

BATTLETECH™

REQUIEM FOR A BLUE STAR

TOTAL WARFARE AND ALPHA STRIKE
WORLDWIDE EVENT
2019





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WORLDWIDE EVENT 2019

REQUIEM FOR A BLUE STAR

BATTLETECH AND ALPHA STRIKE SCENARIOS

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Layout: David Kerber

Special Thanks: Writing WWEs has been a dream of mine since I played in my first one. For the past two years I've been lucky enough to have that opportunity. Now, as we enter the third year of reborn WWEs, I've been lucky enough to get to try something else. Ever since I read *The Periphery* 2nd Edition back in the spring of 2000, something stuck in my mind. The written ending for the 295th Battlemech Division never made sense to me. So this year I get to write a new ending.

I can't thank everyone enough for giving me this opportunity. Thank you Ray for the coordination and gentle guidance in where to take this. Thank you to Michael for helping me to flesh out Buffalo Meadows. Thank you to Mary for putting the weight of the Demo Team behind this. And most of all, thank you to all the volunteers who have and/or will put your time and effort into making this a great and fun event.

After two solid years of WWEs the bar has been raised again. Still, I am confident that the story, the scenarios, and the surprises tucked away in this will rise to the occasion. And I hope all the Agents and players enjoy what we have for you in 2019.

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E-CAT35WWE19



To the players, Agents, and fans of *BattleTech*,

Another year has passed, another summer wanes, and another WWE has come to an end. I say this each year but, to all the Agents who put their time and effort into running the WWE: Andrew Schwenzer, Anthony Hardenburgh, Bartosz Bruziak, Billy Caldwell, Bruce Ford, Dan Shoemaker, Denham Hardman, Donald Vaughan, Doug Riley, Garry Jackson, Gregory Adam Cunningham, Jason Coffey, Jeremy Weyand, Jim Hauser, Joel Agee, John Somers, Jonathan Cox, Joseph Muniz Jr, Keith McDiffitt, Michael Kehoe, Norman Zinner, and Ronald Ralston.

Thank you. Without you there's no event.

Requiem for a Blue Star was a dream for me to put out there for you. The background is one I've wanted to explore for a long time. It was a pleasure writing this and seeing other people enjoy the story that's been concocted.

As with last year, the document you're all going to get is the 2nd Edition. No matter how hard I try, it seems that out "in the wild," the WWE always has some surprises. The updates you've got here, hopefully, address those issues. The point is to have playable, fun, scenarios and that is what you, hopefully, had a chance to play in and now see the background of.

With next year being the year of the Clan Invasion, I'm looking forward to our discussions for that. I know we've got a lot of ideas on how to work the WWE into new relevancy. And I know we're going to make some changes on it. So keep your eyes and ears peeled as the Clan Invasion rolls around.

See you all in 2020!

Alexander "GreyWolfActual" Kaempfen
Catalyst Game Labs Agent #314

2019 WORLDWIDE EVENT RESULTS

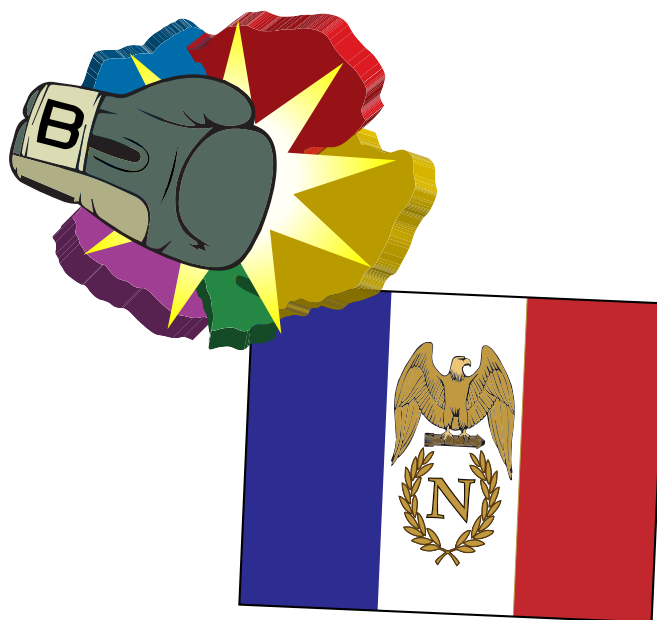
Reported Events..... 37
Total Players..... 223
La Grande Armée's employer? House Davion (13)

Finders Keepers (*Total Warfare*) Events 26

Bartlett's Boxers Victories 16
La Grande Armée Victories..... 10
Average Bartlett's Boxers Points 16.38
Average La Grande Armée Pains 10.50
Average Boxer 'Mechs to survive the crossing..... 3.12
Most Used Notable Personality Dennise Hague

It Simply Means the River Bends (*Alpha Strike*) Events . 11

Bartlett's Boxers Victories 3
La Grande Armée Victories 8
Average Bartlett's Boxers Points 320.55
Average La Grande Armée Pains 555.36
Most Used Notable Personality. . . . Lisa Johns, Roman Koh
Most Killed Notable Personality Roman Koh (100%)
Facility Door Destroyed 54.55%



FINAL STOP

Zenith Jump Point
Buffalo Meadows, Draconis Reach
8 July 2785

The steel deck gave one last heave, as if exhaling, and then all was still. Narrowed eyes of the grim faced engineers looked around, observing the engine room. No voices spoke nor bodies moved.

"Shut her down." The simple command came from a balding man in the middle of the engine room. The power of authority clearly underlaid his voice and within seconds the engine room crew began to move to assorted stations. A few short commands were barked down and in seconds the KF-drive began to power down. In only a few minutes the KF-drive had spun down and Primary Engineering, the largest of the three engine room mainspaces, had gone eerily quiet.

The man in the middle, Captain Horatio Petroni, took a slow gaze around the room then slowly walked over to a mostly red status board. His eyes darted around confirming what he already knew. The SLS *Ulithi* had made her final jump. He walked over to the comm station, grabbed the black sound-powered phone, and began speaking.

"Bridge, Primary Engineering. KF-drive shut down. Drive engines coming online. Full maneuvering thrust available in ninety seconds."

Up on the bridge Commodore Sarah Mbeki nodded and hung up the phone. She turned to Major General Jenna Romanov, commanding officer 295th BattleMech Division, and the bridge crew.

"It's done. Let's get to work." As soon as Sarah gave those orders her crew set to work. As the drive engines kicked on and gravity came back to the ship Sarah checked the radar plot. The *Essex* and *Lola*-class destroyers SLS *Cape Bon* and SLS *Protecteur* came alongside the mighty *Potemkin*-class cruiser while a dozen DropShips detached from the handful of JumpShips accompanying the WarShips. Ahead lay the small blue orb and faint red star that would be their new home.

Dig Site Delta
Buffalo Meadows, Draconis Reach
4 April 3021

The hill was unremarkable to the naked eye. Just a rolling, grassy, mound, the kind that dotted almost every habitable

world. But to an experienced eye, the kind that knew what it was looking for, that hill told a very different story. As soon as Adept Lin Trinh laid eyes on it, he knew he found something touched by man. The curvature was too smooth compared to the other hills around. None of its granite was exposed, and it was just plain too easy to get to. Someone had done some serious work on that hill.

Lin had had a rather uneventful three months so far on Buffalo Meadows. For three months they had been focusing on who settled here. Those first few weeks, right after they realized they were looking at Star League era remains, were a buzz of excitement. But once they calculated this was far too small, and far too close to the Inner Sphere, to be the end of Kerensky things settled down into the routine monotony of an Explorer Corps archeological dig.

Now, though, Lin knew something was going to shake that up. Waving his team over he passed around the binoculars and pointed out what he saw. The team agreed and quickly called in some of the other teams. A pair of *Javelin* BattleMechs came alongside while the team and their Prowler drove up to the hill. It didn't take long for the Beagle Active Probe to detect a very large magnetic presence inside that hill. The *Javelins* knelt down and began to dig. In a few short minutes they hit metal.

Lin was piecing the puzzle together very quickly in his head. Once the demolitions experts had blown a whole in what he knew had to be a door, Lin geared up. The rope they threw in the hole had gone down about seventy feet before hitting bottom. After it was secured to the Prowler, Lin clipped his carabiner on and started to descend into the hole. Once he was in he pulled a half dozen chemlights, cracked them, and threw them in different directions. Seeing no immediate obstacles to his path he lowered himself a bit further before turning on his helmet floodlamp and looking around. Immediately, Lin knew what was in the cavern.

"Blake's Bones." The curse slipped out before he could stop it. "Radio base camp, tell them to get over here." There was a brief pause as the message was relayed.

"Base camp is asking who should come."

He knew it was a cliché. But, hanging thirty feet down in a dark, two hundred year old, manmade cavern, lit only by his floodlamp and glowsticks, Lin did not care. He took another look around, nodded to himself, and answered.

"Everyone."

