

SECRET



**MECHA
BRANCH MANUAL
REVISION 2020**

LIMITED RELEASE

**STARFLEET MARINE
CORPS**



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MECHA BRANCH MANUAL

Revision 2020



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Welcome Aboard!

Welcome to the MECHA Branch Manual of the STARFLEET Marine Corps, which is a department of STARFLEET, The International Star Trek Fan Association, Inc. This manual was created for the members of the SFMC, but anyone with an interest in the concept of large, anthropomorphic robotic combat as it is applied by the SFMC to the universe of Star Trek is invited to look and learn. It is designed to serve as a handy reference work for members of the SFMC MECHA Branch. It covers the history, missions, and organization of the SFMC MECHA units.

In short, it is a one-book source for any SFMC, or SFI, member who wishes to role-play or write fanfiction about the world of SFMC MECHA. Most of this work is obviously fictional in nature, but the references to uniforms and insignia of the SFMC are accurate. This manual is not intended to be the last word on the subject, the Branch material relayed within is constantly being revised, upgraded, and updated by the members of the Branch themselves.

Pronoun Disclaimer

Unless otherwise specified, masculine nouns and pronouns used in this publication refer to individuals of all possible genders and gender identities in accordance with the commonly accepted English-language conventions for non-gender specific nouns and pronouns. No offense or exclusion is intended or implied, as STARFLEET we see the beauty of diversity enshrined in the philosophy “Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations”.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to the following people for their help and guidance in making the current edition of this manual a possibility:

Aaron Clark, S. Christopher Boggs, Bryan Detamore, Bill West, Kyle Wolf, Paul Williams, William “Junior” Hof, and TJ Allen.

Also, thanks to the past and present members of the MECHA Council, whose efforts and talents made this manual, and the entire MECHA Branch, a possibility.

Reporting Authority

The governing authority for training information is the Commanding Officer, Training and Doctrine Command (COTRACOM). Send questions, comments, or suggestions to: tracom@sfi-sfmc.org



Address from the Branch Director

Marines of the MECHA Branch,

The recent rewrite for those who have the older manual is much more different than what was there before. This is a write up going into the Dominion War and post Dominion War. I have been insured that the MECHA of the past will not be forgotten and will live on in another publication I will be honored to be assisting on for the future.

This manual is an overview of MECHA and is intended to expedite the honored College within SFMCA back up for Starfleet Marine Corps member to learn about what MECHA is about. I would like to thank everyone who came before me in creating the MECHA Branch.

In Service,

Aaron E. Clark
Brigadier, SFMC
Director, School of MECHA



1.0 “Big Iron”

Smoke filled the air, burning the lungs of the young platoon commander crouching behind a rubble and lumber barricade. The unmistakable whine of disrupter weapons competed with the deeper hum of phaser rifles, and a near continuous stream of explosions created a mind-numbing clamor. Someone was screaming in the background, a high wailing sound of agony. Lieutenant Walker knew he should do something, but it was difficult to think.

His platoon had moved in on a rebel supply dump, being briefed to expect only limited resistance. Instead of a handful of poorly armed and trained rebels, his marines found a reinforced Cardassian infantry company. While it was the first verified proof of Cardassian involvement in the civil war, these troops, and their heavy weapons, were not poorly armed or poorly led.

The Cardassians had opened fire from cover, killing or wounding over half of the platoon with the first volley. Taking cover, the Platoon Sergeant had tried to direct the defense until a sniper had vaporized the upper half of his torso. Pinned down, the marines were fighting but were also in serious trouble.

Crawling over to the Platoon Sergeant’s corpse, the Lieutenant dragged the commo gear loose. Trying not to notice what was smeared on the dials, he activated the secure channel, “Any station, this is Werewolf Three-Six. We are under heavy attack and pinned down. Requesting immediate assistance from any unit in the area. Over.” It was highly likely that the Cardassians were jamming local communications, but the communication satellite in orbit would hopefully receive the message.

At that moment, a missile flew over his head and struck the wall 20 meters further away, abruptly silencing a man’s mournful screams. He hunched farther over the radio as the tempo of disrupter fire increased, trying his radio call again. Peeking over his cover he noticed movement at the far end of the street; the Cardassians were getting ready to charge.

Drawing his sidearm and worming himself deeper into a corner, he continued speaking into the handset. “Any station, this is Werewolf Three-Six; we are under heavy fire from Cardassian regulars. Unable to withdraw, and completely surrounded. I have greater than fifty percent casualties at this time, and we are about to be overrun. Over.”

“Werewolf Three-Six, this is the High Frontier.” The voice over the radio was a surprising as it was welcome. “We’ve just arrived in the area and are standing by for close fire support. Can you identify your location? Over.”

Lieutenant Walker stared at the handset, momentarily stunned by the reply. It was only after the voice repeated itself again that he snapped out of it. “Negative,” he shouted, “friendlies are intermixed with enemy troops in urban terrain! Can you get a transporter lock on us and get us out of here? Over.”

Negative, Three-Six. Tactical jamming and scramblers are in heavy use around you, I can barely hold your signal as it is.” The voice was apologetic.

Walker noticed someone ducking into a doorway down the street. He thumbed the safety off his phaser pistol and held his breath. A second later, a Cardassian trooper charged out of the doorway and rushed towards him firing his disrupter rifle. Walker’s returned fire with his phaser pistol and caught him in the knees, sending the trooper to the ground. As the trooper rolled to some cover and then tried to get back to his feet, Walker shot him again, this time in the head. Unfortunately, his comrades had noticed, and were now chewing away at his cover with their



own rifles. Lieutenant Walker dived back into the corner and fumbled with the handset. The voice was back, asking about a clear area to land a shuttle.

“A shuttle? They’ll blow you away before you even get close,” he warned.

“Negative Three-Six, we just need an area big enough for one. Do you copy, over?”

A missile barely missed the barricade he was behind and instead slammed into the rubble piled behind him. The explosion lifted him nearly two meters into the air and slammed him back down hard. It took a moment to clear the effects of what had to be a concussion, but he was remarkably still holding onto the radio handset. He squeezed the talk button so hard it seemed it might break. “There’s a road intersection fifteen meters north of my location. Whatever you are going to do, you better—” grenade landed less than a meter away and rolled towards him. Dropping the handset, he kicked the grenade into a nearby storm drain. The blast was mostly contained within the sewer, but the pressure wave still had enough room to fling him backwards into his corner, crushing the wind out of him. He struggled to get up and fell back as a sharp pain in his leg told him it was broken. He saw more Cardassians charging up the street towards him and felt around for his phaser. It was gone. He drew his combat knife and gritted his teeth. As he struggled to get up onto one knee, the Cardassians suddenly stopped running and dropped behind whatever cover there was. Then the entire battle seemed to pause, and he heard a familiar sound.

