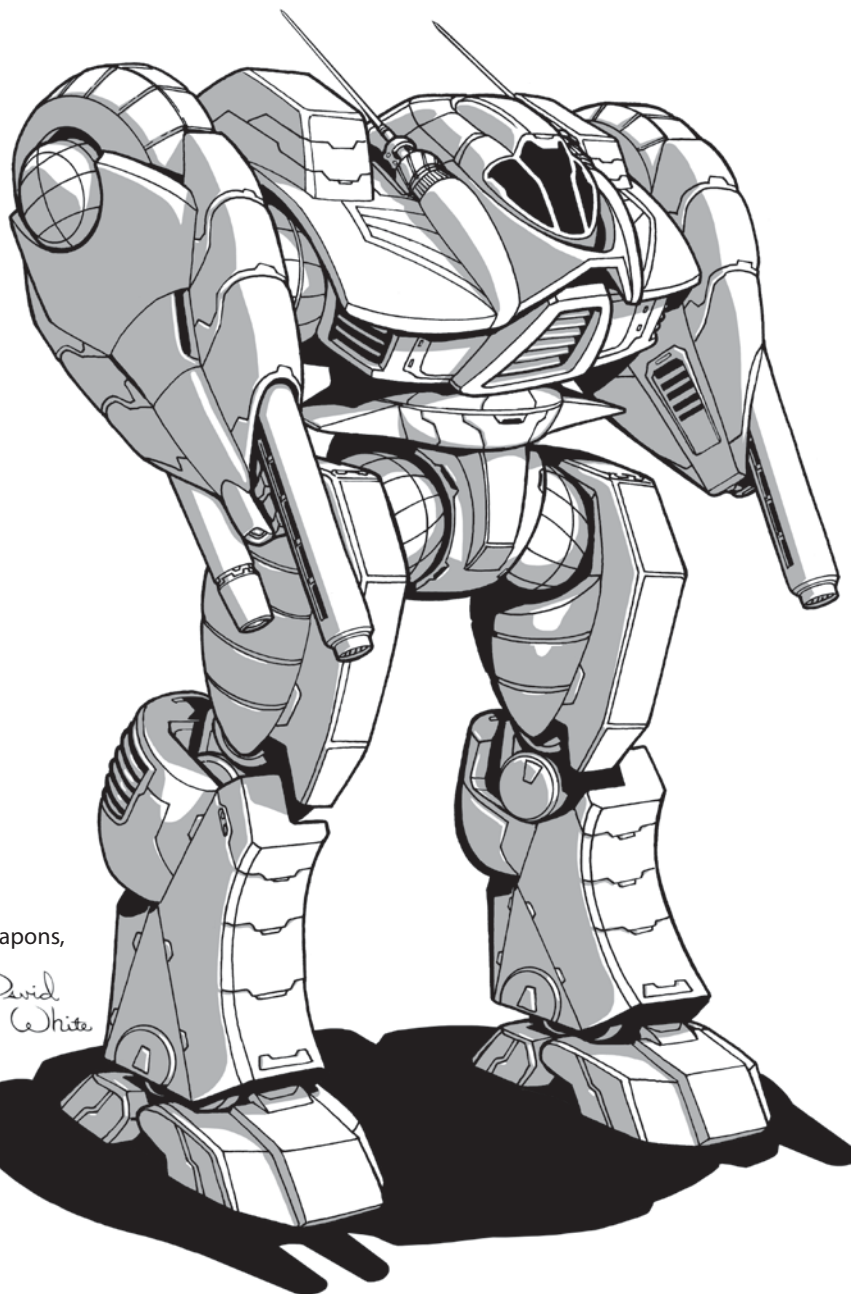
LT

1

1

Notes: Features the following Design Quirks: Modular Weapons, Easy to Maintain, Bad Reputation, Obsolete/2780

*David
White*



PUEBLO-CLASS DROPSHIP

Electronic Intelligence gathering took on many forms before and during the Star League era. Massive WarShips that could sit at the edge of an enemy's star system for weeks at a time were initially dedicated to this task, but during peacetime the First Lord could not place one of these ships in an ally's home system without sparking an interstellar incident. On the other hand, the Camerons knew well the price of interstellar peace was eternal vigilance. The Star League was a political, economic and military union of ten major interstellar powers, each of whom pursued their own agendas, and each of which were ready to pounce on their supposed allies at any hint of weakness.

Early on, the SLDF modified civilian cargo ships to carry a myriad of sensors and a large intelligence processing staff. These ships could easily hop from one system to another, or even linger for weeks, without raising undue suspicion. In times of crisis they were virtual sitting ducks, however, unable to effectively defend themselves or even retreat. The SLDF could deploy a *Bug Eye*, but even those ships were undergunned and, given their enormous price tag and classified technologies, not always an option. The *Pueblo* was built to be the better option.

Every *Pueblo*-class surveillance DropShip shared the same internal characteristics, but outwardly there were at least a dozen different profiles, each designed to look like a common civilian aerodyne DropShip class. Behind those exteriors lay a formidable and capable ship. While their pilots were trained to make it appear they were flying overloaded and underpowered bricks, the *Pueblo* was in fact a powerful and nimble craft with better acceleration than all but dedicated assault ships and aerospace interceptors. It also possessed far better armor and carried more firepower, hidden in recessed pods, than any opposing ships it might encounter, even the feared *Achilles*. A quartet of small craft—often a pair of standard cargo shuttles and two assault craft—gave it additional flexibility to respond to external threats.

Of course, combat was the last option for *Pueblo* crews. Despite being purchased as a "battlespace surveillance vessel," the majority of *Pueblos* spent their time plying the interstellar trade lines, surveiling Star League member states and other domestic powers. Crews almost never wore their SLDF uniforms, and in fact the vessels often worked as tramp freighters, transporting civilian cargoes to better maintain their cover. The *Pueblo*'s sophisticated surveillance systems were built into its hull, while computer and control systems operated by the eighteen-person intelligence staff were housed in what appeared to be standard cargo containers, so well masked that they could pass even a standard customs search. *Pueblos* carried a dedicated detachment of six marines, though the entire crew was trained to make or defeat marine assaults. The *Pueblos* all carried a portable HPG, ensuring they were not beholden to a JumpShip to pass on critical intelligence (though the use of the HPG required either hiding or exposing the ship's true nature to any nearby vessels).

The *Pueblo* played a key role in the SLDF's build-up and response to the Periphery Uprising, and later in Operation CHIEFTAIN, where Amaris' WarShip fleets actively hunted the SLDF's many surveillance ships operating within the Hegemony. The few surviving *Pueblos* that remained in the Inner Sphere following Kerensky's Exodus were eventually lost in the Succession Wars.

PUEBLO-CLASS DROPSHIP

Type: Military Aerodyne

Use: Surveillance

Tech: Inner Sphere

Introduced: 2673

Mass: 8,400 tons

Dimensions

Length: 134 meters

Width: 128.5 meters

Height: 32 meters

Fuel: 450 tons (13,500)

Tons/Burn-Day: 1.84

Safe Thrust: 6

Maximum Thrust: 9

Heat Sinks: 164 (328)

Structural Integrity: 30

Armor

Nose: 520

Sides: 520

Aft: 300

Cargo

Bay 1: Small Craft (4) 2 Doors

Bay 2: Cargo (300 tons) 2 Doors

Bay 3: Cargo (1,000 tons) 2 Doors

Life Boats: 6

Escape Pods: 4

Crew: 2 Officers, 6 Enlisted/Non-rated, 8 Gunners, 5 First Class Passengers, 13 Second Class Passengers, 6 Marines, 20 Bay Personnel

Notes: Mounts 111 tons of Ferro-Aluminum armor, Naval Comm Scanner Suite and Mobile HPG. Features the following Design Quirks: Atmospheric Flyer, Improved Communications



Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	Class
Nose (75 heat)						
2 ER PPCs	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	–	PPC
2 ER Large Lasers	30	3 (26)	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	Laser
2 Medium Lasers						
3 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV	15	4 (36)	4 (36)	4 (36)	–	LRM
LW/RW (70 heat)						
2 ER PPCs	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	–	PPC
2 ER Large Lasers	30	3 (26)	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	Laser
2 Medium Lasers						
2 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV	10	2 (24)	2 (24)	2 (24)	–	LRM
(48 rounds)						

Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	Class
LW/RW Aft (21 heat)						
ER PPC	15	1 (10)	1 (10)	1 (10)	–	PPC
2 Medium Lasers	6	1 (10)	–	–	–	Laser
Aft (70 heat)						
2 ER PPCs	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	–	PPC
2 ER Large Lasers	30	3 (26)	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	Laser
2 Medium Lasers						
2 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV	10	2 (24)	2 (24)	2 (24)	–	LRM
(48 rounds)						

LEE-CLASS DROPSHIP

Throughout the years, the SLDF would often publish requirements for a brand new piece of equipment, significantly change those requirements after a manufacturer produced prototypes that matched the original request to a tee, and then once that manufacturer incorporated the changes, reduce the total number of ordered units to a mere fraction of the original quote—or even change its mind and go with a different manufacturer. This, of course, stemmed from political interference that regularly subordinated the actual needs of the military to the exercise of power. Such maneuvering was the reason the *Colossus*-class DropShip became the biggest boondoggle of the twenty-seventh century, while the similar *Lee* of the twenty-eighth century survived to be one of the SLDF's last major purchases.