FINDERS KEEPERS

SITUATION

Buffalo Meadows, Draconis Reach

18 March 3150

After 200 years of being lost to the Inner Sphere the remains of 295th BattleMech Division was discovered in 3021. The fate of a lost Star League division could be penciled in. But for ComStar this was not welcome news. The division was only a few jumps beyond the Inner Sphere, too far to bring the equipment back covertly, but close enough to the Lyran Commonwealth and especially the Draconis Combine to be a potential source for them. So ComStar hid them and for 130 years that secret remained just that.

But people talk and secrets leak. In 3150 a descendent of the original discoverer came across information pointing to the source. Seeing this as his ticket to the good life this descendent sold the information to a single bidder. But people talk and secrets leak. Soon enough word reached the Republic who had no interest in those 'Mechs reaching the hands of the people trying to take Terra. And so a race began to get to Buffalo Meadows and gain control of the remains of the 295th.

La Grande Armée made planetfall the same time Bartlett's Boxers jumped in system. With their two day head start La Grande Armée rushed to prepare defenses and get as many of the Star League 'Mechs online, either to escape with or to use to defend the rest of the 295th's facility. La Grande Armée drew their first defenses at a river to the east of the facility. There, the conclusion of that race now passes to the hands of the Demo Team.

GAME SET-UP

Maps. The GM should also place three bridges across the river, one on each mapsheet and one at the GM's discretion. Lay out the maps as shown to the right.

NW: Wide River
NE: Woodland
SW: River Valley
SE: Rolling Hills 2

Deployment

The Defender will first deploy one lance on the west map sheets but east of the river.

The Attacker will then deploy their whole force on the east edge of the mapsheets. After that the Defender will deploy all remaining units to the west of the river.

Force Creation

The exact size of the game is left up to the individual GM's discretion. The guidelines below should guide force creation. Any units used in this game cannot be reused for the *Alpha Strike* scenario. That being said, there are a few general concepts which help:

- The GM may choose a Great House faction alignment for the Defending force. That choice may be done by the GM or left to the players. Once that faction is chosen, the GM should create the defending forces as per their TO&E guidelines.
- The forces should be within 5% of each other's BV.
- It is advised that equipment found in the *BattleMech Manual* but not in *Total Warfare* be minimized so as to allow for maximum participation with players who are not the most up-to-date in terms of rulebooks and/or familiarity.

Attacker

The Attacker consists of Bartlett's Boxers, a mercenary unit founded by the Republic to destabilize the Inner Sphere. Bartlett's Boxers should be drawn from the attached TO&E. Individual units should not be mixed, instead whole lances should be chosen to form the force. There is no uniform paint scheme to Bartlett's Boxers. The Attacker's forces should obey the following guidelines:

- Should be no larger than one company in strength.



Defender

The Defender consists of La Grande Armée mercenary unit. The paint scheme of La Grande Armée consists of white legs and front torso, dark blue arms and rear torso, and red trim on the upper body. The Defender's forces should obey the following guidelines:

- The defender's force must use the provided Imperial Guard lance.
- Should be no larger than one company in strength.
- Each lance should use the two 'Mechs provided. The remaining 'Mechs should be from the chosen faction's Random Assignment Table found in *Field Manual*: 3145 p.214-216. Each GM may feel free to use any 'Mech from that table with any skills so long as the lance follows the provided BV cap.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Note: If a notable personality is used for one side, it is recommended that the other side receive one as well. These personalities may be applied to any unit matching their personality but do not change the assigned skills of that unit.

Wynn De Ziel (Bartlett's Boxers): When volunteers were asked to go beyond The Fortress Wall Wynn was one of the first to sign up. Wynn's comrades often joke that in the dictionary there is a picture of Wynn next to the word "wanderlust." As befitting someone who wants to get places, Wynn's abilities in the cockpit are superb. Many a MechWarrior, both friend and foe, have commented that her 'Mech moves with an almost human fluidity.

In-game bonus: Wynn has the ability to move through enemy units as if they were not there.

Ivan Møller (Bartlett's Boxers): To those who don't know him, Ivan is a sociopath. There is no denying his outwardly cold demeanor. However, Ivan is completely and totally devoted to the Republic of the Sphere. His study of history, psychology, and warfare has led him to conclude that only the Republic has a chance of resisting the tide of history and brutality of humanity. Ivan will do anything to preserve the Republic, in whatever form it is.

In-game bonus: Ivan can spend one turn "analyzing" a target during which he must walk only and can neither fire weapons nor spot for anyone. The following turn Ivan adds three to all dice rolls he makes against that target.

Nicholas Davout (La Grande Armée): Everyone has quirks. Some people avoid stepping on sidewalk cracks. Others collect ancient baseball cards. Less healthily, some drink themselves into oblivion. Nicholas obsesses over all things Napoleonic. After convincing

several members of the Dieudonne militia to dessert with him he began to obsess over the glory of the Grande Armée. He changed his last name to one of Napoleon's most famous marshals, developed a paint scheme based on their uniforms, organized his small unit as if it were that army of old, and has begun dreaming of having a multi-regiment force large enough to justify their name.

In-game bonus: Nicholas wants to live up to the nickname "Iron Marshal" that was assigned to the man whose name he has taken. Nicholas and his Imperial Guard cannot be knocked over by Piloting Skill Rolls induced by damage (leg destruction or failed movements PSRs are not affected by this ability).

Dennise Hague (La Grande Armée): There are rules in the universe and those rules are meant to be followed. No one has ever managed to convince Dennise that rules are flexible. This attitude cost her a spot at the Point Barrow Military Academy. It also cost her positions in two older and far more established mercenary units. However, her rigidity was seen as a strength by La Grande Armée who saw her as someone who would not shrink from carrying out her mission. In the four years since joining the unit, Dennise has molded III Corps into a firm force that will get its job done.

In-game bonus: Once per game Dennise and the rest of III Corps can execute one complete turn as soon as initiative has been revealed. However, upon the completion of their actions they then do not participate in the rest of the turn. They do retain their Target Movement Modifier for defensive purposes but can take no actions until the start of the next turn.

SPECIAL RULES

Forced Withdrawal (*Total Warfare* page 258)

Forced Withdrawal is in effect for both sides.

Crippled units must retreat from the battlefield when damage has rendered them useless or they are in imminent danger of being destroyed (see below). A unit making a forced withdrawal must move toward its home map edge as designated by a scenario. However, a unit need not spend Running MP; it can also move backward if the controlling player wishes. Also, a unit equipped with MASC need not engage that system when forced to withdraw.

Withdrawing units may still attack an enemy unit that closes within range of a weapon or physical attack.

Crippling damage is defined as follows:

- A 'Mech is considered crippled when a side torso location is destroyed; the 'Mech takes two engine critical hits; one gyro and one engine critical hit; or loses the use of its sensors. Internal structure damage in either three or more limbs or two or more torso locations (the torso internal structure damage does not count towards crippling damage if that location still has front armor), or four or more pilot hits, also render a 'Mech crippled, as does the loss of all the 'Mech's weapons to damage or ammunition depletion. If all of a 'Mech's weapons are destroyed and it can no longer move, the 'Mech is considered destroyed.
- With the exception of infantry, all of a unit's weapons are considered destroyed if it loses all weapons with a range greater than five hexes and if it can no longer cause more than 5 points of combined weapons damage.
- 'Mechs that are immobilized—usually through motive, leg or gyro damage—are shut down and typically abandoned (though abandonment places the crew at the mercy of the battlefield).



VICTORY CONDITIONS

The game has no official set length but needs to run at least ten turns. GMs are encouraged to fix a length of time appropriate to the size of their game prior to the start of it.

Attacker

On Turn 10, and only Turn 10, check for the third victory condition. The attacker earns points in the following manner:

