

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

The following reports represent the bulk of the MRBC's most up-to-date information on many of the most prominent mercenary commands presently active in the Inner Sphere and near Periphery. The data includes briefings on forces that were first covered in *Field Manual: Mercenaries, Revised*, as well as the *Mercenary Supplementals* released prior to the start of the Word of Blake Jihad. As always, readers are reminded that this collection of mercenary briefs only covers a sample of the outfits currently in operation, although these commands may be considered among the most high-profile in the business. It should also be noted that the MRBC's mandate encompasses the whole of the profession, not just mercenaries of any given affiliation or only those that have been registered with the Commission. Accordingly, the following briefs include many unregistered and unrated commands, as well as many who—either due to war crimes or current employment with the Word of Blake—have been listed as Wanted or Rogue.

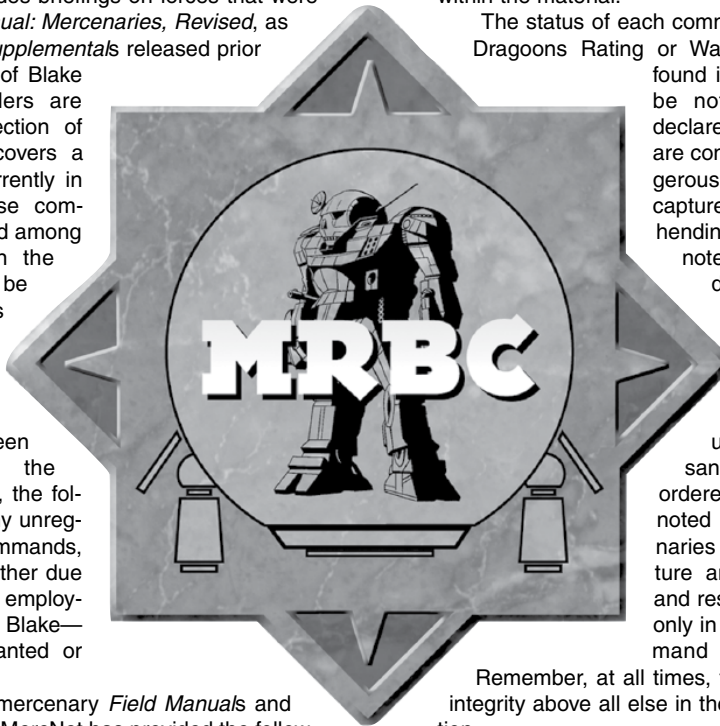
Unlike the previous mercenary *Field Manuals* and *Supplementals*, however, MercNet has provided the following briefs in a condensed format for quicker review. In this condensed format, detailed breakdowns of the various sub-units and have been trimmed to allow for better focus on the overall description of the various mercenary commands and their major sub-commands. Unfortunately, with the confusion of the Jihad and the various side-conflicts that continue to rage even now,

some key details such as the composition, experience rating, and force strength of these various mercenary forces may only be estimated. Where possible, such estimates may be found within the material.

The status of each command with the MRBC (namely their Dragoons Rating or Wanted/Rogue status) may also be found in each command's brief. It should be noted, however, that mercenaries declared Rogue or Wanted by the MRBC are considered armed and extremely dangerous at all times, but rewards for their capture may call for restraint from apprehending agencies. It is also important to note that not all mercenary commands declared Wanted in recent years may be guilty of any crime greater than their choice in employers. In such cases, the MRBC seeks the apprehension of these commands alive and as undamaged as possible to face sanctions for violating a Commission-ordered blacklist. Thus, unless otherwise noted in the text, apprehending mercenaries should use minimal force to capture any Rogue or Wanted commands and resort to overwhelming or lethal force only in defense of the apprehending command or nearby non-combatants.

Remember, at all times, that the mercenary industry prizes integrity above all else in these trying times of war and deception.

Rewards for any rogue or wanted mercenaries captured (or eliminated) in accordance with MRBC requests may be collected at the Commission's offices on Galatea. Any questions regarding the status of rogue or wanted mercenaries—including the current value of any outstanding bounties offered by the MRBC—may be forwarded to the MRBC's Office of Inter-Mercenary Authority in Galatean City.



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AVANTI'S ANGELS

Formed as a sacrificial unit during the hard, trial-by-fire years of the Clan invasion, the Angels were repeatedly thrown into the teeth of the enemy as regular army troops retreated again and again. Attrition ran high, and the unit would have ceased to exist if not for their penchant of picking up battlefield "orphans" to bolster the ranks. Life was cheap and very short, but for whatever time they had left an adopted warrior was given a home, a purpose, and comrades who fought with a nothing-to-lose attitude.

Against all odds, the unit has survived, even thrived, as a smaller, subsistence-level mercenary force. This knack for survival has allowed the Angels to build a solid reputation as a can-do outfit. Establishing themselves through several short-term contracts in the Chaos March then rotating out to the Periphery, they eventually garnered official notice from both the Magistracy of Canopus and the Capellan Confederation (as well as Word of Blake, it is rumored). Bartering on this reputation, the Angels picked up a valuable support contract for the Star League assault against Clan Smoke Jaguar in 3059.

During the Steiner-Davion civil war the Angels were officially listed as "non-aligned." However, Commander Marcus GioAvanti took a leave of absence from his own unit and led a small detachment to the aide of his estranged family in the region of Skye. Details remain sketchy, even to this date. It is only known that this abbreviated command

struck at pro-Katrina forces on the world of Syrma, and then at pro-Victor forces on Zebebelgenubi. After a short investigation in April 3067, the LAAF issued a non-binding statement which chastised Marcus GioAvanti but cleared the Angels of any official misconduct.

Once again on contract to the Magistracy of Canopus, the Angels were on station at Joppa when the Jihad broke out in 3067. Though a part of the Allied Mercenary Command, they received no recall order and awaited news from Outreach, which never arrived. It was here that Word of Blake struck at the Angels as part of their pogrom to scourge the AMC.

Though the Angels fought off the assault, complicity by local Magistracy officials forced them to break their contract. Attempts to reach higher authority failed when the Magistracy plunged into the darkness of a communication interdiction in late 3068, not long after a request for aid reached them from an old employer, Baron Shienzé of New Home (a suspected Word of Blake sympathizer). The Angels voted to honor this call for aid and left the Magistracy with their official contract status still unresolved. Since this time, the Angels have weathered several Word of Blake attempts on their lives and have fulfilled at least two private contracts: one reportedly for Baron Shienzé, and another on the world of Liberty.

Dragoons Rating: A- (Under Review)

Avanti's Angels

The Angels specialize in hard-hitting "fight and fade" warfare, which has led to many special tactics including an ability to salvage on the fly. Their ability to stay on the move and strike hard at vulnerable targets has so far allowed them to stay a jump ahead of Word of Blake efforts to destroy them.

Rumors abound concerning a personal grudge Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais has against the Angels, although this may stem from Word of Blake efforts to eradicate any unit with ties to the former Allied Mercenary Command.

Angels Aerospace

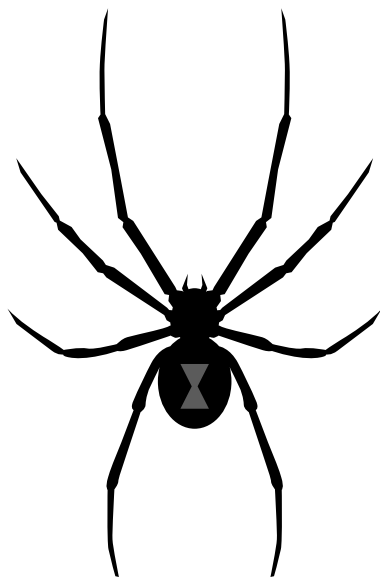
Just after their daring raid on New Home, the Angels reportedly lost one of their two DropShips, the *Head of a Pin*. However, it is not known whether this venerable *Fortress*-class vessel was lost to battle damage or intentionally relocated. The Angels also continue to maintain at least one lance of aerospace fighters.

Angels Special Assault Force

Under the command of General Hanford Lee, a Federated Suns expatriate, this mixed company of armor and motorized infantry continues to serve as the Angels' grab bag of unconventional support tactics. On Liberty, this force somehow tricked an enemy unit into bottling themselves up in a blind canyon using a tactic they admit to only as "coyote camouflage."



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**THE BLACK WIDOW COMPANY**

Every schoolchild in the Inner Sphere knows the name Wolf's Dragoons, and while fifty years of mercenary victories have cemented them into the lore of warfare, some elements of that once-proud organization stand out among their contemporaries.

The Black Widow Company stands out among everyone.

Originally commanded by the fiery Natasha Kerensky, the Black Widow Company functioned as the Dragoons troubleshooter unit through their first series of contracts around the Inner Sphere, during the last part of the Third Succession War. The Widows became synonymous with worlds like Hesperus, Lamon, New Wessex, and New Delos. Along with their commander—the oft-called “First Lady of Death”—the Widows became the bogeymen for MechWarriors everywhere.

After the Fourth Succession War the Black Widow Company evolved into the Black Widow Battalion and eventually the Spider's Web and the Wolf Spiders. The legacy of the original company lived within those commands for thirty years, until the Word of Blake annihilated almost all of the Dragoons, and the treachery of Broadsword Legion all-but-destroyed the Wolf Spiders.

It wasn't until 3069 that the Dragoons ventured from their haven on the Kell Hounds' world Arc-Royal. Captain Stacy Church led a small contingent of hand-picked MechWarriors back to razed Outreach to rebuild the Dragoons' reputation and make the Word respect the survivors. She did so with skill, determination, and the use of a singularly powerful legend.

She brought back the Black Widow Company.



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**BLACKHEARTS**

Until recently the exact details of the Blackhearts' origins had been more rumor than fact. Whenever asked, their standard answer was that they formed from former Star League units stranded in the Periphery. House Steiner hired the mercenaries in 2866, assigning them to guard their Periphery borders, where pirate and terrorist activities had decreased dramatically. Finally, in early 3028 Lyran Intelligence uncovered information that revealed the Blackhearts' origins with the former Star League's Special Armed Services units—an elite anti-terrorist combat group attached to the SLDF. Faced with this revelation, Colonel Johnson confirmed her command originated from the 77th SOG, an admission that earned the regiment a part in Operation Götterdämmerung, where they supported the Twenty-fourth Arcturan Guards in defeating the DCMS' Night Stalkers on Basiliano in August of 3028. Following Basiliano, the Blackhearts captured Kufstein and Engadine by mid-3029 (the latter while supporting the 26th Lyran Guards). Following the Fourth Succession War, the Blackhearts signed a new contract with the Free Worlds League and were still working under League contract during Operation Guerrero, when they went into battle alongside Capellan guerrillas on Capolla. After defeating the Lyran garrison, the Blackhearts departed abruptly when they discovered the Capellan guerrillas were *Zhanzheng de guang* terrorists. Despite both this discovery and the Captain General's growing anti-mercenary sentiments, the Blackhearts renewed their contract with the Free Worlds League after Guerrero.

In November of 3068, the Blackhearts deployed for a training exercise on Wasat when DropShips carrying Raymond's Armored Cavalry and the HeavyHell Raisers grounded at the DropPort in the planetary capital of Wasat Prime. Colonel Marcus Johnson received a summons from Wasat's planetary governor, Duke Howard Long, to appear for an important meeting scheduled for the next day. Colonel Johnson arrived on time with his adjutant but was forced to attend the meeting alone, his adjutant barred by security. While the exact details of the meeting remain in dispute, the results have recently become public knowledge. Reportedly, Duke Long informed Colonel Johnson that he and his command were to stand down immediately, under threat of action by Raymond's ACR and the HeavyHell Raisers. Johnson reportedly refused the order, noting that Long could not override his contract with the LCCC. A Blakist representative on hand then reportedly informed the Blackhearts commander he had no choice in the matter. An argument allegedly erupted that ended with the deaths of both Colonel Johnson and the Blakist Demi-Precentor. Unbeknownst to the security detail, Johnson transmitted the entire event via a hidden wiretap to his adjutant, who then relayed it before his own death to the Blackhearts' second in command, Major Glen Stryker. Stryker placed the command on full alert and enacted Operation Black Fury, a prearranged plan apparently devised by the Blackhearts command in the event of employer betrayal.