The sound and light of a transporter effect, and a big one, suddenly appeared behind him.

As the light cleared, a huge shadow fell over him and he twisted around awkwardly to see what was causing it. He stared back, then up and up. A machine, a robot of some kind, and easily ten meters tall; the height of its foot was as just as tall as the kneeling marine using it for cover

No, it was not a robot; there was a cockpit of some kind where the head should be. He looked so far up that he twisted his already broken leg and fell over onto his back with a gasp of pain. It was at that moment that the collective shock at the appearance of the Mechanical giant seemed to break, and the Cardassians opened fire.

The armored giant crouched in a blur of motion and whipped a hand down between the injured man and the incoming fire. Walker could see into the cockpit as the machine loomed closer to him. The pilot nodded to him as he spoke into a headset. Painted below the nose of the cockpit were the words “Big Iron”.

“Lieutenant,” boomed a speaker on the torso, “let me give you a hand.”

Closing the hand around him, the robot lifted him gently into the air. There was a crunch as the concrete under its feet pulverized. It stood and placed him on a nearby rooftop and then turned to face the enemy.

Striding forward, it lifted an arm and pointed at a building down the street. The beam of phaser flashed out and struck a Cardassian sniper position, all that remained was a cloud of superheated plasma and chunks of blistered concrete. Without pausing, “Big Iron” continued walking down the street, scattering, or crushing the enemy troops under foot. Missile launching tubes, aligned flush with the counters of the robot’s shoulders, blasted open and several missiles roared out. Streaks of smoke lanced down the avenue into a fortified bunker, ripping it open with a thundering effect. Halting at the next intersection, the robot paused to acquire more targets. Another transporter effect began, and another massive robot appeared, different than the first but still impressive. Moments later, the Cardassians began to throw down their weapons and surrender.



The building trembled as “Big Iron” returned to stand in front of the Lieutenant, who had propped himself up on the parapet to see what these massive machines could do. Locking eyes with the pilot, the man at the controls snapped out a jaunty salute and the loudspeaker sounded again.

“Sorry I’m late, sir. I had to get dressed for the party.”



2.0 History

The **M**echanized **E**nhanced **C**ombat **H**eavy **A**rmor program (MECHA) was first envisioned in 2340 as the answer to a theoretical gap in the Starfleet Marine Corps' force composition. It was found that when infantry units conducted operations in certain types of congested terrain, even equipped with powered armor suits, they did not have access to needed heavy fire support. In megacities and chaotic terrain, armored vehicles were unable to keep pace with advancing infantry, and close air support and artillery fire support were minimally effective, if effective at all. Therefore, a requirement was published for a mobile weapons platform that could navigate heavily congested terrain better than armored vehicles, but still maintain the same level of offensive capability.

While most prototypes were standard armored vehicles with heavily modified anti-gravity propulsion units, all of them failed to meet both the mobility and offensive capability requirements simultaneously. A single proposal, based on a cargo loader used in environments that nullified anti-gravity technology, did impress the SFMC judges enough that it was accepted despite the lack of a weaponized prototype. The cargo loader was an anthropomorphized robotic vehicle controlled by a single operator in a cockpit, instead of a motion controlled/amplification harness as was common in the powered armor suits of the time. It was able to navigate terrain as easily as an infantryman would, only on a much larger scale; and given its origins as a cargo loader, it was able to accept numerous weapons emplacements without any loss of mobility.

Research and development continued steadily throughout the latter half of the 23rd century, with the initial conceptual prototype eventually giving way to a fully realized version constructed from the outset as a combat vehicle. These combat prototypes proved to have the same potential as the initial version, and funding for pre-production models was secured in the late-2280s. However, these pre-production versions were not completed until 2292. By this time, the diplomatic negotiations which would eventually lead to the Khitomer accords were well underway. Because of the speed and success of these negotiations defense budgets of both the Federation and the Klingon Empire were slashed, and prototype research programs like the MECHA were immediately halted.

While confidence was high that the Khitomer Accords would prevent future conflict and allow Starfleet to return to its comfort zone of exploration and scientific discovery, the SFMC General Staff was less sanguine. All the data, pre-production models, and core developmental personnel were retained at the SFMC proving grounds on Mars; and work would continue at a slow but constant pace. However, the peace forged at Camp Khitomer lasted nearly six decades, and the MECHA program eventually became mothballed. This decision was taken due to the lack of funds to continue development and maintain personnel rather than a shift in thinking about its combat effectiveness.

In the late 2340's the Cardassian Union and the Federation began to encroach on the same expanse of territory, which, given the militarism and culture-wide superiority complex of the Cardassians, resulted in an increase in tensions. Due to their willingness to engage in armed conflict these tensions would lead to a series of limited wars between both powers. Unlike many of the previous threats faced by the Federation, the Cardassians were more than willing to engage in long term planetary warfare. This propensity, which would lead many to compare the conflict to Earth's Bush Wars, the SFMC would see a drastic increase in its operational tempo. The problem would come from the fact that the Federation Council had no interest in increasing the combat capabilities of either the Fleet or Marine Corps, since negotiations were seen to be



the best course of action. Therefore, the SFMC needed to begin to explore ways to increase combat effectiveness without increasing its need for funding. It was during the studies into this problem that the MECHA program was “rediscovered”.

The pre-production models that had been sitting idle for most of century were uncrated and overhauled. The careful preservation of the data and machines meant that it was relatively simple to upgrade their systems, and that their core structures and Mechanics were still viable and impressive. While the SFMC did not have the funds to restart production, the 25 pre-production models were more than enough to outfit an experimental battalion for testing and shakedown. Since tactical doctrine had never been officially established before the original program’s deactivation, the first pilots and commanders were left to discover how best to use these vehicles in combat.

The primary deficiency in the MECHA concept was strategic mobility. Their anthropomorphic shape took up an unprecedented amount of volume, which very few starships could handle effectively. As a result, the SFMC was forced to utilize the commercial container transports of a Strategic Shipping Squadron to move them from one planet to another. Deployments into contested areas were done with reentry-capsules derived from those used by powered infantry suites. However, these capsules were so large that they could not fit into any normal cargo bay, shuttle hanger, or cargo containers, which meant that they needed to be mounted externally onto a starship’s hull. The arrangement allowed orbital combat deployments, but their use would nearly cripple the transporting starship’s maneuverability and defensive capability. While this particular deficiency would lead to MECHA only being deployed once orbital superiority was gained by the Fleet, their use during a ground campaign yielded drastically different results.