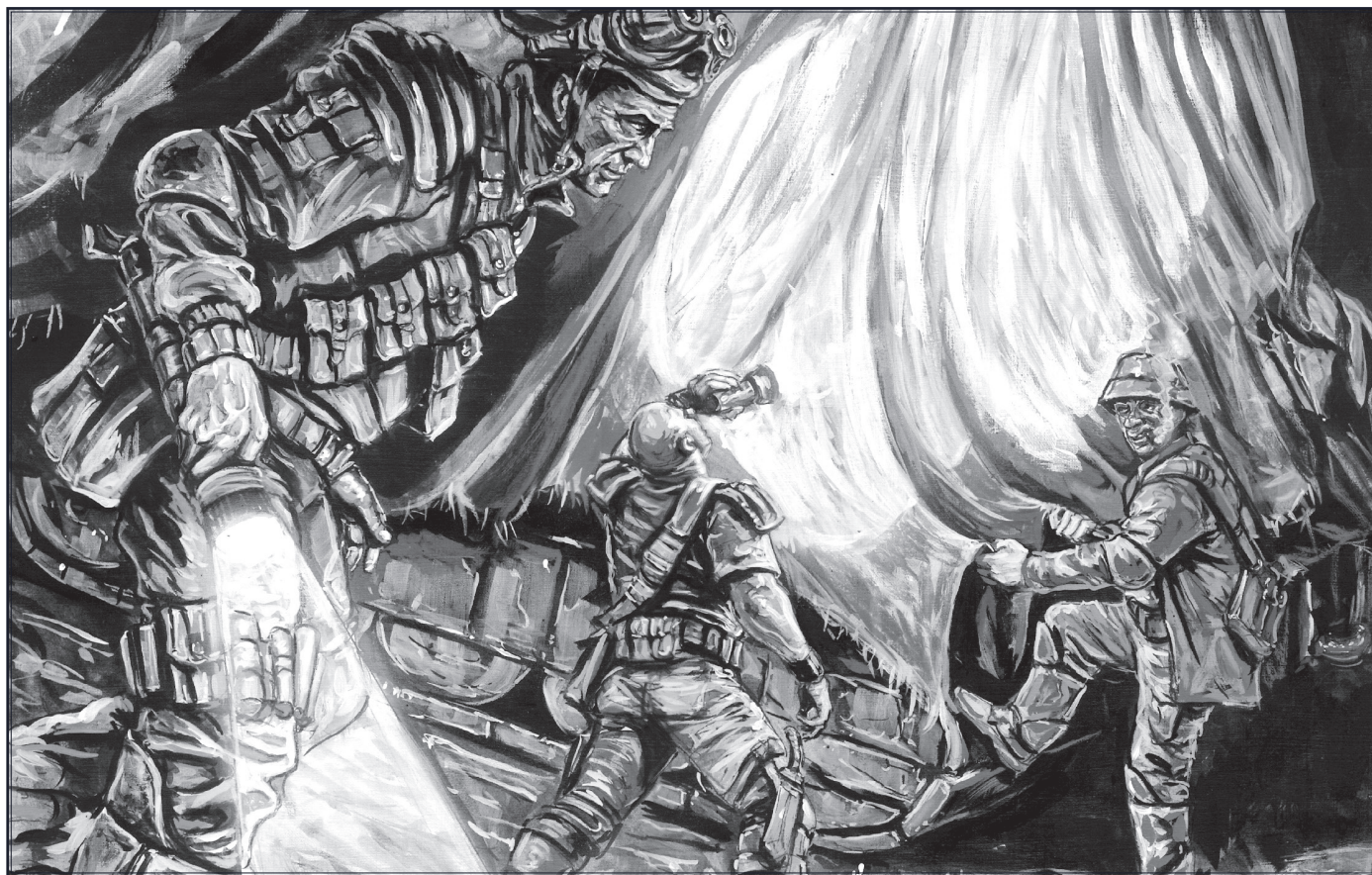
- +2 for each destroyed defending 'Mech
- +1 for each 'Mech which crosses the river
- +X per 'Mech alive and across the river on Turn 10 where "X" equals the number of turns before ten that that 'Mech crossed the river.

Defender

The defender's key objective is to stall for time.

- +3 for each destroyed attacking 'Mech
- +1 additional for each 'Mech destroyed after crossing the river
- +2 per turn after Turn 6 before the first Attacker crosses the river

The winner is the team with the most points.



BARTLETT'S BOXERS – TOTAL WARFARE BRIEFING

Situation

After 200 years of being lost to the Inner Sphere the remains of 295th BattleMech Division was discovered in 3021. The fate of a lost Star League division could be penciled in. But for ComStar this was not welcome news. The division was only a few jumps beyond the Inner Sphere, too far to bring the equipment back covertly, but close enough to the Lyran Commonwealth and especially the Draconis Combine to be a potential source for them. So ComStar hid them and for 130 years that secret remained just that.

But people talk and secrets leak. In 3150 a descendent of the original discoverer came across information pointing to the source. Seeing this as his ticket to the good life this descendent sold the information to a single bidder. But people talk and secrets leak. Soon enough word reached the Republic who had no interest in those 'Mechs reaching the hands of the people trying to take Terra. And so a race began to get to Buffalo Meadows and gain control of the remains of the 295th.

La Grande Armée made planetfall the same time Bartlett's Boxers jumped in system. With their two day head start La Grande Armée rushed to prepare defenses and get as many of the Star League 'Mechs online, either to escape with or to use to defend the rest of the 295th's facility. La Grande Armée drew their first defenses at a river to the east of the facility.

Objectives

You know the defenders are working to excavate the 295th 'Mechs. Your orders are to prevent those 'Mechs from leaving this planet. You cannot afford to give them any more time. You need to cross this river quickly and crush the defenders on your way.

- Destroy the defending 'Mechs.
- Get your 'Mechs across the river quickly.
- Establish a bridgehead (i.e. stay alive across the river).

Bonuses

Wynn De Ziel (Bartlett's Boxers): When volunteers were asked to go beyond The Fortress Wall Wynn was one of the first to sign up. Wynn's comrades often joke that in the dictionary there is a picture of Wynn next to the word "wanderlust." As befitting someone who wants to get places, Wynn's abilities in the cockpit are superb. Many a MechWarrior, both friend and foe, have commented that her 'Mech moves with an almost human fluidity.

In-game bonus: Wynn has the ability to move through enemy units as if they were not there.

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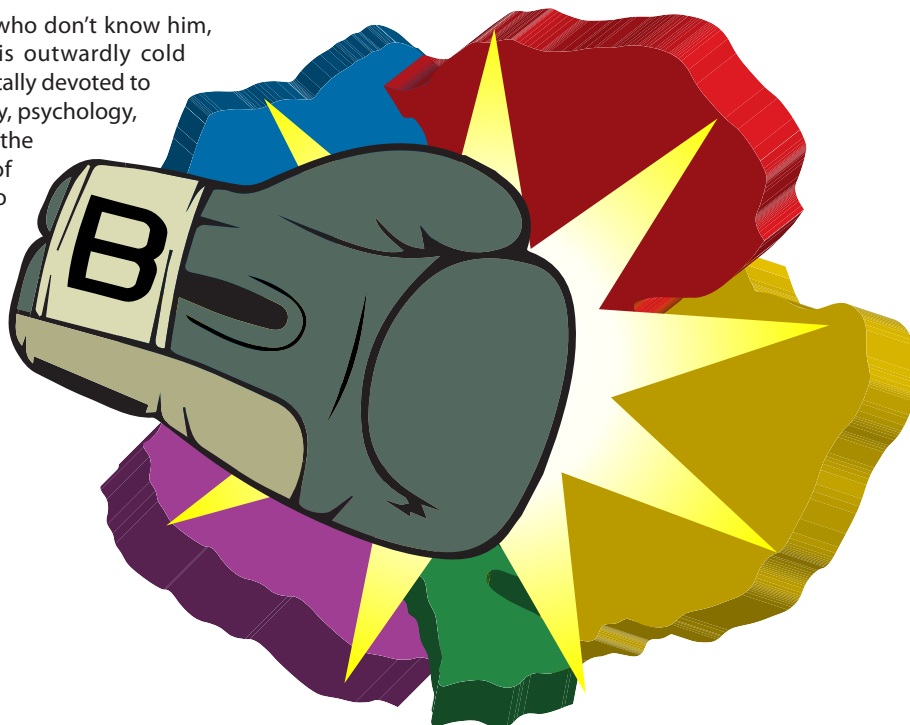
In-game bonus: Ivan can spend one turn "analyzing" a target during which he must walk only and can neither fire weapons nor spot for anyone. The following turn Ivan adds three to all dice rolls he makes against that target.

I see what they're doing. They're brave. Sacrifice some of the unit for the overall greater good. If they can hold us at the river here we'll never get to them in time. They confirm this, maybe load up a battalion of 'Mechs, and off they go. I can appreciate that sort of dedication to the mission and professionalism. It's a shame they're fighting against the Republic. I suppose we'll just have to kill them all the same.

—Captain Steven DeFang, Bartlett's Boxers, 20 March 3150

If this is what it takes to save Terra, then La Grande Armée will die.

—Captain Tony Winters, Bartlett's Boxers, 18 March 3150



LA GRANDE ARMÉE – TOTAL WARFARE BRIEFING

Situation

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La Grande Armée made planetfall the same time Bartlett's Boxers jumped in system. With their two day head start La Grande Armée rushed to prepare defenses and get as many of the Star League 'Mechs online, either to escape with or to use to defend the rest of the 295th's facility. La Grande Armée drew their first defenses at a river to the east of the facility.

Objectives

Your excavation team is still working on digging out the 295th's 'Mechs and getting some of them online. Your objective is simple: buy them the time they need.

- Prevent the attacking 'Mechs from crossing the river.
- Destroy any attacking 'Mechs which do cross the river.
- Buy as much time as possible before the enemy forces a river crossing.

Bonuses

Nicholas Davout (La Grande Armée): Everyone has quirks. Some people avoid stepping on sidewalk cracks. Others collect ancient baseball cards. Less healthily, some drink themselves into oblivion. Nicholas obsesses over all things Napoleonic. After convincing several members of the Dieudonne militia to desert with him he began to obsess over the glory of the Grande Armée. He changed his last name to one of Napoleon's most famous marshals, developed a paint scheme based on their uniforms, organized his small unit as if it were that army of old, and has begun dreaming of having a multi-regiment force large enough to justify their name.

In-game bonus: Nicholas wants to live up to the nickname "Iron Marshal" that was assigned to the man whose name he has taken. Nicholas and his Imperial Guard cannot be knocked over by Piloting Skill Rolls induced by damage (leg destruction or failed movements PSRs are not affected by this ability).