Acting on their intelligence, the Blakist mercenaries moved westward from their base towards the Chromomeric Mountains and McGregor's Black Forest, where the Blackhearts were supposed to be on maneuvers. Raymond's ACR, a lighter and more maneuverable 'Mech regiment, moved ahead of the HeavyHell Raisers in an attempt to slow down the Blackhearts but failed to catch up with Stryker's forces. Forced to rest, the ACR made camp in the western part of Caledon Valley, while the HeavyHell Raisers camped two hours farther east to act as a rear guard. Around 0330 hours local time, Blackheart heavy artillery opened up, saturating the ACR's camp with anti-personnel and FASCAM munitions. Meanwhile, the Blackhearts' 'Mechs erupted from their hidden positions in the surrounding woods, attacking the now-panicked Cavalry. The Blackhearts own armored cavalry simultaneously struck from the west, boxing in the Cavalry forces while the Flying Lions strafed and bombed the HeavyHell Raisers before they could mount an offensive. By local dawn, Raymond's Armored Cavalry effectively ceased to exist, unable to escape the Blackhearts' vengeance, while the battered HeavyHell Raisers withdrew in the face of an assault by the Blackhearts' Thirty-Fifth Dragoon battalion. Reduced to less than forty percent of their effective strength, the Raisers retreated in disarray to Wasat Prime and remained there until reinforcements arrived in the form of the Word of Blake's Third Division.

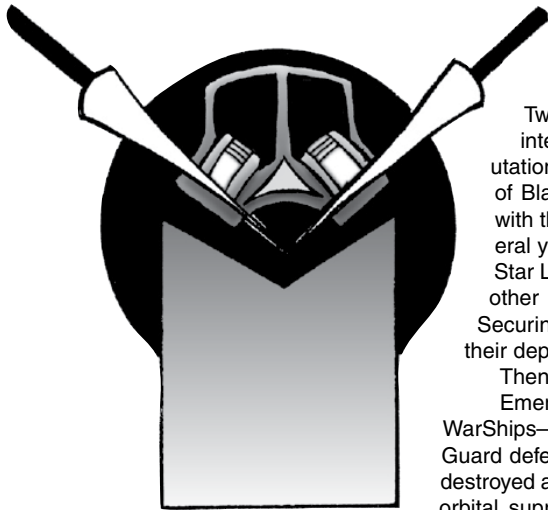
The Blackhearts, who had spent the past two months in hiding, repairing their units from battlefield salvage, were in no shape to repel the Blakist forces in a stand-up fight. Instead, for the next two years, they waged an effective guerrilla campaign that denied the Third a clear victory. The Blackhearts' tenacity, however, ultimately led the Third Division's commander, Precentor Fellers, to issue an ultimatum in January of 3071: either the Blackhearts would surrender absolutely, or Fellers would obliterate Wasat Prime and its 35,000 inhabitants in nuclear fire. Refusing to surrender his command to certain death, Strike chose a third option and led his Blackhearts to retreat via their hidden DropShips deep in the mountains. His victory denied, Feller reportedly flew into a rage and destroyed the planetary capital anyway.

Dragoons Rating: B

The Blackhearts

The current location and effectiveness of the Blackhearts is unknown. After disappearing in January of 3071, there have been no reports placing the command or its captured Blakist JumpShip anywhere throughout the region.

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**21ST CENTAURI LANCERS**

Formed from an ex-Capellan command that mutinied over unpaid wages, the Twenty-first Centauri Lancers built up a reputation for excellence, honesty, and integrity that has made them a symbol for the mercenary industry. Though this reputation was damaged in 3058 when the command's identity was hijacked by the Word of Blake during their conquest of Terra, the Lancers accepted a long-term contract with the secularized ComStar after a period of rebuilding. Based on Tukayyid for several years, the Lancers contributed to the refinement of the Com Guard and the new Star League Defense Force by acting as an OpFor for ComStar's Invader Galaxy and other SLDF troops. It did not take long for the Lancers to regain their elite status. Securing a contract extension with ComStar through 3080, the mercenaries moved their dependants to Tukayyid from their temporary quarters on Orestes.

Then, on 21 January 3068, everything changed.

Emerging from pirate points practically on top of the planet, two Word of Blake WarShips—identified as the *Blake's Sword* and the *Deliverance*—overwhelmed the Com Guard defenses at Tukayyid, gutted the CWS *Blake's Vengeance* and *Hammerstrike*, and destroyed all of the defending aerospace forces—including the Lancers' own air wing. Their orbital supremacy assured, the Blakist ships blockaded the planet, shooting down any DropShips that attempted to flee.

With no ultimatum or warning, the Word vessels soon unleashed their firepower against the Com Guard bases themselves, including the nearby Focht War College and the surrounding cityscape, as well as the SLDF and Lancers bases. The bombings wiped out all of these facilities with over six hours of continuous fire. Fortunately, however, the mercenaries had already evacuated during the initial fighting, leaving much of their equipment behind as they scattered into the surrounding countryside.

For the next several months, the orbiting Blakist ships fired indiscriminately on Tukayyid and sortied fighters against the planet, with seemingly no rhyme or reason for their targets. By June, virtually no major cities remained intact. Among the casualties was a large portion of Lancers, caught in the open as they attempted to flee into the Dinju Mountains. The bombings killed Colonel Evelena Haskell and over five hundred civilian dependants.

Traveling in small groups, eschewing primary transportation for fear of attracting Blakist aerospace, the surviving Lancers went to ground. Of these, roughly two hundred Lancers warriors and dependants managed to hook up with the Killer Bees in the unforgiving terrain of Devil's Bath. Knowing that they could not remain in the hostile expanse of boiling mud pits and steam vents, the Bees managed to stage a distraction, occupying a Blakist squadron while the civilians escaped towards the Skupo River.

By the beginning of 3070—two years after the Blakists' arrival—over ninety percent of Tukayyid's surviving populace was scattered across the continents in small enclaves hoping to be overlooked. Blakist aerospace targeted any use of fusion reactors and all significant grouping of vehicles. Scattered among the bands of civilians, the Lancers helped form small, hidden village clusters in the mountains, though many would perish from attacks and the elements. Those that survived scratched out a meager existence, trading with other refugee settlements.

The arrival of Clan Ghost Bear in July of 3070 went almost unnoticed until Clan DropShips began landing all around the planet, broadcasting their humanitarian intent across the communication spectrum. The Bears spent six months trying to reach as many refugees as they could. Their herculean efforts eventually enabled the fragmented Lancers to regroup with Com Guard survivors. As the Lancers continue to reorganize—at the Bears' sufferance—Colonel LeMonds has extended an offer to all Tukayyid survivors, including those of the Com Guard and the Killer Bees, to join his shattered command.

Dragoons Rating: F

21st Centauri Lancers

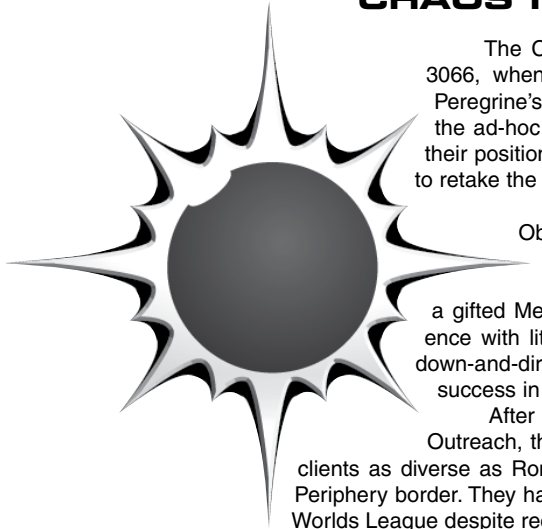
Morale is high with the recent discovery that six Lancers' 'Mechs actually survived the initial bombing of the old Com Guard bunkers the Lancers had used for barracks. Though efforts to recover these machines have been slow, the recent unearthing of part of Strike Company's equipment has given the Lancers hope. These 'Mechs remain in Ghost Bear custody, however, until the rest of the command is ready to leave Tukayyid, which may not be for another year as the mercenaries continue to salvage all they can.

21st Centauri Security Lancers

Recently promoted Captain Peter Furst heads up two platoons of rifle infantry for security duty. The small security force continues to carry out their primary mission—the protection of Lancer dependants—and guards their compound against any possible Ghost Bear treachery. Even though the Clan has given the mercenaries permission to remain on Tukayyid for the time being (under some caveats) the former platoon sergeant is taking no chances with a Clan known for its anti-mercenary bent.

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CHAOS IRREGULARS



The Chaos Irregulars first appeared on Acamar in the Chaos March in October of 3066, when—according to legend—survivors of the destroyed Sorensen's Strikers and Peregrine's Hussars joined forces to defend that world against Olson's Rangers. Together, the ad-hoc command managed to keep the Capellan-backed Rangers from consolidating their position until the First Cunningham's Commandos, dispatched by Duke Hasek, arrived to retake the world.

The Irregulars are unusual in that Colonel Ariel Peregrine-Simson and Colonel Obadiah "Jake" Chowla share equal command. Peregrine-Simson, an Outreach native graduate of Wolf's Dragoons' Outreach Mercenary Training Command, is a shrewd strategist and uncompromising commander. Chowla, by contrast, is a gifted MechWarrior of uncertain origin who rose to command through battlefield experience with little or no formal training and is a charismatic leader known for his multi-level down-and-dirty tactics. The Irregulars' record is eloquent testimony to these co-commanders' success in melding their mutually exclusive skill sets.

After establishing the proficiency of their joint command structure to the MRBC on Outreach, the Irregulars took on a series of short-term contracts specialized in security for clients as diverse as Ronin Inc. and the Mosiro University of Al-IIb before moving anti-spinward to the Periphery border. They have since roamed freely through the frontiers of the Lyran Alliance and the Free Worlds League despite recent conflicts, fulfilling short-term contracts for smaller worlds from the Alliance's Melissia Theater to the fractured League's Rim Commonality.

Peregrine's Hussars were closely linked to both Smithson's Chinese Bandits and the Broadsword Legion—two commands that f  ed heavily in the sacking of Outreach. Some evidence exists, including Colonel Gabriel Peregrine's purchase of a custom *Huron Warrior* shortly before his death, that the Hussars were under a Word of Blake retainer while fulfilling contracts for other clients. Because of this and certain other unusual circumstances surrounding their early career, the Irregulars come under routine suspicion of being in the Word's employ. Colonel Peregrine-Simson is reportedly unaware of—and hotly contests—any connection between her father and the Blakists, but even so, the suspicions levied against her command were not fully allayed until mid-3068, when the Irregulars exonerated themselves fully in battle against Blakist forces—an action which reduced the command to just over a third of its original strength.

More persistent have been allegations of piracy, or at least of involvement with known pirates, with the Irregulars prominently featured on the criminal watch lists of the Eleventh Arcturan Guard. However, the governments of those worlds the Irregulars have defended, including Main Street, New St. Andrews, and Campoleone, hotly dispute such allegations of piracy. More significantly, the Eighth Lyran Regulars have employed elements of the Irregulars on two occasions.