General Kerensky brought a unique perspective to the SLDF, stamping out corruption and trimming the fat to ensure the Star League's military was ready to fight anywhere at any time. He knew that major corps- and army-level deployments were widely considered "epic cluster-flops" that wasted significant amounts of time and fuel while men and equipment were offloaded. Moreover, scores of transport ships did the same job just a few converted cargo carriers could, in the process requiring more men, more JumpShips and more physical real estate to land on.

Kerensky's vision instead relied on fewer heavily armed and armored DropShips to transport the lead regiments of an invasion force into the battle. These transports could quickly offload their cargoes while fighter squadrons ripped enemy forces to shreds, concentrating their own withering direct fire against any opponents that broke through to the landing zone. A consortium of three naval shipyards presented General Kerensky plans for the *Lee* in 2749; massing almost as much as two *Overlords*, the *Lee* also carried almost twice the *Overlord*'s armor protection, and more than twice the weapons, in a hull that could accelerate quicker and was more maneuverable than the SLDF's standard battalion transport.

Lees were produced in four different internal configurations for the SLDF. The 'Mech carrier, based on the standard developed by the *Overlord*, carried a reinforced BattleMech battalion, supported by a single aerospace squadron and two additional small craft—typically assault craft, though transports loaded with artillery or other support equipment were also commonplace—on four different decks. A dedicated *Lee* aerospace carrier brought forty aerospace fighters—two full wings—and an additional squadron of assault craft into the battle (a configuration that clearly inspired the *Vengeance*, which debuted just a few decades later). The third major variant carried a full armored battalion, and had the additional room to carry a mechanized infantry regiment (or a brigade's support personnel, including its trucks and other light vehicles) as well as eight small craft. A final variant, of which just three were produced, was a transport ship that could break through a blockade to deliver more than eight thousand tons of cargo to the battlefield.

Kerensky fought hard to have the *Lee* built, a process that grew easier after Richard Cameron sought to quash continued *Lee* purchases—which in turn united the rest of the Star League Council against the young First Lord. The *Lee* proved its worth time and again during the Periphery Uprising, but those strengths turned to weaknesses when facing the Space Defense System during the Hegemony campaign. The fifteen *Lees* assigned to the Thirty-Fourth Royal BattleMech Division lasted only minutes during that division's ill-fated assault on Epsilon Indi, while many more were lost during the assault on Nusakan before SLDF naval commanders began to hold the ships in reserve. The *Lee* played a major role in the landings on Terra, where most of the surviving ships were crippled or destroyed. The last few surviving *Lees* took part in the Exodus, and were lost during the Exodus Civil War.

LEE-CLASS DROPSHIP

Type: Military Spheroid

Use: Transport

Tech: Inner Sphere

Introduced: 2756

Mass: 17,000 tons

Dimensions

Length: 98 meters

Width: 98 meters

Height: 117 meters

Fuel: 850 tons (25,500)

Tons/Burn-Day: 1.84

Safe Thrust: 5

Maximum Thrust: 8

Heat Sinks: 203 (406)

Structural Integrity: 25

Armor

Nose: 440

Sides: 410

Aft: 251

Cargo

Bay 1: BattleMechs (40) 4 Doors

Bay 2: Fighters (6) 2 Doors

Bay 3: Small Craft (2) 1 Doors

Bay 4: Cargo (967 tons) 1 Doors

Life Boats: 10

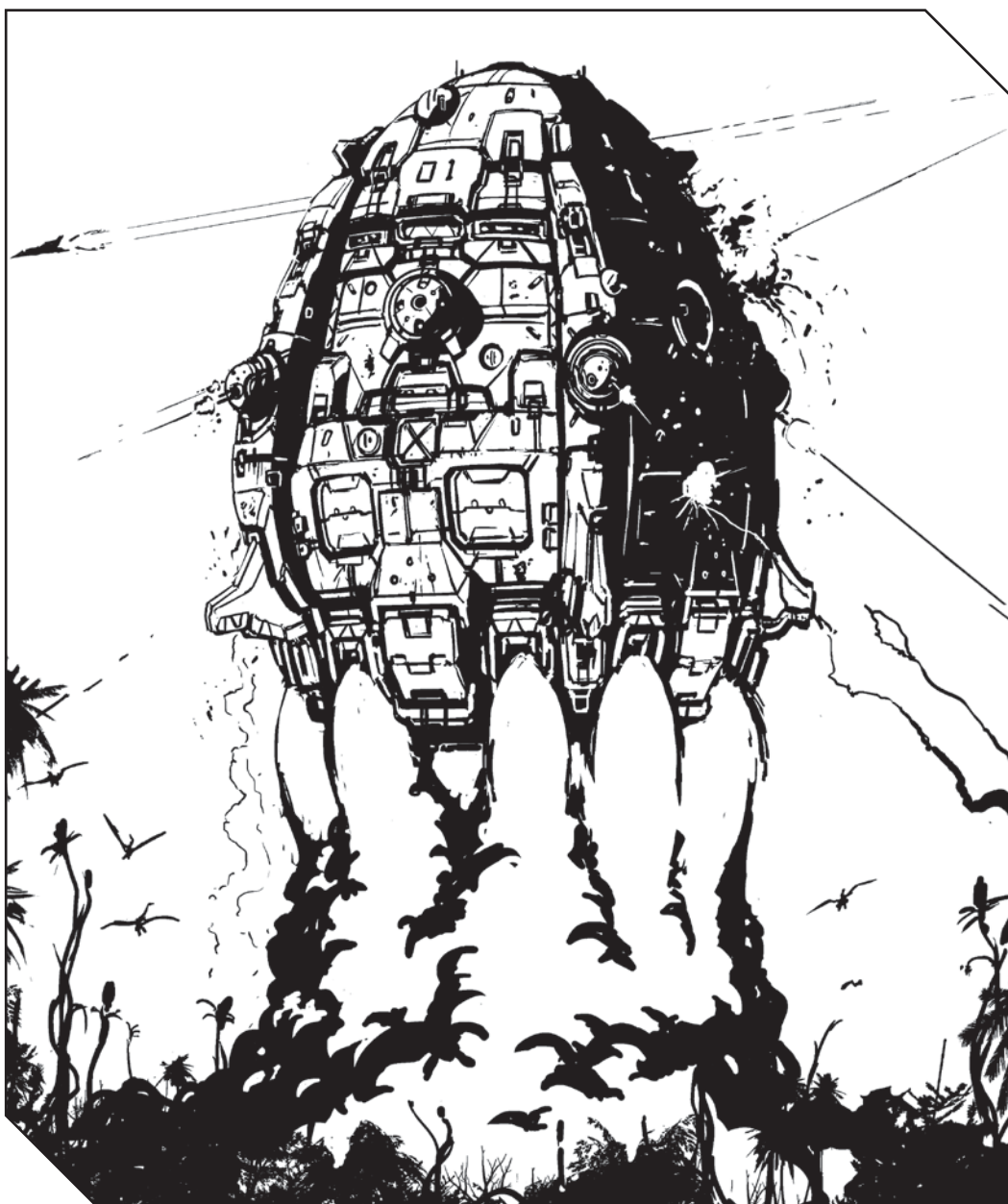
Escape Pods: 10

Crew: 4 Officers, 7 Enlisted/Non-rated, 15 Gunners, 3 First-Class Passengers, 20 Second Class Passengers, 30 Marines, 102 Bay Personnel

Notes: Mounts 90 tons of Ferro-Aluminum armor.

Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)					Class
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme		
Nose (95 heat)							
2 Gauss Rifles (48 rounds)	2	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	–	Autocannon	
3 ER PPCs	45	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	–	PPC	
2 ER Large Lasers 4 Medium Lasers	36	4 (36)	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	Laser	
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV (48 rounds)	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	–	LRM	
FL/FR (75 heat)							
2 Gauss Rifles (48 rounds)	9	5 (50)	3 (30)	3 (30)	–	Autocannon	
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)							
2 ER PPCs	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	–	PPC	
1 ER Large Laser 4 Medium Lasers	24	3 (28)	1 (8)	1 (8)	–	Laser	
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV (48 rounds)	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	–	LRM	

Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)					Class
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme		
AL/AR Aft (80 heat)							
1 Gauss Rifle (24 rounds)	8	4 (35)	2 (15)	2 (15)	–	Autocannon	
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)							
2 ER PPCs	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	–	PPC	
1 ER Large Lasers 4 Medium Lasers	24	3 (28)	1 (8)	1 (8)	–	Laser	
3 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV (72 rounds)	18	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM	
Aft (62 heat)							
1 Gauss Rifle (24 rounds)	8	4 (35)	2 (15)	2 (15)	–	Autocannon	
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)							
2 ER Large Lasers 6 Medium Lasers	42	5 (46)	2 (16)	2 (16)	–	Laser	
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV (48 rounds)	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	–	LRM	



STEFAN AMARIS (BATTLESHIP)

That President Stefan Amaris, leader of the Rim Worlds Republic, possessed such an ego that he directed his nation's very first battleship to be named after him surprised no one, and in fact drew little overt or covert criticism. It was his nation's crowning achievement, centuries in the making. The Rim Worlds had been one of the first Periphery nation to develop a true capital WarShip, but in the wake of the Reunification War was forced to give up on its efforts to build a modern WarShip fleet. Stefan Amaris' ascension to the Presidency finally brought back the focus that his admirals had long yearned for, and ultimately saw numerous Star League WarShip designs commissioned into the Rim Worlds Navy—some purchased from mothballs opened up to Amaris by Richard Cameron, others mere copies of existing ships (almost all of which were notably less efficient and more problematic than their Star League siblings).

Ever the visionary, Amaris did not allow his nation or his admirals to be satisfied with that status quo, demanding that they build the Human Sphere's premier battleship (a ship with which he could lead the Rim Worlds Navy into victory over the Star League, as his diaries later revealed). Given the scale of the project at hand, the Rim Worlds shipyards were unable to deliver the most massive WarShip ever built (as he had hoped), but they did design an effective battlewagon that held the distinction of being the longest WarShip ever built.

Massing just over half the Hegemony's *McKenna*, the *Stefan Amaris* was better armored but otherwise paled in comparison to that king of all WarShips. The *Amaris* was more than capable of facing older battleships, however, as well as the many cruisers and destroyers that made up the bulk of every Inner Sphere navy. Amaris' greatest coup—at least prior to his assassination of Richard Cameron—was arranging for the young First Lord to sell him lithium-fusion battery systems for his battleships. The first three completed hulls had just finished those upgrades in Hegemony shipyards and were on “shakedown” cruises when the Usurper murdered Cameron and named himself First Lord; all three *Amaris* battleships played major roles in securing the Hegemony and eliminating the immediate threat posed by the SLDF Navy.

Two more *Amaris* battleships were under construction within the Rim Worlds at the time of the Coup; neither was finished before the SLDF conquered the nation, and they subsequently fell into the SLDF's hands. Kerensky ordered the two ships completed and made sure that both played prominent roles in Operation CHIEFTAIN, leading the invasion forces on key worlds. The SLS *Vengeance*, nee RWRS *Gregory Amaris*, was destroyed in the assault on New Home, while the SLS *Chieftain*, formerly the *Terens Amaris*, led Task Force Leonidas—which cleared the approach to Terra for the Operation LIBERATION invasion force. None of the *Stefan Amaris*-class battleships survived the liberation of the Terran Hegemony.

STEFAN AMARIS (BATTLESHIP)

Tech: Inner Sphere

Introduced: 2764

Mass: 1,040,000 tons

Length: 1,605 meters

Sail Diameter: 1,200 meters

Fuel: 15,000 tons (37,500)

Tons/Burn Day: 39.52

Safe Thrust: 3

Maximum Thrust: 5

Sail Integrity: 6

KF Drive Integrity: 21

Heat Sinks: 1,666 (3,332)

Structural Integrity: 100

Armor

Fore: 280

Fore-Sides: 260

Aft-Sides: 260

Aft: 251

Cargo

Bay 1: Fighters (18) 2 Doors

Bay 2: Fighters (18) 2 Doors

Bay 3: Small Craft (6) 2 Doors

Bay 4: Cargo (97,600 tons) 4 Doors

DropShip Capacity: 4

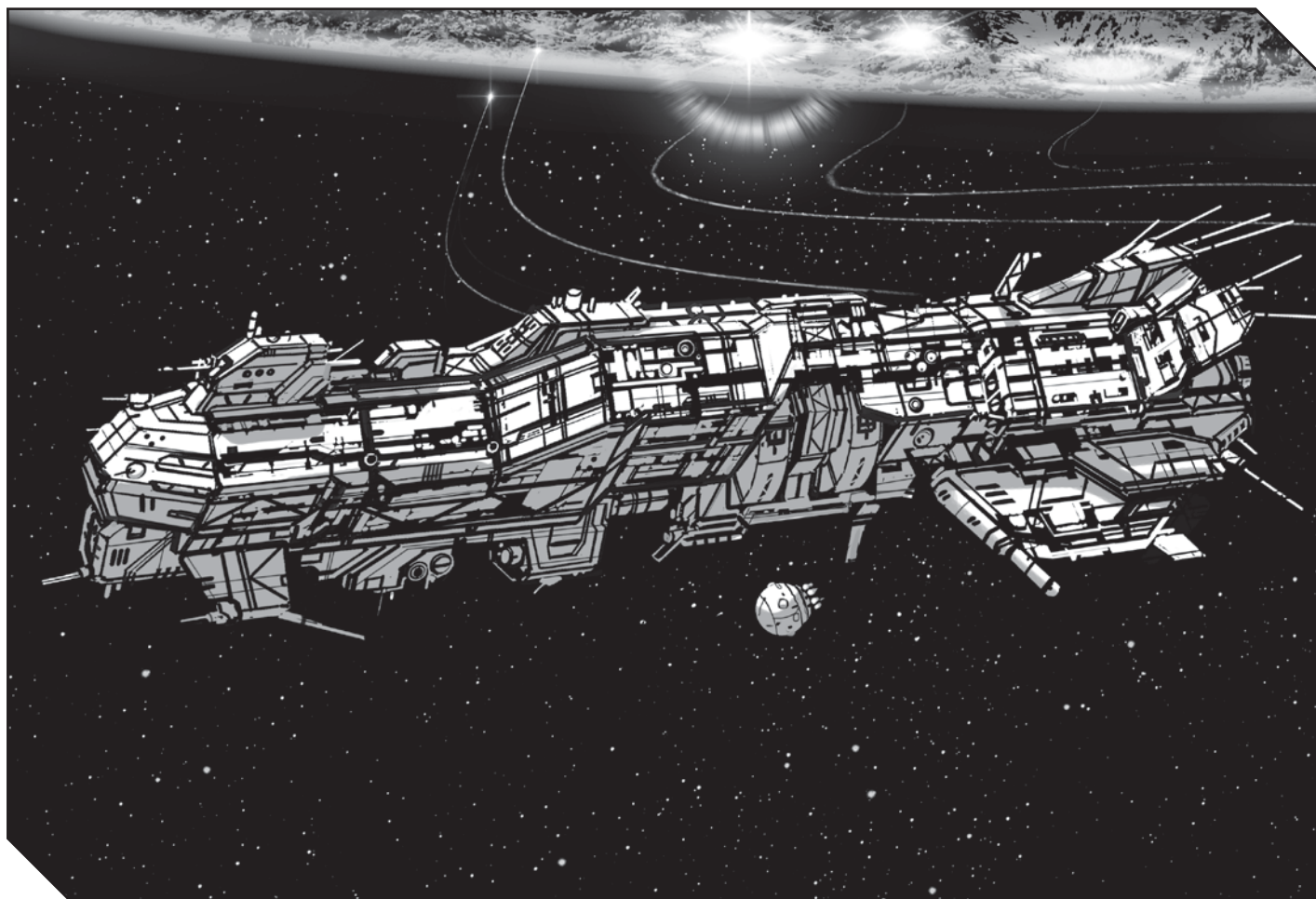
Grav Decks: 2 (150-meter diameter)

Escape Pods: 100

Life Boats: 60

Crew: 118 Officers, 396 Enlisted/nonrated, 98 Gunners, 25 First-Class Passengers, 50 Second-Class Passengers, 100 Steerage Passengers, 60 marines, 102 Bay personnel

Notes: Mounts 1,889 tons of Ferro Carbide armor. Features the following Design Quirks: Bad Reputation, Obsolete/2779



Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	Class
Nose (722 heat)						
3 Heavy N-PPCs	675	45	45	45	45	Naval PPC
3 Gauss Rifles	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	–	Autocannon
(72 rounds)						
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM
4 Medium Lasers	12	2 (20)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense
FL/FR (457 heat)						
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	200	40	40	40	–	Capital AC
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	170	50	50	50	–	Capital AC
2 Killer Whales	40	8	8	8	8	Capital Missile
(20 rounds)						
3 Gauss Rifles	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	–	Autocannon
(72 rounds)						
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM
4 Medium Lasers	12	2 (20)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense
LBS/RBS (1092 heat)						
3 Heavy N-PPCs	675	45	45	45	45	Naval PPC
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	200	40	40	40	–	Capital AC
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	170	50	50	50	–	Capital AC
3 Gauss Rifles	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	–	Autocannon
(72 rounds)						
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM
4 Medium Lasers	12	2 (20)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense

Weapons		Capital Attack Values (Standard)				
Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	Class
AL/AR (597 heat)						
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	200	40	40	40	–	Capital AC
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	170	50	50	50	–	Capital AC
2 Killer Whales	40	8	8	8	8	Capital Missile
(20 rounds)						
3 Gauss Rifles	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	–	Autocannon
(72 rounds)						
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM
4 Medium Lasers	12	2 (20)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense
Aft (322 heat)						
1 NAC/40 (10 rounds)	135	40	40	–	–	Capital AC
2 NL 45	140	9	9	9	9	Capital Laser
3 Gauss Rifles	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	–	Autocannon
(72 rounds)						
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	–	LRM
4 Medium Lasers	12	2 (20)	–	–	–	Laser
4 Small Pulse Lasers	8	1 (12)	–	–	–	Point Defense

BATTLETECH

V.T.O.L. VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: VECTOR

Movement Points: Tonnage: 22
 Cruising: 12 Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Flank: 18 Star League
 Movement Type: VTOL
 Engine Type: Fusion Engine

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
2	Medium Laser	FR	5 [DE]	—	3	6	9
1	Small Pulse Laser	FR	3 [PAI]	—	1	2	3

Infantry Compartment (3 tons)

BV: 512

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Co-Pilot Hit +1 Pilot Hit +2
 Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

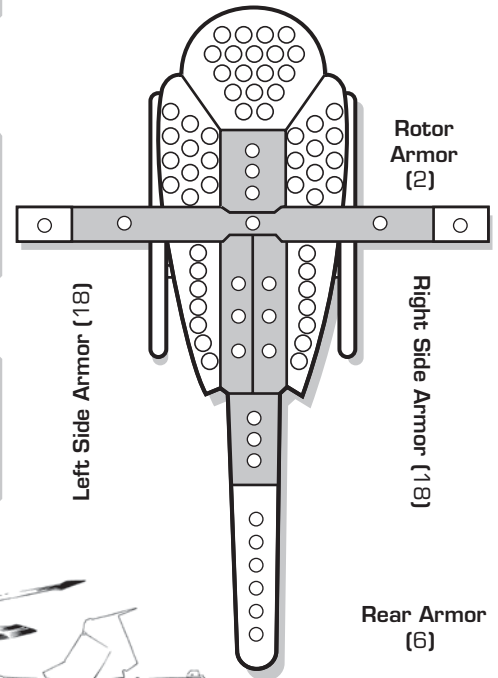
Flight Stabilizer* +3 Engine Hit ☐
 Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 ☐
 Stabilizers
 Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐ Rear ☐
 *Move at Cruising speed only



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Front Armor (18)

Rotor Armor (2)



Left Side Armor (18)

Right Side Armor (18)

Rear Armor (6)



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VTOL COMBAT VEHICLE HIT LOCATION TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	ATTACK DIRECTION REAR	SIDE
2*	Front (critical)	Rear (critical)	Side (critical)
3	Rotors†	Rotors†	Rotors†
4	Turret‡	Turret‡	Turret‡
5	Right Side	Left Side	Front
6	Front	Rear	Side
7	Front	Rear	Side
8	Front	Rear	Side (critical)*
9	Left Side	Right Side	Rear
10	Rotors†	Rotors†	Rotors†
11	Rotors†	Rotors†	Rotors†
12*	Rotors (critical)†	Rotors (critical)†	Rotors (critical)†

*A result of 2 or 12 (or an 8 if the attack strikes the side) may inflict a critical hit on the VTOL. For each such attack, apply damage normally to the armor in that section. The attacking player then immediately rolls once on the VTOL Combat Vehicle Critical Hits Table, below.

†Damage Value / 10 (round up); see *Rotor Hits*, p. 197, *Total Warfare*. Additionally, damage to rotors slows down the VTOL. Each hit reduces the VTOL's Cruising MP by 1, meaning that the controlling player must also recalculate Flank MP; multiply the new Cruising MP by 1.5 and round up. As with all damage, such movement penalties do not apply until the end of the phase in which the damage occurred.

‡ If the VTOL has no turret, a turret strike hits Rotors†

VTOL ELEVATION TRACK

Turn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Elevation															

Turn	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Elevation															

PHYSICAL ATTACKS AGAINST VTOL VEHICLES TABLE

DIFFERENCE IN LEVELS	TYPES OF PHYSICAL ATTACK ALLOWED
-1 or lower	None
0	All except Punch
1-2	All except Kick
3	Club and Physical Weapons only
4+	None

VTOL COMBAT VEHICLE CRITICAL HITS TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	SIDE	LOCATION HIT REAR	ROTORS	TURRET
2-5	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit
6	Co-Pilot Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Rotor Damage	Stabilizer
7	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Rotor Damage	Turret Jam
8	Stabilizer	Stabilizer	Stabilizer	Rotor Damage	Weapon Malfunction
9	Sensors	Weapon Destroyed	Weapon Destroyed	Flight Stabilizer Hit	Turret Lock
10	Pilot Hit	Engine Hit	Sensors	Flight Stabilizer Hit	Weapon Destroyed
11	Weapon Destroyed	Ammunition**	Engine Hit	Rotors Destroyed	Ammunition**
12	Crew Killed	Fuel Tank*	Fuel Tank*	Rotors Destroyed	Turret Blown Off

*Only if the VTOL has an ICE engine. For VTOLs with fusion engines, treat this result as Engine Hit.

**If the VTOL carries no ammunition, treat this result as Weapon Destroyed.

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BATTLETECH

WHEELED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: VALI

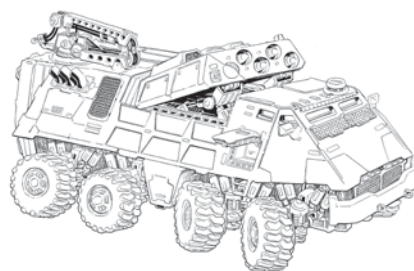
Movement Points: Tonnage: 40
 Cruising: 4 Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Flank: 6 (Advanced)
 Movement Type: Wheeled Era: Star League
 Engine Type: I.C.E.

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Commander Hit **+1** Driver Hit **+2**
Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Engine Hit ☐
 Sensor Hits **+1** **+2** **+3** **D**
 Motive System Hits **+1** **+2** **+3**
 Stabilizers
 Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
 Rear ☐



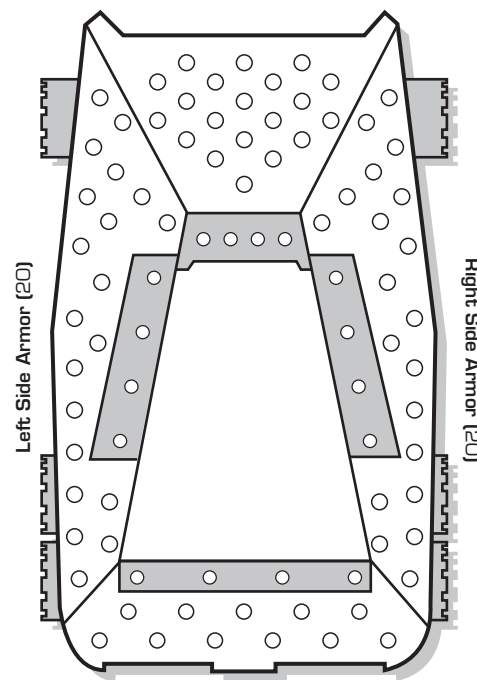
Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)							
Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Arrow IV	FR	20 [AE,S,F]	—	1	2	8

Ammo: [Arrow IV] 25

BV: 653

ARMOR DIAGRAM

Front Armor
[20]



Rear Armor
[11]



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GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE HIT LOCATION TABLE

2D6 Roll	ATTACK DIRECTION		
	FRONT	REAR	SIDES
2*	Front (critical)	Rear (critical)	Side (critical)
3	Front†	Rear†	Side†
4	Front†	Rear†	Side†
5	Right Side†	Left Side†	Front†
6	Front	Rear	Side
7	Front	Rear	Side
8	Front	Rear	Side (critical)*
9	Left Side†	Right Side†	Rear†
10	Turret	Turret	Turret
11	Turret	Turret	Turret
12*	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)

*A result of 2 or 12 (or an 8 if the attack strikes the side) may inflict a critical hit on the vehicle. For each result of 2 or 12 (or 8 for side attacks), apply damage normally to the armor in that section. The attacking player then automatically rolls once on the Ground Combat Vehicle Critical Hits Table below (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). A result of 12 on the Ground Combat Vehicles Hit Location Table may inflict critical hit against the turret; if the vehicle has no turret, a 12 indicates the chance of a critical hit on the side corresponding to the attack direction.
 †The vehicle may suffer motive system damage even if its armor remains intact. Apply damage normally to the armor in that section, but the attacking player also rolls once on the Motive System Damage Table at right (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). Apply damage at the end of the phase in which the damage takes effect.
 ‡Side hits strike the side as indicated by the attack direction. For example, if an attack hits the right side, all Side results strike the right side armor. If the vehicle has no turret, a turret hit strikes the armor on the side attacked.