Dennise Hague (La Grande Armée): There are rules in the universe and those rules are meant to be followed. No one has ever managed to convince Dennise that rules are flexible. This attitude cost her a spot at the Point Barrow Military Academy. It also cost her positions in two older and far more established mercenary units. However, her rigidity was seen as a strength by La Grande Armée who saw her as someone who would not shrink from carrying out her mission. In the four years since joining the unit, Dennise has molded III Corps into a firm force that will get its job done.

In-game bonus: Once per game Dennise and the rest of III Corps can execute one complete

We pissed somebody off back in the Inner Sphere. I guess we have the answer of whether or not this mission was a fool's run. If we make it out of this I might retire. I'll certainly be rich enough I think.

—Sergeant Thomas Ramjasitha, La Grande Armée, 19 March 3150

This battle will either make us or, well, we will be dead so it won't matter.

—Marshal Dennise Hague, La Grande Armée, 20 March 3150

turn as soon as initiative has been revealed. However, upon the completion of their actions they then do not participate in the rest of the turn. They do retain their Target Movement Modifier for defensive purposes but can take no actions until the start of the next turn.



...IT SIMPLY MEANS THE RIVER BENDS

SITUATION

Buffalo Meadows, Draconis Reach

22 March 3150

After 200 years of being lost to the Inner Sphere the remains of 295th BattleMech Division was discovered in 3021. The fate of a lost Star League division could be penciled in. But for ComStar this was not welcome news. The division was only a few jumps beyond the Inner Sphere, too far to bring the equipment back covertly, but close enough to the Lyran Commonwealth and especially the Draconis Combine to be a potential source for them. So ComStar hid them and for 130 years that secret remained just that.

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After the clash at the river La Grande Armée slowly gave ground, falling back to the Star League facility. The technicians were in a desperate race to get some of the Star League 'Mechs operational, either to help hold their ground or as some small amount of proof that they were successful. As Bartlett's Boxers closed in there was no doubt that this would be a fight to the death.

GAME SET-UP

As per standard *Alpha Strike* rules, the game should be played on a hexless terrain board. A minimum size would be 48" x 72" which, in *Alpha Strike* rules is equivalent to a 24" x 36" hex map. A more suitable size, if practical, would be 72" x 84" or a 36" x 42" hex map.

The GM should consult the provided map to create terrain approximating what is shown. Each hill line should be at least one level of elevation.

Other scattered terrain may be provided in addition to what is shown so long as such terrain does not prevent movement through it nor block line-of-sight.

Deployment

Bartlett's Boxers will deploy their forces in the "southeast" corner of the board prior to the start of Turn 1.

La Grande Armée will deploy their forces in the "north" deployment zone as designated on the map. Any SLDF reinforcements (see *Force Creation: Defender* for more details) should deploy in the central deployment zone directly in front of the proscribed entrance to the mountain facility. All defending forces should deploy their forces immediately after the Attacker.

Force Creation

The exact size of the game is left up to the individual GM's discretion. The guidelines below should guide force creation. Any units used in the *BattleTech Total Warfare* game cannot be reused for this scenario. That being said, there are a few general concepts which help:

Attacker

The Attacker consists of Bartlett's Boxers. Bartlett's Boxers should be drawn from the attached TO&E. Individual units should not be mixed, instead whole lances should be chosen to form the force. There is no uniform paint scheme to Bartlett's Boxers. The Attacker's forces should obey the following guidelines:

- No fewer than four lances.
- No more than six lances.

Defender

The Defender consists of La Grande Armée mercenary unit. The paint scene of La Grande Armée consists of white legs and front torso, dark blue arms and rear torso, and red trim on the upper body. The Defender's forces should obey the following guidelines:

- Should be approximately 75% of Bartlett's Boxers.
- If La Grande Armée won the *BattleTech Total Warfare* scenario then they may add SLDF 'Mechs up to 25% of the PV of the Attacker. The SLDF 'Mechs must appear on either the Regular or Royal Star League MasterUnitList.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Note: If a notable personality is used for one side, it is recommended that the other side receive one as well.

Lisa Johns (Bartlett's Boxers): It took three years in service with Bartlett's Boxers before Lisa learned who was behind the unit that she had begun to call her family. It did nothing to dampen her loyalty to them and, if anything, seemed to give her a newfound devotion to the unit and its mission. Her comrades have begun to worry, however, that that fanatical devotion may be leading Lisa to an impulsive and impending death.

In-game bonus: Once per game Lisa's devotion to the unit may be used to give her a bonus turn in which she may take one complete turn, including movement and fire, between normal turns.

Eagle Marlinsen (Bartlett's Boxers): A mercenary unit is not a place conducive to stability and routine, particularly when that routine is based around a 'Mech. Eagle's routine is to practice his gunnery. While an admirable trait for a 'Mech pilot, Eagle's borders on obsession, especially when it comes to long range fire.

In-game bonus: Eagle's precision with weapons allows him to add 2 to the long range damage value of his 'Mech (it must be capable of doing damage at long range) but at the cost of 2 short range damage.

Piotr Baamonde (Grande Armée): Piotr learned as many people in the Republic-era did: by piloting an IndustrialMech. Consequently, Piotr learned a great deal on how to maneuver through trees in his career as a logger. And like many other young people before him, Piotr grew bored and disaffected with his life as a blue-collar nobody.

When the Grande Armée came to recruit on his planet he was one of the first to sign up. His skills with navigating the terrain has made him very useful to the unit.

In-game bonus: Piotr ignores all movement penalties for woods.

Roman Koh (Grande Armée): A horrific encounter in his youth between an outdated Succession Wars 'Mech and a Clan assault 'Mech showed Roman the importance of taking down the biggest threats first. Roman's comrades understand the logic to his argument but have taken issue with his implementation of that desire as a standing order. Indeed, some of the other lance commanders have taken issue with his fixation on that goal.

In-game bonus: At the start of each turn Roman designates an opposing clan 'Mech or, if none are available, one of the opposing side's three biggest 'Mechs. So long as he moves towards the 'Mech (decided at the discretion of the GM) he receives an additional +1 to his TMM and does an additional +1 damage at all ranges where he does at least 1 damage already.

SPECIAL RULES

The entrance to the facility has an *Alpha Strike* CF of 25.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The game has no standardized length but GMs will need to set a game length and announce that prior to the start of the game.

Attacker

Bartlett's Boxers has a singular objective: prevent these Star League 'Mechs from tipping the balance of power. The means by which they accomplish this goal are considered unimportant, but the facility's 'Mechs must not be allowed to leave.

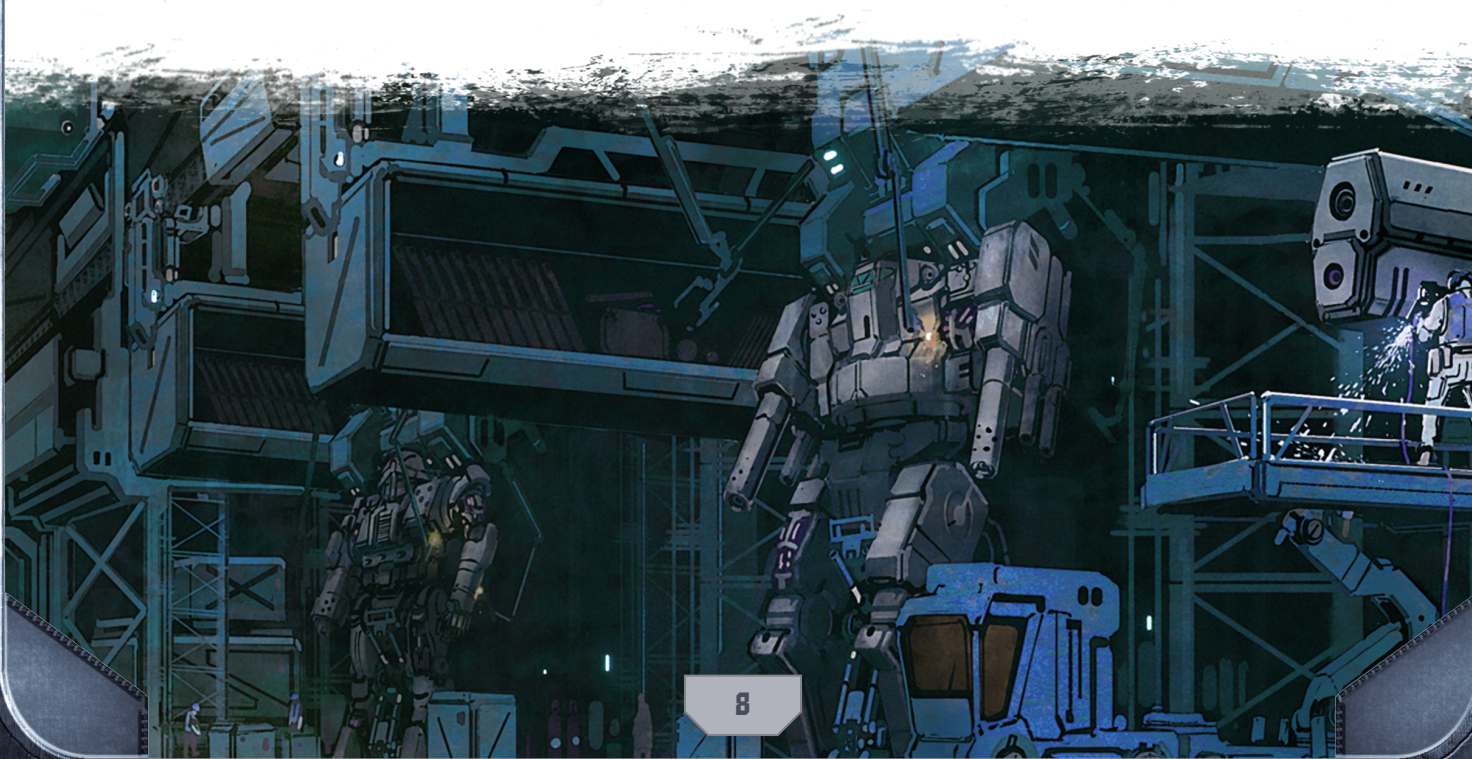
- +25 if the entrance to the facility is destroyed
- +PV of each enemy unit that is killed
- +25 if the defending force CO is killed
- +15 if the defending force XO is killed
- +10 additional if both the defending CO and XO are killed

