

A LANCER Narrative

Operation

SOLSTICE RAIN

Kai Tave



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A two-part introductory mission series for *Lancer* pilots starting at **LL0**

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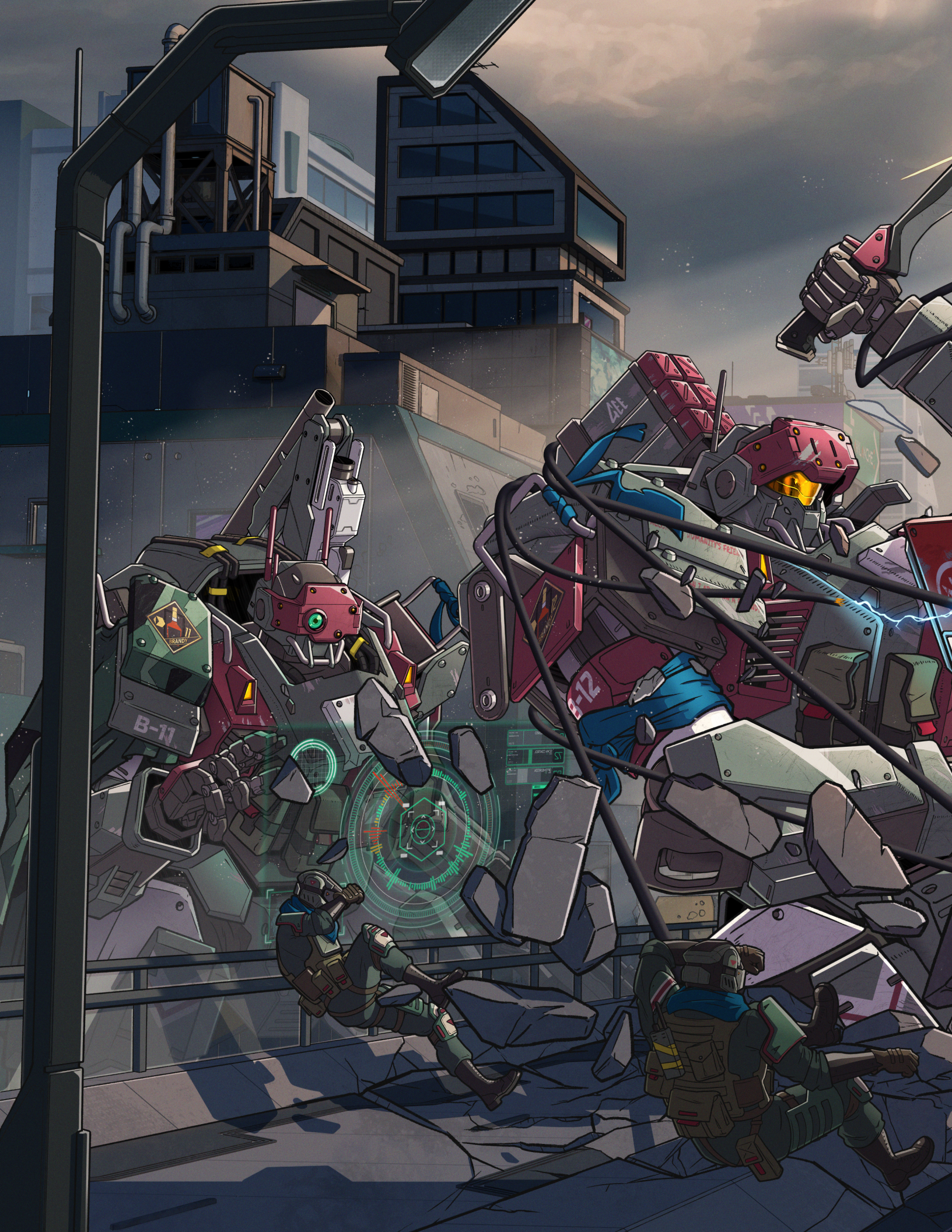
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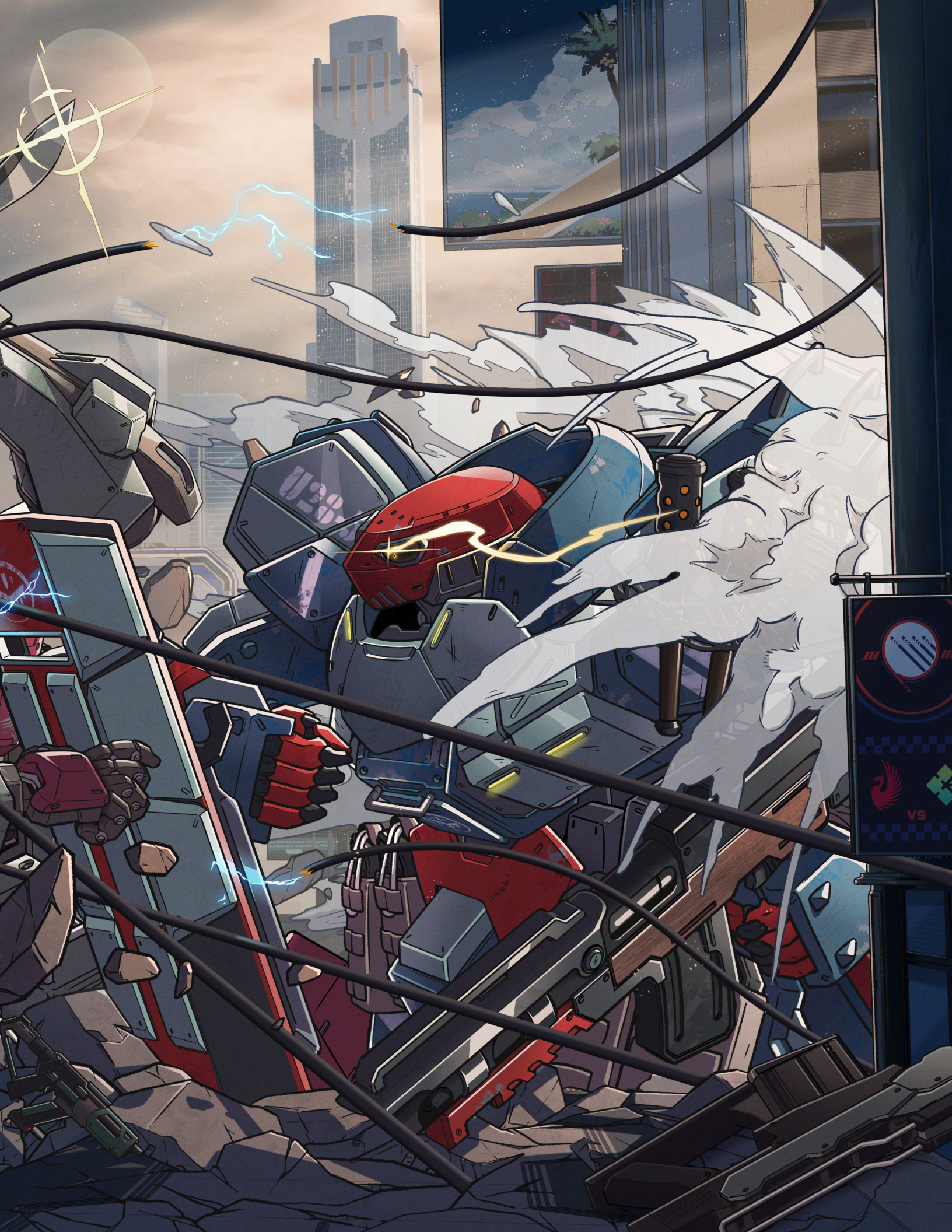
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Operation Solstice Rain*, an introductory two-part mission series for *Lancer*. In these missions, players will take on the role of mech pilots tasked with leading a rescue mission on the besieged city of Nov Elysia. Early on in the mission things don't go as planned, and the players will have to adapt and act quickly if they want to carry on and successfully complete their objectives.

Operation Solstice Rain is designed to allow you and your players to quickly begin playing *Lancer* with minimal preparation. You'll dive into two linked missions, beginning at **License Level (LL) 0** and ending just as they reach **LL2**. These missions can be used as a standalone introduction to *Lancer*, or you can use it as a stepping-stone for an ongoing campaign.

The *Lancer Core Rulebook* can be accessed in one of two forms: a free version containing all the core rules everyone needs to know as well as all the information players need to create pilots and mechs, and a full, paid version that contains Game Master (GM) rules and guidelines along with additional setting information you may want to familiarize yourself. Both can be found at [MASSIF-PRESS.ITCH.IO](https://massif-press.itch.io) along with a range of other supplements. In order to run *Operation Solstice Rain*, you'll need a full copy of the *Lancer Core Rulebook* containing sitreps and the rules for running NPCs.

A NOTE ON PLAYER SAFETY

Operation Solstice Rain puts the player characters in the middle of a chaotic, bloody urban battle, including moments of sudden death and dismemberment as well as scenes involving dispossessed, injured, and traumatized survivors. Every effort has been taken to represent these matters as respectfully as possible, but GMs should still discuss things with their players to ensure that all participants are comfortable during play. If your group decides that adjusting certain scenes will make for a more enjoyable campaign experience then you should do so. You may wish to make use of tools such as the X-Card ([TINYURL.COM/X-CARD-RPG](https://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg)), the Script Change Toolbox ([BRIEBEAU.COM/THOUGHTY/SCRIPT-CHANGE/](https://briebeau.com/thoughty/script-change/)), or the RPG Safety Toolkit ([BIT.LY/TTRPGSAFETYTOOLKIT](https://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit)) to help facilitate this in play. The point of a roleplaying game is ultimately to have fun; as such, ensuring that everyone at your table can comfortably enjoy themselves always comes first.

Operation Solstice Rain assumes that all player characters (PCs) are brand new Union pilots starting at LL0. The structure of this mission series – missions, enemy combatants, downtimes, and opportunities to perform Full Repairs – is designed according to the narrative outlined in this book, but you should always make adjustments or changes based on the expectations of your group.

The missions in this series are comprised of a series of combats interspersed with important story moments, called **beats**. In addition to marking the passage of time, beats create the structure for a story that progresses alongside the PCs. It's not necessary to stick exactly to the beats presented in this book – especially if you're an experienced GM – but for the best play experience we recommend keeping to the structure presented in this book.

Each mission opens with a briefing that provides a rundown of the mission's overall objectives, parameters, and narrative framing. Between the two missions presented in this module is a period of **downtime**, an extended narrative interlude in which PCs can interact with various characters and attempt to secure resources to help them during their next mission. The missions in *Operation Solstice Rain* take place over the course of several days, but in your own campaigns missions can happen over longer or shorter periods of time based on your specific narrative circumstances; some missions take place over several weeks, and some only a few days or hours.

The events of *Operation Solstice Rain* take place on **Cressidium**, a planet that was settled by Union's anthrochauvinistic **Second Committee** just before it was overthrown by the coalition that would eventually become the current-day **Third Committee**. As revolution swept throughout Union space, sparked by mounting oppression and atrocities, many SecComm bureaucrats and military commanders fled their homeworlds looking for a safe haven to ride out the storm. Among the places they fled—bringing their friends, families, and politically connected allies with them—was Cressidium, a recently charted and newly colonized world that boasted suitable Cradle-like conditions for habitation and an abundance of natural resources. Information on Cressidium's location and its colonization was purged by those who fled there in an attempt to cover their tracks. This included scuttling the world's omninet infrastructure to prevent detection, and in the aftermath of the revolution the world was lost from official record.

The sudden influx of unplanned colonists pushed the world's fledgling settlements to their limits in the early days. The result was years of hardship and factional infighting as various figures attempted to take control of the colony in the name of a government which, as far as anyone knew, no longer even existed. New borders were established and fought over as people spread across the planet seeking freedom, authoritarian governments rose and fell, and Cressidium soon became a microcosm of SecComm and its downfall as it contended with a reckoning of its own.

Now, 500 years later (5016u by Union's calendar), Cressidium is a developed world home to a number of major nations and alliances that have formed in the half-millennium since. The world's SecComm history lies in its distant past, but echoes of it can be seen among its more authoritarian polities. Many of its nations, however, have cast off the anthrochauvinistic attitudes of their forebears and adopted more egalitarian policies in line with those of the Third Committee.

For centuries Cressidium has been isolated from the wider galaxy, cut off from Union and the omninet and left to develop on its own, but recently a ThirdComm colonial survey team charting distant worlds made contact. The survey team was surprised to discover a highly developed Diasporan world interested in rejoining the galactic community after centuries of isolation. An ambassadorial delegation was quickly dispatched to Cressidium to begin the process of negotiating its admittance into Union once more.