MOTIVE SYSTEM DAMAGE TABLE

2D6 Roll	EFFECT*
2-5	No effect
6-7	Minor damage; +1 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
8-9	Moderate damage; -1 Cruising MP; +2 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
10-11	Heavy damage; only half Cruising MP (round fractions up); +3 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
12+	Major damage; no movement for the rest of the game. Vehicle is immobile.

Attack Direction Modifier:		Vehicle Type Modifiers:	
Hit from rear	+1	Tracked, Naval	+0
Hit from the sides	+2	Wheeled	+2
		Hovercraft, Hydrofoil	+3
		WIGE	+4

*All movement and Driving Skill Roll penalties are cumulative. However, each Driving Skill Roll modifier can only be applied once. For example, if a roll of 6-7 is made for a vehicle, inflicting a +1 modifier, that is the only time that particular +1 can be applied; a subsequent roll of 6-7 has no additional effect. This means the maximum Driving Skill Roll modifier that can be inflicted from the Motive System Damage Table is +6. If a unit's Cruising MP is reduced to 0, it cannot move for the rest of the game, but is not considered an immobile target. In addition, all motive system damage takes effect at the end of the phase in which the damage occurred. For example, if two units are attacking the same Combat Vehicle during the Weapon Attack Phase and the first unit inflicts motive system damage and rolls a 12, the -4 immobile target modifier would not apply for the second unit. However, the -4 modifier would take effect during the Physical Attack Phase. If a hover vehicle is rendered immobile while over a Depth 1 or deeper water hex, it sinks and is destroyed.

GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE CRITICAL HITS TABLE

2D6 Roll	LOCATION HIT			
	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	TURRET
2-5	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit
6	Driver Hit	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Stabilizer
7	Weapon Malfunction	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Turret Jam
8	Stabilizer	Crew Stunned	Stabilizer	Weapon Malfunction
9	Sensors	Stabilizer	Weapon Destroyed	Turret Locks
10	Commander Hit	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Weapon Destroyed
11	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Ammunition**	Ammunition**
12	Crew Killed	Fuel Tank*	Fuel Tank*	Turret Blown Off

*If Combat Vehicle has ICE engine only. If Combat Vehicle has a fusion engine, treat this result as Engine Hit.
 **If Combat Vehicle carries no ammunition, treat this result as Weapon Destroyed.



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BATTLETECH

TRACKED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: BALLISTA

Movement Points: Tonnage: 55
 Cruising: 3 Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Flank: 5 (Advanced)
 Movement Type: Tracked Era: Star League
 Engine Type: I.C.E.

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Commander Hit **+1** Driver Hit **+2**
Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

CRITICAL DAMAGE

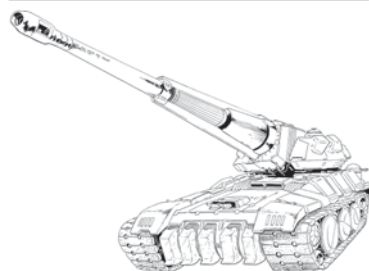
Turret Locked ☐ Engine Hit ☐
 Sensor Hits **+1 +2 +3** **D**
 Motive System Hits **+1 +2 +3**
 Stabilizers
 Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
 Rear ☐ Turret ☐

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
2	Machine Gun	FR	2	—	1	2	3
			[DB,AI]				
1	Machine Gun	R	2	—	1	2	3
			[DB,AI]				
1	Sniper	T	20	—	1	2	18
			[AE,S,F]				

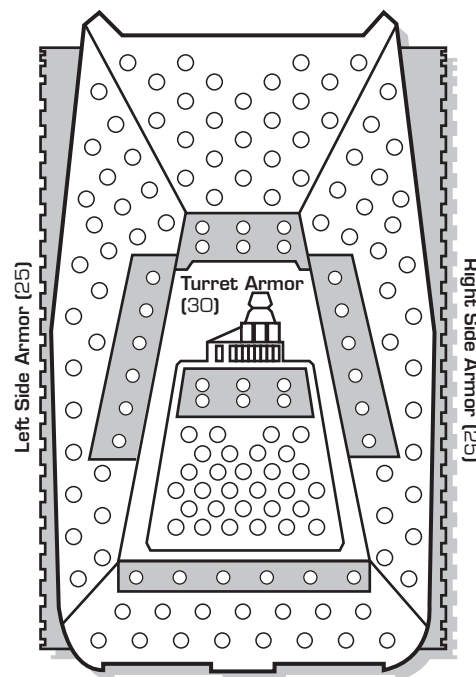
Ammo: [Sniper] 30, [Machine Gun] 100

BV: 531



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Front Armor
(25)



Rear Armor
(15)



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GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE HIT LOCATION TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	REAR	SIDES
2*	Front (critical)	Rear (critical)	Side (critical)
3	Front†	Rear†	Side†
4	Front†	Rear†	Side†
5	Right Side†	Left Side†	Front†
6	Front	Rear	Side
7	Front	Rear	Side
8	Front	Rear	Side (critical)*
9	Left Side†	Right Side†	Rear†
10	Turret	Turret	Turret
11	Turret	Turret	Turret
12*	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)

*A result of 2 or 12 (or an 8 if the attack strikes the side) may inflict a critical hit on the vehicle. For each result of 2 or 12 (or 8 for side attacks), apply damage normally to the armor in that section. The attacking player then automatically rolls once on the Ground Combat Vehicle Critical Hits Table below (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). A result of 12 on the Ground Combat Vehicles Hit Location Table may inflict critical hit against the turret; if the vehicle has no turret, a 12 indicates the chance of a critical hit on the side corresponding to the attack direction.
 †The vehicle may suffer motive system damage even if its armor remains intact. Apply damage normally to the armor in that section, but the attacking player also rolls once on the Motive System Damage Table at right (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). Apply damage at the end of the phase in which the damage takes effect.
 ‡Side hits strike the side as indicated by the attack direction. For example, if an attack hits the right side, all Side results strike the right side armor. If the vehicle has no turret, a turret hit strikes the armor on the side attacked.

MOTIVE SYSTEM DAMAGE TABLE

2D6 Roll	EFFECT*
2-5	No effect
6-7	Minor damage; +1 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
8-9	Moderate damage; -1 Cruising MP, +2 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
10-11	Heavy damage; only half Cruising MP (round fractions up), +3 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
12+	Major damage; no movement for the rest of the game. Vehicle is immobile.

Attack Direction Modifier:		Vehicle Type Modifiers:	
from rear	+1	Tracked, Naval	+0
from the sides	+2	Wheeled	+2
		Hovercraft, Hydrofoil	+3
		WIGE	+4

*All movement and Driving Skill Roll penalties are cumulative. However, each Driving Skill Roll modifier can only be applied once. For example, if a roll of 6-7 is made for a vehicle, inflicting a +1 modifier, that is the only time that particular +1 can be applied; a subsequent roll of 6-7 has no additional effect. This means the maximum Driving Skill Roll modifier that can be inflicted from the Motive System Damage Table is +6. If a unit's Cruising MP is reduced to 0, it cannot move for the rest of the game, but is not considered an immobile target. In addition, all motive system damage takes effect at the end of the phase in which the damage occurred. For example, if two units are attacking the same Combat Vehicle during the Weapon Attack Phase and the first unit inflicts motive system damage and rolls a 12, the -4 immobile target modifier would not apply for the second unit. However, the -4 modifier would take effect during the Physical Attack Phase. If a hover vehicle is rendered immobile while over a Depth 1 or deeper water hex, it sinks and is destroyed.

GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE CRITICAL HITS TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	TURRET
2-5	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit
6	Driver Hit	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Stabilizer
7	Weapon Malfunction	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Turret Jam
8	Stabilizer	Crew Stunned	Stabilizer	Weapon Malfunction
9	Sensors	Stabilizer	Weapon Destroyed	Turret Locks
10	Commander Hit	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Weapon Destroyed
11	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Ammunition**	Ammunition**
12	Crew Killed	Fuel Tank*	Fuel Tank*	Turret Blown Off

*If Combat Vehicle has ICE engine only. If Combat Vehicle has a fusion engine, treat this result as Engine Hit.
 **If Combat Vehicle carries no ammunition, treat this result as Weapon Destroyed.