Defender

La Grande Armée was hired to find this planet, reconnoiter the site, and report back if the rumors are true. The rumor had indeed been confirmed and so the unit only wants to survive to report back and collect their paycheck. At the start of the scenario the defending force will need to designate a CO and XO for the force.

- +One-and-a-half times the PV of each enemy unit that is killed
- +Twice PV of CO if alive at game end
- +PV of XO if alive at game end
- -Twice the PV of each Star League 'Mech lost (if applicable)

The winner is the team with the most points.



...IT SIMPLY MEANS THE RIVER BENDS BATTLEFIELD LAYOUT



BARTLETT'S BOXERS – ALPHA STRIKE BRIEFING

Situation

After 200 years of being lost to the Inner Sphere the remains of 295th BattleMech Division was discovered in 3021. The fate of a lost Star League division could be penciled in. But for ComStar this was not welcome news. The division was only a few jumps beyond the Inner Sphere, too far to bring the equipment back covertly, but close enough to the Lyran Commonwealth and especially the Draconis Combine to be a potential source for them. So ComStar hid them and for 130 years that secret remained just that.

But people talk and secrets leak. In 3150 a descendent of the original discoverer came across information pointing to the source. Seeing this as his ticket to the good life this descendent sold the information to a single bidder. But people talk and secrets leak. Soon enough word reached the Republic who had no interest in those 'Mechs reaching the hands of the people trying to take Terra. And so a race began to get to Buffalo Meadows and gain control of the remains of the 295th.

After the river clash La Grande Armée slowly gave ground, falling back to the Star League facility. Their techs were in a desperate race to get some of the Star League 'Mechs operational, either to help hold their ground or as some small amount of proof that they were successful. As Bartlett's Boxers closed in there was no doubt that this fight would be to the death.

Objectives

Bartlett's Boxers came with a single mission: prevent these Star League 'Mechs from tipping the balance of power. The means by which you accomplish this goal are considered unimportant, but the facility's 'Mechs must not be allowed to leave Buffalo Meadows. Your objectives in detail are therefore:

- Destroy the facility entrance.
- Destroy La Grande Armée.
- Specifically eliminate the CO & XO of La Grande Armée.

Bonuses

Lisa Johns (Bartlett's Boxers): It took three years in service with Bartlett's Boxers before Lisa learned who was behind the unit that she had begun to call her family. It did nothing to dampen her loyalty to them and, if anything, seemed to give her a newfound devotion to the unit and its mission. Her comrades have begun to worry, however, that that fanatical devotion may be leading Lisa to an impulsive and impending death.

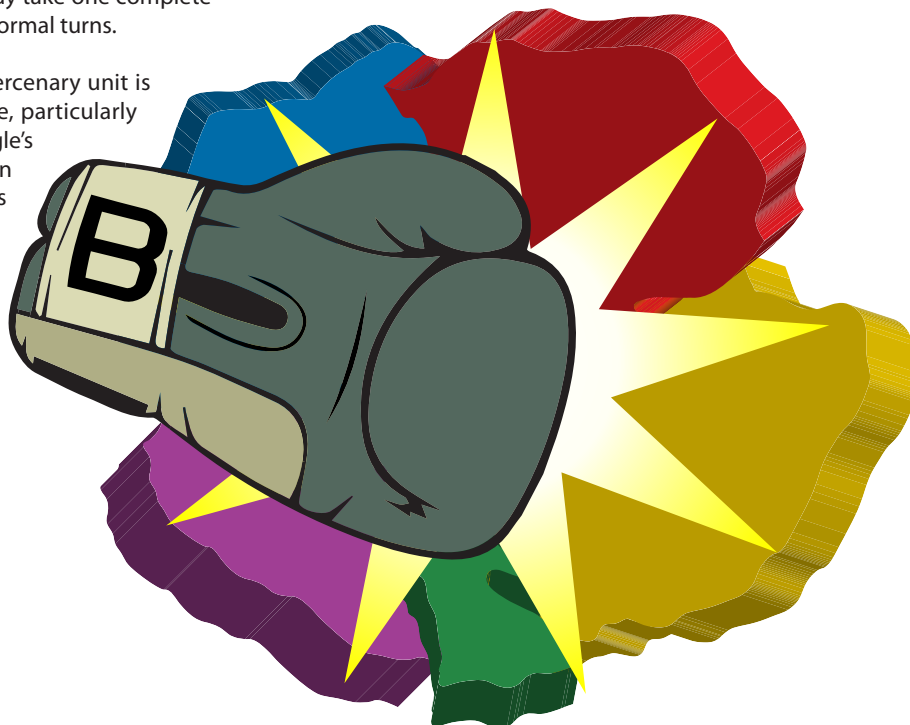
In-game bonus: Once per game Lisa's devotion to the unit may be used to give her a bonus turn in which she may take one complete turn, including movement and fire, between normal turns.

Eagle Marlinsen (Bartlett's Boxers): A mercenary unit is not a place conducive to stability and routine, particularly when that routine is based around a 'Mech. Eagle's routine is to practice his gunnery. While an admirable trait for a 'Mech pilot, Eagle's borders on obsession, especially when it comes to long range fire.

In-game bonus: Eagle's precision with weapons allows him to add 2 to the long range damage value of his 'Mech (it must be capable of doing damage at long range) but at the cost of 2 short range damage.

It was a wise man who once said "there can be only one." No ilClan, no Star League, no Terran Hegemony. There is only the Republic. Only the Republic has done right by its people. Only the Republic stands for a better future for all. And only the Republic will emerge out of this conflagration to take the reigns of the Inner Sphere. No half-baked anachronistic mercenary unit on some desolate periphery world is going to stop that.
—Lieutenant Jeremy Sardi, Bartlett's Boxers, 21 March 3150

No mercy. 'Nuff said.
—Lieutenant Hassan Seabrooke, Bartlett's Boxers, 21 March 3150



LA GRANDE ARMÉE – ALPHA STRIKE BRIEFING

Situation

After 200 years of being lost to the Inner Sphere the remains of 295th BattleMech Division was discovered in 3021. The fate of a lost Star League division could be penciled in. But for ComStar this was not welcome news. The division was only a few jumps beyond the Inner Sphere, too far to bring the equipment back covertly, but close enough to the Lyran Commonwealth and especially the Draconis Combine to be a potential source for them. So ComStar hid them and for 130 years that secret remained just that.

But people talk and secrets leak. In 3150 a descendent of the original discoverer came across information pointing to the source. Seeing this as his ticket to the good life this descendent sold the information to a single bidder. But people talk and secrets leak. Soon enough word reached the Republic who had no interest in those 'Mechs reaching the hands of the people trying to take Terra. And so a race began to get to Buffalo Meadows and gain control of the remains of the 295th.

After the river clash La Grande Armée slowly gave ground, falling back to the Star League facility. Their techs were in a desperate race to get some of the Star League 'Mechs operational, either to help hold their ground or as some small amount of proof that they were successful. As Bartlett's Boxers closed in there was no doubt that this fight would be to the death.

Objectives

You were hired to find this planet, reconnoiter the site, and report back if the rumors are true. The rumor have indeed been confirmed and so you only want to survive to report back and collect your paycheck. Here are your objectives:

- Destroy the enemy 'Mechs before they destroy you.
- Keep your CO & XO alive.
- Do not lose the valuable Star League 'Mechs (if your team got any operational).

Bonuses

Piotr Baamonde (Grande Armée): Piotr learned as many people in the Republic-era did: by piloting an IndustrialMech. Consequently, Piotr learned a great deal on how to maneuver through trees in his career as a logger. And like many other young people before him, Pitor grew bored and disaffected with his life as a blue-collar nobody. When the Grande Armée came to recruit on his planet he was one of the first to sign up. His skills with navigating the terrain has made him very useful to the unit.

In-game bonus: Piotr ignores all movement penalties for woods.