The Irregulars have some of the best tech support in the Periphery, which keeps them at or near full strength at all times. Though they possess only a single *Seeker*-class DropShip, transportation is rarely a problem for these mercenaries; a Timbuktu Theater-based civilian freight carrier provides them with interstellar transportation in exchange for protection.

The Chaos Irregulars have grown over the past year, adding nearly a company of BattleMechs, infantry and armor to their roster. The exact figures, however, remain as vague as the origins of these recently acquired assets, though there is evidence these new troops are in fact survivors from other commands who were broken by (or have broken with) Word of Blake forces in the Periphery. For obvious security reasons, the Irregulars never confirm nor deny these rumors, a reticence that has earned them a "Questionable" rating. When pressed, Colonels Peregrine-Simson and Chowla simply advise anyone who doubts their integrity to "hire someone else."

Dragoons Rating: C

Chaos Irregulars

The Chaos Irregulars currently describe themselves as a "heavy battalion"—a deliberately imprecise designation as their use of independent and/or ad hoc special-purpose lances and demi-companies makes exact counts difficult at times. However, it is generally accepted that these mercenaries possess two and a half companies of BattleMechs, which range in age from a vintage *Crockett* to a factory-fresh *Spector* and in size from a 95-ton *Hauptmann* to a 25-ton *Mongoose*. The Irregulars also have some two companies of infantry (none equipped with battle suits) and a platoon of conventional armor. Platoons and squads of infantry often serve on detached security assignments.

In combat, the Irregulars prefer engaging their enemy from multiple points—a tactic one adversary characterized as "fighting a hydra." Chowla's *Thanatos* or Peregrine-Simson's trademark *Huron Warrior* can often be found at the leading edge of any assault.

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**CRESCENT HAWKS**

The Crescent Hawks have been a distinguished, if somewhat unknown, component of the Kell Hounds mercenary regiments since the end of the Third Succession War. Formed by famed LAM pilot Jeremiah Youngblood as an LCAF special operations team, the Hawks took part in many of the most hard-fought skirmishes on the Kurita border in the last years of the Third War. They retired from active duty as the war wound down, with Jeremiah disappearing after depositing his son Jason in a small academy on Pacifica.

A Kurita raid ended Jason's education prematurely and sent him on the run, where he managed to form the Hawks and fight off the Combine invaders with a combination of skill, luck and help from his father's old comrades. Over the next forty years, the Hawks' members joined with the Kell Hounds and became a valuable addition to their forces, coming to prominence in battles like the defense of Luthien during the Clan Invasion. While they still called themselves the Crescent Hawks informally, they were Kell Hounds until Akira Brahe, new commander of the Kell Hounds after the death of Dan Allard, asked Jason Youngblood to re-form his independent Crescent Hawks. With the wildfire conflict of the Jihad raging, a small but powerful unit could often turn the tide, and Brahe wanted more options. Jason Youngblood, by this time content

to be teaching Kell Hound cadets on Arc-Royal, declined the offer of command and instead recommended his son—and his father's namesake—Jeremiah.

The new Crescent Hawks, formed on Arc-Royal and trained by the best of the Kell Hounds, Clan Wolf-in-Exile and the rebuilding Dragoons, have recently dropped off the radar. After a lengthy series of war games on Arc-Royal, the Hawks—who have become masters of the quick strike and surgical assault—loaded aboard loaned Kell Hounds DropShips and boosted into the night of the Jihad. No reports have yet placed them in action, though their course after leaving Arc-Royal pointed them toward the Blakist Protectorate.

Captain Jeremiah Youngblood attended the Nagelring before returning to the Kell Hounds. He served in Christian Kell's battalion of the First Regiment until he was picked to lead the new Crescent Hawks. He is an intense young man, with holovid-star good looks and a flair for the dramatic. This attitude sometimes causes trouble with his officers, especially his Striker lance leader, Max Pearson. The son of another original Crescent Hawk, Pearson resigned from the LAAF to join the reborn Crescent Hawks when his father Rex learned of them from Jason Youngblood.

Colonel Brahe has refused to comment on where the new Crescent Hawks are being deployed or even who is paying their contract. We haven't been able to confirm if the Hawks are even flying the Kell Hounds colors at present, but from the records of the Hawks' training exercises, we can be sure that whoever they face, they will give an accounting of themselves worthy of their parents' legacies.

MRBC Rating: Not registered

Crescent Hawks

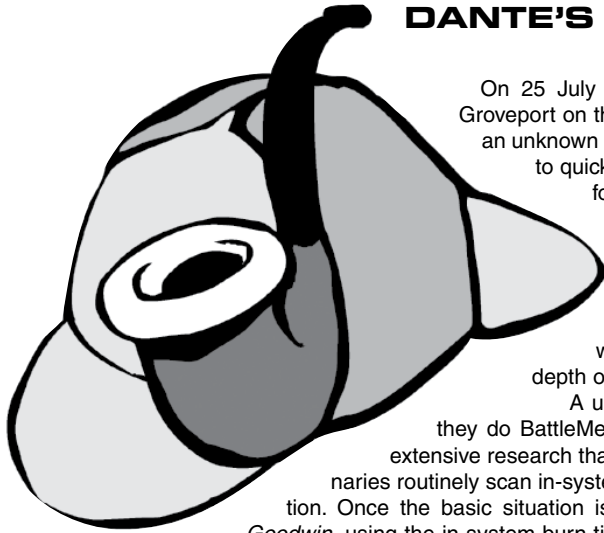
The Crescent Hawks are a full company of twelve 'Mechs and an aerospace squadron. Captain Youngblood leads the company from the cockpit of his father's Phoenix Hawk, but his 'Mech is the lightest in the Command Lance. Lieutenant Klatt's Awesome is the largest, and often functions as the lance's anvil in combat.

Lieutenant Pearson's Striker Lance is composed of fast heavy 'Mechs and has the uncanny ability—in exercises, at least—to appear far behind enemy positions without being detected. It's not uncommon to see Lieutenant Levine's Pursuit Lance making as much ruckus as possible to help screen the Strikers' movements.

Lieutenant Schiller's squad of Stingray fighters escorts the Hawks' three Leopard-class DropShips on missions and provides close fire-support on the ground.

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DANTE'S DETECTIVES



On 25 July 3069, a *Union*-Class DropShip descended near the small hamlet of Groveport on the League-controlled world of Wyatt. Minutes later, the vessel boosted to an unknown location, leaving behind a mixed force of light vehicles and SecurityMechs to quickly isolate a small warehouse on the outskirts of town. Soon after infantry forces entered the building, several vehicles—later determined to be from the remains of the local militia—approached on a high-speed assault. Within seconds, these forces were wreathed in fire by a withering salvo of raider missiles. In what turned out to be a ruse, the raiders then used their force of lightly armored CellCo Ranger police vehicles and *Inquisitor* SecurityMechs to draw out and destroy the militia rebels within in the area with a precision and coordination that demonstrated the depth of research used to pinpoint their target and assess its defenses.

A unique new command, Dante's Detectives uses guile and wit as often as they do BattleMechs to determine the status of their objectives on hostile planets. With extensive research that begins on board their *Tramp*-class JumpShip *Nero Wolfe*, these mercenaries routinely scan in-system communications to analyze the planetside situation prior to any insertion. Once the basic situation is determined, the Detectives launch their single DropShip, the *Archie Goodwin*, using the in-system burn time to formulate plans that focus on meticulous tactics and minimal hostile contact. The efficiency of these plans can be seen in their execution, and the Detectives have carried out precision raids in record time. This has in turn allowed the small outfit to collect a significant number of contracts within the relatively short span of their career, and they have been seen operating everywhere from the expanding Blakist Protectorate region to locales near the Jade Falcon-Lyrans border.

MercNet observers have theorized that the Detectives actually began as a corporate security force, created at the special request of a prominent IrTech VP (before the IrTech-based interstellar conglomerate realigned its corporate stance and Free Worlds member status to benefit their Blakist Protectorate shareholders, that is). First appearing in 3069, just after the Blakist White-Out, and led by the charismatic Jimmy Dante, they immediately undertook several missions seemingly aimed at determining the status of IrTech properties throughout Marik and Steiner space. With several successful missions under their belt to worlds on both sides of the embattled Lyrans-Free Worlds border, the Detectives have cultivated a reputation as expert scouts, devoted mainly to the hunting and gathering of information. Backed up by a handful of security vehicles, SecurityMechs, and even a lance of BattleMechs, the Detectives use these assets to their fullest potential in coordinated missions aimed at locating and securing their objectives at minimal cost. Dante himself attributes his team's success to the camaraderie among its members, handpicked from a pool of experts with backgrounds in investigation or police work.

Ironically, Jimmy Dante himself has apparently never served in any police force. Though most of his close-knit "family" can be traced to either IrTech corporate security force or IrTech-based police departments, his drive to learn had led him through several forensic university degrees by the age of 26, and he was reportedly on his way to establishing a career as a professional private investigator just prior to the Jihad. When the White-Out began, Dante took that opportunity to work on what he called "the great mystery"—his term for the "true" causes behind the Blakist Holy War—and with his drive, charisma, and contacts within the IrTech corporate elite, he quickly forged his Detectives to undertake this quest.

Dragoons Rating: Unrated

Dante's Detectives

Dante's Detectives forces are numerically small, numbering only a reinforced lance of BattleMechs led by Rocco "The Dean" Giambrocco and a handful each of security vehicles and SecurityMechs—almost all of IrTech design or manufactured by local operations. However, the command's true strength lies within its extensive intelligence apparatus built into the bays of the JumpShip *Nero Wolfe*. Many of the *Tramp*-class vessel's extensive cargo bays have been stripped out in favor of extensive new computer storage systems, communications gear, and passenger space for over a platoon of intelligence experts. Some of the Detectives' technical experts have likened the ship to the ancient Star League *Bug-Eye*, jokingly saying that all the *Nero Wolfe* would need to compete with the sophisticated "spy ships" would be a Lithium-Fusion battery and maneuvering drives.

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DEVIL'S BRIGADE

Interstellar Expeditions—a private multi-national group, disparaged by many as “mercenary archaeologists”—has been known to maintain its own irregular security forces, even beyond the various specialized mercenary commands they regularly employ. Whether to protect a valuable find or to provide escorts for long-range Deep Periphery expeditions, these few IE full-timers have typically hailed from familial circles, linked to the group by blood through decades or even centuries of history.

But for Major Alex Keller and those who followed him, those bonds broke abruptly in 3066 after an operation alongside the Periphery Star Guard, in the coreward regions of the Lyran Alliance. As is often (if not always) the case with Interstellar Expeditions, the exact details of what occurred are sketchy at best, non-existent at worst. However, it seems that on this mission, the expedition encountered both a mysterious pirate group and the dreaded Bounty Hunter. While Colonel Annapoulis of the Periphery Star Guard had nothing but praise for Major Keller and his men, even she cannot explain what occurred.

Whatever caused the schism, IE apparently cut Keller and his followers loose without repercussions. Yet despite their previous connections to one of the richest private organizations in known space (as rumor has it), the Devil's Brigade appeared on Galatea with almost no cutting-edge technology to speak of. In fact, most of the Brigade's equipment appeared centuries old and held together with spit and bailing wire, which has led many curious reporters to conclude that Keller's departure came at the price of a low-tech restriction.

At the start of the Jihad, the Brigade found itself seeking contracts on Galatea. Unwilling to jump at some of the juicier contracts being tossed about—with rumors of Word of Blake involvement and the implications of Outreach's loss to the mercenary trade slowing their decision-making process—the Brigade eventually accepted a corporate security contract in 3069. Shipping out to Son Hoa, the Brigade has taken up station protecting StarCorps Industries' production lines just in time for the first off-world shipments of the new EMP-6S *Emperor* variant to the beleaguered LAAF.