Over the course of multiple engagements, MECHA became a welcome sight to the marines who would fight beside them. The eclectic mix of weapons found on an individual vehicle, along with its ability to change weapons loadouts in the field, allowed them to be used in an equally varied number of missions. Their tactical mobility equaled many types of infantry and Mechanized units meant that they could be used in nearly any type of terrain; along with their obvious emphasis on navigating heavy broken and chaos terrain. And while they did have problems redeploying within the same theater, due to their inability to be transported by intra-theater aerospace assets, their heritage as cargo loaders allowed them to be operated reliably over extended periods of time. This meant that even though they needed to walk from one battle zone to another, an inefficient and time-consuming process, MECHA could self-deploy without losing combat effectiveness or requiring maintenance stand-downs when they arrived.

The most spectacular deployment of MECHA during the Cardassian Wars was “Operation Broken Hammer”. The 1st Provisional MECHA Battalion was part of a joint operation with Starfleet and the SFMC Special Operations Branch to launch a spoiling attack against a Cardassian forward staging base. What made this mission so important to MECHA was two-fold: it was the only time that the entire battalion was deployed together, and it represented the confidence that the larger SFMC establishment had in the force. The Battalion’s mission was to combat drop onto the Cardassian base, guided by Special Operations “Omega” teams, and simply destroy everything in sight. Not taking any chances with their first large scale deployment, the commander of the Battalion assigned her best pilots and officers to make the drop. Pre-deployment exercises, both in holodecks and on map tables, were constant all the way to the time of drop.

When the Battalion made landfall, they found the Cardassians in the first stages of embarkation and their base in complete chaos. The Special Operations teams had done their job well, and



the Cardassians could no more defend their base from the gargantuan reentry capsules as they could effectively counter their appearance once landed. The ensuing battle was as glorious as it was brutal. While the MECHA did rampage thru the masses of parked vehicles and assembled troops, they encountered pockets of still resistance where Cardassian officers could make effective defensive fights. They also found that Cardassian aerospace assets were still intact even after the loss of their ground control facilities, and that their minimal anti-aerospace loadouts were ineffective for anything other than self-defense. If it had not been for the few fighter squadrons that the Fleet was able to divert to counter-air missions, the Battalion would have suffered higher losses than the 7 MECHAs that were unrecoverable at the end of the mission.

The success of "Operation Broken Hammer", along with their numerous other successes during the Wars cemented MECHAs place in the SFMC force structure. With the 2366 truce bringing an end to open hostilities with the Cardassian Union, the marines of the MECHA Battalion feared the dissolution of their unit and the consignment of their beloved machine to the storage facility from which they came. However, just the opposite happened. The SFMC petitioned for the establishment of the MECHA Branch as a permanent part of the Corps, and the Federation Council granted the request. While the 1st Provisional MECHA Battalion was indeed disbanded, it would live on as the headquarters for an entire branch of the SFMC. And the personnel who fought for its establishment would take to task of creating an entirely new combat force with joy and vigor.



3.0 Traditions

The MECHA Branch is the youngest within the Starfleet Marine Corps, and as such its traditions are largely barrowed from the rest of the SFMC. This is not to say that MECHA has no

3.1 MECHA Branch Motto “Wielding the Lightning”

The motto of the MECHA Branch refers to the combination of precision accuracy and powerful weapons found on all its vehicles. Since many combat missions start with an orbital drop or a beam down, the lightning analogy is particularly appropriate since MECHA seem to arrive with in either a blinding flash of light or a deafening thunder. The motto is often preceded by a quick anecdote in order to provide increased context for those unfamiliar with the branch, “The reason lightning never strikes the same place twice is because the same place isn’t around after the first strike!”

3.2 MECHA Branch Device “The Finisher”

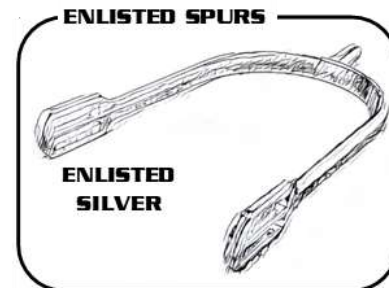
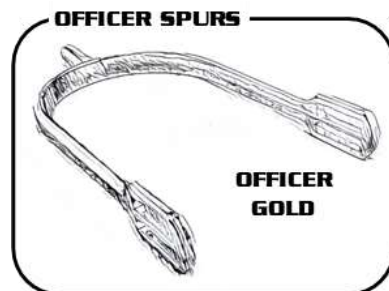
The Branch of Service device for MECHA is an armored fist clenching three lightning bolts surmounting a pair of stylized geometric wings. The armored gauntlet is symbolic of armored warriors; and the lightning bolts symbolize the striking power of individual MECHA vehicles. The fact that the fist is grasping the lightning bolts denotes the MECHA pilot’s control over the power of their vehicle.



3.3 MECHA Branch Uniform

Like other branches of the SFMC, the MECHA Branch has several unofficially authorized uniform accessories to set itself apart from the other branches.

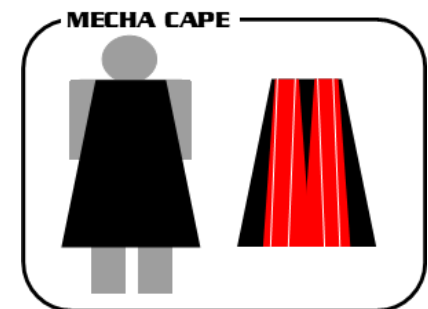
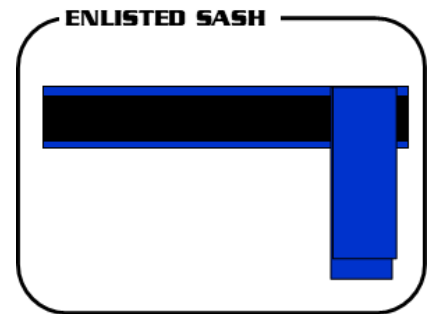
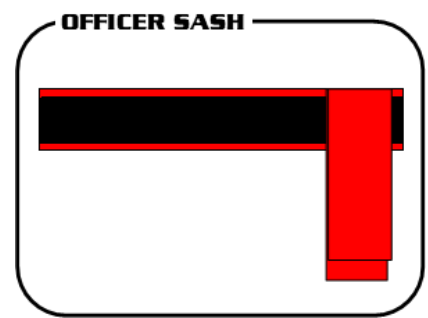
Riding Spurs - Many early MECHA pilots were members of the Armor Branch, and as such brought with them the tradition of wearing their cavalry spurs with dress uniforms. Although the practice of wearing spurs, and the customs about their issuance, has declined as the Branch has evolved its own identity. In the modern day, only those marines who have earned the right may wear them. Officers wear gold spurs, while Enlisted wear silver spurs.