Operation Solstice Rain begins amidst this ongoing diplomatic process, during Union's third visit to Cressidium. These trips have been largely uneventful thus far, with most of the delegation group's time spent shuttling diplomats and scientists to and from the planet, loading and unloading cargo, and running various drills. The action has been taking place behind closed doors on Cressidium's surface with **Union Ambassador Nilan Bannerjee** engaging in delicate negotiations between two of the planet's major nations, the **Leandric States Alliance** and the **Vestan Sovereignty**.

These powers have been locked in a cold war for decades, and the continued presence of Union at the LSA's request has exacerbated tensions between them. The LSA, first to make contact with the colonial survey team, has been very receptive to the possibility of becoming a Union member state once more, while the Sovereignty is much more distrustful. A series of diplomatic summits have been held at the metropolitan LSA port city of **Nov Elysia**, of which this one is the latest. During the course of these summits, a great deal of Ambassador Bannerjee's time has been spent trying to find a compromise acceptable to all parties.

Accompanying the ambassadorial delegation is a Union Navy ship, the UNS-CV **Rio Grande**, under the command of **Captain Brigid Farris**. The *Rio Grande* is an *Ebro*-class light carrier, a vessel well-suited for both independent patrols and escort duties like the one she's currently performing as part of the diplomatic mission. Smaller than a mainline naval carrier, the *Rio Grande* is nonetheless readily capable of ferrying personnel and materiel both on- and offworld, and she carries a compliment of strike craft in reserve in case of unexpected hostilities. The PCs are stationed aboard the *Rio Grande*, having been recently assigned to her following their graduation from pilot training academy. This is their first posting as fully trained and qualified mechanized chassis pilots.

CRESSIDIUM AT A GLANCE

Cressidium is a Cradle-type planet along the Cascade Line. It is fortunate enough to boast natural conditions suitable for habitation, with a diverse, human-compatible climate and biosphere and a variety of flora and fauna, including both native specimens along with those introduced during colonization. Like Cradle, its surface is largely covered by water interspersed with large continental landmasses and island chains. The human population of the planet has grown over the last 500 years to form a number of large nations and power blocs, including the Leandric States Alliance (LSA), the Vestan Sovereignty, and the Republic of Okasnia.

The LSA and the Sovereignty are presently engaged in a cold war going back decades. Both states were established during a period of civil instability and warfare over land and resources known as the Barren Years. The LSA began as an alliance of smaller nation-states against the Sovereignty, an oppressive and expansionistic power founded by the descendants of military and political leaders who had fled to Cressidium to escape the collapse of SecComm. Over time, the political situation on Cressidium stabilized around these major power blocs, leading to the planet's present state of affairs.

For a time it seemed that the Vestan Sovereignty's authoritarian government was losing its hold, giving way to something more progressive, and there were even hopes of long-term peace talks in the future. A recent series of assassinations and internal power struggles has, however, prompted a renewed wave of hardline nationalism and neo-anthrochauvinist sentiment, vying against the older and less outwardly aggressive regime for control of the nation. The current relationship between the major powers is tense, but not to the point of outright war, and representatives of the Vestan Sovereignty have agreed to attend talks along with the LSA during this diplomatic mission.

Societally, Cressidium has been largely isolationist until recently. Though knowledge of other humans existing across the galaxy isn't suppressed information, most assume that Union inevitably collapsed in the wake of the revolutionary movement against the Second Committee, and that remaining obscure and unnoticed is vital to protect the planet against any number of marauding, vengeful splinter nations. As a result, Cressidium's spacefaring capabilities have historically been fairly minimal, generally relegated to satellite launches, though within the last century more development in this area has taken place as conservative attitudes have waned. The planet now boasts several space elevators and the major powers have all made headway in developing their own surface-launched space-capable ships, roughly equivalent to what Union would classify as corvette-tier vessels. These are used largely in a deterrence role along with limited anti-satellite and orbit-to-surface strike capabilities.

Despite its long isolation and lack of omninet access, Cressidium's technological development has generally kept pace with wider galactic trends. At the time, mechs had just entered into military service with the use of the Genghis Mk I during the Hercynian Crisis. Over the course of the 500 years that followed, Cressidium's various nations have developed their own mechs that, despite their divergent evolution, are generally comparable to those in use elsewhere. The biggest differences lie in their grasp of paracausal science, which is notably lacking compared to their Union counterparts. While the early colonial efforts possessed printers that were, at the time, cutting edge, without replacements they eventually fell into disrepair, leaving things entirely to conventional manufacturing. Access to modern printer technology is among the benefits Union is offering should Cressidium ultimately decide to join them.

SHIPBOARD LIFE: THE UNS-CV RIO GRANDE

The *Ebro*-class light carrier saw modest use during the late Second Expansion Period, primarily as an escort carrier accompanying second-line naval units. The Third Committee's reorganization of the navy has granted it a resurgence as a fast and flexible alternative to full-sized carriers such as the *Amazon* class. Though smaller than its siblings, the *Ebro*-class is nonetheless capable of fielding wings of fighters, bombers, or mounted chassis (mechs outfitted with special external packs containing additional power plants, thrusters, armor, and weapons for use in naval operations), and they serve as effective force-multipliers or patrol vessels, well able to handle themselves against pirates or hostile subline-equivalent Diasporan ships.

During long patrols, naval crews tend to spend much of their time in stasis ("downtime"), regularly rotating in and out of active duty shifts ("uptime"). While the *Rio Grande* maintains an orbit around Cressidium, however, the entire crew is currently active and both assisting with the logistics of transport to and from the planet's surface – carrying everything from trade goods and gifts to exchange groups of engineers and scientists – as well as maintaining a safe watch over the rest of the diplomatic mission. Fortunately, none of Cressidium's major powers appear to present more than a limited naval threat thus far.

Without any immediate danger to confront, life aboard the *Rio Grande* largely revolves around maintenance, drills, training, briefings, and all the other assorted sundry duties that come with a posting aboard a naval vessel, not to mention recreational activities. Card games and board games (like chess and Kapkat) remain enduring naval traditions, along with watching omninet media, sparring practice, and competing to earn the top score on the pilot simulators.

This is how the PCs find themselves at the start of *Operation Solstice Rain*, as recently graduated pilots transferred aboard the *Rio Grande* during her last rearmament and resupply. The *Rio Grande* makes for a great place to start the game, setting the scene and letting everyone introduce their PCs. They probably know one another from their time at whatever academy they trained at, though it's possible this is the first time they've been assigned together as a squad.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

Even a light carrier like the *Rio Grande* isn't a small ship, and there are plenty of other personnel serving alongside the PCs for them to interact with. These are some of the notable NPCs they may encounter during their time aboard and have opportunity to interact with in the weeks leading up to the events of this mission series:



CAPTAIN BRIGID FARRIS SHE/HER

Captain Farris is a career naval officer, having served for 20 years subjective, 10 of those as captain of the *Rio Grande* after her promotion from executive officer aboard the cruiser *Reykjavík*. In that time, she's proven herself to be a confident and capable commander whose quick thinking and level-headedness under pressure has earned her the respect of her crew. Despite being temporally distanced from her homeworld by the time-dilating effects of extended nearlight travel, Farris enjoys telling stories of her old life working at her family's bakery, and impromptu baking contests culminating in shared meals have become something of a tradition during shore leave.

Under Farris's command, the *Rio Grande* has seen occasional combat duties on her long interstellar patrols – primarily anti-piracy actions (notably against the infamous Dead Suns pirate clan) as well as joint operations with a Department of Justice and Human Rights task force during the liberation of Corazón. This is Farris's first recontact mission and it's one she's eager to see succeed peacefully and amicably for all involved. Cressidium lacks any major naval powers, so it's unlikely the *Rio Grande* will be called upon to participate in combat even if things should turn sour, but she isn't so overconfident as to forego regular shipboard readiness drills.



1ST LIEUTENANT ALEX KIM HE/HIM

The executive officer aboard the *Rio Grande*, 1st Lieutenant Alex Kim hasn't served as long or had as storied a career as Captain Farris, though he wouldn't be XO if he lacked the necessary qualifications. Promoted to the post relatively recently, Kim is eager to prove that he's up to the task – perhaps a bit too eager if you were to ask some of the ship's personnel who've found themselves on the receiving end of yet another pep talk or by-the-book lecture about regulations. They're hoping that some of the captain's self-assurance will rub off on him and he'll start to relax more into the role, ideally sooner rather than later.

While the XO finds such relaxation something of a challenge (along with socialization in general), his eye for detail and keen grasp of tactics express themselves through a love for games of strategy, and he remains the ship's undisputed champion of the Sparri card game Kapkat.



RIO, SHIPBOARD NHP SHE/HER

While NHPs (*Lancer's* equivalent to advanced AI systems; see *Lancer*, p. 381–382) often have personalities suited to their line of work, they're still their own people with mannerisms and quirks as diverse as any human's. Rio, the *Rio Grande's* shipboard THALASSA-class naval NHP, is an outgoing person with a bright and cheerful personality. While she's technically always “on duty,” she enjoys socializing with the crew during those periods in which she's allowed to leave shipboard tasks to her more automated subprocesses and take time for herself. Given her immense calculative and processing capabilities compared to the ship's organic crew, she prefers non-competitive pastimes (1st Lieutenant Kim is one of the few people aboard she enjoys playing chess with) and has a fondness for omninet dramas.

During combat, her demeanor becomes much more focused and serious – a state the crew refer to as her “game face.” Like all naval NHPs she's more than capable of effectively monitoring and coordinating much of the *Rio Grande's* various tactical systems, including point defenses, electronic/systemic countermeasures, and its complement of robotic subalterns, while also lending strategic coordination to the ship's fighter and chassis wings and advising Captain Farris during battle.



STAFF SERGEANT OMARI GARCIA

HE/HIM

It takes a special breed of person to be a marine lifer, and Staff Sergeant Omari Garcia is a marine's marine. He's tough, he's stubborn, he's fearless, and he proudly plays his part in the long-standing traditional sibling rivalry between Union marines and their naval mech pilot counterparts, always ready with a joke or a crack about "fancy suits" whenever a mech pilot starts getting a little too full of themselves (marine pilots are themselves only occasionally exempt from this). He is, however, fiercely loyal to everyone aboard his ship, and given the chance he'll be the first one into danger and the last one out of it.

A recipient of the Marine Distinguished Service Medal for his actions during the Pellaran Dispute, SSgt. Garcia has been wounded many times in the course of action and has seen his share of dead comrades, but although he often talks about retiring one day to somewhere tropical he shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. On those rare occasions he takes shore leave planetside he enjoys fishing, and he has an avid interest in antique firearms.



UNION AMBASSADOR NILAN BANNERJEE

THEY/THEM

Ambassadorial activities, including diplomatic negotiations with Diasporan states and recontact/reintegration missions, fall under the purview of the Union Administrative Department, and the UAD's representative for the Cressidium mission is Nilan Bannerjee. Where administrators are assigned to single worlds or sectors, ambassadors travel wherever their skills are needed; as such, Bannerjee has seen dozens of worlds in a life spent traveling the stars and bridging gaps between peoples and nations. Widely traveled as they are, recontact with a previously lost world considering Union membership isn't something that happens every day, and this momentous occasion will hinge upon their diplomatic prowess.

As befits their role, Ambassador Bannerjee is charming and pleasant to be around, with a dry sense of humor that grows more pronounced when they've been drinking. They speak numerous languages and dialects fluently without the need for dataplate translation, have an encyclopedic knowledge of liquors and wines, and their poker face is second to none – as several members of the *Rio Grande*'s crew have discovered to their chagrin.

Despite the pressure to succeed here, Bannerjee remains poised and unflappable at all times, only ever showing irritation or annoyance with quirked eyebrows and slight frowns. This assignment may be one of the most challenging they've been tasked with in their career, and the stakes are suitably high; facilitating an accord between the LSA and the Sovereignty won't just mean the likely admittance of Cressidium into Union but will put an end to decades of simmering tensions, proxy skirmishes, and the threat of all-out war. For any diplomat, a success here would be the crowning achievement of a career.

The ambassador has traveled to Cressidium aboard their own vessel along with their own diplomatic staff, but they periodically shuttle over to the *Rio Grande* to conduct meetings with the senior officers.

PREPARING FOR DEPLOYMENT

By default, PCs begin at **LL0** with access to all General Massive Systems (GMS) weapons and systems (*Lancer*, p. 118–121), as well as the **GMS Everest Frame** (*Lancer*, p. 122–123), a solid, flexible all-rounder that can be customized to suit a variety of playstyles even at higher license levels.