While the Brigade has so far managed to avoid the worst of the Skye-Bolan border fighting, they have received much unwanted attention from Son Hoa's local answer to the Sphere-wide scandalvids. Keller, who clearly hoped his command's departure from Galatea would finally silence the journalists “with nothing better to do than watch the war,” was reportedly dismayed to find that his Brigade's strange notoriety has only made the limelight follow it to a new location.

Dragoons Rating: D

Devil's Brigade Battalion

Besides the battle armor-equipped infantry and improved C³ systems mounted on most of its BattleMechs, the newest addition to the Devil's Brigade is also its oldest and strangest—only further enhancing the scandalvid curiosity that is the Brigade. In place of his usual BNC-3S *Banshee*, Alex Keller was observed in early 3071 at the helm of a vintage *Gladiator* during a Son Hoa training exercise.

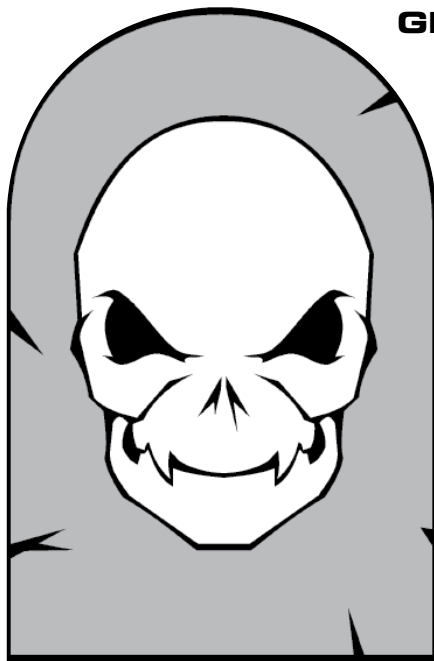
Rumors have since circulated that some second- and third-tier 'Mech production facilities within the Alliance, in an effort to feed the monstrous materials demand created by the Blakist Jihad, have initiated the production of so-called “Primitive BattleMechs” to cut costs. Based on the outmoded engineering that gave birth to the original *Mackie* in 2439, these design standards went extinct by the end of the twenty-fifth century thanks to the rise of more modern BattleMech design as early as 2460 (though most of the Great Houses were slower to follow the Terran Hegemony's lead). Though largely relegated only to IndustrialMech design today, however, some economists and military engineers—citing the disruption of trade and the loss of first-tier factories to Blakist assaults and captures—have predicted a possible (and hopefully temporary) return to such “RetroTech,” where BattleMechs produced on the cheap would feature commercial-grade components from gyros and cockpits to structural design and weaponry. In the current crisis, where some commanders are beginning to believe quantity counts more than quality, RetroTech may yet find a niche, but it remains unclear at this time whether such production is underway, at plants like StarCorps.

Despite these rumors, Alex insists (when asked) that his *Gladiator* is not a new design, nor even one of the “modern” GLD-3Rs first produced by the long-lost Merryweather Industries in 2468. Instead, Keller claims his ride is actually an original GLD-1R, the prototype from which the GLD-3R eventually evolved.

Understandably, this claim is hard to substantiate. While Keller's machine's weaponry bears almost no resemblance to the 3R model, the original specs for the 1R “Primitive” have been lost to five centuries of warfare. Still, the armor is patch-worked enough to stand as its own mute witness to Alex's statement, but it leaves too many questions unanswered, thus only adding to the Brigade's mystique. This biggest question, of course, is why any commander would trade the pinnacle of 3025-era assault technology for a design almost half its weight and so outdated its original primitive specs cannot be traced.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

GRAVE WALKERS



Despite a long history of service in the Inner Sphere that some say predates the Star League and perhaps even the 'Mech, many observers wrote off the Grave Walkers after their near annihilation by the Jade Falcons on Kookken's Pleasure Pit and Babaeski in 3064, especially with their arrival and subsequent disintegration on Arc Royal. Even the remaining members thought it was a matter of time before the historic mercenary command disbanded once and for all; with two near-complete destructions at the Falcons' hands in two decades and no recent comparable successes, the Walkers' reputation was shot.

At the start of 3068, the Grave Walkers' new CO, Lt. Colonel Tevdt signed a contract (reportedly while drunk) with Blackstone BattleMechs to raid the Falcon-held system Sudeten. Within hours, the rest of the unit mutinied and deposed Tevdt, leaving the next highest officer, Lieutenant Robert Prather, in charge. Nullifying their contract immediately, now-Captain Prather approached the Kell Hounds with an offer to disband the Walkers and join the Kell Hounds. Commander Allard refused, citing among other things a waiting list of other mercenaries to join the Hounds' prestigious ranks. But as a consolation, he offered the Walkers a generous retainer contract, mostly to augment Arc Royal's defenses.

When Dan Allard fell in combat against the Jade Falcons on Graceland in the summer of 3069, the Hounds' waiting list of proven candidates dried up quickly. The intramerc war on Outreach sent a flood of MechWarriors to Arc-Royal, many survivors from other shattered commands and defeated house regiments seeking out what seemed to be the most secure system still friendly to mercenaries and anti-Blakists. Many petitioned to join the Kell Hounds and other A-rated units in the area. However, with screening and background checks now the norm, the process took several months, even with-

out the interference of the Blakist White-Out—time the Kell Hounds did not have as the Jade Falcons surged across the border once again. Lt Col Akira Brahe, now in charge of the Hounds, thus came to Captain Prather with an offer of his own: the Grave Walkers, training the last several years in defensive tactics, would take on many of these eager new arrivals and put them through their paces. The Kell Hounds would hire the top of the class, while the Walkers could keep the rest. With full maintenance, transport, and battlefield loss compensation, Captain Prather jumped at the offer, and thus the Walkers became the Hounds' latest farm unit. Starting with a lance of MechWarriors (who eventually won an assignment to the Arc-Royal militia), the rotation of forces increased, and at the height of the program the Grave Walkers boasted two combined-arms battalions.

Despite nearly doubling the number of permanent members (four times, when counting the rotating troops), the Grave Walkers still suffer from extremely low morale two years after their near disintegration. The original members now chafe at the realization that they have become "nothing but another Kell Hound training cadre." Worse, many of the new permanent members hail from units that have seen some of the most horrific events since the Amaris Crisis, warriors whose evident signs of post-traumatic stress make them unemployable by Grand Duke Kell, potential powder kegs with skills too valuable to turn away. Nevertheless, the Grave Walkers' program has proven so successful that Margrave Steiner has worked out a deal with the Hounds and Prather to expand his services for not only Kell Hounds recruits, but also for possible LAAF troop replacements in the Arc Royal Theater as well.

Dragoons Rating: C

Grave Walkers

The Grave Walkers continue to train in defensive tactics, using the constant influx of vehicle crew and infantry platoons to create small combined-arms task forces that can quickly deploy static defenses (such as minefields and hidden weapon emplacements). As these troopers are reassigned, Prather (now a Major) has begun to use his influence to keep them together in company or higher allotments so they may maintain cohesion in their new posts.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**HAMPTON'S HESSENS**

Several years after fleeing to Galatea to avoid the FedCom Civil War, a shortage of funds finally prompted General Kurt Festerling of the reconstituted Hampton's Hessens to sign his newly formed First New Hessen Irregulars to an LAAF garrison contract on Thorin. Unfortunately, having taken station mere months before the outbreak of the Blakist Jihad in 3067, the Irregulars' presence drew the fanatics' attention in 3068. With a massive surprise assault and a storm of tactical nukes, they annihilated the entire regiment, including General Festerling. The brutal assault prompted Pat Hampton, then-commander of the Second Irregulars, to gather the remaining Hessens on Galatea with whatever supplies they could gather for the long journey back home. Many civilians and some small mercenary units, fearing another bout of Galatean riots, pleaded with now-General Hampton to take them along to his seemingly secure home world. Not willing to abandon people and possible allies, Hampton agreed. Unfortunately, with so many refugees coming along, the Hessens' JumpShips did not have enough docking collars to take everyone along at once. After some debate, they decided that half the military ships would jump to each system, establish jump point security, and burn planetside for supplies where possible while the JumpShips recharged and doubled back to pick up the rest at each hop. Combat casualties on nearly every world reduced the problem of surplus personnel—including one instance where a mutinous DropShip was left behind. But when the Hessens reached Hall, one of the brigade's JumpShip captains panicked over an approaching Blakist interceptor squadron and

abandoned the rest of the fleet.

The bloodiest point of the Hessens' odyssey came in the Protectorate system of New Canton. Claimed by the Word even before the Jihad, the system boasted one of the earliest discovered re-education camps. Desperate for supplies after a costly operation on Berenson (an operation only partly mitigated by the defection of several Blakist troops), General Hampton reluctantly ordered his forces to make planetfall. Local resistance—or what was left of them—swiftly made contact with the Hessens, offering information and terrain guides in exchange for a portion of the captured supplies. The battle turned sour during the exfiltration, however, when a Protectorate ambush cut off several companies of guerrillas. Hessens' Mechs from the main force. Literally out of ammunition by this point, Hampton ordered his soldiers to run for their transports, abandoning nearly a battalion of his own troops.

When the Hessens finally reached New Hessen weeks later, they found their homeworld unscathed, thanks in part to the militaristic local government that had declared martial law and built an extremely strong, locally raised garrison. Relieved to find their homeland safe, Hampton dropped off the surviving refugees and ordered a hasty re-supply for his mercenaries, declaring his intention to "bring his boys home." Not a single soldier—Hessen or refugee—declined Hampton's call for volunteers.

In one of the most daring maneuvers in their career, the Hessens jumped back to a pirate point two hours from New Canton and combat-dropped every BattleMech upon the Blakist garrison and re-education camps to quickly establish a perimeter inside the city. As both sides exchanged fierce fire amid falling metal, Hessen fighters blew holes in the camp walls and demolished the static emplacements so the prisoners could escape. Unable to secure a large enough perimeter for his DropShips, Hampton ordered them to land outside the city and led a fighting withdrawal. In the brutal, close-quarters struggle, the Hessens' Mechs toppled buildings, threw cars, even self-detonated their own fusion reactors to defend the fleeing prisoners from Protectorate Militia fire. By the time the Hessens lifted off for home, they had sacrificed over a battalion of troops but rescued their two lost companies and several hundred refugees.

Dragoons Rating: C

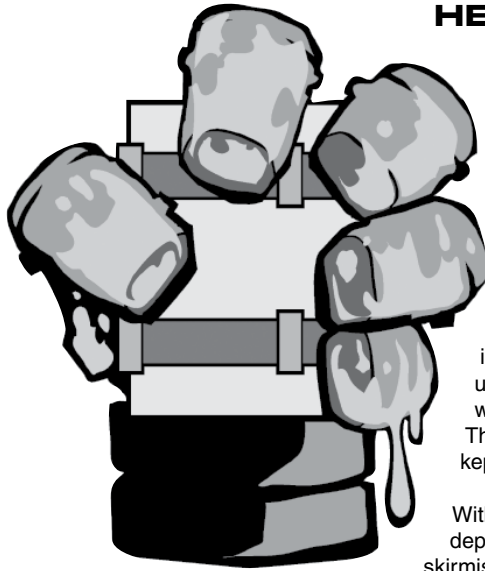
New Hessen Armored Scouts

Despite seeing no significant combat since the Fourth Succession War, the aging warriors of the Armored Scouts earned every ounce of their elite status in the blood, sweat, and tears of the last few years. Most are past retirement age and suffer some sort of shell shock, especially those who survived the Blakist re-education camp on New Canton. Only the Hessens' desperate need for skilled pilots keeps them on the rolls.