The MECHA Sash - The first training facility for MECHA pilots was established at the New Military Academy. Before this colony joined the Federation, the officers trained at this Academy would be awarded a blue belt sash upon graduation. This sash would be used by its wearer to display campaign ribbons and other devices relating to accomplishments in combat. The Branch's personnel adopted this tradition and modified it for their use.

The MECHA Sash is a wide cloth sash, traditionally silk or satin, worn around the waist under any belt and knotted on the wearer's left side. The sash tails hang naturally down the left leg and are sometimes decorated with non-regulation markers for combat kills or tours served; a practice that is prevalent though officially frowned upon. The sash color is royal blue for officers and scarlet for non-commissioned officers. While it is authorized for all marines holding the rank of Corporal or above, some unit commanders are known to withhold this privilege until the marine in question has "seen the elephant".

The MECHA Cape - Another adopted tradition is the wearing of capes. In the SFMC, the MECHA Branch is authorized to wear a knee-length cape of black satin or silk material lined in MECHA scarlet, this cape is attached by buttons on any approved dress uniform or ceremonial uniforms.



4.0 Organization

The basic organizational unit of the MECHA Branch is the 100-marine strong Company, which maintains 16 individual MECHA as its principle combat assets. Each company contains a Company Headquarters, a Support Section, an Armory Section, a Maintenance Section, and 4 MECHA Lances.

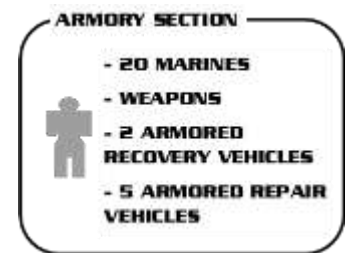
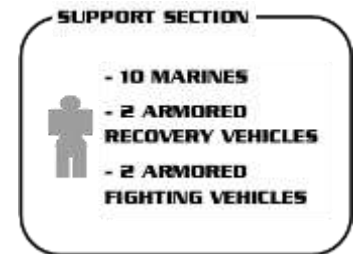
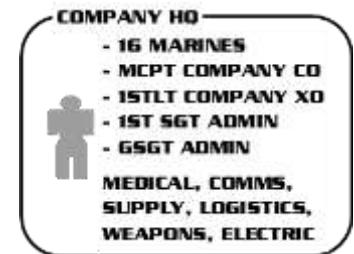
The Company Headquarters contains 16 marines, including a Marine Captain as the Company Commander, a First Lieutenant as the Executive Officer, a First Sergeant, and a Gunnery Sergeant as the administrative chief for the company. Filling out the rest of the billets are enlisted marines specializing in medical care, communications, supply, logistics, and individual weapons and electronic systems maintenance. The purpose of the Headquarters is to provide command and control of the MECHA Lances and coordinate the actions of the company.

The Support Section is 10-marines strong; and equipped to provide maintenance support for the Company's armored support vehicles and armored transportation for the Company Headquarters. To accomplish this mission, they have 2 armored recovery vehicles (ARV) and 2 armored fighting vehicles (AFV) equipped for command and control organic to their organization.

The Armory Section is 20-marines strong; and equipped and trained to maintain the weapon and ancillary systems of the MECHA. It contains specialists in direct fire weaponry, missile ordnance, generator maintenance, and electrical systems. During combat operations they would also be responsible for rearming the MECHA and troubleshooting non-standard problems, even while under fire. To assist in this mission, especially when in the field, they are equipped with 2 armored recovery vehicles (ARECV) and 5 armored repair vehicles (AREPV).

The Maintenance Section is 20-marines strong; and equipped and trained to maintain the all the systems of a MECHA except the weapon systems. Under combat conditions this Section would be responsible for providing field expedient repairs to battle damaged MECHA and troubleshooting issues as they arise. To assist in this mission, they are equipped with 6 armored recovery vehicles (ARECV) and 3 armored repair vehicles (AREPV) organic to their organization.

The fighting strength of the Company is in the four MECHA Lances, each with 8 pilots manning 4 MECHA. The Lance is led by a Second Lieutenant as Lance Commander, and a Staff Sergeant as Lance Sergeant. While most MECHA only require a single pilot, a Lance structure with 8 fully qualified pilots has been found to have numerous advantages. It allows the Lance to switch from single pilot MECHA to 2-man crew MECHA on



short notice, especially when appropriate replacement vehicles are not available. Having twice the number of pilots within the Lance allows the MECHAs themselves to be used in combat far extended durations of time without risking pilot fatigue by simply switching pilots at regular intervals. And finally, having extra pilots provides the Lance organic replacements for combat losses, allowing them to use replacement or recovered MECHA as soon as they are ready.

4.1 Missions of the Lance

Depending on the mission and qualifications of the pilots, the Company could either maintain a homogenous mix of vehicles or equipping each Lance with different MECHAs to specialize each in a different mission type. For obvious reasons, a middle ground of a company maintaining a homogenous mix of vehicles, but each vehicle armed for different mission profile is the most common. However, when using any of the above options it is common for each Lance to specialize in a specific mission profile.

Some common missions are as follows:

General Service

The most common type of Lance is one that is equipped for any situation that it may encounter. No matter what class of MECHA is assigned to this Lance, the duties assigned to each of the four vehicles is usually the same. One will be equipped with a few heavy weapons to provide direct fire support. Another will have a sensor heavy load-out, and often be equipped with missiles for air-defense and indirect fire missions. The other two MECHA will usually have a more generalized load-out tailored to the environment and the expected threat forces in the area.

Air Defense - Equipped mainly with missiles, electronic warfare systems, and sensor pods; this Lance is tasked with keeping a segment of aerospace clear of threat forces. They will also carry a few long-range, direct fire weapons for either self-defense or engaging aerospace forces that have nullified the ability of missiles to obtain a firing solution. It is common for three of the MECHA to have heavy weapons loadouts, while the fourth is primarily equipped with sensor pods and communications equipment. This allows for a threat forces to be engaged from unexpected angles while focused on the MECHA being used as a sensor picket.

Anti-Infantry - This type of Lance is uncommon since this mission requires primarily small caliber weaponry to be equipped, which are generally unsuitable for engaging armored targets. They do, however, find good utility during operations in urban terrain where other armored vehicles are often vulnerable.

Assault - A feared type of Lance that is equipped with the heaviest classes of MECHA, armed with the most devastating weaponry available. Their mission is often centered on the elimination of entire threat formations or breaking through heavily defended positions.

Reconnaissance - The lightest and most maneuverable types of MECHA can be found as scouts within a company. Armed for little more than self-defense, they are equipped with sensors and stealth systems to allow them to quickly explore the area of operations and report to higher headquarters. Utilizing MECHA in such a way is often scoffed at by other Branches, but few can argue with the sheer amount of sensor equipment that can be quickly hauled around the battlefield by a well piloted MECHA.