This book also introduces a new Frame available at **LL0**, the **GMS Chomolungma**. This Controller chassis boasts enhanced electronic warfare capabilities, and is well-suited to players that want to focus on hacking and tech actions. Through Lancer's online companion app, **Comp/Con** (COMPCON.APP), you can also access a third LL0 Frame introduced in the narrative campaign *No Room For a Wallflower*, the **GMS Sagarmatha** – a durable and resilient Defender that can shield its allies from harm.

Several new talents are available for players to choose as well: **Demolitionist**, which enhances a pilot's ability to make use of grenades and mines, and **Sysop**, which enhances the Bolster action with additional defensive utilities. These can be found along with the **Chomolungma** in **Appendix: New Options** (p. 44).

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

The **Chomolungma** allows pilots to make extensive use of **SCAN** to learn critical information about their enemies during combat, including their HP, their heat levels, and any special weapons, systems, or traits they might have, which in turn allows them and their teammates to better plan their turns. While a potent ability, frequent use of Scan can also add additional overhead to games that you may wish to be mindful of.

If you know that players will be using **SCAN** or other similar abilities during combat, it helps to prepare NPC stats in a format that allows for quick sharing whenever those NPCs are scanned. Also, keep in mind that if a target is Scanned multiple times it's fine to simply provide only any relevant information that may have changed since the last time (e.g., **HP**, **HEAT**, **STRUCTURE DAMAGE**, **STRESS**, etc).

Players who use **SCAN** can also help alleviate some of this overhead by keeping track of gleaned information themselves, such as by taking quick notes on a system's functions or an NPC's **HEAT CAP**.

How open you wish to be with NPC information, with or without **SCAN**, is up to you, but it's important to note that two pieces of information should always be available upon request to players at all times: an NPC's class and any templates they have (*Lancer*, p. 284). Players should always be able to find out, for example, whether an NPC is using the **GRUNT** template before attacking them with powerful, limited-use weapons, or whether the enemy leveling an automatic weapon at them is an **ASSAULT** or an **ARCHER**.

MISSION 1: THE DROP

MISSION BEATS

COMBAT 1: IT'S NOT THE FALL THAT
KILLS YOU...

BEAT 1: ON THE MOVE IN A MILITARY
MANNER

COMBAT 2: LOOK BOTH WAYS

BEAT 2: BROKEN SKY

COMBAT 3: DOWNPOUR

It's another routine day like any other on this mission when it happens. The latest diplomatic summit has been extended again as negotiations remain at an impasse, and Ambassador Bannerjee has requested that Captain Farris join them down on the planet to give a speech or two and meet with some of the delegates in the hopes that a new face and fresh perspective might help shift some attitudes. She's been down there for several days now, and the XO, 1st Lt. Kim, has command.

This routine is suddenly upended as a shipwide alarm interrupts whatever the PCs are in the middle of, and Rio, the shipboard NHP, issues a general announcement:

"All hands to action stations. I repeat, all hands to action stations. This is not a drill. Set condition 1-Azure, ready away ships for debarkation. All marine and pilot elements, report to your assigned flight decks for briefing and assignment."

The relaxed state aboard the ship dissolves in an instant as everyone stops whatever they're doing and hurries to their stations. In the case of the PCs, this is one of the Rio Grande's flight decks. Condition 1-Azure, they know from their academy courses, is the call for landing craft to prepare for deployment. Whatever's happening, it isn't coming from space – it's on the planet below.

The hangar deck is no less busy, with deckhands hurriedly prepping ships and chassis as marines don armor and move double-time into formation. Speakers crackle and display screens light up with the face of 1st Lt. Kim looking even more serious than usual as he begins to address the assembled troops on the deck.

"As of 1400 hours, we are on combat alert. Several hours ago, we received a transmission from Ambassador Bannerjee that civil defense warnings were being sounded across Nov Elysia. Then all communications with the surface went dark, and we've been unable to raise the ambassador, the captain, or anyone within the local government. Based on orbital flyover imagery gathered by Rio, it appears that Nov Elysia is under attack by Vestan Sovereignty forces, with significant deployment of mechanized chassis forces throughout the city."

He waits for a moment to let that news sink in before continuing.

"Cressidium is not officially a member of Union at this point. Militarily, we aren't authorized to intervene on behalf of the LSA in this conflict, but simply leaving Captain Farris and Ambassador

Bannerjee to ride this out on their own is not an option. As such, after conferring with the other officers aboard this ship, it's been decided that we will be conducting a rescue operation with the primary objective of first locating, then securing the ambassador and the captain, and safely escorting them to an extraction point. Rules of engagement for this operation are that you are not to engage unless fired upon. Our main priority here is to bring our people home."

BRIEFING

The mission, as outlined, seems straightforward enough: mechs and marines from the *Rio Grande* will deploy near a staging area location in Nov Elysia's industrial district designated **Forward Operating Base Saber**. Once assembled, they'll resupply if necessary and then move out toward the central district where the diplomatic talks were taking place, heading for the last known location of the captain and ambassador. After the VIPs have been secured, they'll be escorted back through a defensive perimeter established by a second wave of Union forces to a safe location away from the fighting and extracted by shuttle back to the *Rio Grande*.

The PCs have been selected as part of the initial landing, which means they're headed down to Cressidium along with the rest of the first wave. Because communications with the surface seem to be cut off, one person in each mech squad is being assigned an **omnihook** (*Lancer*, p. 114) to maintain omninet comms with the *Rio Grande*. This specialized piece of equipment is finicky, and tuning it requires a high level of technical skill, but it will allow the PCs to send and receive reports to and from the ship if necessary. The PCs should take care of any last-minute preparations or adjustments they wish to make to their mech loadouts, and then it's time for them to board their dropship.

MISSION OBJECTIVES: Land at Forward Operating Base Saber and await further orders. (GM Note: This will immediately be changed to "Make your way through Nov Elysia to reach FOB Saber" following the events of **COMBAT 01: It's NOT THE FALL THAT KILLS YOU...** [p. 16].)

MISSION PARAMETERS: Unknown at this time. Hostile forces are confirmed to be operating within Nov Elysia, so anticipate enemy contact; you are cleared to engage if fired upon.

STAKES: Failure to rendezvous at FOB Saber in a timely fashion will result in delays, setting the operation's timetable back and potentially narrowing the window of opportunity to rescue Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee. (GM Note: This will be changed to "Failure to clear an approach corridor to FOB Saber through Sovereignty defenses will result in additional casualties and delays for second-wave reinforcements arriving from the *Rio Grande*" during the events of **BEAT: BROKEN SKY** [p. 21].)

REWARD: Once the players arrive at FOB Saber, the situation on the ground will be evaluated and field upgrades distributed accordingly, bringing the PCs up to **LL1**. At his discretion, 1st Lt. Kim may also authorize the distribution of advanced weapons and systems as **EXOTIC GEAR**.

RESERVES: The PCs don't have the opportunity to bring any reserves into play at the moment.

YOU ARE THE CAVALRY

Some players may ask that if Union forces have a ship in orbit whether they can expect to be provided with orbital fire support, or perhaps with air support from its fighters and bombers. For several reasons, this isn't an option. Firstly, like most naval carriers, the *Rio Grande* is minimally armed. While outfitted with an array of point-defense cannons capable of intercepting smaller vessels and inbound munitions, the majority of its force projection lies with its wings of strike craft rather than weapons capable of providing fire support from orbit. Additionally, the area of operation for this mission is a densely populated urban environment, and Union's rules of engagement regarding orbital bombardment are held to strict standards; even precision orbit-to-surface strikes are frequently high splash, with a corresponding high risk of collateral damage. Lastly, naval strike craft aren't typically designed to be used in-atmosphere. While some examples of transatmospheric aerospace fighters and bombers do exist, the *Rio Grande*'s complement are limited to exoatmospheric operations only. Once the PCs deploy onto Cressidium, they'll be on their own.



Standard orbit-to-surface deployment protocols would be to ferry troops down to the surface in landing craft at designated operating bases for assignment and, in the case of pilots, chassis printing as required. At least that's how it's supposed to happen, but right now the area of operation is too hot to risk a conventional landing and the clock is ticking fast. With the situation on the ground growing more critical by the hour, the XO has decided that a combat-ready strike force of mechanized chassis and marines will be fast-deployed via dropships to secure the area, locate the captain and the ambassador, and extract for pickup.

Your squad has been selected to be a part of this speartip. Your mechs are prepped and loaded aboard the dropship, ready for deployment. Through your chassis' camera feeds, strapped securely into the cockpit, you watch as the hatches slide closed around you and the hangar airlocks open for launch. From up here, Cressidium looks peaceful – a shimmering jewel hanging in space.

"Ten seconds to drop."

You take a breath as the pilot counts down. Inhale. Exhale. Then your stomach lurches as the clamps disengage and the dropship's thrusters kick into full burn.

The ride is smooth at first: atmospheric insertion nominal, no anti-orbital defenses rising to greet you. It's all very textbook, straight out of the simulators. But the closer you get to the drop zone the hotter things become, the pilots having to adjust their course to avoid greater concentrations of incoming fire. The ship jukes hard to narrowly avoid another incoming missile and for a moment you think you're in the clear, then a blinding beam of light suddenly lashes up from somewhere down below and an explosion rips through the hull.

"Shit! Starboard engine's blown, stabilizers aren't responding! Mayday, mayday, this is Kingfisher 2-2! We are going down, repeat, we are going—"

The crash is sudden and violent, slamming you around inside the cockpit of your chassis, but your cockpit is also what saves you as the dropship hits the ground hard with the sound of screeching metal. What's left of the dropship finally skids to a halt and just as suddenly it's all over, leaving you reeling and bruised. Your cockpit readouts blare with collision alarms and your ears are ringing, but you're all still alive and your mech is still in one piece.

With nothing but static on all frequencies, you can assume that help isn't coming. For now, you're on your own. Time to get to work, pilot.

The mission begins with the PCs' dropship being shot down, forcing them to crash land. They find themselves in **Kirman Plaza**, far off course from their intended drop zone. With intense comms jamming in full effect and the city under siege, the PCs are cut off from the main unit and unable to call for assistance.

This doesn't mean they're helpless, though. They've all survived the crash unharmed save for some superficial injuries, and their mechs are fully intact and operational. The dropship pilots weren't as lucky, unfortunately, and were killed on impact. The dropship itself has also been destroyed; none of its systems are operational, and nothing useful can be salvaged from the wreckage. Sounds of gunfire and explosions can periodically be heard in the distance.

Give the PCs a few moments to get their bearings and take everything in. They may want to collect dog tags from the deceased pilots, take stock of their surroundings, and begin to formulate a plan of action. Though their landing didn't go as planned, they still have a mission to pursue; right now their first order of business is finding a way to link up with the main unit in this sector. According to their briefings and their onboard maps, there should be a forward operating base, FOB Saber, within the area, though it's going to require moving through the city on foot in order to reach it now.

Before the PCs can set out, a burst of gunfire sails narrowly overhead, interrupting them. Enemy forces have been sent to investigate the crash, and several squads of mechs are now closing in on all sides. The PCs will have to hold their ground and drive off the enemy before they can proceed any further. Their first objective is to survive.

PRE-COMBAT PREPARATIONS

Some astute players may anticipate that a fight is imminent and wish to preemptively fortify the area using systems like mines or turrets. By default, systems and abilities can't be placed or switched on before combat begins, as the actions required to deploy or activate them are considered part of the cost of utilizing them. If you wish to allow players to begin a fight with a certain number of pre-deployed or activated systems, this can be handled either as special Reserves (*Lancer*, p. 52), as a reward for succeeding at various narrative challenges between combat encounters, or as part of a special encounter where the players are given the chance to prepare the battlefield in advance.



COMBAT 1

IT'S NOT THE FALL THAT KILLS YOU...

SITREP: Holdout (*Lancer*, p. 272)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 2x **ASSAULTS** (Rank Discipline)
1x **BASTION** (Deathcounter)
1x **HIVE** (Electro-Nanite Cloud)
For 4 PCs: +1x **SUPPORT** (Latch Drone)
For 5 PCs: +1x **HIVE** (Electro-Nanite Cloud)

REINFORCEMENTS

For 3–4 PCs: 1x **BOMBARD** (High-Impact Shells)
1x **PRIEST** (Empowered Shield)
1x **PYRO** (Explosive Jet)
1x **RONIN** (Chaff Launchers)
For 5 PCs: +2x **ASSAULT** Grunts
+2x **RONIN** Grunts

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone/Objective Zone (PDZ/OZ)** and can place their mechs however they like. This area is fortified with **hard cover** provided by the wreckage of the dropship and nearby rubble. The initial group of enemy forces is placed in one of the two **Enemy Deployment Zones (EDZs)** along the right side of the map, while the second group is held in reserve as reinforcements.