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BATTLETECH

TRACKED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: LB-X CARRIER

Movement Points: Tonnage: 60
 Cruising: 3 Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Flank: 5 Era: Star League
 Movement Type: Tracked
 Engine Type: Fusion Engine

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
2	LB 10-X AC	FR	10	—	6	12	18
3	LRM 5	FR	1/Msl [M,C,S]	6	7	14	21

Ammo: (LRM 5) 48, (LB 10-X Cluster) 20, (LB 10-X) 20

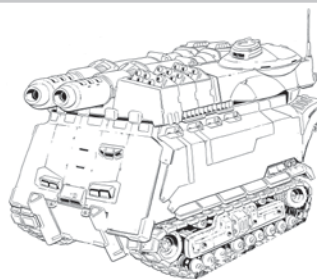
BV: 901

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Commander Hit +1 Driver Hit +2
 Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

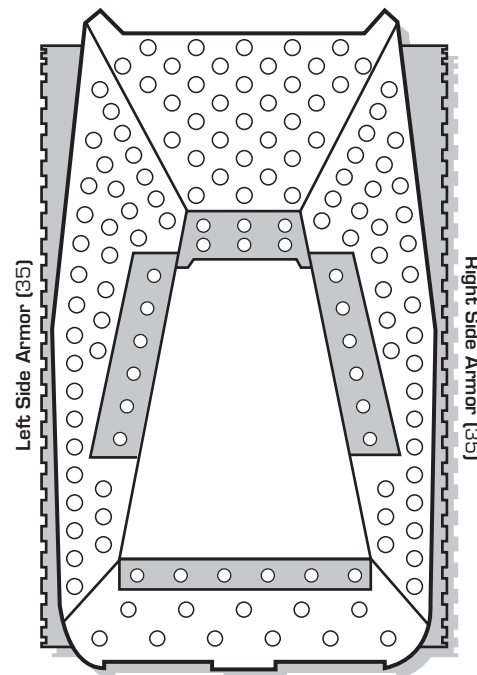
CRITICAL DAMAGE

Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 D
 Motive System Hits +1 +2 +3
 Stabilizers
 Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
 Rear ☐



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Front Armor
(35)



Rear Armor
(11)



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GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE HIT LOCATION TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	REAR	SIDES
2*	Front (critical)	Rear (critical)	Side (critical)
3	Front†	Rear†	Side†
4	Front†	Rear†	Side†
5	Right Side†	Left Side†	Front†
6	Front	Rear	Side
7	Front	Rear	Side
8	Front	Rear	Side (critical)*
9	Left Side†	Right Side†	Rear†
10	Turret	Turret	Turret
11	Turret	Turret	Turret
12*	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)

*A result of 2 or 12 (or an 8 if the attack strikes the side) may inflict a critical hit on the vehicle. For each result of 2 or 12 (or 8 for side attacks), apply damage normally to the armor in that section. The attacking player then automatically rolls once on the Ground Combat Vehicle Critical Hits Table below (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). A result of 12 on the Ground Combat Vehicles Hit Location Table may inflict critical hit against the turret; if the vehicle has no turret, a 12 indicates the chance of a critical hit on the side corresponding to the attack direction.
 †The vehicle may suffer motive system damage even if its armor remains intact. Apply damage normally to the armor in that section, but the attacking player also rolls once on the Motive System Damage Table at right (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). Apply damage at the end of the phase in which the damage takes effect.
 ‡Side hits strike the side as indicated by the attack direction. For example, if an attack hits the right side, all Side results strike the right side armor. If the vehicle has no turret, a turret hit strikes the armor on the side attacked.

MOTIVE SYSTEM DAMAGE TABLE

2D6 Roll	EFFECT*
2-5	No effect
6-7	Minor damage; +1 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
8-9	Moderate damage; -1 Cruising MP; +2 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
10-11	Heavy damage; only half Cruising MP (round fractions up); +3 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
12+	Major damage; no movement for the rest of the game. Vehicle is immobile.

Attack Direction Modifier:	Vehicle Type Modifiers:
Hit from rear +1	Tracked, Naval +0
Hit from the sides +2	Wheeled +2
	Hovercraft, Hydrofoil +3
	WIGE +4

*All movement and Driving Skill Roll penalties are cumulative. However, each Driving Skill Roll modifier can only be applied once. For example, if a roll of 6-7 is made for a vehicle, inflicting a +1 modifier, that is the only time that particular +1 can be applied; a subsequent roll of 6-7 has no additional effect. This means the maximum Driving Skill Roll modifier that can be inflicted from the Motive System Damage Table is +6. If a unit's Cruising MP is reduced to 0, it cannot move for the rest of the game, but is not considered an immobile target. In addition, all motive system damage takes effect at the end of the phase in which the damage occurred. For example, if two units are attacking the same Combat Vehicle during the Weapon Attack Phase and the first unit inflicts motive system damage and rolls a 12, the -4 immobile target modifier would not apply for the second unit. However, the -4 modifier would take effect during the Physical Attack Phase. If a hover vehicle is rendered immobile while over a Depth 1 or deeper water hex, it sinks and is destroyed.

GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE CRITICAL HITS TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	TURRET
2-5	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit
6	Driver Hit	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Stabilizer
7	Weapon Malfunction	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Turret Jam
8	Stabilizer	Crew Stunned	Stabilizer	Weapon Malfunction
9	Sensors	Stabilizer	Weapon Destroyed	Turret Locks
10	Commander Hit	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Weapon Destroyed
11	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Ammunition**	Ammunition**
12	Crew Killed	Fuel Tank*	Fuel Tank*	Turret Blown Off

*If Combat Vehicle has ICE engine only. If Combat Vehicle has a fusion engine, treat this result as Engine Hit.
 **If Combat Vehicle carries no ammunition, treat this result as Weapon Destroyed.



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BATTLETECH

TRACKED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: POLLUX

Movement Points: Tonnage: 75
 Cruising: 3 Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Flank: 5 (Advanced)
 Movement Type: Tracked Era: Star League
 Engine Type: Fusion Engine

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Commander Hit **+1** Driver Hit **+2**
Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

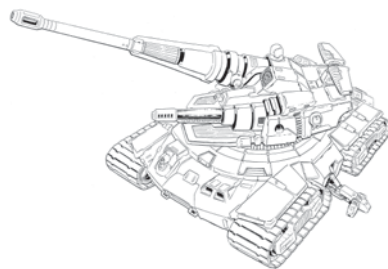
CRITICAL DAMAGE

Turret Locked ☐ Engine Hit ☐
 Sensor Hits **+1 +2 +3** **D**
 Motive System Hits **+1 +2 +3**
 Stabilizers
 Front ☐ Left ☐ Right ☐
 Rear ☐ Turret ☐

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Small Pulse Laser	FR	3 [PAI]	—	1	2	3
1	LB 10-X AC	T	10	—	6	12	18
			[DB,C/F/S]				
1	Medium Laser	T	5 [DE]	—	3	6	9
1	Sniper	T	20	—	1	2	18
			[AE,S,F]				

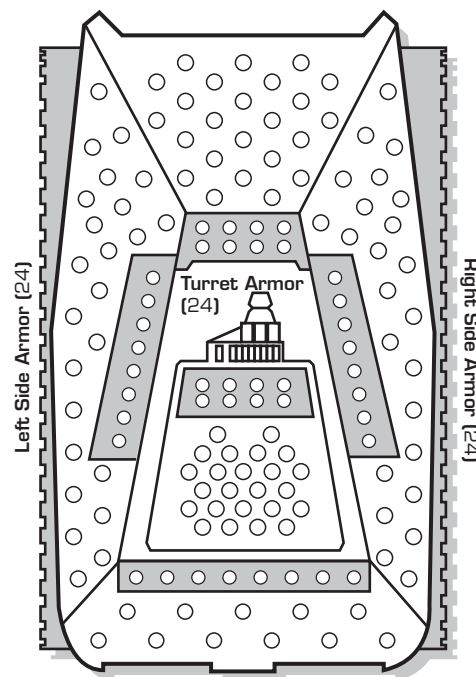
Ammo: [Sniper] 30, [LB 10-X Cluster] 10, [LB 10-X] 20

BV: 772



ARMOR DIAGRAM

Front Armor
[24]



Rear Armor
[11]



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GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE HIT LOCATION TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	REAR	SIDE§
2*	Front (critical)	Rear (critical)	Side (critical)
3	Front†	Rear†	Side†
4	Front†	Rear†	Side†
5	Right Side†	Left Side†	Front†
6	Front	Rear	Side
7	Front	Rear	Side
8	Front	Rear	Side (critical)*
9	Left Side†	Right Side†	Rear†
10	Turret	Turret	Turret
11	Turret	Turret	Turret
12*	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)	Turret (critical)

*A result of 2 or 12 (or an 8 if the attack strikes the side) may inflict a critical hit on the vehicle. For each result of 2 or 12 (or 8 for side attacks), apply damage normally to the armor in that section. The attacking player then automatically rolls once on the Ground Combat Vehicle Critical Hits Table below (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). A result of 12 on the Ground Combat Vehicles Hit Location Table may inflict critical hit against the turret; if the vehicle has no turret, a 12 indicates the chance of a critical hit on the side corresponding to the attack direction.
 †The vehicle may suffer motive system damage even if its armor remains intact. Apply damage normally to the armor in that section, but the attacking player also rolls once on the Motive System Damage Table at right (see Combat, p. 192 in Total Warfare for more information). Apply damage at the end of the phase in which the damage takes effect.
 §Side hits strike the side as indicated by the attack direction. For example, if an attack hits the right side, all Side results strike the right side armor. If the vehicle has no turret, a turret hit strikes the armor on the side attacked.