Second New Hessen Irregulars

Though rated Green at the onset of their pilgrimage home, the remaining battalion of the Second Irregulars have been forged to Veteran quality in the fires of war. General Pat Hampton, crippled during the New Canton extraction, has released command of the Second to his executive officer, Colonel Mardul. Convinced that Blakist reprisals will not be long in coming, the General now oversees the rebuilding of his BattleMech regiments and the fortification of New Hessen itself.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES



HEART OF BLAKE

As more reports filtered in, both from independent sources and from the Word's own mouthpieces, certain members of the Word of Blake military became nervous about what might be happening in the name of their holy cause. Rumors of atrocities circulated, but few among the fanatics dared speak of them for fear of swift retribution by ROM—and of those who did, according to legend, few survived to see the next local sunrise. Though this atmosphere of fear maintained compliance in some, not all of those who served Blake's Word could do so blindly.

In July of 3069, a small group of Blakist counter-reformists was transferred to Berenson as part of several Level IIIs dispatched to suppress local resistance against the planetary government's entry into the Blake Protectorate. Immediately upon arrival, these forces began rounding up suspected League loyalists, their families, and other "deviants" to place them in hastily built prisons, far away from any populated area. After two weeks of round-ups and torturous interrogations, Blakist guards would take the prisoners out to execute them all before the next round of "pacification." Though several soldiers privately questioned the methods of the pro-Blakist regime, fear kept any of them from protesting openly.

This continued until Hampton's Hessens raided Berenson for supplies in late August. With the numerous Blakist forces there, the raiders were forced back from the supply depots they were attempting to capture after several days of intense maneuvering and skirmishing. As the mercenaries withdrew, they came upon a cluster of the prisons that housed dissidents, fully packed and ready for execution. The Hessens broke them out and

loaded them into the empty cargo vehicles originally brought for food and ammunition.

Precentor David Hunter was assigned to command two of the Level IIIs sent to close off the Hessens' escape route. Ordered to wipe out everyone, including the escaping prisoners, several in Hunter's command privately pleaded with him not to follow the orders, knowing that he himself had privately questioned the government's extremist methods. As the raiders came into view, Hunter quietly ordered units not loyal to him to engage the mercenaries. As the 'Mechs advanced, however, Hunter openly announced on all channels that he would take no part in the massacre of civilians and would fight to protect the prisoner convoy. The fight between the counter-reformists and the Blakist loyalists was swift, with the Blakists caught in crossfire between the mercenaries and Hunter's men. Hunter's group then swiftly moved to the spaceport before the rest of his former comrades could regroup, and he commandeered a pair of DropShips to escape along with the Hessens. Haggling with a merchant JumpShip, Hunter's turncoats were able to escape, eventually making their way to other contested Free Worlds League worlds where they have since begun collecting bounties on Word-affiliated mercenary forces.

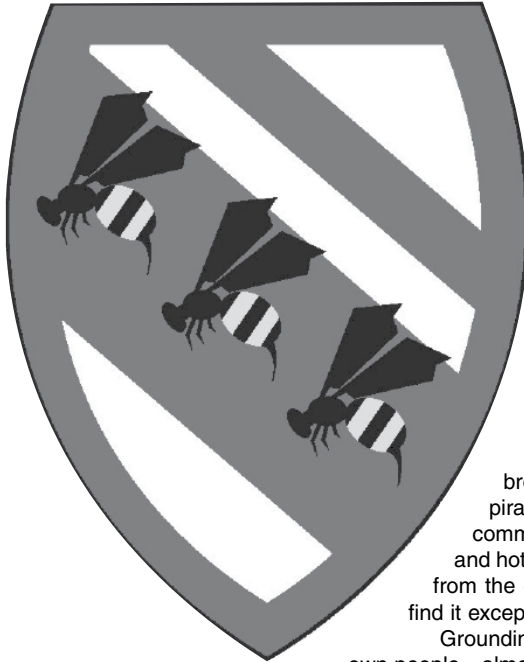
Using General Hampton as a reference, Precentor Hunter has petitioned to join the battered Allied Mercenary Command, though AMC officials remain doubtful of the expatriate Blakists' intentions. In an attempt to build trust with his suspicious would-be comrades, Hunter has divulged even scraps of intelligence on Blakist operations that he has deemed reliable, a fact that has made him a high-profile target among the fanatics, who have placed a twenty million C-Bill bounty on his head. To complicate matters, many who hear the name of Hunter's Heart of Blake mercenary command, see their distinctly Blakist equipment, and note their use of Blakist rank structure instantly distrust them. This has prompted Hunter to try everything from adopting generic ranks and a fake table of organization to using different names for his command during contract negotiation. Only when facing and attempting to turn those of his former brethren he meets in battle does Hunter commonly employ Blakist terms and nomenclature.

Dragoons Rating: Unrated

Heart of Blake

A mixture of BattleMechs, conventional armor, and battlesuits make up the Heart of Blake. Once a front-line Blakist force, Hunter's men currently maintain several Level II C3is, one of which Hunter himself operates from his *Legacy*. Typically, their *Assault Triumph*- and *Union*-class DropShips—*Hard Six* and *High Price* respectively—alternate between dropping troops into battle and strafing the landing zone clear of hostiles. The Heart has been able to recruit enough of a support staff for seventy percent of their maintenance needs, and it makes up the rest with grateful groups who do not realize the unit's origins.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**KILLER BEES**

Formed in 3025 as a group of Cal-Boeing test pilots turned reconnaissance specialists, the Killer Bees have racked up many victories through the years by relying on the skill and stealth of its highly mobile force. Their career has seen them along the Lyran-Combine borders of the late 3020s, raiding the Combine's Alshain Military District in 3039, pirate hunting in the Rasalhague Periphery, and—after the coming of the Clans—even working for ComStar's Explorer Corps.

In 3067, the Bees were under special employment with the SLDF Intelligence Command, hunting Periphery bandits claiming to be Smoke Jaguars when the Word of Blake Jihad began. After news reached the mercenaries of the Blakist attack on Tukayyid that destroyed the First Royal BattleMech Regiment in 3068, the Bees mobilized to return to their base world. Though the Star League was gone, the Bees had left friends and family behind on Tukayyid, and Major Ernst Murdoch was adamant that his command would leave nobody behind.

Armed with the best charts the Explorer Corps could produce, Murdoch brought the *Invader*-class JumpShip *Queen Bee* into the Tukayyid system at a covert pirate point. Taking the *Hornet's Nest*, the Bees *Leopard*-class DropShip, he led his command to the hellish region known as the Devil's Bath, a seething region of mud pits and hot springs the Bees had extensively scouted during past training exercises. The heat from the geothermal vents masked the Bees' grounded DropShip, and the unwary would find it exceptionally hard going to penetrate the region.

Grounding northeast of Kelly Springs, Murdoch was shocked to find that—in addition to his own people—almost two hundred dependents and wounded from the Twenty-first Centauri Lancers had taken sanctuary near the Devil's Bath. Knowing he could never get them all out in the *Hornet's Nest*, but also realizing that the Blakists would swarm the area upon liftoff, the Bees loaded their own dependents and the Lancers' wounded, while their heavily stealthed light 'Mech lance staged diversions to cover a relocation of the rest of the Lancers' dependents. The operation worked perfectly, with the Blakists chasing electronic ghosts around the granite spires of Kelly Springs. Meanwhile, the Bees' special operations team, led by Captain John Smith, melted away into the countryside. Running the gauntlet, the *Hornet's Nest* launched two days later, narrowly avoiding the Blakist blockade. The operation was costly, with three Bees 'Mechs and two aerospace fighters lost.

Two months later, the Killer Bees returned. Prepared by intelligence from the Lancer survivors, Murdoch knew that scattered survivors from the Com Guards, First Royal BattleMech Regiment, and the Twenty-first Centauri Lancers remained on Tukayyid. Persuading ComStar to fund efforts to retrieve them, his mission focused on gathering these scattered survivors at a pre-arranged rally point, with Captain Smith—still on-planet—making most of the arrangement. This mission took everything in Murdoch's bag of tricks to slip by the Blakist aerospace forces, while the Bees' second *Leopard*-class DropShip, the *Gall Wasp*, drew the orbiting WarShips out of position with the aid of an elaborate sensor ruse. The break gave the *Hornet's Nest* the window it needed to perform a dangerously hot landing and lift off again a mere ten minutes later, with the survivors of Smith's team and another twenty-three refugees on board.

The Killer Bees would make one more attempt to break the Blakist blockade in August of 3068, but the Word's increasing familiarity with the mercenaries' plays forced them to abort the attempt. With Tukayyid now considered too hot, ComStar sought other opportunities for the Bees to sting the Word of Blake. Over the past two years, the Bees have reportedly been conducting reconnaissance missions within the expanding territories of the Blake Protectorate. Determined to avoid the mistakes of Case White, Precentor-Martial Victor Steiner-Davion has apparently chosen this course to ascertain the defenses and weaknesses of the Word's new hegemony before committing his battered Com Guard to any future attacks.

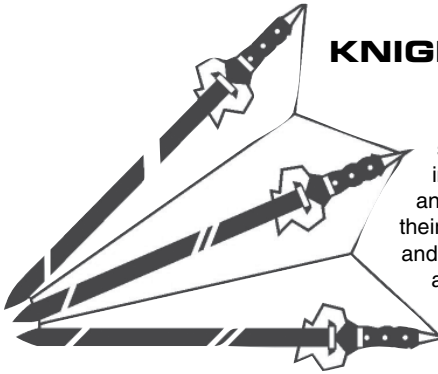
Dragoons Rating: C

Killer Bees

After almost three years of near-constant action against the Word of Blake, the Killer Bees have had little time to plug in the growing holes within their order of battle. Worst hit has been their aerospace elements, which have borne the brunt of their efforts to get past Blakist interceptors during each mission.

Since the liberation of Tukayyid by the Ghost Bears, Murdoch has been contacted by James LeMonds, the senior-most surviving officer of the Twenty-first Centauri Lancers. Acting Colonel LeMonds has reportedly offered the Bees a place within a rebuilt Lancers regiment.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**KNIGHTS OF ST. CAMERON**

Often derided for their emphasis on personal honor, the Knights of St. Cameron seemed destined for decommission when the Clans destroyed both regiments during their initial invasion. However, a handful of survivors managed to rebuild the command in 3053, and few paid much attention to the resurrected Knights at first, expecting them to be just like their predecessors; a collection of semi-skilled MechWarriors with nothing but good intentions and poorly maintained equipment. But while the new Knights indeed still championed the poor and the weak, they soon also proved themselves to be both well-equipped and skilled combatants—as their stunning victory against the Fourth Davion Guards on Ft. Loudon proved during the FedCom Civil War.

In 3069, the LAAF detailed the Knights to support the reactivated Thorin FTM (more popularly known as Archer's Avengers) in mounting a counterattack against the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone. By striking at Baker 3, the Lyrans hoped to cut the Falcon territory in two, forcing the Clan to divert forces to re-secure its lines of communication. Unfortunately, the Falcons prepared for such an eventuality this time. Instead of facing the Tenth Provisional Garrison Cluster, the Inner Sphere strike force found itself facing the Seventh and Eighth Talon Clusters. The Falcons discounted the Knights of St. Cameron as a significant threat, however, concentrating fully on the Avengers instead. Thus, the Clansmen were completely unprepared for the speed and precision of the Knights' response. Swinging wide around where the Seventh Talon was engaged with the Avengers, the Knights hammered into the Seventh's rear. When Star Colonel Daniel Kyle's *Night Gyr* fell to Gauss rifle fire from Lt. Colonel David Robstein's *Excalibur* in the first seconds, the resulting confusion proved nearly fatal for the Seventh Talon. Hardly slowing, the Knights shattered the Cluster, destroying nearly every one of the Clanner 'Mechs. They then struck the Eighth Talon's flank, buying the surviving Avengers in time to retreat before disengaging themselves.