Skirmish - This type of Lance that is equipped with a utilitarian spread of weaponry and sensor equipment. They are typically tasked with advancing into unknown areas to locate and fix in position threat forces so that heavier units can advance to destroy them.



4.2 MECHA Piloting

Being a MECHA pilot is as demanding as it is enjoyable. Being the biggest and toughest thing on the battlefield is great until you realize you have to control a walking tank using the controls of an aerospace fighter, while being required to engage targets with the speed of an infantryman, and all by yourself. In this way, being a MECHA pilot is often considered the most demanding thing any sentient being has ever attempted to do. This chapter will teach you the basics of the job, but do not consider this to be a substitute for hands-on training with an experienced instructor.

The Cockpit - Every MECHA is different, but each cockpit shares the same basic layout and controls. The pilot sits in a full-backed chair that is slightly reclined to assure that moving the controls will as effortless as possible. To either side of the chair, and even above in some models, there will be controls and readouts for all the primary and auxiliary systems. In front of the chair is a full width multi-function display panel that is configurable to the needs and personal preferences of the pilot. This panel will be the primary source of information about the status of your MECHA and the world around it.

Helmet - The primary visual interface for all relevant information about your MECHA will be your helmet's visor. The information displayed on the visor is fully customizable but does come stock with certain features. The most valuable feature of the visor's display is the Point of Interest Pointer, or PIPer, that is located in the center of your vision. The PIPer serves two linked purposes: the first is to identify a target to which you wish the computer systems to focus on, for either identification or to select as a reference point; and the second is as a crosshair for the weapon systems. Since all the weapons of a MECHA are trainable to target in some way, you can engage off-axis targets by simply turning your head.

At the top of your vision will be a compass rose aligned with the magnetic poles of the current planet. The compass rose will display two icons at all times: a fixed icon displaying the direction in which you are currently looking; and an icon that will move and indicate the direction in which your MECHA is currently traveling. This allows you to efficiently keep track of your direction of movement and being able to surveil the area around you. Icons will also appear on the compass rose to indicate points of interest such as navigation waypoints and sensor contacts.

A small map viewer is located at the top left of your vision, which can display a true color topographic view of the current area with overlays that include target and threat locations, IFF readouts, map orders, and intelligence. Because of its small size there is not much detail contained on the map, however it can be used to maintain situational awareness.

On the left side of your vision will be an area in which information will be displayed in text format. Intelligence and operational orders will often appear here, along with any readout of the current radio communication traffic. The MECHAs computer system can also pass critical information to you via this text readout.

The bottom left of your vision will be dominated by a graphical representation of your MECHA, which will indicate its current physical status. The graphic will display the position of the limbs, rotation of the waist, and a rough indication of the damage taken by the vehicle. Next to the MECHA graphic will be readouts indicating current traveling speed, shield status, capacitor charge, and defensive system status.

The bottom right of your vision will be a readout indicating the status of your weapon systems. Information contained in this readout will usually be ammunition level or current charge of a



weapon, indicators about its ability to engage a selected target, and what firing group it is currently assigned to.

The right side of your vision will be utilized by the library computer and sensor systems to display any information you have requested. In most cases this information will relate to a currently selected hostile target; but information about the current terrain, atmospheric conditions, and indirect firing solutions can also be displayed here.

Control Stick - At your dominant hand will be a three-axis joystick, which controls the gross motor actions of your MECHA. The y-axis of the stick controls the pitch of your torso; push forward to tilt the torso down and pulling back tilts the torso up. The x-axis controls the rotation of the torso; moving the stick to port will rotate the torso counterclockwise and moving the stick to starboard will twist the torso clockwise. The rotational axis of the stick controls the tilt of the torso; twisting the stick to port will tilt the torso to port and twisting the stick to starboard will tilt the torso to starboard.

The stick is designed to allow a Hands-On-Throttle-And-Stick (HOTAS) control scheme, meaning that you should be able to access many of the common controls and functionality of your MECHA without ever needing to remove your hand from the control stick. The functionality of the stick controls is fully customizable; however, it is highly recommended that you keep the standard configuration until you are confident in your abilities. The upper face of the stick contains two multi-directional hat switches, a mini-stick controller, and a button; and all are usually utilized by the thumb.

On the left side of the stick's face head is the mini-stick controller, which is identifiable by its sunken head disc shape. This control can be moved in any direction and can be depressed as a button; and its function is to control the arms of the MECHA. By pressing the control up the arm will extend towards a location identified the PIPer and pressing it down will retract the arm to its default position. Pressing the control to towards the right will open the hand and pressing the control to the left will close the hand. Depressing the control center as a button will automatically return the arm to its default stored position. Typically, the arm utilized by this control will be on the same side as the control stick; however, this can be switched by voice command to the computer. Specialty commands or intricate movements of the arms can be accomplished with the entire stick; this functionality will be covered by your trainer.

The right side of the stick's face head is a pair of four-way hat switches arranged with one above the other. The upper switch is identifiable by its stepped conical shape, and it is often referred to as a witch's hat. This switch controls the weapons select and sensor select functionality. By pressing the switch either up or down, the system will scroll through the pre-programmed groups of weapons. The selected group of weapons is then fired by pressing the button just to the right of the witch's hat. By pressing the switch left and right, the system will scroll through individual sensor systems. The selected sensor array will immediately be activated for its designated purpose. All the sensor arrays controlled in this way are either low powered or passive systems. Active sensor systems are accessed from another controller on the throttle.

The second four-way hat switch is located below the witch's hat and is identifiable by the four tabs at each of the cardinal directions. Often referred to as the castle switch, due to its superficial resemblance to a tower of a European medieval castle, it controls the active voice communications system. The active voice communications channel is the channel onto which you will transmit when speaking. By pressing the switch up or down you will scroll through all available communications channels that you have access to or have set up in advance. By pressing the switch either left or right you will select one of the two preset communications



channels. Usually these two channels will be the intra-Lance channel and the intra-Company channel.

The index finger has access to a pair of buttons, one on the neck of the stick and the other on the right outside face of the head. The neck button is located on the opposite side of the stick from the face head and is a position where the index finger would normally rest. This button, referred to as the trigger, controls a preset group of weapons and is usually those weapons which are used most often. The second button, reachable when the index finger is fully extended, controls a secondary group of weapons. This secondary group usually contains missile weapons which require a target lock to fire, or a heavy weapon that is always infrequently used but nonetheless ready to fire.

On the left side of the stick is a mini-stick controller accessed by the thumb when it is grasping the stick. This mini-stick controller has a full range of motion and can be depressed as a button. It is used to control the cursor on the main display panel located in front of the pilot. When depressed the cursor will select whatever item it is located on. The functionality of this mini stick is highly dependent on the content currently displayed on the panel, so your trainer will cover this functionality.