MOTIVE SYSTEM DAMAGE TABLE

2D6 Roll	EFFECT*
2-5	No effect
6-7	Minor damage; +1 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
8-9	Moderate damage; -1 Cruising MP; +2 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
10-11	Heavy damage; only half Cruising MP (round fractions up), +3 modifier to all Driving Skill Rolls
12+	Major damage; no movement for the rest of the game. Vehicle is immobile.

Attack Direction Modifier:		Vehicle Type Modifiers:	
Hit from rear	+1	Tracked, Naval	+0
Hit from the sides	+2	Wheeled	+2
		Hovercraft, Hydrofoil	+3
		WIGE	+4

*All movement and Driving Skill Roll penalties are cumulative. However, each Driving Skill Roll modifier can only be applied once. For example, if a roll of 6-7 is made for a vehicle, inflicting a +1 modifier, that is the only time that particular +1 can be applied; a subsequent roll of 6-7 has no additional effect. This means the maximum Driving Skill Roll modifier that can be inflicted from the Motive System Damage Table is +6. If a unit's Cruising MP is reduced to 0, it cannot move for the rest of the game, but is not considered an immobile target. In addition, all motive system damage takes effect at the end of the phase in which the damage occurred. For example, if two units are attacking the same Combat Vehicle during the Weapon Attack Phase and the first unit inflicts motive system damage and rolls a 12, the -4 immobile target modifier would not apply for the second unit. However, the -4 modifier would take effect during the Physical Attack Phase. If a hover vehicle is rendered immobile while over a Depth 1 or deeper water hex, it sinks and is destroyed.

GROUND COMBAT VEHICLE CRITICAL HITS TABLE

2D6 Roll	FRONT	SIDE	REAR	TURRET
2-5	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit	No Critical Hit
6	Driver Hit	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Weapon Malfunction	Stabilizer
7	Weapon Malfunction	Weapon Malfunction	Cargo/Infantry Hit	Turret Jam
8	Stabilizer	Crew Stunned	Stabilizer	Weapon Malfunction
9	Sensors	Stabilizer	Weapon Destroyed	Turret Locks
10	Commander Hit	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Weapon Destroyed
11	Weapon Destroyed	Engine Hit	Ammunition**	Ammunition**
12	Crew Killed	Fuel Tank*	Fuel Tank*	Turret Blown Off

*If Combat Vehicle has ICE engine only. If Combat Vehicle has a fusion engine, treat this result as Engine Hit.
 **If Combat Vehicle carries no ammunition, treat this result as Weapon Destroyed.



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BATTLETECH

Nose Damage
Threshold
(Total Armor)
52 (520)

ARMOR DIAGRAM

Standard Scale



AERODYNE DROPSHIP RECORD SHEET

DROPSHIP DATA

Type: PUEBLO

Name: _____ Tonnage: 8,400
Thrust: _____ Tech Base: Inner Sphere
Safe Thrust: 6 Era: Star League
Maximum Thrust: 9
Fighters/Small Craft: 0 / 4 Launch Rate: 4

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

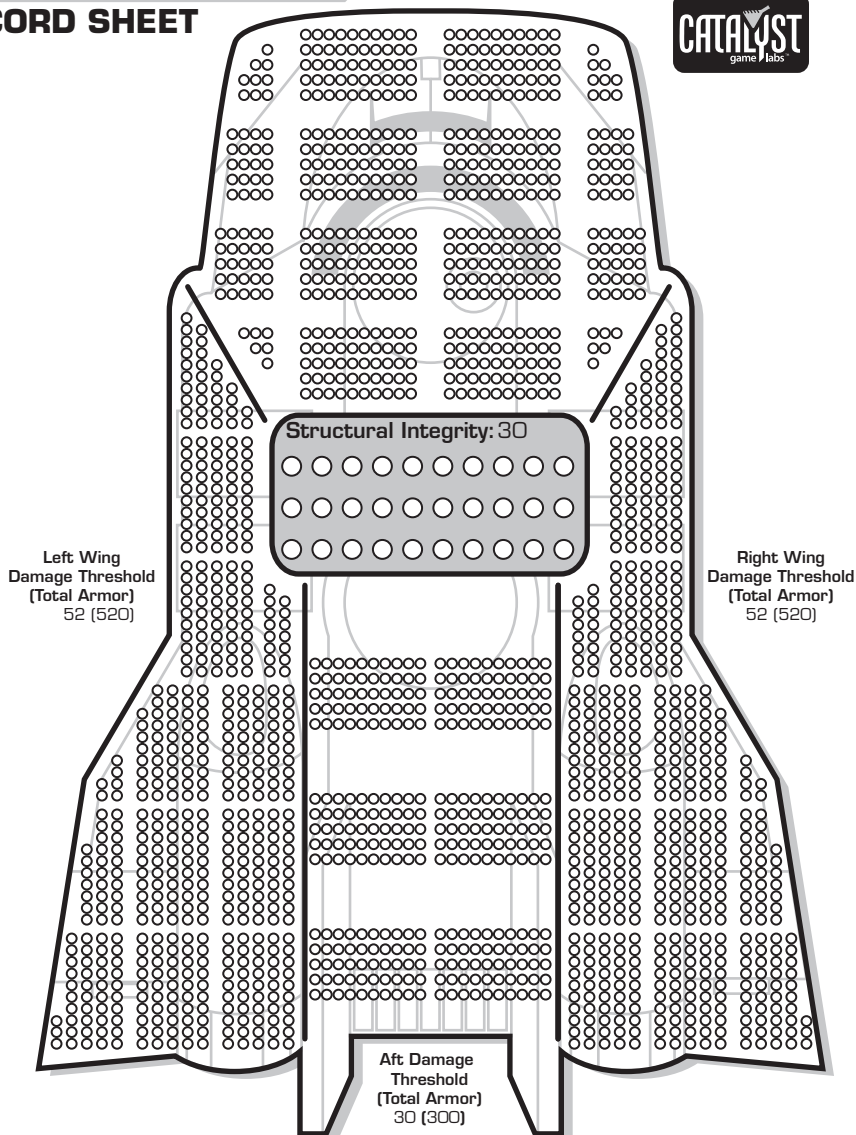
Standard Scale		[1-6] [7-12] [13-20][21-25]				
Bay	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
2 ER PPC	N	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
2 ER Large Laser	N	34	3 (26)	3 (26)	2 (16)	—
2 ER Medium Laser	N					
3 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV FCS	N	15	4 (36)	4 (36)	4 (36)	—
(72 rnds)						
2 ER PPC	FL/FR	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
2 Large Laser	FL/FR	22	3 (26)	2 (16)	—	—
2 Medium Laser	FL/FR					
2 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV FCS	FL/FR	10	2 (24)	2 (24)	2 (24)	—
(48 rnds)						
2 ER PPC	AL/AR	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
2 Medium Laser	AL/AR	6	1 (10)	—	—	—
2 ER PPC	A	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
2 Large Laser	A	22	3 (26)	2 (16)	—	—
2 Medium Laser	A					
2 LRM 15 w/Artemis IV FCS	A	10	2 (24)	2 (24)	2 (24)	—
(48 rnds)						

Notes:
Small Naval Comm Scanner Suite and Mobile HPG

Cargo:
Bay 1: Small Craft (4) (2 doors)
Bay 2: Cargo Space (300 tons) (2 doors)
Bay 3: Cargo Space (1,000 tons) (2 doors)

BV: 10,662

FUEL: 13,500



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 16 Marines: 6
Passengers: 18
Other: 20 Battle Armor: 0
Life Boats/Escape Pods: 6 / 4

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Gear	+5	
FCS	+2	+4	D	Life Support	+2	
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	K-F Boom	D	
Thrusters				Docking Collar	D	
Left	+1	+2	+3	D		
Right	+1	+2	+3	D		
Engine	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	D

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 164 (328)

Heat Generation Per Arc	Nose:	79	Aft:	62
	Left Wing:		Right Wing:	
	Fwd:	62	Fwd:	62
	Aft:	36	Aft:	36