Pulling back to Deia, the battered Knights, Avengers, and the surviving elements of the Second Wolf Legion (smashed in the previous month by the Falcons on Pasig) had just weeks to prepare for the arrival of the Eighth Talon and Fourth Falcon Dragoons. When they arrived in July, the enraged Falcons concentrated on the Knights first, only to have the Avengers and Wolves duplicate the Knights' flanking tactics to hurt the Fourth Dragoons. Though too weak to smash the Dragoons, these attacks forced the Falcons to pull back and reconsider their approach. Probing strikes followed, pinning the allies in place until the arrival of the First Falcon Striker Cluster in August. Fresh from their conquest of Mkuranga, the Strikers' arrival ended all hope of holding Deia. Committing his aerospace assets to cover the withdrawal, Colonel Dewey led the combined retreat to Great X, joining the badly mauled Twenty-fifth Arcturan Guards RCT (the same force pasted by the Falcons on Mkuranga). Expecting the vengeful Falcons to continue their pursuit, the surviving Avengers and Arcturan Guards began to erect strong points while the Knights set up dispersed caches of supplies. Distracted by events elsewhere, the Falcons did not focus their attention on the Knights until the end of 3070.

When all four surviving Clusters from the Falcons' Delta Galaxy finally began their assault on Great X in early January of 3071, they faced defenders who had spent several months preparing for them. Evenly matched on both sides, the battle quickly bogged down into a stalemate, tying up the Falcons for months. As of this writing, the Falcons' advance has halted on Great X, but the Clan forces have yet to withdraw, suggesting another push could come as soon as one side or the other manages to tip the balance of power in its favor.

Dragoons Rating: B+

Knights of St. Cameron

Colonel Mortimer Dewey used the same recruitment criteria to rebuild his command as the Knights' original founder, Martin Gluck. To become a Knight, a candidate must first be able to trace their ancestry back to members of the SLDF. Starting with a seemingly bottomless war chest and several companies of BattleMechs and aerospace fighters (many of Star League design), Dewey rebuilt the Knights into a far better equipped and trained command. The Colonel remains evasive about his source of this funding, speculation has been rife with rumors that claim everything from Dewey's discovery of a long-forgotten SLDF weapons cache to secret backing by the Word of Blake.

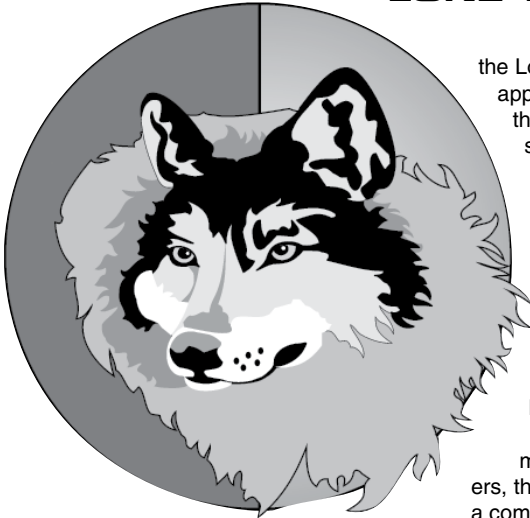
Under-strength from their incessant battles with Clan Jade Falcon, the Knights are nonetheless in remarkably good shape. Salvage taken from the battlefield has provided the regiment with a smattering of Clan technology, though they have yet to capture a reasonably intact OmniMech.

Angles of St. Cameron

The Angels have proven invaluable in preventing the Falcons from dominating the skies over the Knights' battlefields. They suffered heavy casualties during the escape from Deia but have been able to get half their craft flying again with aid from the Arcturan Guards.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

LONE WOLVES



Since their first appearance in the Third Succession War, the common story about the Lone Wolves held that preceding a massive fight, the infamous mercenaries would appear and offer the target system their services at an extortionate price. If refused, the Wolves would then, allegedly, open negotiations with the attackers to offer their support. Though given credibility in the climatic campaign on Galtor III in 3025, many dismissed the Wolves' reputation as little more than hearsay and confabulation, designed to intimidate weaker local governments into paying the outrageous fees demanded by this malcontent command. Major powers dismissed the Wolves, but local nobles—closer to the battle front—often proved credulous enough to believe the hype, if only to avoid unnecessary risks.

That all changed in 3067. Shortly after the Fed-Com Civil War, the Lone Wolves landed on Outreach and offered the planetary government their services for the defense of the system. With the Wolf's Dragoons providing for one of the most powerful planetary garrisons in known space, Outreach's leaders scoffed at these advances. Mere weeks later, Colonel Waco launched his surprise assault on Harlech, backed by a Blakist-cultivated band of Temptown mercenaries. Sitting on the sidelines instead of offering their service to the attackers, the Lone Wolves' Committee actually held their offer open but were refused. When a company of Lone Wolf 'Mechs led by several former Com Guard warriors then defected to lead a strike against the Dragoons' Home Guard firebase, rumors quickly spread that the

Lone Wolves had sided finally with the Temptown insurgents. These rumors moved through the regiment itself, and many decided to choose sides between the Dragoons and Colonel Waco, initiating a miniature war within their own base. After hours of intense fighting, the Committee finally intervened, joining up with the pro-Dragoons forces to annihilate the Lone Wolves who, against explicit orders, joined the Blakist-backed forces. Several of the defectors, including apparent Blakist plants, commandeered one of the command's DropShips to flee the system. Leaving their pro-Dragoons contingent on Outreach (where, ironically enough, they were later mistaken for Waco's men and wiped out during the Dragoons' Condition Feral), the Committee chased after the traitors and destroyed their DropShip at the jump point following a brief battle. Realizing Outreach had become a death trap, the remaining Lone Wolves fled for the next nearest legitimate hiring hall, Galatea.

With sensationalized stories in the media inciting public distrust towards mercenaries, the Lone Wolves who arrived on Galatea have since kept a low profile, apparently fearing reprisals at their new haven as they have struggled to rebuild both their shattered forces and their blackened reputation. However, many mercenary cynics have noted with some relief that the Wolves have yet to offer their services to the Galatean government, so the hiring halls must be safe from imminent attack, at least for now.

Though still not registered by the MRBC, investigations into the Lone Wolves' activities before, during, and after Outreach and their subsequent flight to Galatea have cleared the unit of any possible charges. Indeed, investigators have publicly stated that the Committee's decisive action against its own anti-Dragon elements were to be commended, although their appearance in the system right before the surprise assault suggested advanced knowledge that should have been shared with the planetary government. Thus, no punishment has been levied against the Lone Wolves as of this writing.

Dragoons Rating: Unrated

The Lone Wolves

Currently, the Lone Wolves' Committee and their surviving warriors are still repairing their damaged machines on Galatea, looking for easy short-term contracts to finance these efforts. Due to rampant distrust surrounding the events on Outreach, however, most of these contracts so far have come from only the most desperate of local nobles. The Lone Wolves refuse to deal with the Word of Blake, claiming that they suspect the defector who led the anti-Dragoons charge on Outreach was a plant intended to lure them into Waco's coalition.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES




MCFADDEN'S SKYRIDERS

In every change there are holdouts that resist. When Hell's Black Aces left the service of House Liao originally, there must have been those that resisted the defection. With the Aces' recent trend back toward regular service with the Confederation, there are certainly those who want to keep the regiment's mercenary status. Foremost among them is squadron commander Colleen McFadden.

A former Highlander, Colleen McFadden joined Hell's Black Aces with her Gotha fighter and quickly rose to squadron command. After the climactic battle of Liao in 3069 and 3070, her squadron was reorganized and detached from the regular Hell's Black Aces to form an independent squadron, McFadden's Skyriders. Though still permitted to fly the Black Aces' insignia, the Skyriders operate and are contracted independently of the rest of the regiment. The fact that all of McFadden's pilots are those who question the regiment's closer ties with House Liao is dismissed by regular Aces officers as coincidental.

To date most of the Skyriders' contracts have been with the CCAF or local planetary militias in operations in and around the Blakist Protectorate. Convoy duty, protective flights, interdiction and long-range aerial reconnaissance typify current Skyrider missions, though Lieutenant Commander McFadden has been drilling her pilots in close-in ground support in recent months. After a short-term contract escorting an evacuation flight from a corporation on Towne, the Skyriders have been keeping clear of Word of Blake garrisons.

During the Towne contract the Skyriders were called on to escort a high-level executive from the Turanian Transport Company out of the system without alerting in-system Blakist forces. After a high-g burn behind the cover of Conan, Towne's moon, the Skyriders and the Aurora-class DropShip they were escorting cut their acceleration and coasted toward the waiting JumpShip. The journey to the pirate point was twenty-seven days, and though they took turns cycling through the DropShip by flights, by the end of it the Skyriders' support staff had to be forbidden from just pouring petrol into the cockpits and setting them on fire to clean out the funk.

Lieutenant Commander McFadden is an atypical aerospace officer. She stands more than two meters tall in a profession where the median height is a meter-six. Her flaming red hair is kept tied back when out of the cockpit, and otherwise stuffed beneath a helmet. Her command of invective  directed at underperforming Skyriders in exercises and the enemy in combat, often makes for colorful listening.

Lieutenant Jason Windgate, formerly Major Windgate, was broken in rank after an altercation on Liao, but neither Windgate nor the Aces will divulge the precise details. Whatever the action, Windgate is just too deadly in the cockpit to be cashiered, and McFadden was pleased to get him as her executive officer.

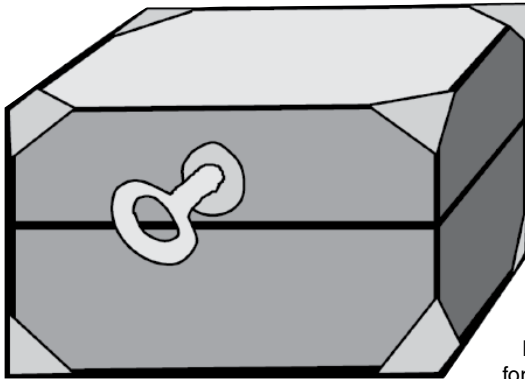
Dragoons Rating: Not registered

McFadden's Skyriders

The six aerospace fighters of the Skyriders are all fully upgraded models. McFadden's own -500 Gotha is kept in top condition, as are those of lieutenants Windgate and Barstow. The Command Flight, McFadden and her wingman in their Gothas, often leads attacks, backed up by Windgate's Two Flight and Barstow's heavy Thunderbirds.

The squadron moves in a reconditioned Leopard CV-class DropShip, the Wicked Tale. They own no JumpShips, but have a long-standing arrangement with the Merchant-class vessel Glitterstick.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**PANDORA'S BOX**

After the Marik-Liao invasion of 3057 and the formation of the Chaos March, several dozen worlds were left to their own devices whether they wanted it or not. As for the military units abandoned on these worlds, some of them simply had nowhere to go.

Gan Singh, in those early months of chaos, is where the enigmatic mercenary commander Pandora Black found remnants of the Third Donegal Guards and a small Capellan irregulars unit known as *TaoTao KowGun LauFu*, the Stalking Tigers. Forming them into an ad hoc command, Black led these forces in a fight to escape a world that was quickly tearing itself apart. Eventually, Pandora's new command picked up a few stragglers from the shattered First FedCom RCT, as well as some mercenaries from the Dark Night, whose crew had formed on Outreach only months before the fighting broke out and had not even lasted long enough to register their unit logo with the MRBC offices.