The objective for the PCs is to securely hold the **PDZ/OZ** for **six rounds**. They can also succeed by destroying all enemy forces. If they fail, they will still be able to continue on with the rest of the mission, but it will force them to hastily fall back to avoid being overrun.

*As this is an introductory fight, it's a good opportunity to remind less experienced or familiar Lancer players about important basic rules such as cover, the **SCAN** action, and their mech traits. One example is the **GMS Everest's INITIATIVE** trait, which allows them to take a quick action of their choice as a free action 1/scene. This can allow them to **SKIRMISH** or **INVADE** an additional time, to **BOOST** if they need more movement, to deploy or use a system, and so on. Using **INITIATIVE** doesn't cost anything, so remind the players that they may as well use it when they see a good opening. **OVERCHARGE** is another source of additional actions, and at this point in the mission the heat cost for doing so is very low, though it will increase the more the players push their mechs beyond their limits.*

*Each **FRAME** also has a powerful **CORE SYSTEM**, a special ability that, in most cases, can only be used once per mission. The **Everest**, for example, has a **POWER UP** ability that increases its overall effectiveness for the duration of an entire combat scene, giving it enhanced **ACCURACY** on all attacks, checks, and saves, and a free **BOOST** on each of its turns. Players can choose when to use **CORE SYSTEMS** and may wish to save them for later; you may want to remind them that this won't be the only fight they'll be getting into during this mission, if they aren't aware.*

In combat, enemy **ASSAULT** units will attempt to stick close to cover and their **BASTION** ally, while the **HIVE** will use **DRONE BARRAGE** and **RAZOR SWARMS** to disrupt the PCs, creating zones that protect its allies and damage enemies. **RANK DISCIPLINE** also gives the **ASSAULTS** additional **ACCURACY** on attacks, checks, and saves while adjacent to allied mechs, and the **HIVE** becomes even more dangerous up close with the use of **ELECTRO-NANITE CLOUD**. The **SUPPORT** does no damage itself, though it can **RAM** and **GRAPPLE**, but it can keep the **HP** of its allies topped up with **RESTOCK DRONES** and **LATCH DRONES** to make them harder to kill. Keeping a **SUPPORT** close by an **ASSAULT** is also a good way to give the former the benefit of **RANK DISCIPLINE** alongside its **NANO-REPAIR CLOUD** trait.

The ultimate goal of the NPCs is to occupy the **PDZ/OZ**, so they won't simply remain on the outside shooting in, but neither will they recklessly charge without regard for cover, especially if the PCs have powerful ranged weapons at their disposal.

REINFORCEMENTS

Enemy reinforcements can be brought in at the start of any round, but you may wish to wait until the start of the second round to give the players a chance to adjust to things. You can bring in up to two NPCs at a time anywhere in the **Ingress Zones (IZs)** that run most of the way around the map, or from the initial **EDZs**. This allows reinforcements to enter the fight from flanking angles, and you can choose which reinforcements to bring in based on the situation and the PCs' tactics.

GM TIPS

The **BOMBARD** is an artillery unit that does more damage against clustered targets. While it's unlikely to want to advance into the **PDZ/OZ** itself, it can provide support fire for its allies from a distance. Be advised, though, that **BOMBARD** attacks don't distinguish between friend and foe. The **PRIEST**, on the other hand, has powerful defensive capabilities that can be used to enhance and protect allies, though doing so requires it to remain close by. This protection can be used to guard against the PCs' attacks, but can also protect closer-ranged allies from the **BOMBARD**'s friendly fire if necessary.

RONIN are fast, hard-hitting melee units that will seek to close the gap quickly, putting additional pressure on the players. **RONIN** can prove especially hard to deal with using ranged weapons, as their **REBOUND** ability both gives them **RESISTANCE to ranged attacks** and also sends damage back the way it came.

The **PYRO** is a dangerous, resilient NPC that can protect allies with its **FIREBREAK SHIELD** and deal burn damage over a wide area, synergizing with the burn dealt by the **HIVE**. **EXPLOSIVE JETS** allows it to move rapidly, keeping pace with faster units, but its **RECHARGE** limit means you won't always be able to count on having access to it. Look for good opportunities to use **RECHARGE** abilities while they're available, and have a plan for when they aren't.

GRUNTS present players with a unique threat that hits as hard as a normal enemy, but dies to a single point of damage or heat, including from **RELIABLE** weapons like the **GMS ASSAULT RIFLE**. As easy as they are to kill, **GRUNTS** left unchecked can do significant damage. Spacing them close together also makes them more vulnerable to area-of-effect weapons such as mortars, howitzers, and RPGs. As such, consideration should be given to how you deploy them as their proximity to one another can make them easier or harder to handle depending on what the players are equipped with and how challenging you want to make the fight.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If the PCs successfully hold their position for six rounds, any remaining hostiles are forced to retreat. Among the wreckage, the PCs find an intact target designator that one of the enemy mechs was carrying. This designator can be patched into one of their mechs and used to signal for an artillery strike using the enemy's own guns, though it will only work once before they figure out that their own weapons have been turned against them. Treat this as a **BOMBARDMENT** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 52).

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail, they are forced to abandon their position under constant artillery fire. Each player must roll a **d6**. On **1–3**, they're hit by enemy fire while retreating and must either take **1 structure damage** (this *does not* cause a structure damage check) or destroy all weapons on one mount of their choice. On **4+**, they make it out unscathed.

VSAF C-60 KERBEROS (ASSAULT NPC)



The standard frontline mechanized chassis in service with the Vestan Sovereignty Armed Forces, the C-60 Kerberos (commonly referred to as "roundheads" by LSA troopers) is a rugged and reliable design, if somewhat top-heavy, and is often used to spearhead assaults and storm entrenched positions, clearing the way for additional forces to follow up. Its reinforced frame is outfitted with panels of ablative armor that can be angled to absorb and deflect incoming fire, though doing so necessitates frequent replacement and maintenance downtime. Standard loadout for Kerberos pilots is based around a heavy-caliber ballistic automatic rifle and a composite alloy close-combat blade, with frame- and weapon-integrated mounting points for additional armaments based on mission profile.

BEAT 1

ON THE MOVE IN A MILITARY MANNER

With their first battle behind them, the PCs have a chance to catch their breath as they make their way through the city. During a mission, the time between combat scenes allows pilots to rest (*Lancer*, p. 82), repairing damage and preparing for the next engagement. It can also be an opportunity for the GM to provide characters with narrative challenges. These challenges can influence future scenes, provide PCs with additional intelligence or resources, and flesh out the scope and stakes of missions beyond simply combat.

Nov Elysia is a modern city on par with any Core world metropolis. Tall, gleaming buildings rise over precisely ordered streets and thoroughfares, all built in a grandiose, somewhat outsized architectural style that hints at the planet's SecComm history. Under better circumstances the city might be beautiful, but now a grimy haze of dust and smoke hangs in the air. Empty cars line the roads, signs of a hasty evacuation, while civil defense warnings urging people to take shelter loop endlessly across electronic advertisement screens interspersed with automated advertisements. This close to the thick of the fighting, more and more buildings have been damaged in the crossfire, and broken glass and debris crunch beneath the feet of the PCs' mechs as they traverse the environment. As with all urban combat, the dissonance between a place where people live and work and the violating encroachment of weapons of war makes for a tense and unsettling atmosphere.

The jamming that the PCs have been experiencing since their landing remains a constant; any attempts to raise comms with anyone beyond their own immediate area are drowned by static, and even long-range sensors are patchy and full of ghosts. Omninet signals aren't affected by the jamming, however, and the PCs can still communicate with the *Rio Grande* via the omnihook that they were assigned.

As they make their way through the downtown area, the PCs round a corner and find a broken-down bus stalled out, with several soldiers hastily attempting to repair the engine. They drop their tools and throw their hands in the air before the PCs have a chance to act, interposing themselves between the mechs and the bus. Frightened passengers look back at the players through the windows and duck down with cries of alarm.

"Woah woah woah, don't shoot! Don't shoot, please! There are civilians on board!"

Based on their uniforms and markings, the PCs can easily identify the soldiers as belonging to the LSA, not the Sovereignty. Once the PCs make it clear that they're Union pilots sent from the *Rio Grande*, the soldiers tell them that they were sent out as part of a larger convoy to escort civilians to defense shelters when they were ambushed and cut off from the others. They've been trying to make their way to a nearby shelter on their own but it's been slow-going as they skirt around the fighting, and now the bus has broken down. They need help to escort their passengers to safety.

Escorting the civilians to safety can be handled one of two ways, either narratively as an **extended skill challenge** (*Lancer*, p. 47) or as a **combat**. A skill challenge allows players to bring their pilots' relevant **triggers** into play along with their mech skills, and is suitable if your group wants to take a more narrative approach to problem-solving. Handling it as a skill challenge is also appropriate if you feel that three combat scenes in this mission are perhaps too many, such as if you're concerned about time or if the PCs took heavy damage in the previous battle. Missions in *Lancer* can vary in length from 2-4 combat scenes depending on how challenging the GM wishes to make things and how resourceful the players are.

If you choose to escorting the civilians as an extended skill challenge, it has three stages:

1. Repair the bus
2. Scout a safe route ahead
3. Provide an escort

The players will need to succeed in at least **two** of these stages. Refer to the **PC Victory** and **PC Defeat** results for **COMBAT 02: LOOK BOTH WAYS** (p. 20) for the consequences of either outcome.

If you wish to handle this as a tactical combat encounter instead, then use the following combat.

COMBAT 2

LOOK BOTH WAYS



SITREP: Escort (*Lancer* p. 269)

OBJECTIVES: 1x Bus (**SIZE 2**, **HP 20**)

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **ARCHER** (Hail of Fire)
1x **BARRICADE** (Drag Down)
1x **ENGINEER** (Mobile Turrets)
1x **SEEDER** (Grav Spike)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **PRIEST** (Empowered Shield)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **ASSAULT** (Rank Discipline)

REINFORCEMENTS

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **SENTINEL** (Impaler)
2x **CATAPHRACTS** (Electric Lasso)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **SENTINEL** (Impaler)

FOR 5 PCs: +2x **ASSAULT** Grunts
+2x **RONIN** Grunts

move the objective, and you may wish to point this out if it seems like the PCs are struggling to make much headway. It's also important to note that as this objective is **SIZE 2**, it can move through (but not stop in the spaces occupied by) obstructions that are smaller than itself, including other characters.

REINFORCEMENTS

There are four **Ingress Zones (IZs)** placed around the map from which enemy reinforcements can enter. At the start of any round, you can deploy one standard NPC or up to four **GRUNTS** from any **IZ**, though the same zone cannot be used twice in a row. These reinforcements can be used to flank the PCs, threatening them from positions against which they aren't as protected and diverting their attention from other NPCs or the bus.

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)** on the left side of the map, along with the mission's **Objective**, the **bus**. Enemy forces are placed in their own **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)**, situated between the players and the **Extraction Zone (EZ)** at the other end of the map. The battlefield is strewn with pieces of cover from rubble and overturned vehicles, and the enemy forces have also created an improvised firing position within their deployment zone reinforced with cover and extruded polymer fortifications from a combat chassis with mobile printing capabilities.

The goal of this encounter is to escort the bus to the **EZ** and safely extract with it by the end of the **eighth round**. Failing to accomplish this will mean that the bus cannot safely reach the emergency shelters, and the PCs will be forced to leave it behind to continue on with their mission.

The bus only moves when a character who started their turn adjacent to it makes their standard move, at which point it moves along with them. As such, it's possible for PCs to "daisy chain" the bus forward by moving it so it ends up next to another PC who hasn't taken their turn yet. This allows them to cover ground quickly, but if the bus ever ends up adjacent to characters from two opposing sides then it stops moving and can't move again until only characters from one side are next to it. The **Escort** sitrep is about teamwork, not just one PC being assigned to

GM TIPS

The **Escort** sitrep relies on the PCs being able to move along with the objective, and the enemy forces arrayed against them in this combat are designed to make it more difficult to advance forward. In combat, the **ARCHER** will start by staying close to its dug-in firing position and targeting PCs with **SUPPRESS** and **HAIL OF FIRE**, but as they get closer it will fall back to new cover positions, including those created by the **BARRICADE**. Not only can the **BARRICADE** create additional areas of cover, but its **GRAVITON LANCE** will **SLOW** PCs, and **DRAG DOWN** makes even standard movement a painful choice.