The little finger has access to a button and a paddle switch. When at rest, grasping the stick, the finger sits on a button which controls the manual target lock. When depressed the targeting system will lock the engagement sensors on whatever the PIPer is currently identifying. The system can lock multiple targets simultaneously, and which ever target that is identified by the PIPer will be engaged. Switching targets, or labeling these targets, require voice commands. The paddle switch is located forward of the button and can be reached by the little finger with little difficulty. When depressed, a melee strike will be rendered against the target currently being identified by the PIPer. By default, this strike will be a simple punch, but the pilot can change this strike either by programming a different action – typically done when equipped with a melee weapon, - or by voice command before depressing the switch.

The entire hand typically rests on a shelf located near the base of the stick, approximately level with the button pressed by the number 5 finger. This shelf serves to support the hand during long periods and allows the pilot to use fewer muscles to keep a grip on the stick. However, it allows is used a control input when depressed. When it is used, the torso will center on the legs; giving the pilot a simple way to return to a forward-facing position in relation to the MECHA's direction of travel.

Throttle - At your non-dominant hand will be a single-axis horizontal controller assembly, which controls the walking speed of your MECHA. Referred to as the throttle, as the controller is pushed forward your speed will increase. When you pull the throttle backwards your speed will reduce until you are at a complete stop. The idol position of the throttle is not the farthest back you can pull the controller; if pulled beyond the idol stop, the MECHA will begin to walk backwards. The length of travel, and corresponding speed, of the controller beyond the idol stop position is limited as your stability is reduced when the legs are traveling backwards.

The throttle is designed to allow a Hands-On-Throttle-And-Stick (HOTAS) control scheme, meaning that you should be able to access many of the common controls and functionality of your MECHA without ever needing to remove your hand from the throttle. The functionality of the throttle controls is fully customizable; however, it is highly recommended that you keep the standard configuration until you are confident in your abilities. Most controls are manipulated by the thumb, however, there are two buttons and a two-position toggle switch on the fore portion of the throttle assembly.



The ring finger has access to a two-position toggle switch that controls the release of carried drones. These drones are of a standard type and can be configured for either support missions or as a decoy depending on the direction the toggle is pressed. When pressed upwards, the drone will release as a decoy and begin to move away from your position. In decoy mode, the drone will emulate the active electronic signature of your MECHA to lure threat forces or long-range missiles away from your position. While perfectly capable of being used in direct combat situations, it is more effective when used outside such conditions.

When the drone release toggle is pressed downwards, the drone will be released in a support mode. The default action of a drone is to circle your position at a range of 500 meters and serves to extend the range and coverage area of passive sensors. Communication between MECHA and drone is done by means of a line-of-sight laser link, so interception or detection of the data stream is near impossible. The drone in support mode can also be used as a communications relay or remote active sensor array, which allows a pilot to utilize these systems without revealing their exact location. The mission profile of a drone in support mode must be set before launch, other than the default surveillance profile, but can be accomplished by voice commands or the main display panel.

The index and middle fingers each have a button that will release defensive decoys of either an electro-optical or active sensor nature. The middle finger button will release a spread of sensor reflective particulates and defensive smoke by means of dispensers on the body of the MECHA and launched grenades. The goal is to cover the immediate area in obscurant to render electro-optical targeting systems useless or prevent them from holding a lock on the MECHA. The index finger releases a spread of sensor beacons from launchers mounted around the body of the MECHA. When released, these beacons will broadcast an amplified version of the threat targeting sensor's carrier wave to either distract the weapon from your MECHA or "blind" the system entirely. Separating the two types of decoys with different controls allows for the pilot to choose which type of decoy is best for a given situation, but it is not uncommon that both buttons are pressed simultaneously when under attack.

Most controls on the throttle are used by the thumb, and include: two button dials, a two-position sliding switch, a button, a mini-stick controller, and two four-way hat switches. The dorsal side of the throttle is longer than the ventral side and allows for a concave surface to be formed between the two sides, giving the thumb a place to rest.

This design promotes a solid grip on the controller and extends its surface beyond the arch between the thumb and index finger. It is on this extended surface that the two button dials are located, one on the dorsal and the other on the ventral side.

The dorsal dial controls the electro-optical cameras located around the surface of the MECHA's body. They are initially activated by pressing the button in the center of the dial; subsequent presses of this button will change the selected camera. By spinning the dial counterclockwise, the zoom factor of the camera will increase up to its individual maximum magnification. Spinning the dial clockwise will decrease the zoom factor, and if spun beyond the camera's minimal magnification the system will deactivate.

The camera's feed is displayed on the pilot's visor, and at the center of the feed is a PIPer with identical functionality to the main PIPer. Each camera has different specifications based its intended use; but each has some ability to pan around its mounting to provide a greater field of vision. This panning ability is controlled by the movement of the helmet and can give the pilot greatly increased situational awareness.



The ventral button dial controls the active surveillance sensor array and its emitted power. Depressing the button in the center of the dial will activate or deactivate the array. Spinning the dial counterclockwise will increase the emitted power of the array and spinning it clockwise will decrease the power. Increased power will enlarge the area covered by active sensors and provide greater detail for targets inside that area. It should be noted that emissions from the active array are detectable at three times the range from which useable results can be provided to the pilot. For example: if your active array can detect a target at 3 kilometers distance, then threat forces can detect its emissions at 9 kilometers. Therefore, care should be used when activating the active array, and how much power is emitted by the array.

On the aft portion of the throttle on which the two dials are located is a two-position sliding switch that controls the target designation features of the PIPer. When in the left position the target designator will be set to inertial guidance, meaning that the computer system will store the location or target with internal reference systems and passive sensors. This mode is utilized primarily to designate targets during combat, or to set navigation waypoints when pointed at terrain features. When the switch is in the right position the target designator will be set to active mode, meaning that a pulse of tachyon energy is emitted to laze the object being designated. This mode is only used when the pilot wishes to identify a target for other friendly forces, such as when directing indirect fire or indicating priority targets. In either mode, a button located directly beneath the switch is used to activate the designator.

Directly below the target designator button is a mini stick that is used to control the position of the PIPer in the pilot's field of vision. Unlike other mini-sticks, movement controls the absolute position of the PIPer and not speed and direction of movement (functions like a trackball mouse rather than normal stick). This mini stick is not often used as helmet movements are typically enough to position the PIPer effectively. However, it is still a nice feature to have for unusual situations. A more common function of this mini stick is when it is depressed as a button to activate the computer's voice control interface. When depressed anything spoken by the pilot will be acted upon by the MECHA's computer system rather than transmitted over the communications system. This allows the pilot to rely on a physical control rather than specific phraseology when interacting with the computer system.