The trials faced on Gan Singh lasted well into 3058, when Lieutenant Kelly Van Lou (Seventh Company, Third Donegal) and *Sao-wei* Bryant Tang (Stalking Tigers) agreed to a deal brokered by Black with the forming Styk Commonality. Thus did Pandora's Box win its first, fairly lucrative, twelve-month garrison contract, paid mostly in parts from Styk's Tao MechWorks and a few refurbished BattleMechs to strengthen the unit to company size.

Helping save their lives (and their machines) apparently went a long way toward establishing a degree of trust among this hodge-podge collection of military orphans. Pandora's Box extended its garrison contract through two more years and eventually wound up on Outreach looking for work, having recruited enough veteran warriors to field two strengthened companies.

On Outreach, Major Black gained a solid reputation for weeding out talent and finding the best deals on supplies, as well as for her numerous sightings at high-level social functions. Nevertheless a private person, she conducts very few interviews and prefers to let her subordinates handle the command's day-to-day operations. Allowing her record to speak for itself, Black neither confirms nor denies rumors of her having graduated from a top FedCom MechWarrior Academy, or that her family is of a displaced noble lineage. The sordid tales of wild affairs with anyone (and everyone) from Treyhang Liao to Solaris Champion Kelley Metz draw little more than a good laugh from the warriors of Pandora's Box.

Since its formal inception, the Box has hired itself out as a trouble-shooter force or short-term, high-risk garrison command. The mercenaries' FedCom Civil War years were spent mostly in the employ of noble families or large corporations who sought extra protection against being nationalized and commandeered, while their early Jihad contracts have been so low-profile that the MRBC is unsure if they are even still employed or simply hiding from potential Blakist reprisals. The Box's low Dragoons Rating stems more from the fact that its first assignment was completed before its official sanction with the Commission, as well as its tendency to take many jobs off the books.

Dragoons Rating: C-

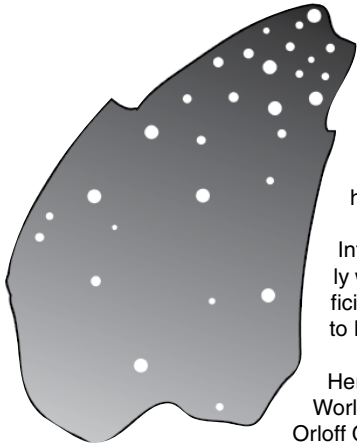
Pandora's Box

The Box consists of three strengthened companies, two of BattleMechs and one of mixed vehicles and armored infantry. First Company, "The Avenging Seventh," prefers medium and heavy machines and is led by Captain Roland Mills and Lieutenant Kelley Van Lou. This company continues to paint its machines a blue-and-gray similar to its warriors' old Third Donegal scheme, and likewise has adopted the Third's old insignia: a set of scales with the balance tipped.

Second Company, "The Stalking Tigers," uses a rust color scheme with an orange and black Bengal tiger pattern painted in a drape, like a pelt hanging over the shoulder. Commanded by Lieutenant Bryant Tang, they have a full range of machines, from light to assault, and prefer Capellan designs almost exclusively. Tang is refurbishing a battered *Men Shen* OmniMech, spoils from a past contract on Styk.

The Box is very adept at mixing it up on the battlefield, their tactics once described as "targeted chaos" by Wolf's Dragoons' commander Jaime Wolf. Born from their uncertain footing back on Gan Singh, these tactics work best when the Box can seize the initiative, creating a slight liability if the unit is hard pressed.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES



PERIPHERY STAR GUARD

Beginning as several smaller mercenary commands who all worked for ComStar's Explorer Corps, the Periphery Star Guard formally emerged after the Corps released a number of mercenary commands due to extensive funding cuts. With so many of its subcommands over-specialized, the uniting of these "Corps orphans" allowed the Guard to offer a wider variety of services to prospective employers that made them more appealing than the individual commands could ever have hoped for.

Employed for a time along the coreward borders of the Lyran Alliance during a contract with Interstellar Expeditions, the Periphery Star Guard saw numerous actions against a group of extremely well equipped raiders called the Green Ghosts. While this has significantly improved the combat proficiency of the unit compared to previously poor levels of skill, the command's true strengths continue to lie with its tremendous logistical capabilities.

In 3068, the Star Guard arrived on Poulsbo to support the local militia units and the Harper's Heretics mercenary command in the face of rising hostilities between the Lyran Alliance and the Free Worlds League. Only months after their initial deployment, however, elements of the League's Sixth Orloff Grenadiers and the Second Fusiliers of Oriente made landfall and proceeded to destroy the Poulsbo militia forces in and around Fort Bangor, despite the best efforts of the Guard and Harper's Heretics. The Heretics suffered severe casualties, reducing them to no more than a lance of functional 'Mechs who were absorbed into the Guard's bloodied ranks before the survivors retreated to Khon Kaen on the Heretics' JumpShip. Only days after their arrival, however, the rest of the Sixth Orloff also hit Khon Kaen, having bypassed Poulsbo entirely. Heavily assaulted by the Sixth before they could retreat again, the Guard lost about half its remaining strength, including all of the Star Guard Armor battalion.

Their retreat took them eventually to Loburg, where the mercenaries have since made camp near the StarCorps 'Mech factories there. It is suggested that StarCorps itself influenced this deployment, a rumor supported by recent sightings of new *Longbow* and *Thanatos* 'Mechs sporting Guard colors.

Dragoons Rating: F

Star Guard BattleMechs

Expected to work independently in the field, the emphasis on non-combat skills left the Guard's MechWarriors unable to compete with the more focused FWLM troops. They lost almost two-thirds of their numbers on Poulsbo and Khon Kaen, though they gained the surviving heavy lance from Harper's Heretics on Poulsbo. Colonel Annapoulis has since made a strong effort to increase the size of her 'Mech unit and improve their combat abilities in case they are ever called upon to battle without employer support.

Star Guard Aerospace

The Guard aerospace pilots are specialized in DropShip escort and aerospace superiority missions. During the retreat from Poulsbo, the Wing performed well, despite sporadic efforts by the Marik *Vengeance*-class carrier *Moment*.

Star Guard Infantry

Wiped out almost entirely on Poulsbo, the Guard Infantry's First Battalion is currently struggling to reconstitute. Second Battalion's combat engineers—specialized in tasks from bridge building and fortification construction to mine laying and demolitions—proved instrumental in delaying the advancing Mariks on Khon Kaen.

Star Guard Engineers

Focused almost entirely on the construction of bases, fortifications, depots, and permanent bridges, the Guard Engineers typically see little combat, though damage to the DropShip during the burn out of the Poulsbo system caused a number of casualties.

Star Guard Naval Support

The aquatic specialists of the Guard Naval Support group incurred severe casualties at Fort Bangor on Poulsbo, but nonetheless managed to rendezvous with their DropShip in time to retreat off-world.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES


**SNORD'S IRREGULARS**

One of the most legendary mercenary commands in the Inner Sphere, Snord's Irregulars are credited with many amazing exploits—some real, some not. After leaving the Wolf's Dragoons in 3006, these mercenaries (then known as Cranston Snord's Irregulars) quickly built a reputation for themselves as highly skilled lostech hunters—scavengers, eager to acquire any piece of history they could get their hands on, sometimes even accepting artifacts in lieu of C-bills for contract payment. The Irregulars' knack for coming out on top, regardless of the odds, further raised their standing in the community, even after it became clear that they shared Clan origins with the infamous Wolf's Dragoons.

The Irregulars' career culminated in the early 3050s, when they faced off against Clan Jade Falcon on several occasions, succeeding in taking on the Clan that many believed unbeatable. Perhaps their greatest success was the capture of Camelot Command in the Dark Nebula, an ancient naval facility that the Irregulars defended time and again against repeated Falcon attacks, while simultaneously using it to execute Wolcott-style raids into Clan space. After the Refusal War, the Lyran Alliance decided that Camelot Command was too exposed to properly support and curtailed their operations there, eventually pulling the Irregulars back.

Shortly before the FedCom Civil War began, the Irregulars were relocated to Odessa, arriving there in January of 3063. Initially, they kept themselves out of the fighting and the politics of the conflict until war came to them with Archer's Avengers' attack in 3063. The assault killed Major Sneed and severely injured the Irregulars' commander, Colonel Rhonda Snord. This prompted Snord's adopted daughter, Tasha Snord, to take command, holding the outfit together until the deception that set the Avengers upon them was revealed and both forces disengaged. After her recovery, Colonel Snord confirmed Tasha Snord as the Irregulars' new commander, and retired.

When the Falcons attacked the Alliance again, the Irregulars were among the units that moved against them. Rhonda Snord's decade-plus experience in what she called "budgie baiting" prompted her to resume command of the Irregulars (with Tasha's blessing), and at her lead, the mercenaries bloodied the 124th Striker Cluster on Rasalgethi. When they soon found themselves facing almost an entire Falcon Galaxy after that, the Irregulars retreated rather than be destroyed. Eventually, however, the Irregulars petitioned to join the Blair Atholl garrison, hoping to use the open world to maintain pressure against the Falcon Clan.

When the Falcons decided to engage the Lyran Alliance again, they repositioned the Fifty-first and Ninth Garrison Clusters from Blair Atholl  clusion among the offensive forces striking into Lyran space. This left three Eyrie Clusters to deal with their former sparring partner. The Irregulars, however, were not caught unaware by the Falcon's aggression. Having prepared for the eventuality of a Falcon assault, Snord's Irregulars laid a series of traps and ambushes that nearly destroyed the Gyrfalcon Eyrie when they started their attacks in 3070. The remaining two Eyrie Clusters absorbed the few survivors, then proceeded more cautiously. Still confident in their numbers and Clan superiority, the Falcons soon found themselves in one ambush after another, often misinterpreting or misreading their opponent's actions. While both Clusters were savaged almost beyond the point of being viable combat units, however, attrition had finally caught up with the Irregulars as well. Forced to retreat to New Exford after six months of combat, Snord's Irregulars have since spent the following year reconstituting their force in anticipation of further missions against the Clans.

Dragoons Rating: A

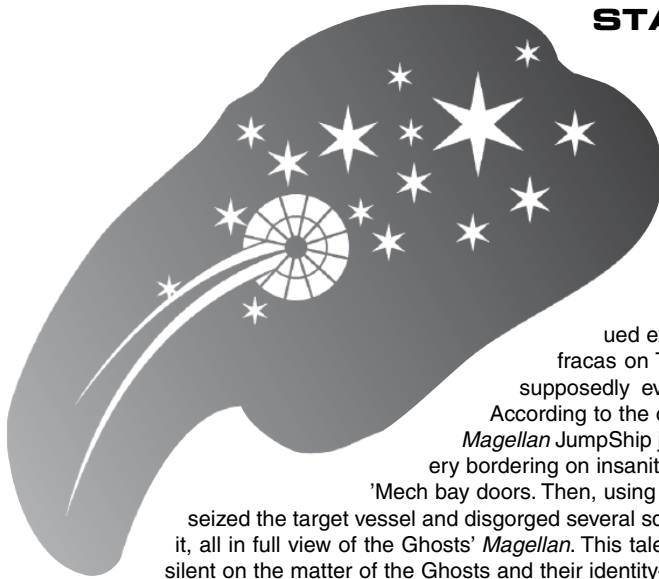
Snord's Irregulars

Down to four and a half companies of 'Mechs, the Irregulars have regained some of their strength since quitting Blair Atholl. Their rebuilding efforts are aided considerably by the salvage they extracted from the Gyrfalcon Eyrie.