The **ENGINEER** is a striker that deploys turrets that can quickly grow to be an overwhelming force all on their own if left uncontested. Up to six turrets can be placed at a time, but they have to be placed adjacent to the **ENGINEER**, which restricts their deployment – at least until it can use **MOBILE TURRETS** to reposition them. The **SENTINEL** is a short-ranged Defender-role NPC that threatens with **OVERWATCH** and whose **IMPALER** can **IMMOBILIZE** any PCs that don't respect it. You should look to position the Sentinel in such a way that players who choose to simply run past it risk triggering **OVERWATCH**, which it can use multiple times in a round thanks to **EYE OF MIDNIGHT**.

CATAPHRACTS are mobile strikers that can move through enemy spaces without being forced to stop, allowing them to reach the back lines quickly. They can also drag PCs away from the bus using abilities

like **IMPALE** and **ELECTRIFIED LASSO**, making it harder for them to regroup. The **SEEDER** is an area controller that places mines down on the battlefield before either moving enemies onto them using its **GRAV GRENADE LAUNCHER** or **GRAV SPIKES** or by having allies like the **CATAPHRACTS** do so. Allies won't trigger a **SEEDER's** mines just by walking over them, but they can be caught in the blast when they detonate, so be mindful of that.

You may wish to remind players that **BLAST** weapons, as well as those with **ARCING** such as the GMS Mortar, can be used to attack enemies behind cover since you check for cover and line of sight from the center of the blast itself. Additionally, some PCs may have abilities like **JACKHAMMER**, from the **Siege Specialist** talent, that allow them to easily destroy chunks of cover, which can make it easier to deal with dug-in enemies. Things like the **PATTERN-A JERICHO DEPLOYABLE COVER** system or **PATTERN-A SMOKE CHARGES** can also be used to create cover where there is none, allowing PCs to advance more safely. Similarly, the ability of the **INVADE** option **FRAGMENT SIGNAL** to **IMPAIR** enemies can hinder NPCs that rely upon threatening the PCs with additional attacks, like the **ARCHER** and the **SENTINEL**.

If you want to add an additional environmental hazard to this fight, you can include a number of overturned vehicles that can act as improvised explosives if shot, marked on the map as the vehicles that are on fire. Each one is a **SIZE 1/2** object with **EVASION 5** and **E-DEFENSE 5** that explodes with a **BURST 1** area upon taking any damage or heat. All characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 explosive damage**. On a success, they take **half damage**. Both PCs and NPCs can take advantage of these improvised weapons.

Remember that the NPCs will not willingly damage the bus – their goal is to stop the PCs from extracting it, though incidental damage may occur due to area-effect weapons and systems. Likewise, if the players are about to do something that could potentially damage the bus you should remind them that they're meant to be protecting it and ask if they're sure they wish to go through with it. Destruction of the bus will result in there being no victor.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

The PCs clear a safe path for the bus and escort it through the worst of the fighting. The grateful passengers thank the PCs for their help, and from here the soldiers will be able to make their way to a nearby shelter without any further difficulties. Before they part ways, one of the soldiers gives the PCs the lay of the land, informing them of some useful side routes they can make use of on their way to reach FOB Saber. This will open up an additional **Player Deployment Zone** in the next battle, **COMBAT 03: DOWNPOUR**.

One of the passengers, a young girl, shyly gives one of the PCs a well-loved stuffed rabbit for luck. Whether they believe in such things or not, this lucky charm acts as a single-use version of the **CUSTOM PAINT JOB** system (*Lancer*, p. 120), that, once triggered, is permanently expended. If the PC also has an actual **CUSTOM PAINT JOB**, then the charm can instead be expended to automatically set the result of the **CUSTOM PAINT JOB** roll to **6**.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs don't extract the bus in time, the enemy forces prove too intractable to punch a hole through. The bus's driver, in a panic, pulls the vehicle into a hard turn down a side alley to escape the fighting. Moments later, an explosion causes part of one of the buildings to collapse, blocking the alleyway behind it. Their ultimate fate will have to remain unknown for now, as the PCs are forced to fall back towards their own objective and leaving this part of the city in enemy hands.

BEAT 2 BROKEN SKY

After another opportunity to **rest**, the PCs continue their journey as it begins to rain throughout the city. Though they've had to fight to get this far, they're now finally within reach of the intended initial drop point, and as they get closer they can see why this mission has been more difficult than expected.

Ahead of them is a train depot, through which is the most direct route to FOB Saber, and perched aboard a train car is a mechanized chassis outfitted with missile launchers. Another Union dropship flies overhead, part of a new wave dispatched from the *Rio Grande*. They've made it farther into the city by air than the first wave did, but with no way to punch through the comms jamming and not enough time for an omnihook-relayed message to reach them, the PCs can only watch as the mech takes position, tracks the dropship, and launches a salvo of missiles at it. The pilots attempt to evade, but like their own dropship it takes fire and begins to fall.

Moments later, the PCs hear the crash and a plume of smoke begins to rise in the distance.

Sovereignty forces have deployed mobile missile batteries all throughout the city along with their other forces, and those units are preventing any dropships from making effective landings within the area of operations. This particular battery is positioned in such a way that it's locking down the approach corridor to FOB Saber, which means that – as long as it remains active – it won't be possible to touch down near the base without serious danger.

There are other mechs deployed near the missile battery as well, arrayed in defensive positions throughout the depot. If the PCs are going to reach FOB Saber and prevent more of their reinforcements from being shot down, they'll need to clear the area first.



COMBAT 3 DOWNPOUR

SITREP: n/a

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **HIVE** (Driving Swarm, Seeker Cloud)
1x **VETERAN RAINMAKER** (+1 **ACCURACY** to **AGILITY** checks/saves, Hades Missiles, Lightning Reflexes)

1x **ELITE SENTINEL** (Punisher Ammunition, Rapid Response)

1x **SPECTER** (Weakness Analyzer)

For 4 PCs: **SENTINEL:** Add **COMMANDER** template and **QUICK MARCH** trait.

+1x **ARCHER** (Impending Threat)

For 5 PCs: **RAINMAKER:** Add **ELITE** template and **ENDLESS RAIN** trait.

+1x **RONIN** (Chaff Launchers)

+2x **ASSAULT GRUNTS**

The primary objective of the PCs in this combat is to eliminate the **RAINMAKER** NPC and the rest of the enemy units stationed here. While simply destroying the **RAINMAKER** on its own won't mean instant victory, its destruction will ensure that even if the PCs are defeated or forced to retreat they will have neutralized the anti-air defenses within this area, allowing further reinforcements to safely land.

There are two **Player Deployment Zones (PDZs)** for this combat. **PDZ A** is always available for the PCs to deploy in at the start of the combat. If the PCs successfully assisted the bus during the previous beat, **BEAT 1: ON THE MOVE IN A MILITARY MANNER**, they will know about a flanking route they can exploit without alerting the enemy in advance. In this case, one PC can deploy to **PDZ B** if they wish, giving them a direct sightline to the **RAINMAKER**.

Aside from the **RAINMAKER**, which has its own dedicated **Deployment Zone**, you are free to deploy the NPCs however you wish as long as they are **10 spaces or more away from the PDZs**. This is a chance to experiment with NPC deployment and positioning. Keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the NPCs comprising the enemy force here and how you can best utilize them to challenge the PCs, as well as being mindful of cover and line of sight, and how you can use those to your advantage.

GM TIPS

The **RAINMAKER** itself has taken up position behind several train cars big enough to block line of sight. Each train car is **3 spaces high**, and each **SIZE 1**

section of train car has **5 Evasion** and **10 HP** if anyone tries to blow holes in them to create sightlines, though this might take some time depending on the weapons used. The **RAINMAKER's MISSILE PODS** have **ARCING**, which means it can be used to attack without needing line of sight, nor does it need line of sight to use its **HADES MISSILES**. Furthermore, targeting PCs with **LOCK ON** gives its **Missile Pods SEEKING, SMART, and AP**, which means it not only ignores line of sight but also all cover penalties. Keep in mind that this ability even works if the Rainmaker consumes the **LOCK ON** for additional **ACCURACY**, as **LOCK ON** is only removed from the target after the attack is fully resolved.

Because of this, the **RAINMAKER** can afford to remain out of sight behind the train cars and still attack the PCs, especially if other NPCs apply **LOCK ON** to them either by taking the **QUICK TECH** action to do so or by using things like the **HIVE's SEEKER CLOUD**. However, the **RAINMAKER's JAVELIN ROCKETS** do require line of sight to their destination. These rockets can deny areas on the map, forming a potent combination together with the **MISSILE PODS'** ability to knock targets back into them, so the **RAINMAKER** has a choice: it can either seek to remain as safe as possible, or it can try to maneuver itself to where it has line of sight (such as the gap between the train cars) to launch **JAVELIN ROCKETS** and set up a combo attack, but risk being attacked in turn.

The PCs can also try to use indirect fire with **ARCING** weapons to hit the **RAINMAKER** from behind its cover, or they can attempt to flank it by moving around and past the train cars, but the **HIVE** and **SENTINEL** will do everything they can to prevent this as long as possible. They can do this by cutting off the PCs' movement through a combination of positioning, the **SENTINEL's OVERWATCH** attacks enhanced by **PUNISHER AMMUNITION**, forced movement with **DRONE BARRAGE**, and deploying **RAZOR SWARMS**.

There is another approach that the PCs could take: located within the depot is a **Turntable Control Panel** that can be used to rotate the turntable upon which one of the train cars rests, shifting the train car and anything else on it by 90 degrees. This can open up clearer sightlines and potentially even expose the **RAINMAKER** to unobstructed direct fire if it happens to be standing on the turntable when it rotates. An adjacent mech with the **MANIPULATORS** system or a dismounted pilot on foot can use the controls as a quick action with no check required. Other PCs must succeed on an **AGILITY check** as a **full action** while adjacent to the terminal in order to make use of the human-sized controls with their mech's hands.

Additionally, once during the combat, a PC within the marked **Crane Control Zone** can interface with the nearby automated cargo and maintenance crane as a

quick action. This can be done either by a dismantled pilot or from within a mech. Interfacing with the crane allows them to use it to lift one of the specially designated train cars and remove it from the map entirely. While this won't expose the **RAINMAKER**, it can open up the map and make it easier for players to maneuver around things like **RAZOR SWARMS** and **JAVELIN ROCKETS** that they might otherwise be funneled into.

This combat introduces several NPC templates that make NPCs tougher and grant additional capabilities beyond what they normally have access to. Both the **RAINMAKER** and the **SENTINEL** have templates that give them additional **STRUCTURE** and **STRESS**, making them harder to kill, and the **RAINMAKER**'s additional **LIGHTNING REFLEXES** trait gives the comparatively fragile artillery unit an additional layer of protection against heavy and superheavy weapons. As an **ELITE** NPC, the **SENTINEL** gains no new abilities but takes two separate turns each round instead of one, making it a significantly more dangerous opponent. Compensating for its short range, **RAPID RESPONSE** allows it to quickly reposition itself once per round in order to more effectively threaten anyone trying to move past it or soften it up from a distance.

If the **COMMANDER** template comes into play, don't forget to make use of its abilities. In addition to granting the **SENTINEL** even more **STRUCTURE** and **STRESS**, the **VOICE OF AUTHORITY** feature allows it to give its allies rerolls on attacks, while **QUICK MARCH** gives enemy forces even more options for repositioning (but only with line of sight, remember).

This combat also introduces the **INVISIBLE** and **HIDDEN** conditions. The **SPECTER**'s **TACTICAL CLOAK** makes it permanently **INVISIBLE**, the benefits of which apply against all attacks – ranged, melee, and tech – and can provide considerable protection to even fragile characters. However, this only applies to attacks, which means that PC actions that force saves (such as **PATTERN-B HEX CHARGES**) still work without penalty. **RELIABLE** weapons also continue to deal damage when they miss **INVISIBLE** targets, meaning weapons like the **GMS ASSAULT RIFLE** or **GMS PISTOL** can steadily add up as well. Characters that are **HIDDEN**, which requires sufficient cover or the **INVISIBLE** condition, cannot be targeted directly, although they can hit by attacks and affected by systems which affect an area such as mortars and grenades.

The **SPECTER**'s **WEAKNESS ANALYZER** gives its **MONOWIRE SWORD** additional **ACCURACY** and critical damage when the **SPECTER** is **HIDDEN**, making it even more of a danger if not dealt with promptly. **SPECTERS** also gain additional damage when preying on isolated targets, which the **RAINMAKER** or **HIVE** can help set up through forced movement.

You may wish to remind the players of the **SCAN** action if they seem to be struggling with the

unfamiliar abilities of these template-enhanced NPCs. Remember that NPC classes and templates are public knowledge, available to players on request, but details of specific weapons, systems, and traits can be kept hidden unless **SCANNED** for.