Forward of the target designator button is a four-way castle switch that controls the secondary communications channels. These secondary channels are described as those that need to be monitored by the pilot but that the pilot does not need to regularly transmit on. Scrolling through the available channels is done by pressing the switch up or down. Pressing the switch fore or aft will select either of two channel presets; such presets are usually the intra-company channel and a channel used by local forces with whom the pilot would need to coordinate activities.

Forward of the PIPer mini-stick controller is a four-way witch's hat switch that controls the shield array. Each MECHA is equipped with a multi-function shield array which can be tuned to counter specific threats. Pressing the switch forward will activate or deactivate the entire system. Pressing the switch aft will select between ray and force modes of the shield emitter.

Typically, the emitter is set to ray shielding mode, which protects against incoming energy weapon fire. However, when large amounts of physical threats are encountered, such as a missile barrage, force shielding should be activated. The reason that force shielding is not the default is that force shielding is more power intensive than ray shielding, and therefore more detectable by electronic warfare equipment. Also force shielding interacts with all physical objects, and effectively transforms your MECHA into an egg-shaped plow walking the battlefield.



Pressing the switch up or down controls the power output of the shield emitter, either increasing its output or decreasing it.

Pedals - The pilot's feet will be seated in a pair of foot pedals that together act a large rocker switch, which is used to control the rotation of the MECHA's hips and legs in relation to the torso. By depressing the right pedal, the legs will rotate counterclockwise; and depressing the left pedal will rotate the legs clockwise. This functionality allows the pilot to quickly change their direction of travel without changing the direction that most of the weapon systems are facing. Often used when circling a hostile target that is currently being engaged.

A secondary function of the foot pedals is to allow the MECHA's feet to render a melee strike. If a pedal is quickly rotated away from the center the corresponding leg will move forward in a kicking motion. The utility of this type of melee strike is highly dependent on the situation and the overall stability of the MECHA. If the automated stability systems determine that such a movement would likely cause fatal instability, then a kick would not be rendered.

If both pedals are rotated away from center simultaneously then the MECHA will activate its jump jets. The power level of the jump jets is determined by the degree of rotation imparted to the pedals, the more rotation, the more power. At any power level the jump jets can transfer vertical momentum to the MECHA; the lowest setting will turn a running stride into a jump, and the highest is used to scale vertical obstacles. The exact amount of vertical momentum imparted is dependent on the model of MECHA and what types of jump jets are fitted.

Ejection System - Making an unexpected egress from a MECHA is never a pleasant experience, but the ejection system makes it faster. Triggered by a pair of yellow and black striped handles located above the pilot's head; once pulled down a panel secured with pyrotechnic fasteners will be blown away from MECHA. The command chair will then be propelled through the area vacated by the panel by means of an electromagnetic accelerator rail on the seat's back. This acceleration will throw both chair and pilot clear of the cockpit; once clear, a gas thruster will fire and continue to propel both for another 2 kilometers straight up. Once the thruster has exhausted its fuel the chair will fall away from the pilot, and the pilot is free to make a parachute descent to the ground.

4.3 Critical Pilot Skills

Besides the basics on how to move and control a MECHA, every pilot needs to know a little something about the systems that keep the whole machine workings. The information that follows should be considered a primer and no substitute for a qualified trainer.

Survival is Movement - In nearly all combat theaters, save the urban environment, a MECHA is highly recognizable target and is nearly impossible to camouflage. Therefore, an experienced pilot will always remain on the move, which minimizes the time an enemy force must engage and to make targeting solutions hard to calculate. But you will still attract unique levels of hostile attention, so remaining on the move will also minimize the enemy's ability to precisely target your weak points.

An experienced pilot must also recognize the fact that a MECHA has far more points of weakness than any other armored vehicle. Limb joints are the most vulnerable, and even though they are armored, that protection is not nearly as good as a tank. This is because too heavily armor the joints would make them nearly impossible to move. So, deny your opponent the chance to take a targeted shot at the joints of the MECHA; and the best way to do that is to keep moving.



When it is not advisable to remain on the move, remember your rifleman training and seek cover and concealment. Seeking such safety in a MECHA that could be up to 15 meters tall is an equally tall order, but something is better than nothing. Positioning in a grove of trees or beside a cliff face is better than nothing and will assure that attacks will only come from predictable directions. An urban environment is the best for MECHA as sightlines are restricted and the buildings are as good any pilot could ask for regarding cover. Seek out ravines and cuts in the terrain to conceal your movements and protect your legs from long range attacks.

Keep your active sensors disabled and the fusion generator in a low setting to minimize your delectability to units with electronic warfare equipment. Make use of drones to scout ahead and keep pace with friendly forces so they can protect you. And always remember that your best friend is another marine; whether he packs a rifle or a tank, or he flies a plane or crews a ship. Survival in war is more about whose beside you than who is against of you.



5.0 Basic Operational Concepts

MECHA present operational problems that are both unique and well understood in a historical context. Understanding these problems and their standard solutions is the best way to successfully utilize MECHA units in combat. Whether you are a rookie pilot or a Regimental Commander, understanding the limits and benefits of your unit is essential.

Insertion from Orbit - By far the most difficult task of a MECHA unit is getting it into the fight. There are three primary methods by which to place MECHA onto a planet's surface, each with its own benefits and drawbacks.

Transporters - Matter transporters can place a MECHA in a precise position on the planet without being engaged by enemy aerospace defenses. The drawbacks are many, which would prevent this method of deployment from being used regularly.

The first problem is that even the smallest MECHA would require nearly all the transporter buffers aboard a starship to conduct a matter transport. Some cargo ships have enough large-scale buffers to conduct the matter transport of two MECHA, but this would be stressing the system to its breaking point. The second concern is the long transition time a MECHA requires in the transporter's matter stream, which leads to two related problems. Long transition times means that the transporter effect (the light and sound of a transporter reconstituting the matter at its destination) is correspondingly long. Couple this with the size of MECHA's transporter effect, and threat forces would be hard pressed not to notice the new arrival to the battlefield. This long transition time also requires the ship conducting the matter transport to have its shields lowered for an unusual amount of time, resulting in increased vulnerability.

In certain situations, a matter transport is the only way to place a MECHA on the ground. But this type of deployment is always the last to be considered in any operational plan.

Drop Pods - All pieces of equipment and personnel in the SFMC can be inserted onto a planet by means of a drop pod. Drop pods allow for large amounts of combat power to be deployed quickly, but they run the risk of being intercepted by enemy aerospace defense or the troops being scattered over a large area. Because of these risks, drop pods are utilized only by specially trained units; but with MECHA the risk is substantially less.