While the Irregulars remain in fair shape after the recent fighting, however, Colonel Rhonda Snord has once more stepped from the outfit's overall command, citing her own advanced age and unspecified illness. Control of the Irregulars has reverted to her adopted daughter, Tasha, though experts expect that Rhonda will remain active with her Irregulars—if only in the background—for some time to come.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

STAR SEEDS



One of the few mercenary commands to be formed since the start of the Jihad, the Star Seeds' origins remain shrouded in mystery. Rumors abound that the all-infantry force are anything from Word of Blake ROM expatriates to the Black Warriors from Circinus to renegade DEST commandos. What is known for sure is that Captain Marcel Webb appeared one day on Galatea, quietly registered his unit with the Commission, declared no debt, and promptly signed a contract with Interstellar Expeditions in June of 3068.

The Seeds then faded out of sight for the next year, their continued existence considered more rumor than fact. Reportedly involved in a fracas on Tomans between Jade Falcon and Green Ghost forces, the Seeds supposedly even captured a Ghost DropShip as it retreated from the planet. According to the current incarnation of this story, the Seeds waited near the Ghosts' *Magellan* JumpShip just outside of sensor range, and—with precision gunnery and bravery bordering on insanity—neatly blasted and rammed open the *Overlord*-class DropShip's 'Mech bay doors. Then, using their *Elephant*'s powerful magnetic locking clamps, the Seeds' ship seized the target vessel and disgorged several squads of improved Purifier battlesuits to swarm the ship and capture it, all in full view of the Ghosts' *Magellan*. This tale, however, has been largely dismissed, since the IE has remained silent on the matter of the Ghosts and their identity—something they have reportedly been interested in for years.

Nevertheless, it is a matter of record that the Seeds have an *Elephant* in their order of battle (the *Syssiphus*). This ComStar-registered vessel was reportedly lost at the Titan Yards in the Terran system, along with the *Vortex*, the Seeds' *Tramp*-class JumpShip. This odd pair is rounded out by a second DropShip, the *Condor*-class *Black Feather*, which went missing from the Sixth Free Worlds Legionnaires in mid-3067.

The reported make-up of the unit is equally odd. Completely infantry-based, every trooper with the Seeds is apparently experienced in zero-g marine operations, with approximately half of them trained as battle-armor troops using mixed designs and deployed in six-man squads. A preponderance of Purifier battlesuits adds credence to the rumors of their Word of Blake or ComStar origins, but the Seeds have yet to be confirmed supporting any Blake operations. The Seeds also have at least a squad each of Raiden and Achilleus suits, and they are believed to possess at least one Void suit, a Kanazuchi, some Cavaliers and even a Fa Shih or three. Considering the lack of jump jets on some of these designs, it is somewhat doubtful a force with as much specialization in marine combat would use such limiting armor types, but until a full disclosure is obtained, critics can only speculate.

Recently, Captain Webb allowed for an interview with INN correspondent Michael Bosworth, where he admitted to his command's involvement in a recent clash on Orestes. Though he declined to name the Seeds' employer at the time (their contract with IE expired in January of 3070), he mentioned their involvement with the destruction of the WBS *Yoke of Purity*, a *Star Lord* transport that had been ferrying prisoners and other civilians to parts unknown. The Seeds also reportedly captured one DropShip before destroying the *Yoke*, but the whereabouts of that ship and its crew remain unknown.

The Seeds are currently being courted by the Lyran Alliance for a highly classified contract. Sightings have linked Captain Webb and *Hauptmann* Belinda Josee—a known Loki agent posted on Galatea—leading to speculation that their mission may involve Tharkad or any of the other major Lyran worlds currently under Blake blockade.

Dragoons Rating: B

Star Seeds

All Star Seeds troopers—standard and battle armored—are highly skilled in marine intrusion and zero-g operations. Each squad is divided into groups of six, including regular infantry, and their quiet efficiency and use of non-standard tactics lend strong credence to the rumors that the Seeds are ex-Light of Mankind or Fury troopers. The Seeds' current estimated strength consists of six squads of battle armor and fifteen of regular infantry. The mercenaries have full technical and transportation support and do not surrender command rights in contract negotiations.

MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**VANGUARD LEGION**

Formed from the fires of the Clan war and Chad Dean's personal grudge against House Steiner, the Vanguard Legion found itself on the Federated Suns' side of the FedCom Civil War. Involved in the thickest of fighting on New Syrtis and New Avalon, the regiment suffered heinous losses from which it had only barely recovered when Duke Hasek launched his Operation Sovereign Justice campaign in the early months of the Blake Jihad. When the Capellan counterattack came in March of 3069, the Legion—held back from offensive operations—soon found itself facing the enraged Confederation hordes. By April, the Legion was posted to Taygeta as a protective measure against Liao incursions.

However, the Legion soon received orders to boost for Kafr Silim in August of 3069 and was just one day out from Taygeta when the First and Second St. Ives Lancers struck. Unwilling to risk all of his ground assets in Taygeta's orbit, Colonel Dean landed outside of the massive Michael Hasek Memorial Spaceway. The St. Ives forces had barely touched down when Dean attacked, crippling several debarking 'Mechs and toppling the Capellan commander. Unfortunately, the Legion had failed to notice the incoming Third McCarron's Armored Cavalry, who had trailed the St. Ives forces by a few hours since the

jump-in. Taking advantage of the situation, the Third MAC executed a textbook drop in the middle of the Legion's formation, scattering them. Having lost the initiative, Dean began pulling the Legion back to its DropShips.

The Third MAC pressed the Legion for two weeks, each side conducting short and brutal clashes whenever they met. Infuriated with the MAC's hit-and-fades, Dean made plans to rush the Third's left flank. Instantly assessing a suicide mission in the making, Major Colin Chesley argued vehemently and publicly with the Colonel for over an hour, finally forcing Dean admit that his plan was folly and the Legion should withdraw. Though smarting from the public rebuke and incensed at what he saw as Chesley's insubordination, Dean nevertheless agreed to pull back. With the two merchantmen JumpShips hired to ferry the Legion still at the zenith point, the Legion's DropShips lifted, driving off the small CCAF aerospace unit guarding their rides long enough to abandon Taygeta.

When Dean arrived in New Syrtis, however, he discovered his command was one JumpShip short. Sensor logs aboard their JumpShip soon revealed that the *Wind of Olam* had suffered a helium seal rupture just as the vessel jumped, hopelessly distorting its K-F field. No sign of the *Olam* could be found at New Syrtis. The Legion mourned the death of their Second Battalion comrades, with Colonel Dean reportedly taking the loss hardest. His anger, however, focused on Major Chesley, whose argument for withdrawal had—in his opinion—directly led to Second Battalion's demise.

The Legion survivors returned to New Syrtis to join the gathering defensive forces. In mid-September, the Third MAC arrived with other Capellan forces in tow to hit the defenders around Saso City. In the desperate fighting, the Vanguard Legion was ordered to drive a wedge into the Third MAC's flank, coordinating with the arrival of the Sixth Syrtis Fusiliers' battle armor troops. Due to a mistimed communiqué, Dean ordered the thrust too early. For several critical minutes, his Third Battalion suffered the brunt of the MAC's firepower before the Fusiliers arrived to turn the fight. But during the MAC retreat, Major Colin Chesley had been killed, his *Marauder's* cockpit stove in by an enemy's Gauss slug.

Though no one voiced it, many of Third Battalion's warriors believed Dean had deliberately put Chesley into harm's way. This sentiment only spread as Dean repeatedly threw the Third into the thick of the fighting for the next several months.

Finally, in early 3070, the Capellans withdrew from New Syrtis. When Blake agents then killed Duke Hasek in March, the fighting between Davion and Liao forces began to die down. Many hard-hit commands were finally able to stand down, the Legion among them. But as they await new parts and machines, the simmering anger that infected Third Battalion erupted when Captain Kevin Chelsey, cousin of the late Major Chelsey, punched Colonel Dean during a noonday meal. Chelsey was subdued and thrown into the brig, which has only further evidenced the notion that Dean carries a grudge against the battalion as a whole, and the Chelseys in particular.

Dragoons Rating: D

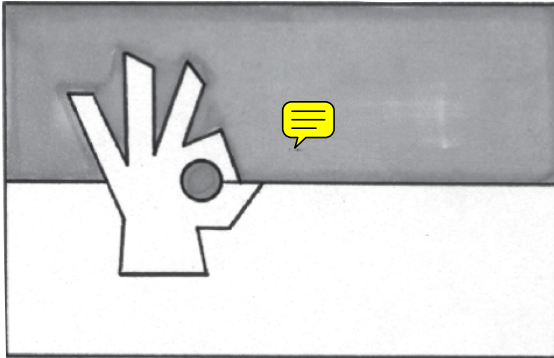
Vanguard Legion

Down to two reduced battalions, limited technical support, and two DropShips, the Legion is hurting. With no other recourse, Colonel Dean has entered into a company store relationship with the FedSuns in order to bring his Legion to at least two battalions in strength.

Dean favors going on the offensive over defensive tactics. Even when pinned, the Legion often attacks, hoping to knock the enemy off-balance enough to make an exploitable mistake. With so much of the Legion damaged, however, this isn't a strongly supported tactic—especially among those in the Third Battalion.



MRBC FORCE BRIEFS UPDATES

**WILSON'S HUSSARS**

For years Wilson's Hussars had been seen as the prime example of the hard-luck mercenary command, with other mercenaries uttering their name as an analogy of failure and poverty. In an effort to reverse this, Major Donna Wilson launched a one-woman crusade to bring her Hussars back from the brink of oblivion as soon as she assumed command in the mid-3050s. Arriving on Outreach in 3056 on board a decrepit—and, as some suggested, stolen—DropShip, the Hussars began a desperate hunt for new contracts that finally struck gold when a small-time freelance security force offered to join the command, infusing the Hussars with new blood and new capabilities. The much-needed boost helped the Hussars win a contract with the Federated Suns on the eve of the FedCom Civil War, where the reformed Hussars would finally face their trial by fire.

The FedCom Civil War proved to be the career turning point that Wilson's Hussars needed when they led an ad-hoc force of assorted smaller merc units to victory against the Seventeenth Arcturan Guard on Small World. Emerging victorious by the fall of 3066, when the fighting for Small World ended the Hussars signed a new long-term contract with the Federated Suns and settled down on Nopah to rest, refit, and await new orders.

The start of the Jihad soon found the Hussars on the defensive. Though they took no part in the initial strikes of Duke Hasek's Operation Sovereign Justice or the defense against the Capellan counterattack, the Hussars were still placed on alert as the Word of Blake's forces surged beyond their Chaos March conquests to expand their Protectorate in all directions. In late 3068, Blake troops finally hit Nopah. The combined-arms Hussars quickly went to ground after the zealots landed, fighting hit-and-run actions until they were able to retreat to Valexa by early 3069. Desperate to maintain the defensive lines against Blake encroachment, the AFFS officially reassigned the Hussars to Valexa in June 3069 and extended their contract through 3072.

Dragoons Rating: D

Wilson's Hussars

The Hussars were stationed on Nopah when the Word of Blake sent a mixed force of mercenaries and Blake Militia to take the planet in 3068. The Hussars' vehicle/infantry battalion "Murphy's Wrath" took the brunt of the initial assault, losing much of their Baker Platoon while buying time for the rest of the Hussars to head for the hills. Over the next three months, the mercenaries harried the Blakes, trying to find a way to liberate their captured DropShip *Raconteur* to get off-world. When a Hussars sniper's lucky shot killed the commander of the Blake forces on Nopah and temporarily brought a halt to the action, the mercenaries pounced on their advantage and rushed the spaceport. Overwhelming the token force guarding their ship, they high-tailed it off Nopah and hitched a ride on a passing merchant to Valexa for debriefing and repairs.

Still stationed on Valexa, the Hussars remain at only two-thirds of their prewar strength. To overcome this and avoid a return to the Hussars' "golden age of failure," Major Wilson is offering mergers to smaller units and bits of shattered commands in an effort to bolster her overall force before its next assignment.