OUTCOME

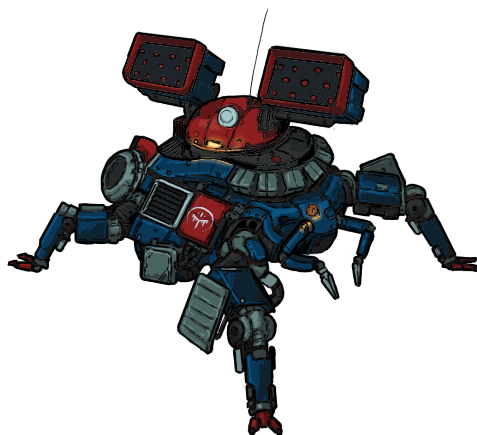
PC VICTORY

If the PCs eliminate all enemies, they will have neutralized the missile battery and punched a hole through the enemy's anti-air defenses. Additional reinforcements arriving through this corridor will be able to land without risk of being shot down, and the way is also clear to proceed directly to FOB Saber. If the PCs defeat every enemy by the end of the **fifth round**, they earn **one additional Exotic Gear selection** (refer to **Downtime: FOB Saber**, p. 25, for details).

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs are unsuccessful or are forced to retreat without destroying the **RAINMAKER**, enemy anti-air coverage remains unabated. They can still make their way to FOB Saber by a longer and less direct route. Reinforcements are forced to break off their approach and touch down elsewhere or risk being shot down. Further casualties are incurred, and it's a weary and wounded force that winds its way toward the base late into the night under the drumbeat of constant rain.

VSAF C-47 TYFONAS (RAINMAKER NPC)



The C-47 Tyfonas mobile missile platform is a cornerstone of Vestan seize-and-hold and area-denial doctrines, presenting a broad portfolio of threat response options. Built with a low profile for additional stability and designed for traversal across uneven terrain, the Tyfonas' multi-role guided missile batteries can be equipped for a variety of tasks including anti-air coverage, direct and indirect fire-support, and strategic counter-battery missions. Though versatile, the Tyfonas' slow overland speed and lack of armor render it vulnerable to direct assault in the absence of accompanying escort units.

DOWNTIME: FOB SABER



The sun is setting by the time you finally reach the coordinates on your tac map, within Nov Elysia's industrial district. The sprawling complex is abuzz with activity; people moving pallets of supplies from one area to another, squads of soldiers jogging by on their way to rally points or returning from patrols, industrial cargo loaders trundling along with pre-fabricated fortification components to shore up perimeter defenses.

As soon as you get within shooting distance, your systems are bombarded with automated identification queries, and just as quickly your IFF codes are transmitted and authenticated. A dozen targeting warnings vanish off your sensors as the defenses surrounding the base stand down, and for the first time since you landed on Cressidium you feel like you can relax, if only for a moment.

Through your screens you see Staff Sergeant Garcia waving you over. "I see you hotshots took the scenic route, but it's good to see you all the same. We've still got units scattered all over the city, it's a real hell of a mess. For right now, follow Vonna," he says, gesturing to the well-built woman standing nearby. "She'll show you to the repair bay and get your chassis squared away, and then after that we'll get some food in you. Welcome to FOB Saber."

Forward Operating Base Saber isn't an official military base in the strictest sense. Instead, the Amanta Motors automotive factory has been hastily put into service as an impromptu FOB for forces in this part of the city to rally around, acting as a crucial staging and resupply point for the city's defenders and scattered Union forces.

In addition to the factory's size and relative defensibility, there's another crucial reason why it was chosen as an operating base: During the earlier negotiations, Ambassador Bannerjee had a single GMS schedule 1 printer delivered down to Nov Elysia and brought to the factory to showcase its capabilities to the delegates in attendance, demonstrating the advances Union was offering as a benefit of membership. As a result, this is currently the only schedule-tier printer on the entire planet.

Once the invasion began, both Union's and the factory's engineers have had the printer running hot, feeding it raw material and printing out additional fortifications to supplement the factory's defenses as well as spare mech parts, weapons, and ammunition. While there are typically limits on the amount that can be printed at any one time, Union technicians have been pushing it beyond its standard output thresholds at the risk of drastically shortening its lifespan; these are desperate circumstances and they call for desperate measures. The factory's chief engineer, **Vonna Mayhew**, was here when the attack began and elected to stay behind to help rather than evacuate to a shelter, and she's currently overseeing chassis repairs and rearmament with a mix of military and civilian engineers.

In addition to performing a **FULL REPAIR**, each PC levels up to **LL1**. This grants various benefits, including the opportunity to purchase a **license rank** of their choice (*Lancer*, p. 31). The printer's omninet connection with the *Rio Grande* remains unaffected by the jamming, and Rio informs the players that 1st Lt. Kim has authorized (and prioritized) additional loadout permissions for them, which can be printed and equipped to their mechs as they undergo repair and refit. This is the first opportunity that players will have to begin customizing their mechs with non-GMS equipment, a major part of character advancement in *Lancer*.

Reaching **LL1** also grants PCs with a new **talent rank**, **+1 to a mech skill point** of their choice, **+2 to an existing pilot trigger** or **a new trigger at +2**, and their **first point of GRIT** (+1). **GRIT** is added to a mech's **HP**, **SP**, **save target**, and **attack rolls**, making it a very important stat in both combat and mech construction. At this point, players still won't have access to **FRAMES** from any manufacturers other than GMS as those other only become available when taking the second rank of a mech's license (e.g. a **rank II** license in the **IPS-N BLACKBEARD**), but between a new license rank, new talents, and additional mech skill points, the players should be well on their way to personalizing their mechs to suit their own desired playstyles.

At any point during a **FULL REPAIR**, players are able to completely overhaul their mechs however they like, swapping out weapons, systems, and **FRAMES** for any other options they have access to in any combination.

EXOTIC GEAR

In this particular case, the players don't just level up; they also gain access to several pieces of **EXOTIC GEAR**, advanced systems 1st Lt. Kim has authorized for their use during this mission. Weapons and systems with the **EXOTIC GEAR** tag represent tech that exists outside the traditional licensing system and can be awarded for completing various missions and objectives.

All examples of **EXOTIC GEAR** in this book are brand new systems, but you can also reward characters with existing weapons and systems they don't have already have access to by applying this tag. For example, if a character wants to take **SHOCK KNIVES** from the **SSC METALMARK** but doesn't have the licenses to use them, you can offer them that reward as **EXOTIC GEAR** instead.

While **EXOTIC GEAR** is a great reward for running missions, giving it out freely can rapidly increase PCs' power levels as it gives them wider access to gear or weapons than they would usually have at their current **LL**.

XC-BR Battle Rifle

Main Rifle, AP, Exotic Gear, Overkill
[Range 10][1d6 kinetic damage]

On critical hit: Your target gains **Lock On**.

Additionally, you may attack characters with **Lock On** using this weapon as though it is **RANGE 15**.

.....
The GMS MC-AR assault rifle currently in use throughout Union's forces and beyond is a time-tested and reliable design. Rather than attempting to replace it outright, CentComm's Defense Logistics Committee has put out a call for a supplementary standardized battle rifle system that can operate alongside the MC-AR in mixed fireteams, or as a primary weapon system for engaging heavily armored opposition at longer ranges than the MC-TR thermal rifle. The XC-BR uses an advanced caseless electrochemical propellant design capable of firing larger-caliber, armor-defeating rounds while minimizing recoil along with an integrated dynamic targeting system, though the weapon is still plagued by intermittent heat issues that can adversely affect performance.

ADJUTANT-Class Comp/Con

3 SP, AI, Exotic Gear, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **ACTIVE ASSIST**.

Additionally, you may load one talent rank you qualify for but do not have onto this system's ontologic bridge. You gain access to that talent while piloting your mech. If this system is destroyed, neither this talent nor any systems or mech capabilities it grants can be used until it's repaired. You may choose a different talent rank whenever you take a **FULL REPAIR**.

This system isn't a full NHP and cannot enter **cascade**.

.....
A major cornerstone of GMS's advanced technology initiative is the planned development of a next-generation companion/concierge system to replace the standard EPIPHANY-Class C/C currently in use by Union pilots. For reasons both practical as well as ethical, widespread dissemination of chassis-compatible C/C systems is currently being pushed by Union CentComm over military NHP design, and the ADJUTANT is the latest model to be approved for limited field trials following First Contact Accords compliance evaluation. Utilizing a new-model ontologic bridge framework, ADJUTANT allows for the use of selected simulat/reflex architectures to be uploaded to an engrammatic matrix for compatible pilot integration along both first- and second-tier neural processes. Long-term effects of repeated engrammatic synthesis are currently unknown, but early feedback is promising with test pilots reporting minimal difficulty expressing previously unheld aptitudes.

Active Assist

Free Action

1/scene, you may take a **quick action** of your choice. This action cannot be an attack or force any saves.

Pattern-C Advanced Charges

3 SP, Exotic Gear, Limited 3, Unique

Expend a charge from this system for one of the following effects:

- **Smart Grenade** (*Grenade, Range 5, Blast 1*): All hostile characters within the affected area must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or take **1d6 energy damage** and gain **LOCK ON**. On a success, they gain **LOCK ON** only.
- **Lurker Mine** (*Mine, Burst 1*): This mine does not detonate as normal. Instead, gain the **SELECTIVE DETONATION** reaction, which can be performed once per deployed lurker mine.

.....
GMS's latest intelligent munition system is a self-contained, multi-mode weapon designed to be easily deployable from a variety of chassis. Boasting advanced decision-making capabilities, each drone-tier charge is capable of independent target selection and interception, maintaining regular pilot-in-the-loop protocols to ensure optimal detonation parameters.

Selective Detonation

Reaction, 1/round per mine

Trigger: A character enters the lurker mine's space or an adjacent space, or begins their turn there.

Effect: The mine detonates and affected characters must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 explosive damage**. On a success, they take **half damage**.

TAG: EXOTIC GEAR

EXOTIC GEAR: Once acquired, this system becomes a permanent part of the character, but does not increase their **LL** or count as a **license rank** for the purposes of gaining **core bonuses**. If it is destroyed or damaged, it can be repaired or reprinted as any other gear with no penalty. **EXOTIC GEAR** can only be installed or removed during a **FULL REPAIR**, like any other gear. Characters may install up to two pieces of gear with the **Exotic Gear** tag at a time, but can own any number of pieces with the tag.

XC-DPM Predator Nexus

Main Nexus, Accurate, Exotic Gear, Smart
[Range 10][1d6 kinetic damage]

Attacks with this weapon ignore **INVISIBLE**.

.....
One of GMS's most advanced nexus weapons currently undergoing field-testing, the XC-DPM Predator project is the direct descendant of the earlier MC-DHK Hunter-Killer program, itself a joint venture between the Advanced Projects Special Research Agency and GMS engineers. The Predator nexus benefits from a comprehensive targeting and autonomy upgrade, incorporating MD+ "Muse Drive" smart weapon design. This system's heuristics, though declared Turing-Null, display startlingly advanced target acquisition capabilities even when confronted with active countermeasures that might otherwise confound traditional smart weapon platforms.

LOOKING AROUND

The PCs now also have an opportunity to explore FOB Saber, talk to some of the characters here (or among themselves), and participate in one **downtime action** each (*Lancer*, p. 53–55). Downtime actions are ways for PCs to begin long-term projects and acquire **RESERVES** – special supplies and advantages that can be utilized during the upcoming mission. Even in an ad hoc military base in the middle of an active war zone, there's always a way for creative and determined pilots to get a damn drink.

If the players successfully destroyed the **RAINMAKER** during **COMBAT 03: DOWNPOUR**, the mood at the base is optimistic. Further Union forces arrive throughout the evening, able to land in relative safety thanks to the actions of the PCs. If they weren't able to neutralize the missile battery, the mood is much more somber. Reinforcements arrive more slowly and with more casualties, and the base's medics work tirelessly through the night tending to the wounded. Either way, the sounds of combat continue to be heard across the city, from the staccato report of gunfire to the occasional thunderclap of explosions in the distance.

During this downtime period, the PCs can also explore FOB Saber and converse with NPCs if they wish. You can have each PC roll on the table below to find out what sorts of things they encounter while attending to their own business, or you can choose results off the table if you feel particular encounters would be appropriate.

FOB SABER ENCOUNTERS

1-2: "I need two units O neg! And you, grab that pad and put pressure on that wound!" Either because you came across it while exploring or because you were taken there for injuries of your own, you find yourself in the base's makeshift triage station just as a wounded soldier is hurriedly brought in. They're bleeding badly and medics are short in supply, so you're briefly drafted as an additional pair of hands – applying pressure to the wound, lifting and turning them when told to, and fetching supplies as needed. Your hands and your uniform are bloody by the time you're done, but the soldier is stabilized and the medics send you on your way with a grateful nod.