When deploying by drop pod, a MECHA is completely encased in a multi-stage entry capsule which provides both thermal protection during atmospheric transit and some small amount of control during the drop. The drawback is that no ship is capable of internally loading a MECHA encased in a drop pod, meaning that they need to be mounted to the outside surfaces of the hull. This prevents the ship from establishing efficient warp bubble and shield geometry and will block the offensive systems needed for combat deployments. Also, these pods will often find themselves primary targets for enemy aerospace defenses during the drop, meaning that losses are uniquely high for MECHA forces during drop pod operations.

However, MECHA are equipped with high precision navigation and control equipment as standard. This means that they can control their descent far better than any other type of unit, allowing them to land in their designated landing zones better than 80% of the time. The standard for any other type of unit is less than 60%. Also, since MECHA are designed to utilize jump jets during combat, they can defend themselves and offensively engaging the enemy immediately upon landing. It is for this reason that MECHA often included in the first waves of any large-scale drop pod assault.



Landing Craft - The most reliable way to place MECHA on a planet's surface is to transport them with atmospheric capable starships. This method does expose the transport to large amounts of enemy fire; but allows the MECHA to be placed in precise locations, in a coherent unit, and without limiting the performance of the starship carrying them. The overall concern when conducting this type of insertion is how dense is the enemy aerospace defenses and how much punishment can the transport take before it must retreat from the area.

Like with infantry formations, MECHA can either disembark the transport when it has made a landing or jump from the craft during flight. For obvious reasons most ground forces prefer the former option, while the pilots prefer the latter option. When disembarking when the transport is still in flight, the MECHA will utilize their jump jets to slow their descent. Single use thruster packs and anti-gravity rigging may also be used when the descent is from a higher altitude, or the MECHA has removed its jump jets.

Allowing the transport to attract all the attention from enemy forces prevents the MECHA unit from suffering critical losses during the insertion, but also increases the chances of an entire unit being eliminated.

5.1 Lance Tactics

A Lance is the smallest tactical unit of the MECHA Branch and consists of 4 individual MECHA grouped together. Due to the variations of MECHA chassis, weapon loadouts, equipment packages, and pilot skill and specialization there is no such thing as a standard Lance composition. The Lance Commander needs to balance their personnel, equipment, and mission in ways that no other small unit commander ever needs to consider. For this reason, the topics covered in this section will be broadly reductive and open to a large amount of interpretation.

Organization - It is common for the members of a Lance to be paired into elements of 2 MECHA each, usually with one being controlled by an experienced pilot and the other more junior. Within these elements' loadouts will often be complimentary. For example, one pilot has long range weapons and the other has short range weapons; or a one utilizes all their tonnage to support a large singular weapon system while their partner is equipped for all situations. When making such elements, the Lance Commander must be sure that the fighting ability of the entire Lance is preserved and can be used as a unit when required.

Another common method of organization is for the Lance Commander to equip their unit to fight as an integrated whole, instead of a pair of cooperating elements. This opens the possibilities of equipping pilots and MECHA to fulfill highly specialized roles, because they can always rely on the support of the rest of the Lance. A common mix of roles in this type of organization is sensor and electronic warfare scout, quick firing skirmisher, sniper with long range weapons, and tank equipped with heavier armor and armament for any situation. Because such a spread of roles is possible, the Lance Commander must make sure that each MECHA can keep pace with the others and provide mutual support.

Common Missions - When operating independently, MECHA Lances are often used with other forces to provide heavy fire support. And unless the Lance is used to engage an enemy strongpoint, the task force commander will often want to spread the MECHA out across their entire front. The Lance Commander must resist this policy, as a single MECHA, even when supported by other arms, is far too tempting a target for enemy forces. MECHA must be deployed in pairs to provide adequate levels of support and mutual defense. If the mission



requires the Lance to be split into individual MECHAs, the Lance Commander must assure that every MECHA is able to support one another.

Operations with multiple Lance, or an entire company, require the Lance Commander to coordinate with their partner commanders and higher headquarters to achieve a unity of effort during the mission. In these operations a Lance is often able to have all four MECHA become specialized in single mission profile, such as heavy assault or reconnaissance. However, even when specializing in a single task the Lance Commander must still assure the security of their unit and their ability to respond to unexpected threats. Therefore, if the Lance is to be equipped for long range bombardment, making sure that each MECHA is has a short-ranged weapon to provide for self-defense. Such defense would also encompass aerospace defense, since long range bombardment units will attract enemy aerial attacks. So, having one member of the unit equipped with an expanded sensor suite and attack coordination systems would be advisable.

5.2 Company Tactics

MECHA Companies are often the largest unit deployed as single entity, are charged with a wide variety of missions. The keys to any company-sized operation are to maintain mission support for the subordinate Lances, and to coordinate their activities to achieve the mission's overall objective.

Organization - The Company Commander has under their command 16 MECHAs in four Lances; and since the Lance is a potent combat force, it is usually deployed on missions independent of the Company. In these situations, the Company Commander exercises a loose supervision of their Lance Commanders, assuring that they are adhering to established best practices and are properly supported. With independent operations the Company Commander does not need to exercise direct control over the load-outs of individual MECHA but does need to coordinate Lances that will be operating in close proximity to assure that they can provide mutual support if necessary.

When operating as a coherent unit, the Company Commander has more direct control of the composition of the MECHA's loadouts and the pilots to be deployed. Because of this, the Company Commander needs to be intimately familiar with the capabilities of the chassis each Lance is equipped with and the skills of the pilots. The ways and methods to organize a company are orders of magnitude more complex than those used by the Lance Commander. The Company Commander is therefore best served by matching missions with specific Lances and leaving the detail work to their subordinate commanders. But he should still assure that mission integrity is maintained, and that individual Lances do not stray from their assigned task profiles unnecessarily.

Common Missions - The missions assigned to a MECHA Company fall into two distinct categories: assault and support. Assault missions require the company to engage a specific position or enemy formation, and often require engaging enemy MECHA. When tasked with an assault mission, the Company Commander will organize their subordinate Lances with specific tasks and oversee the loadouts of the individual MECHA. The typical tasks assigned to the Lances are: 1 Lance is the skirmishers, with lighter MECHA equipped to detect enemy forces and fix them in place; 1 Lance is tasked with the artillery mission, with load-outs that often include large numbers of artillery missiles; and 2 lances tasked with the actual assault, with the heavier MECHA chassis equipped with increased armor protection and weapons geared towards the vulnerabilities of the expected threat forces.



Support missions require the subordinate Lances to be widely separated, and often regulate the Company Commander to a purely support role. In such situations, the Company Commander assures that the support capabilities of the company are properly deployed, and they are ready to displace should they be needed elsewhere. He exercises supervision over their subordinate commanders, offering advice when needed and restraint when required. The Company Commander coordinates with higher headquarters to maintain the integrity of their unit, and advocates for their proper use when deployed.