Roman Koh (Grande Armée): A horrific encounter in his youth between an outdated Succession Wars 'Mech and a Clan assault 'Mech showed Roman the importance of taking down the biggest threats first. Roman's comrades understand the logic to his argument but have taken issue with his implementation of that desire as a standing order. Indeed, some of the other lance commanders have taken issue with his fixation on that goal.

In-game bonus: At the start of each turn Roman designates an opposing clan 'Mech or, if none are available, one of the opposing side's three biggest 'Mechs. So long as he moves towards the 'Mech (decided at the discretion of the GM) he receives an additional +1 to his TMM and does an additional +1 damage at all ranges where he does at least 1 damage already.

Six regiments. Six regiments of practically brand new, factory fresh, Star League 'Mechs. We sure as hell don't have enough room to bring back even one regiment with us, but boy would I love to get my hands on even a company. Well guess whose job it is to do that? Mine. And now I've got all the toys I could ever want to play with at my fingertips. I'm a big kid in a bigger toy store.

—Sergeant Joseph Bantu, La Grande Armée, 21 March 3150

Whoever said "It's too late to fight, it ends tonight," was only partially right. There is still time to fight, but it will end tonight.

—Marshal Sun Hayakawa, La Grande Armée, 21 March 3150



BARTLETT'S BOXERS

Unit	Base BV	G	P	Modifier	Final BV	Final PV	Armor	Structure	Tons	Sub-Unit Name	IWM #
Stinger STG-3Gb	674	3	4	1.38	930	26	69	33	20	Poseidon 1	20-207
Stinger STG-3P	489	4	5	1.00	489	14	64	33	20	Poseidon 1	20-207
Stinger STG-3P	489	4	5	1.00	489	14	64	33	20	Poseidon 1	20-207
Wolverine WVR-9M	1,617	2	3	1.82	2,943	54	176	91	55	Poseidon 1	20-208
	3,269				4,851	108	373	190	115		
Eagle EGL-2M	800	4	4	1.15	920	21	80	43	25	Poseidon 2	AR20-246
Gambit GBT-1G	777	4	5	1.00	777	27	80	43	25	Poseidon 2	20-5146
Uller G	1,368	3	4	1.38	1,888	28	76	51	30	Poseidon 2	20-402
Hatchetman HCT-6D	1,611	4	5	1.00	1,611	32	152	75	45	Poseidon 2	20-864
	4,556				5,196	108	388	212	125		
Hound HD-2F	1,389	4	5	1.00	1,389	36	208	107	70	Poseidon 3	20-5136
BattleMaster BLR-10S	1,930	3	4	1.38	2,663	60	263	130	85	Poseidon 3	20-210
Emperor EMP-6A	1,969	4	5	1.00	1,969	42	279	138	90	Poseidon 3	AR20-699
Viking VKG-2F	2,079	3	3	1.56	3,243	67	248	138	90	Poseidon 3	20-933
	7,367				9,265	205	998	513	335		
	15,192				19,312	421	1,759	915	575		
Rook NH-2	1,525	4	4	1.15	1,754	32	185	91	55	Neptune 1	20-5071
Ha Otoko 3	2,206	3	4	1.38	3,044	60	208	104	65	Neptune 1	AR20-645
Thunderbolt TDR-17S	1,803	4	5	1.00	1,803	40	206	104	65	Neptune 1	20-5032
Sirocco SRC-3C	2,154	4	5	1.00	2,154	52	309	153	95	Neptune 1	AR20-647
	7,688				8,755	184	908	452	280		
Wasp WSP-8T	439	4	4	1.15	505	14	56	33	20	Neptune 2	20-999
Chameleon CLN-7V	1,042	4	5	1.00	1,042	24	112	83	50	Neptune 2	AR20-697
Black Hawk (Standard)	2,183	4	5	1.00	2,183	38	136	83	50	Neptune 2	AR20-441
Black Hawk 3	2,317	3	3	1.56	3,615	48	136	83	50	Neptune 2	AR20-441
	5,981				7,344	124	440	282	170		
Nyx NX-80	924	4	4	1.15	1,063	38	89	51	30	Neptune 3	20-5041
Calliope CAL-1MAF	1,125	4	5	1.00	1,125	25	125	67	40	Neptune 3	20-5129
Eisenfaust EFT-7X	1,203	3	5	1.20	1,444	34	152	75	45	Neptune 3	20-5013
Cronus CNS-5M	1,579	4	5	1.00	1,579	38	168	91	55	Neptune 3	AR20-249
	4,831				5,210	135	534	284	170		
	18,500				21,310	443	1,882	1,018	620		
Panther PNT-13K	996	3	4	1.38	1,374	25	96	58	35	Shiva 1	20-853
Spector SPR-5S	1,155	4	5	1.00	1,155	35	119	58	35	Shiva 1	20-764
Icarus II ICR-2S	986	4	5	1.00	986	24	134	67	40	Shiva 1	20-5002
Uziel UZL-2S	1,352	4	5	1.00	1,352	32	128	83	50	Shiva 1	20-5153
	4,489				4,867	116	477	266	160		
Rook NH-2	1,525	3	4	1.38	2,105	38	185	91	55	Shiva 2	20-5071
Axman AXM-3S	1,649	4	5	1.00	1,649	32	179	104	65	Shiva 2	20-770
Cyclops CP-11-B	2,145	4	5	1.00	2,145	50	241	138	90	Shiva 2	20-863
Atlas AS7-Dr	2,101	4	5	1.00	2,101	55	304	152	100	Shiva 2	20-942RE
	7,420				8,000	175	909	485	310		
Arbalest (Standard)	1,029	4	5	1.00	1,029	26	56	43	25	Shiva 3	AR20-319
Targe TRG-2N	1,078	4	5	1.00	1,078	38	109	67	40	Shiva 3	AR20-351
Hatchetman HCT-7S	1,243	4	5	1.00	1,243	30	152	75	45	Shiva 3	20-864
Thunder Fox TFT-L8	1,513	4	5	1.00	1,513	28	152	99	55	Shiva 3	20-5125
	4,863				4,863	122	469	284	165		
	16,772				17,730	413	1,855	1,035	635		
Blackjack BJ2-OF	1,405	2	3	1.82	2,557	41	152	83	50	Trident Prime	20-905
Shockwave SKW-2F	1,453	2	3	1.82	2,644	49	160	83	50	Trident Prime	20-5109
Rifleman RFL-8X	1,798	3	3	1.56	2,805	46	200	99	60	Trident Prime	20-297
Crusader CRD-7W	1,221	3	4	1.38	1,685	48	203	104	65	Trident Prime	20-217
	5,877				9,691	184	715	369	225		
	56,341				68,043	1,461	6,211	3,337	2,055		

LA GRANDE ARMÉE

Unit	Base BV	G	P	Modifier	Final BV	Final PV	Armor	Structure	Tons	Sub-Unit Name	IWM #
Avatar AV1-OB	1496	3	4	1.38	2064	48	192	107	70	I Corps	AR20-915
Verfolger VR5-R	1639	4	4	1.15	1885	42	200	104	65	I Corps	AR20-239
GM Chosen										I Corps	
GM Chosen										I Corps	
No more than 7,900 BV	3,135				3,949	90	392	211	135		
Chameleon CLN-7V	1042	4	4	1.15	1198	24	112	83	50	II Corps	AR20-697
Assassin ASN-21	749	4	5	1.00	749	22	72	67	40	II Corps	20-875
GM Chosen										II Corps	
GM Chosen										II Corps	
No more than 5,400 BV	1,791				1,947	46	184	150	90		
Sentry SNT-04	1069	4	5	1.00	1069	25	136	67	40	III Corps	AR20-267
Snake SNK-2B	1081	4	5	1.00	1081	31	112	75	45	III Corps	AR20-982
GM Chosen										III Corps	
GM Chosen										III Corps	
No more than 5,800 BV	2,150				2,150	56	248	142	85		
	7,076				8,047	192	824	503	310		
Rifleman RFL-3C	1066	3	4	1.38	1471	34	136	99	60	IV Corps	20-297
JagerMech JM6-S	901	4	5	1.00	901	26	96	104	65	IV Corps	20-861
GM Chosen										IV Corps	
GM Chosen										IV Corps	
No more than 5,000 BV	1,967				2,372	60	232	203	125		
Valkyrie VLK-QD	807	4	5	1.00	807	25	105	51	30	V Corps	20-221
Battle Hawk BH-K306	926	4	5	1.00	926	25	98	51	30	V Corps	20-419
GM Chosen										V Corps	
GM Chosen										V Corps	
No more than 3,900 BV	1,733				1,733	50	203	102	60		
Shootist ST-8A	1507	2	3	1.82	2743	57	215	107	70	Imperial Guard	AR20-684
Awesome AWS-9Q	1875	3	3	1.56	2925	54	247	122	80	Imperial Guard	20-847
King Crab KGC-009	2260	3	4	1.38	3119	66	307	152	100	Imperial Guard	20-899
Prefect PRF-2R	1710	3	4	1.38	2360	44	215	114	75	Imperial Guard	20-5024
	7,352				11,146	221	984	495	325		
	11,052				15,251	331	1,419	800	510		
	18,128				23,298	523	2,243	1,303	820		

OPERATION KNOCKDOWN

By Craig A. Reed, Jr

Dropship Bitter Pill
Zenith Jump Point, System 1245K3
Draconis Reach
13 March, 3150

"Commander on deck!"