3-4: Your quest for fresh air takes you to the roof of the main factory complex, where several soldiers in rain ponchos are stationed on lookout, scanning the perimeter through scopes. "You got a light?" one of them asks as you wander close to get a better look at the city in the distance. The cigarette smoke vanishes quickly in the rain that's still coming down. "Man, take a look at this shit," the lookout says and hands his binoculars over for you to look through. The city is illuminated in light-amplified greens that bloom white with distant explosions. Gunfire pops and streaks streaks across the night sky, and you can just make out dark mechanical shapes stalking between the buildings.

5-6: Not being a proper military base, FOB Saber doesn't really have a mess hall, but a cafeteria for the factory workers is the next best thing. A mix of soldiers and civilians have set up shop in the kitchens, and as you make your way down there in search of something to eat you can smell the unfamiliar but appetizing scents of food you've never had before. Even though most of it is frozen and pre-packaged fare, it's still a step up from MREs, and some enterprising cooks have even whipped up a local stew of some sort (or as close an approximation as they can manage given the circumstances). Most importantly, they have plenty of coffee.

7-8: "Come to check up on 'er, huh? Don't worry, she'll be good as new. Hell, these mechs of yours practically build themselves." Vonna Mayhew doesn't seem to mind the company in the engineering bay where your mech is being gone over by technicians. The temperature in here is sweltering thanks to the printer running far beyond normal tolerances, and it's hard to say whether it's better or worse than being out in the rain. Vonna's happy to let you pitch in if you prefer giving your mech a personal tune-up, and over the din of machinery she's happy to tell you about Nov Elysia and what it's like when there isn't a war on, including her favorite bar and a restaurant she recommends you try.

9-10: “Wow, you guys are really Union, huh? Gotta be honest, I didn’t think you actually existed. Y’know, not anymore.” Private Regas is wired on stims, scared from his first taste of real combat, and excited to meet people hailing from a vast galactic polity that local history books suggest had probably dissolved after the fall of SecComm. He’s also unsure exactly where he’s supposed to be reporting, as he was separated from his unit and made his way to FOB Saber on his own. He clings to you, peppering you with questions, eager to hear of your own exploits (even though this may be your first mission as well), and he’d be extremely grateful if you could help get him squared away.

11-12: It isn’t thunder that rolls through the base, causing everyone to freeze before running off to ready stations – it’s an explosion. Alarms go out across the complex, the orders going out over local comms fuzzy and distorted from the jamming blanketing the city. But your mech is still being repaired, not yet ready to sortie. Tired and tense, the defenders make ready for hostile contact...that never comes. It seems to take forever for the recon unit to report back that they’ve found the blast site, but no sign of the enemy. Was it an errant artillery shell? A missile that went off target? It’s impossible to say. The all-clear is sounded, the alarm silenced, and everyone warily returns to their duties.

13-14: “About time you showed up!” It’s Naia Reynaud, another chassis pilot from the Rio Grande. They’re in a pretty good mood for someone who’s newly missing an arm, though with modern medical technology being what it is, a biological or cybernetic replacement will take care of that easily enough. She wants to hear all about your trek here, and she’s got some stories of her own to share. Her dropship managed to circle around the thickest anti-air and touched down safe, but her squad was soon ambushed by Sovereignty forces packing some sort of beam weapon, which is what cost her the arm. “They must have been spec ops. It was like they were hunting for something. One of ‘em just vanished into thin air when we returned fire, real freaky shit. Watch yourself out there, yeah?”

15-16: Your wanderings have taken you into the factory’s administrative wing, which seems to have been put to use as an impromptu civilian shelter. You see clusters of people sitting on the floor or borrowed office chairs, tired and scared. Some are listening to music or reading, some talking quietly, some fruitlessly trying to find a broadcast that isn’t drowned in endless static. One of them, a woman named Zoe, approaches as she sees you and asks if you’re one of the “soldiers from the ship” and if you can help her round up some additional supplies for their group. Extra blankets, painkillers, and bottled water would be appreciated. You can tell she’s exhausted, but she’s holding it together. She has to. People are counting on her.

17-18: “Hey! Hey Union, c’mere! We need an impartial third party for this.” A group of LSA soldiers engaged in a heated debate call you over, telling you they need an outside perspective to help resolve an argument about – as best you can tell – whose partner is the cutest. You’re shown an assortment of pictures and videos on slates, regaled with stories and anecdotes, all in an attempt to sway your opinion one way or the other. The in-jokes fly fast and thick along with cultural references you have no context for, though it feels unerringly similar to arguments you witnessed (and maybe even participated in) during your academy days. No consensus is ever reached, and things eventually turn, as they so often do, to arm wrestling.

19-20: You aren’t sure where the cat came from. Nobody seems to be looking for a lost pet, so maybe it wandered into the base looking to get out of the rain and away from the fighting, but wherever it came from it seems to have taken a liking to you. It meows energetically and trots alongside you as you go, rubbing against you and pawing at your leg for attention whenever you stop. It’s a good conversation starter at the very least, and hey, when’s the last time you petted a cat anyway? Whenever an explosion rumbles in the distance it freezes for a moment and then moves even closer to you for protection, and when you eventually settle in to grab some sleep it curls up on top of you, purring contentedly.

RESERVES

ROLL D20

If your players want to gain specific items or material rewards from their downtime actions, you can use the core book's lists of **RESERVES** (*Lancer*, p. 50–52), this list, or improvise your own. Some **RESERVES** on this list have effects that will last for the duration of the upcoming mission as well as additional effects that can be activated. These have their own durations, noted in their descriptions.

1-2	Up-Armoring	It's a simple and straightforward battlefield modification to affix additional plating to a chassis' exterior. Your mech gains +1 ARMOR for the duration of the next mission (to a maximum of 4), and you start the next combat with +5 OVERSHIELD .
3-4	Hot-Load Ammunition	Adding this much additional power to a weapon's ammunition is generally not sanctioned, but it is effective. You can spend this reserve to empower your weapons. The next successful ranged or melee attack you make can't have its damage reduced in any way, and the target must pass a HULL save or be knocked PRONE . This effect ends when you hit with a ranged or melee attack roll, or at the end of the scene.
5-6	Recon Drone	With the intense signal jamming blanketing the city, these high-ceiling, long-loiter drones provide some of the best intel a pilot is likely to get. At the start of each combat, choose a single hostile character within RANGE 50 and SCAN them. This does not require line of sight.
7-8	Sniper Team	LSA ground forces and Union marines are getting a crash-course in joint operations on this mission, and nothing builds teamwork like target shooting. You can spend this reserve at the start of any combat to call upon a nearby sniper team to provide you with fire support. For the rest of the scene, each time you take the LOCK ON QUICK TECH action, your target takes 2 AP kinetic damage .
9-10	LOOKING-GLASS Overlay	This head-mounted sensor add-on is capable of defeating even advanced thermal/optic/systemic camouflage systems, though it can only operate at that level of intensity for a short duration before burning out. You can spend this reserve during any combat to activate the sensors. For the rest of the scene you ignore soft cover and ignore INVISIBLE for characters within RANGE 3 . Hostile characters within RANGE 3 can't become HIDDEN , though they remain HIDDEN if they were already.
11-12	Leg Enhancements	Mechs are already built to navigate uneven terrain, but joint and servo reinforcements can make a good thing even better. Your mech ignores difficult terrain for the duration of the upcoming mission. Additionally, once during the mission you can spend this reserve to ignore SLOWED or IMMOBILIZED received from a hostile source, negating the condition as it happens.
13-14	High-Mobility Pack	The LSA uses these externally mounted flight units for rapid assault and air-drop operations, and the schematics are easy enough to modify and print to GMS standard. You can spend this reserve at the start of any combat to count any and all of your movement as flying for the rest of that scene. Additionally, you may deploy yourself anywhere on the map after all other characters (PCs and NPCs) have deployed.
15-16	Golden Ticket	1st Lt. Kim is only authorized to distribute so many limited-access licenses, but a little off-the-books code-cloning by Rio can help stretch those licenses a bit further. You gain a piece of EXOTIC GEAR from those listed on p. 25-26.
17-18	Personal Touch	It looks like Vonna's taken a shine to you, or at the very least taken a shine to your chassis. Your mech gains a free CUSTOM PAINT JOB for the duration of the next mission, and you can also spend this reserve to gain +1 ACCURACY on all mech skill checks and saves during a combat of your choice.
19-20	Return to Sender	Using a captured artillery shell as a chassis-deployed improvised explosive device is incredibly unwise, but it's probably not the worst decision a pilot's ever made. Your mech is equipped with a powerful, single-use explosive. 1/mission , you can create a BLAST 2 explosion within RANGE 3 as a quick action . Affected characters must pass an AGILITY save or take 3d6 explosive damage , or half damage on a success. Objects, cover, and terrain within the area automatically take 30 AP explosive damage . Only one PC can have this reserve at a time; anyone rolling this result again picks another reserve of their choice from this list.

MISSION 2: DAYBREAK

MISSION BEATS

COMBAT 4: CLEAR THE AIR

BEAT 3: BOOTLEG PLAY

COMBAT 5: LEVIATHAN

BEAT 4: NEMESIS PYRE

COMBAT 6: WAKE THE FURIES

BRIEFING

Eventually the PCs manage to grab some sleep, but the sun has barely started to rise by the time they're woken up again. The rain has finally stopped, and the base buzzes with activity. Messages have been arriving by courier that LSA reinforcements have started arriving and massing just outside Nov Elysia in preparation for a coordinated push to take and secure the city's central district from Sovereignty forces. With the district back under their control, locating the captain and the ambassador should follow shortly.

The PCs aren't going to be a part of that operation, though, as 1st Lt. Kim and Rio outline during a briefing via omnihook. They have a different objective, one that's even more crucial to the success of this mission. It's time to do something about the jamming that's been blanketing the city; as long as it remains, there are concerns that, lacking the ability to properly coordinate, the LSA's push to retake the central district will be picked apart. Based on intel gathered from various Union squads following their arrival at FOB Saber, it seems the Sovereignty has deployed a network of jamming transmitter units throughout the city. Some squads managed to destroy several that they encountered on their way to the base, but that wasn't enough to bring the network down.

In order to neutralize the jamming, the entire transmitter network is going to need to be taken offline. Fortunately, Rio has put together a viral code-spike package that should be capable of disabling the network from a single transmission point. Once loaded onto the PCs' mechs, all they need to do is find a transmitter unit and upload the program, which will happen automatically. However, this will require close proximity access in order to establish a clean link, which means finding and securing a transmitter long enough for the program to upload itself.

Local LSA forces believe there to be a jamming transmitter located within striking distance of FOB Saber, but their intel also suggests that Sovereignty forces are heavily reinforcing it, including airborne units patrolling the area. Once the PCs have finished checking over their mechs and all preparations are complete, they're headed back out into the city to take this transmitter and shut down the jamming once and for all.

The sun is rising over Nov Elysia by the time you set out. The rain has finally stopped too, though the air still smells like smoke and gunfire. It'll take a lot more more to wash all of that away, but it's a start. Your nav-points are set for the target location. Word's been steadily coming in about the LSA counterattack set to push into the heart of the city. It sounds to be a big one, but as long as those jammers are still in play the Sovereignty has the advantage.

And somewhere out there, the captain and the ambassador are waiting. Maybe they're holed up in a shelter, maybe they're in enemy hands. There are other possibilities that you don't want to think about just yet. You've come too far to start second-guessing things. The mission's bigger than just a rescue op now, and others are counting on you to level the playing field.

Compared to how hard you had to fight to make it this far, the going through the city is so uneventful that at times you could almost forget there's a war on. Seems like the enemy's pulled back from this area, likely regrouping and reinforcing key strongpoints, like the one you're approaching now. As you get closer to the target area the jamming intensifies, glitching even your short-range sensors and distorting your visual feeds with artifacts and ghost images.

Then one of those ghost images opens fire, and all hell breaks loose.

MISSION OBJECTIVES: Neutralize the enemy's comms jamming network, then locate and secure Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee.

MISSION PARAMETERS: Intel places the nearest transmitter within a nearby financial/commercial district. The area is densely packed with tall buildings, and there are reports that the Vestan Sovereignty has begun to deploy air assets in defense of its strongpoints throughout the city. The existence of the jamming network also indicates that the Sovereignty forces have significant electronic warfare assets at their disposal; anticipate systemic invasion and localized sensor jamming/optical camouflage-equivalent capabilities.