BATTLETECH

SPHEROID DROPSHIP RECORD SHEET

DROPSHIP DATA

Type: LEE

Name: _____ Tonnage: 17,000
 Thrust: _____ Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Safe Thrust: 5 Star League
 Maximum Thrust: 8
 Fighters/Small Craft: 6 / 2 Launch Rate: 4/2

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

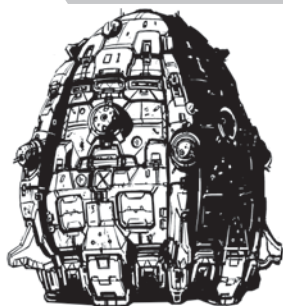
Standard Scale		[1-6] [7-12] [13-20][21-25]				
Bay	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
2 Gauss Rifle (48 rnds)	N	2	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	—
3 ER PPC	N	45	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	—
2 ER Large Laser	N	36	4 (36)	2 (16)	2 (16)	—
4 Medium Laser	N					
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV FCS (48 rnds)	N	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
2 Gauss Rifle (48 rnds)	FL/FR	2	3 (30)	3 (30)	3 (30)	—
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)	FL/FR					
2 ER PPC	FL/FR	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
1 ER Large Laser	FL/FR	24	3 (28)	1 (8)	1 (8)	—
4 Medium Laser	FL/FR					
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV FCS (48 rnds)	FL/FR	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
1 Gauss Rifle (48 rnds)	AL/AR	1	2 (15)	2 (15)	2 (15)	—
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)	AL/AR					
2 ER PPC	AL/AR	30	2 (20)	2 (20)	2 (20)	—
1 ER Large Laser	AL/AR	24	3 (28)	1 (8)	1 (8)	—
4 Medium Laser	AL/AR					
3 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV FCS (72 rnds)	AL/AR	18	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	—
1 Gauss Rifle (24 rnds)	A	1	2 (15)	2 (15)	2 (15)	—
1 AC/20 (15 rounds)	A					
2 ER Large Laser	A	42	5 (46)	2 (16)	2 (16)	—
6 Medium Laser	A					
2 LRM 20 w/Artemis IV FCS (48 rnds)	A	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—

Cargo:

Bay 1: BattleMechs (40) (4 doors)
 Bay 2: Fighters (6) (2 doors)
 Bay 3: Small Craft (2) (1 doors)
 Bay 4: Cargo (967 tons) (1 doors)

BV: 14,393

FUEL: 25,500



VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										
Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										
Altitude										

Left Damage Threshold (Total Armor) 41 (410)

Right Damage Threshold (Total Armor) 41 (410)

Structural Integrity: 25

Aft Damage Threshold (Total Armor) 26 (251)

CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 26 Marines: 30
 Passengers: 23
 Other: 102 Battle Armor: 0
 Life Boats/Escapes Pods: 10/10

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Gear	+5	
FCS	+2	+4	D	Life Support	+2	
Sensors	+1	+2	+5	K-F Boom	D	
Thrusters				Docking Collar	D	
Left	+1	+2	+3	D		
Right	+1	+2	+3	D		
Engine	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	D

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 203 (406) Heat Generation Per Arc

Nose:	95	Aft:	55
Fore-Left:	68	Aft-Left:	73
Fore-Right:	68	Aft-Right:	73

BATTLETECH

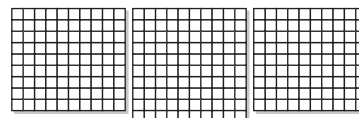
ARMOR DIAGRAM

Capital Scale

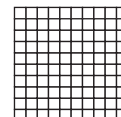
Nose Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
28 (280)



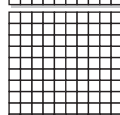
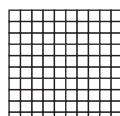
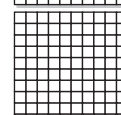
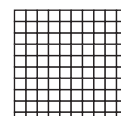
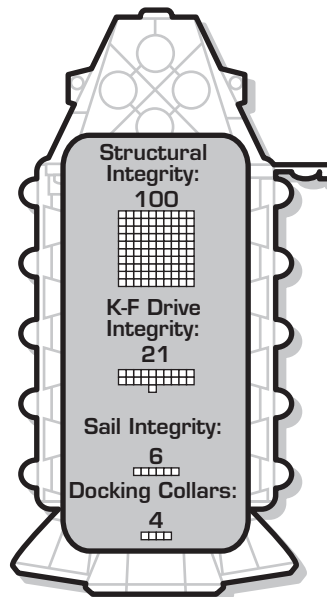
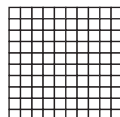
WARSHIP RECORD SHEET



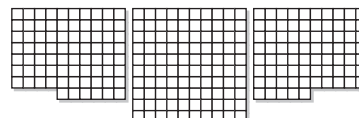
Fore-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
26 (260)



Fore-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
26 (260)



Aft-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
26 (260)



Aft-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
26 (260)

Aft Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
26 (251)

CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____
Hits Taken: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Modifier: +1 +2 +3 +4 +5 Incp.
Crew: 724 Marines: 60
Passengers: 175
Other: 0 Battle Armor: 0
Life Boats/Escapes Pods: 60/100

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics +1 +2 +5 Life Support +2
CIC +2 +4 0
Sensors +1 +2 +5
Thrusters
Left +1 +2 +3 0
Right +1 +2 +3 0
Engine -1 -2 -3 -4 -5 0

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 1,666 (3,332)
Heat Generation Per Arc
Nose: 722
Left/Right Fore: 457 / 457
Left/Right Broadside: 1092 / 1092
Left/Right Aft: 597 / 597
Aft: 322

WARSHIP DATA

Type: STEFAN AMARIS

Name: _____ Tonnage: 1,040,000

Thrust: _____ Tech Base: Inner Sphere

Safe Thrust: 3

Maximum Thrust: 5

DropShip Capacity: 4

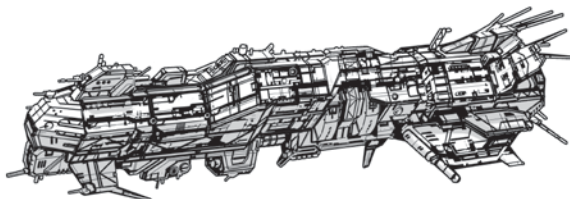
Fighters/Small Craft: 36/ 6 Launch Rate: 8/4

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Capital Scale	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
Bay						
3 Heavy N-PPCs	N	675	45	45	45	45
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	FL/FR	200	40	40	40	-
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	FL/FR	170	50	50	50	-
2 Killer Whales (20 rounds)	FL/FR	40	8	8	8	8
3 Heavy N-PPCs	LBS/RBS	675	45	45	45	45
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	LBS/RBS	200	40	40	40	-
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	LBS/RBS	170	50	50	50	-
2 NAC/30 (20 rounds)	AL/AR	200	40	40	40	-
2 NAC/25 (20 rounds)	AL/AR	170	50	50	50	-
2 Killer Whales (20 rounds)	AL/AR	40	8	8	8	8
1 NAC/40 (10 rounds)	A	135	40	40	-	-
2 NL 45	A	140	9	9	9	9

Standard Scale	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
Bay						
3 Gauss Rifles (72 rounds)	N	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	-
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	N	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	-
4 Medium Lasers	N	12	2 (20)	-	-	-
4 Small Pulse Lasers	N	8	1 (12)	-	-	-
3 Gauss Rifles (72 rounds)	FL/FR	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	-
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	FL/FR	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	-
4 Medium Lasers	FL/FR	12	2 (20)	-	-	-
4 Small Pulse Lasers	FL/FR	8	1 (12)	-	-	-
3 Gauss Rifles (72 rounds)	LBS/RBS	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	-
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	LBS/RBS	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	-
4 Medium Lasers	LBS/RBS	12	2 (20)	-	-	-
4 Small Pulse Lasers	LBS/RBS	8	1 (12)	-	-	-
3 Gauss Rifles (72 rounds)	AL/AR	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	-
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	AL/AR	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	-
4 Medium Lasers	AL/AR	12	2 (20)	-	-	-
4 Small Pulse Lasers	AL/AR	8	1 (12)	-	-	-
3 Gauss Rifles (72 rounds)	A	3	5 (45)	5 (45)	5 (45)	-
4 LRM 20 (96 rounds)	A	24	5 (48)	5 (48)	5 (48)	-
4 Medium Lasers	A	12	2 (20)	-	-	-
4 Small Pulse Lasers	A	8	1 (12)	-	-	-

Grav Decks: _____ Cargo: _____
Grav Deck #1: 150-meter Bay 1: Fighters (18) (2 doors)
Grav Deck #2: 150-meter Bay 2: Fighters (18) (2 doors)
Bay 3: Small Craft (6) (2 doors)
Bay 4: Cargo (97,600 tons) (4 doors)



VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										