The two men and one woman sitting in the conference room snapped to attention as Major Cassandra Bartlett floated in. Her hazel eyes swept over her three company commanders, noting their relative attitudes and said, "At ease."

Bartlett, along with Master Sergeant Yancy Orleans, the Boxers' senior NCO, pulled themselves to chairs and made sure they were anchored to the chairs. Bartlett leaned forward. "We jump out in four hours. I want everything secured in two hours and I want you and your senior NCO to make personally make sure. We're too far away from support for any injuries or damaged equipment." She looked at the other woman in the room. "Jones was lucky last time, so let's not temp fate, shall we?"

Captain Marie Kayne nodded sheepishly. "Yes, Ma'am. It won't happen again."

"See that it doesn't." She looked at her other two company commanders. "And no slacking from you two either."

"Understood, Ma'am," Steven DeFang replied with a nod.

"Anything new on the target?" Tony Winters asked.

Bartlett gave him a long gaze. "And where are we going to get any intel out here, light-years from the Republic?"

Winters lowered his head. "Yeah, I wasn't thinking."

DeFang shook his head. "We're not going to know what's there until we get there."

"It can't be more than a battalion," Bartlett said. "Anything larger, and it would have attracted the Dracs and the Clanners."

"Star League 'Mechs are still hot properties," Orleans said. "A regiment of them could make the difference between victory and defeat. Six regiments could reverse a major campaign."

"Assuming the information is true, and not a snipe hunt," Winters muttered.

Bartlett looked around the table. "Our intelligence says it is, which is why we're here."

"Anything else on the location?"

"Not much. It has an atmosphere that's breathable, but not much else to recommend it."

"Buffalo Meadows?" Kayne said, shaking her head. "Dumb name for a planet."

"We're not here to rename planets, we're here to stop whoever it is from claiming six regiments of SLDF 'Mechs."

"For now," DeFang said. "But what happens with the next team they sent out, and the one after that?"

"Hopefully, the failure of this team to return will convince the opponent to cut their losses and forget about it." Bartlett looked around the table. "Any questions?"

One by one, her subordinates shook their heads. She glanced up at the clock on the bulkhead in front of her. "Time's wasting. Let's get everything tied down and double checked. I want everything done in plenty of time. Dismissed."

The others left, leaving DeFang by himself. He closed his eyes and sighed. He didn't like the idea of going in almost blind, but orders were orders, and six regiments' worth of SLDF 'Mechs were more than enough of a reason for the Republic to send the Boxers to stop them.

The problem was there were too many fires all over the Inner Sphere and not enough firefighters to fight them. The Boxers were running from one fire to the next, with no chance to rest and barely having time to repair. There were a few new recruits, most not knowing the Boxers were one of the Republic of the Sphere's covert units, with orders to keep the Republic's enemies off-balance. Now, they were racing to stop the uncovering of a Star League cache, a prize that could turn the tide of battle on any of several fronts, or the spearhead of an invasion of Terra.

He briefly thought about his wife and children on Terra. Bonnie worked as a VP of sales for a medical company, and his kids—Jericho, eight and Keri, five. Did they remember him?

He shook his head. He had a job to do, and it wasn't going to get done sitting on his butt.



Foster was waiting for DeFang when he exited the conference room. "Orders?" she asked.

"The Major wants everything tied down and wants us—you and me—to double check. We have about two hours to get it done and checked."

Foster nodded. She was a short slim woman who looked like someone's kid sister. "How do you want to approach it?"

"We'll start with Poseidon-One, and work our way up."

"Yes sir."

They floated toward the Overlord's 'Mech Bay. They didn't say anything as they moved down the corridor. The Bitter Pill looked like it was on its last legs if seen from the outside, but inside, the DropShip was clean, if somewhat worn.

They reached the deck overlooking the main Mechbay. As a "mercenary" unit, the Boxers had BattleMechs from across the Inner Sphere, a mix of old and newer designs. Unlike many mercenary units, the Boxers didn't have a unifying paint scheme. From where he was standing, DeFang could see half a dozen different woodland cammo patterns, three separate jungle cammo patterns, and the rest ranging from a riot of color to subdued grays and blacks.

"Any idea who backing this play?" Foster asked.

DeFang shook his head. "No, which is why we're going to shut them down now, before they can get any of those SLDF 'Mechs off-planet. It could be one of the Inner Sphere states,

or it could be a noble looking to cave out is own little kingdom, or even a pirate looking for an army of their own. We just don't know, and we can't afford to have these regiments on the field at this time." He shrugged. "Maybe the Republic will take them, or trade their location to the Federated Suns, Free Worlds League, or the Commonwealth. He looked at Foster. "But right now, we have a job to do. Let's get to work."

Camp Alpha
Buffalo Meadows
Draconis Reach
14 March, 3150

"Marshal!"

Marshal Dennise Hague turned as the skinny tech came up to her and saluted. She returned the salute. The Austerlitz's main Mechbay was busy as La Grande Armée prepared to disembark from the DropShip. "What?" she demanded in ordered to be heard above the din.

"Marshal Davout has called for a Mess des officiers at once." Hague frowned. "Did he say why?"

"No. Marshal. Only that it is important."

"All right. I'm on my way." The tech nodded, saluted and run for the next set of Mechbays. Hague watched him leave, then turned and headed for the conference room.

As she walked, the entire situation nagged at her. Davout hadn't said who the employer was, but they clearly had enough clout to give La Grande Armée enough 'Mechs to double the unit's size to five corps and the imperial guards corps. Granted, each "Corps" was only four 'Mechs, each lead by a Marshal and to the rest of the Inner Sphere, they were two BattleMech companies. But Devout had a vision, he had the charisma to get the employer to cough up almost an entire company of 'Mechs, and most important, he had secured the unit a plum job babysitting a team of techs as they unearthed what could be the most important military cache around – six regiments of SDLF-era 'Mechs.

She reached the conference room and found most of the others already there. Devout, a small, trim man in a red, white and blue jumpsuit, sat at the head of the table. As always, his moustache and goatee were trimmed and groomed. Around the table, three of the other four Marshals were already seated. She took her seat. "Sir," she said.

"Dennise." Devout said with a nod. "Apologies for the lateness of this call."

"Not a problem, sir."

The last marshal, Sun Hayakawa, appeared a few seconds later. He frowned when he saw he was the last one. "Apologies sir," he said.

"That's all right," Devout said with a wave of his hand. "Take your seat. There is much we need to discuss."

Hayakawa took his chair. Once he had settled in, Devout leaned forward and rest his hands on the table. "Mes amies," he said. "It appears we will be tested sooner than we expected."

"We have an enemy?" Marshal Mel Niles asked.

"Oui. I've just received word from the our client's on-planet security team. Their satellites picked up a jump wave at a pirate point thirty minutes ago."

"Are they sure?" Hayakawa asked.

Devout nodded. "Our client's representative believes we will have about two days before the enemy will be upon us."

"Where is Mister Johnston?" Hague asked.

"Monsieur Johnston is current speaking to the head of the tech team," Devout replied. He smiled. "We may have an opportunity to test some of the SDLF 'Mechs ourselves."

The others looked at each other then back at Devout. "How confident are we that could happen?" Niles asked.

Devout shrugged. "It depends on how much time we can give them. Two days for sure, but after that?" He shrugged again. "We do not yet know what they are going to land. Therefore, I am ordering that three Corps stand guard here at the dig site while the other three recon the surrounding terrain, rotating every eight hours. Once we know where they're landing, the three corps on recon will go out and fight a delaying action, while the other three stay here to guard the dig site from an enemy attack." He looked around the table. "A delaying action, Mes amies. We are fighting for time, not ground. I am willing to trade ground for time. We can always retake ground, but time is something we can never regain."

The others nodded. "What about Johnston?" Hague asked.

"Don't worry about him, Marshal," Devout said. "He is my concern. I intend on making it clear the SDLF 'Mechs availability will be vital if we are to hold onto the site and the 'Mechs within." He looked around the table. "Any other questions?"

No one spoke. Devout nodded. "Bien. Return to your corps, Mes amies and disembark. First, Third and Fifth Corps will immediately begin recon out to twenty kilometers, while Second, Fourth and the Imperial Guard Corps will guard the camp and the dig site. Dismissed."

Landing Zone Uppercut
Buffalo Meadows
Draconis Reach
17 March, 3150

"Trident Prime Actual to Poseidon Six Actual."

"Poseidon Six here," DeFang said. His Viking was two hundred meters from the Bitter Pill, along with the rest of Poseidon Company's Command Lance. His company was already unloaded and spaced around the Dropship as a protection screen. Kayne's Neptune Company was in the process of unloading, while both Winter's Shiva Company and Bartlett's Trident Prime Command lance were still onboard.

"I want you company to push out toward the dig site," Bartlett said. "Recon only. If you run into opposition, hold position and gather intel. Do not pursue if they pull back, and if they have the numbers, you pull back. I don't want to fight until I know who we're facing and what type of equipment they have."

"Copy Six. Recon only, do not engage in a major battle."

"Right. Get going."

"Roger Six. Poseidon Six out." He switched to the company channel. "Poseidon, we're on recon. One-Six, I want you on point. If you make contact with the enemy, you are not to fully engage. Return fire is okay, but pursuit is not. If the enemy is in force, you are to fall back. We need intel, not a firefight."

"Copy, Six!" a bright, cheerful voice replied. DeFang closed his eyes and sighed. Lieutenant Bandi was new to the unit, and eager to show he was a good commander. Was he every that young and eager for combat? He opened his eyes in time to see Poseidon One, his recon lance, begin moving to the west. The three Stingers and single Wolverine took off at a run and for a second, he felt a flash of anger. But as soon as it started, it went away and he sighed. "Poseidon Two, Poseidon Three, let's move out."

Camp Alpha
Buffalo Meadows
Draconis Reach
17 March, 3150

"Enemy contact!"

The words brought Hague out of her doze. It took her a couple of seconds to realize she was in her 'Mechs's cockpit. Her Third Corps was part of the camp security detail, and she had taken the chance to get some sleep.

"Who is this?" Devout demanded. "Identify yourself!"

"Sorry sir!" The voice replied. "This is Two-Two!"

"Good," Devout said in a more controlled tone. "Your location, the size and type of enemy?"

"Grid reference Victor Four-One-Seven-Three. Enemy are two Stingers."

"Can you ID the unit?"

"Negative. They have different cammo patters. Wait! I'm picking up a third Stinger and a Wolverine. Their cammo does not match the other two!"

"Bien. Pull back. Do not engage. Three-One."

"Yes sir?" Hague asked

"Move you Corps up to support Second Corps, just in case our new friends are looking for a fight."

"Yes sir!" She activated her weapons and started moving.

"Third Corps!" she said. "Form up on me!"

Romanov Hills
Buffalo Meadows
Draconis Reach
17 March, 3150

"Contact!"

DeFang sat up a little straighter. "Details, One-Six!"

"Two mediums," Bandi replied. "One is reading as a Chameleon, Second is an Assassin. They're pulling back. Permission to push?"

"Negative. Orders are clear on that. Can you ID the unit?"

"Negative, but they like red, white and blue."

"Transmit visual data to the Pill and stay in contact with the

enemy Do not close to weapons range. If they stop or get reformed, you are to fall back at once. Understood?"

"Yes sir!"

"Poseidon Two, move up to support Poseidon One. Poseidon Three, move up to checkpoint KING and hold."

"Copy Six," Poseidon Two's CO, Lieutenant Goldon replied. "ROE?"

"Same as before, Two-Six. Support but do not--"

Bandi's voice interrupted him. "Missile launch! Missile launch! Multiple missile launches!"

"Fall back!" DeFang barked, sending his ninety-ton 'Mech into a run, the rest of his command lance following.

"Falling back!" Bandi shouted. In the distance, He could see a number of explosions in the distance. "Two-Six! Status?"

"Poseidon One is pulling back. The missiles fell short." Golden sounded almost bored.

"All Poseidon units, converge on checkpoint KING and regroup! Trident Prime, do you copy?"

"Copy is green," Bartlett replied. "Do not advance beyond Point KING. Shiva is moving to checkpoint ROOK to support, if needed."

"Understood, Prime. We hold at KING."

Camp Alpha
Buffalo Meadows
Draconis Reach
17 March, 3150

"You should have attacked!" Johnston screamed. He was tall, thin with a beak of a nose and thinning hair, wearing a suit unsuited for a dig site.

The DropShip's conference room was close to full with the Devout and his Marshals, Johnston, Doctor Yannerman, the chief tech and Doctor Franks, the head of the dig team. The compartment was hot, power to most of the DropShip's systems shut down to conserve energy

"Attack with what?" Devout said in a mild tone. "My forces were scattered and to send the force guarding this camp would have been a mistake."

"It was only a lance!"

"An enemy lance that was within support range of a second enemy lance. And based on the readings Marshal Niles were able to take, there was a third lance close enough to support the other two. I do not encourage my officers to fight at one to three odds." Devout sighed. "It is clear they were looking for information, not a fight. I expect that will change in the morning. Doctor, what is the status of those 'Mechs you have found?"

Yannerman was an older man, short and slight with thick white hair and a sunburnt face. "We can get a few of them ready within a day, more if we have enough time. The SDLF made sure they were stored the correct way."

"Bein."

"Where are you going to get the MechWarriors to pilot these Star League 'Mechs?" Johnston demanded. "They don't grow on trees you know!"

Devout looked at Johnston and smiled. "Mon ami, I have the situation well in hand. A few of the techs are experienced MechWarriors, without their own 'Mechs and have signed on for a chance to pilot a BattleMech again. Do not worry about finding pilots, worry about having rides for them ready when we need them."

"We'll need more techs," Yannerman said.

"You will have them. I can loan you four teams."

"That will help," Franks said. He was a squat, ugly man with a shaved head. "As long as we have the time."

"That is my responsibility," Devout said. "Marshal Hague."

"Sir!"

"You, Marshal Miles, and I are moving up to the Lin River tonight and setting up a defense. The rest will stay here to protect the camp. We will keep the enemy from advancing beyond the river for as long as possible. We'll hurt them as much as we can, but it's more important that we delay them as much as possible."

"Yes sir."

Niles nodded. "Yes, Sir."

Devout looked at Johnston. "Will that be satisfactory mon ami?"

Johnston leaned back and folded his arms. "I sure hope you know what you're doing, Nicholas."

"I know what I am doing. The problem is I cannot say what the enemy is doing."

Landing Zone Uppercut

Buffalo Meadows

Draconis Reach

18 March, 3150

"We've ID'd the enemy unit."

The three company commanders looked at Major Bartlett. The remains of coffee and freeze-dried breakfast sandwiches were scattered across the conference room table. The sun wasn't up and wouldn't be for several more hours.

DeFang watched the Major through half-closed eyes. He company had held at Checkpoint KING for several hours, waiting for an attack. But the enemy had stayed outside of weapons range for a couple of hours, then retreated. After three hours of waiting, DeFang had ordered Poseidon Company to fall back to the DropShip.

"They call themselves La Grand Armée," Bartlett continued. "Their CO is obsessed with Napoleon, even going so far and taking the surname of one of Napoleon's marshals as his own. Original reports pegged them as around a company in size, but they may have gotten some extra 'Mechs from their benefactor."

"Track record?" DeFang asked.

"A few small contracts, nothing major. Devout – he's their CO – has a reputation for being reliable, with a decent grasp of strategy and tactics."

"We'll wipe the floor up with them," Winter's said with a smirk.

Bartlett shot him a glare. "Stow that talk right now! We don't know how many of those SDLF 'Mechs they have ready. We could be the ones outnumbered!"

Winters put his hands up in a pleading gesture. "Sorry, Ma'am."

Bartlett looked around the table. "Mark my words. This isn't going to be a pushover." She tapped a button and the table's holotable came to life. It showed an area of a planet between their location and the suspected dig site. There were hills, a river, then rocky terrain between the two camps.

Bartlett used a laser pointer to emphasize her words "The quickest route to where the dig site is through the Romanov Hills and across the Lin River here at crossing point ARGON." Sever square centimeters along the river began flashing.

"Where the enemy is most likely to be," Kayne muttered.

Bartlett nodded. "The problem is there's only a few a places where the Lin River can be forded. There's two other possible sites in this area, NEON to the north, and XENON to the south. Two more sections of the holomap began flashing. "However, they have to be scouted from the ground."

"So, how are we going to do this?" DeFang asked.

"I plan to hit ARGON with a strong force. Their job will be to force a crossing at the Lin River and destroy or drive the enemy back. Meanwhile, lances will be sent to NEON and XENON and see if they can be forded. If they can, they'll ford and recon the dig site." Bartlett looked around the table. "Any questions?"

No one said anything. Bartlett nodded. "Right, now let's figure out who's doing what."

Lin River

Buffalo Meadows

Draconis Reach

18 March, 3150

"Contact! Contact! Multiple contacts!"

Hague felt her stomach tighten when she heard Niles' voice. She glanced over at her own sensors screen and at the edge of her sensor range, she saw several red triangles, a deep contrast to the scout's blue squares.

"All scouts," Devout said. "Fall back to rally point Blanco."

Hague looked over at where Devout was. The Imperial Guard were here, the heavy and assault 'Mechs, led by Devout himself, standing on a hill overlooking the Lin River to the south of Hague. Hague's own corps were hidden in woods along the river.

"Mes amies," Devout. "The time is battle is upon us. Look to your comrades, listen to your officer's commands and be steadfast. The enemy wants to be on this side of the river. It is our task to prevent that for as long as we can. Longue vie à la Grand Armée!"

"Longue vie à la Grand Armée!" the soldiers shouted as one. Hague blinked as found herself shouting with the others.

"Longue vie à la Grande Armée!"