STAKES: If the players fail to neutralize the enemy jamming network on schedule, the LSA advance into Nov Elysia's central district will face heavy resistance, incurring serious casualties which may hinder their ability to retake the city effectively. Should they then fail to locate and secure Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee, it will likely result in them being taken prisoner or even killed.

REWARD: Following this mission, the PCs' actions will be recognized, earning them a promotion to LL2. Mission success may also grant them access to additional prototype Exotic Gear that they can then utilize during future missions to come.

RESERVES: Check any reserves that the PCs might be bringing with them that they acquired on during the events of Downtime: FOB Saber. This includes any Exotic Gear they acquired during that time. Ensure the PCs are satisfied with the distribution of all reserves and gear before the mission begins.

COMBAT 4

CLEAR THE AIR

SITREP: Control (*Lancer*, p. 268)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **ACE** (Bombing Bay)
1x **BREACHER** (Superior Ram, Follower Count)
1x **DEMOLISHER** (Kinetic Compensation, Concussion Missiles)
1x **VETERAN MIRAGE** (+1 **ACCURACY** to **HULL** checks/saves, Manifest False Idols, Viper's Speed)
1x **WITCH** (Chain)

For 4 PCs: +1x **ASSASSIN** (Spinning Kick, Cloud Projector)

For 5 PCs: **DEMOLISHER:** Add **VETERAN** template, +1 **ACCURACY** to **HULL** checks/saves, and **LIMITLESS** trait.
ASSASSIN: Add **ELITE** template and **EXPLOSIVE KNIVES** system.

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)** along the bottom of the map, and the NPCs begin in the **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)** along the top. Some NPCs may be held in reserve as reinforcements if you wish, entering play at the start of any round from the **EDZ**. Between the two forces are four **Objective Zones (OZs)**. This combat takes place in an area dominated by tall buildings that can be climbed or ascended using flight systems.

The PCs' primary objective in this combat is to secure control of the area by scoring as many points as possible. Points are scored by holding the four **OZs**. At the end of each round, each side scores 1 point for each **OZ** that contains only units from its side, with an additional +1 point if they control all four zones. If characters from both sides occupy an **OZ**, it is contested and neither side scores a point. This combat lasts for six rounds, with final scores tallied at the end.

GM TIPS

This encounter introduces several important NPC concepts, beginning with dedicated tech attackers. The **MIRAGE** and **WITCH** are powerful support and control units whose tech attacks can disrupt opponents while also applying heat to them, making it more risky for PCs to use weapons, systems, or abilities that cost heat and pushing them closer to taking reactor **STRESS**. Remember that tech attacks still require line of sight, but they ignore all cover penalties.

The **WITCH** has a number of potent abilities at its disposal, including **BLIND** and **PREDATORY LOGIC**; however, keep in mind that **PREDATORY LOGIC** can't be used to fire **SUPERHEAVY** weapons as those require the use of the **BARRAGE** action unless specified otherwise. Additionally, its **CHAIN** ability is useful for making it harder for the PCs to move across the map towards the **OZs**.

The **MIRAGE**, by contrast, focuses more on helping its allies reposition thanks to its sensor-glitching teleport abilities, which let it shuffle other NPCs around the map. The most notable of these allies is the slow but hard-hitting **DEMOLISHER**. The **DEMOLISHER** is slow to maneuver, but very hard to dislodge from objectives thanks to its large size and **HEAVY FRAME** trait, and its **DEMOLITION HAMMER** hits extremely hard. The **MIRAGE** can reposition the **DEMOLISHER** to where it can do the most damage (as teleportation isn't affected by **HEAVY FRAME**), including right into the middle of the PCs, who may be unprepared for it to close the distance so quickly.

The **MIRAGE's DATAVEIL** makes it (or another NPC it transfers the ability to) permanently **INVISIBLE**. If the **MIRAGE** gives **DATAVEIL** to an ally, it becomes significantly more vulnerable itself, which can provide the PCs with an opportunity to take it down, so care should be taken when choosing who should benefit from this potent defensive ability.

This combat also introduces flying NPCs. The **ACE** is a fast and hard-to-hit aerial striker that can go wherever it needs to, launching missiles and dropping bombs on targets below. Despite its low **HP**, its high **EVASION** and **BARREL ROLL** ability can make it difficult to shoot down. That said, if the PCs lack any significant ranged damage capabilities – if they're more equipped for CQB and melee, for example – you may wish to swap out the **ACE** for an **ASSAULT (MICRO-MISSILE BARRAGE)** to prevent frustration at being unable to reach it from the ground.

There are two other new NPCs introduced in this fight: the **ASSASSIN** and the **BREACHER**. While the **ASSASSIN** isn't capable of the same degree of flight as the **ACE**, its **KAI BIOPLATING** trait makes it incredibly maneuverable, capable of climbing at full speed and leaping over gaps with ease, which gives it an advantage in encounters featuring vertical terrain and pitfalls that other units would struggle to navigate. **LEAP** does grant it flight, if only in short bursts, and its **HEATED BLADE** not only gains increased damage when it targets enemies it knocks **PRONE** itself, but also when used against enemies that have been Stunned by the **DEMOLISHER**. **SPINNING KICK** can also be used to force PCs away from **Control Zones** or off of rooftops. Remember that once the **ASSASSIN's MARK** trait is used on someone that it can't be reapplied until that marked target is destroyed, so choose it with care.

The **BREACHER**, meanwhile, doesn't fly but instead smashes through obstructions, meaning it can take unexpected flanking paths through the buildings and cover throughout the map. Its **DUAL SHOTGUNS** are inaccurate but hard-hitting, benefitting when they target **PRONE** enemies and those with lower **EVASION**. **BREACH RAM** allows it to move through obstructions and knock characters **PRONE**, augmented by **SUPERIOR RAM**, but with its strict **RECHARGE** limit you should plan around only being able to use it infrequently. Its **FOLLOWER COUNT** ability allows it to mark a specific target, gaining additional mobility towards them as well as greater accuracy with its attacks against them, compensating for the **DUAL SHOTGUNS'** inherent inaccuracy.

Something to note here, for the purpose of sitreps, is that while **DRONES** count as characters for various effects and abilities, **they do not contest objectives such as OZs**. This means that players can't use **TURRET DRONES** or similar systems to contest or hold zones. An actual mech, vehicle, or person is required to successfully control or contest a zone.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If the PCs have the highest score at the end of the sixth round (or are tied), they successfully hold the area long enough for Rio's code-spike to upload itself to the transmitter. Within moments, the viral payload spreads throughout the network, disabling it and finally lifting the jamming signal across Nov Elysia. Analysis of both the jamming transmitters and the downed Sovereignty e-war rigs gives one PC a hastily-compiled wideband spoofing program that can be activated to blind enemy sensors. As a **protocol**, they or an allied character of their choice becomes **INVISIBLE** until the end of that character's next turn. This program can be used once before burning out.

PC DEFEAT

Failure is not an option here; without those jammers taken offline, any push on the central district is bound to grind to a standstill, and with every passing hour the chances of recovering the ambassador and the captain grow less likely. Pinned down by enemy fire, the PCs have one last shot at uploading the program before they're forced to retreat, but to do so one of them will have to spend their **Core Power** in order to force the broadcast through. If, somehow, no PC has any unspent **Core Power**, then they'll instead have to take **1 STRESS** (this does not cause an overheating check). The network comes down, but not before further friendly casualties are incurred in those chaotic moments between the main assault beginning and the jamming finally clearing for good.

BEAT 3

BOOTLEG PLAY

As soon as the jammer network goes offline, everything's quiet for a moment, and then a cacophony of voices pushes past the fading static as signals can finally get through.

–shit, we've got a man down–

–contact left, contact left–

–can hear you loud and clear–

–immediate fire mission, danger close–

–need suppression on that building–

–systems back online–

It takes another moment for clear comms channels to be established, but once they are the PCs can listen in as the LSA reinforcements, bolstered by Union forces, continue their advance on the central district. With the jamming out of the picture the advantage is now theirs, and their coordinated push is driving Sovereignty forces into a retreat.

From here, the PCs receive orders from the Rio Grande to rendezvous with the main fighting force, but they don't have a chance to travel far before an unfamiliar voice cuts in over comms:

"This is Sergeant Callas to, ah, Union command vessel. My squad has just secured the Hall of Consuls and we have no sign of either principal here. We're checking with all defense shelters in the area to see if they were evacuated to one of them, but so far we've heard nothing–"

Another voice interjects, this time one the PCs immediately recognize: Rio has something for them.

"I've got a signal from the captain's ontologic implants! She's moving fast, heading toward what looks like a port facility. Belay the rendezvous, I've got a dropship inbound for your location – get aboard and follow that signal!"

Sure enough, a Union dropship roars overhead a few seconds later and touches down, the hatches opening to allow the PCs' mechs to clamber aboard before it quickly takes off again, moving full speed toward the captain's signal. Despite the hurried nature of the airlift, the PCs are still able to **rest** and quickly patch up their mechs while en route. In the air for the first time since their rough landing the day before, they now have a much clearer view of the destruction throughout the city, but they can also see LSA forces steadily pushing the Sovereignty back.

Nov Elysia is a coastal city with a number of major ports, towards one of which the signal is heading. Through cameras, viewscreens, or open hatches, the port facility soon comes into view, with warehouses and stacked rows of shipping containers spread out beneath the dropship. As they close in on the signal, the PCs start to see how the Sovereignty was able to deploy forces to Nov Elysia in such numbers without being detected – as they watch, a stealth submarine carrier breaches the surface up ahead. From their vantage point, they can also see Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee being forcibly marched toward the sub. It seems that the Sovereignty, no longer able to hold the city, is attempting to execute a withdrawal with a pair of valuable prisoners in tow.

The PCs don't have a moment to lose. By the time they deploy from the dropship the captain and ambassador are already aboard the sub, which means they'll need to disable it before it can submerge and escape. But the Sovereignty doesn't plan to give up the ship lightly, and enemy units begin deploying from the submarine's launch decks and moving to engage...

COMBAT 5

LEVIATHAN

SITREP: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **BARRICADE** (Drag Down, Hunger/Pursuit Limpets)
1x **HORNET** (Umbral Interdiction)
1x **PYRO** (Siege Armor, Explosive Jet)
1x **SCOURER** (Supercharged)
1x **SCOUT** (Dataveil, Orbital Strike)
1x **SNIPER** (Moving Target, Shroud Charge)

For 4 PCs: **BARRICADE:** Add **ELITE** template and **TITAN-SNARE DRONE** system.
PYRO: Add **VETERAN** template, +1 **ACCURACY** to **HULL** checks/saves, and **ACROBAT** trait.
SCOUT: Add **COMMANDER** template and **QUICK MARCH** trait.

For 5 PCs: +2x **ASSAULT GRUNTS**
+2x **SENTINEL GRUNTS**

The route to the submarine is heavily protected by various pieces of cover – a mix of shipping containers and deployed barriers, some of which are big enough to block line of sight along the way. The submarine itself is surrounded by water. Anyone, PC or NPC, who falls into the water counts as being **PRONE** until they leave the water. Attacks against **PRONE** characters gain +1 **ACCURACY**, plus the characters are **SLOWED** and they move as if in **difficult terrain**. Characters with propulsion or flight systems, including things like EVA modules and jump jets (*Lancer*, p. 121), aren't affected by this and instead treat the water as normal terrain.

REINFORCEMENTS

There are also four **Ingress Zones (IZs)** arrayed around the map from which reinforcements can choose to enter. At the end of the first round, all enemy reinforcements pick a single **IZ** and arrive all at once, entering as a group rather than one at a time.

DETAILS

The PCs begin this combat in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)** at the far end of the pier, arranged however they like. Half of the enemy forces are deployed to the **Enemy Deployment Zone/Objective Zone (EDZ/OZ)** – the top deck of the submarine carrier, which is already making preparations to dive. The other half of the NPC forces are held as reinforcements.

The goal of this combat is for the PCs to occupy and control the **EDZ/OZ**. At the end of the eighth round, if there are more PCs inside the **EDZ/OZ** than enemy characters, the PCs will have secured the submarine long enough to prevent it from diving, allowing them to rescue the VIPs. Each PC and normal NPC counts as a single character for the purpose of scoring (except for **DRONES**, which don't count at all), but some NPC templates change this: **ELITES** count as **2 characters**, for example, while Grunts only count as **1/4**. Although they don't count for much, even a single **GRUNT** can tip the scale in favor of the enemy.

GM TIPS

The group reinforcement is one of the key features of the **GAUNTLET** sitrep, allowing you to choose where best to deploy your forces to make the approach to the **EDZ/OZ** most difficult. You could choose to deploy them to an **IZ** closer to the objective, or to a zone that the PCs have moved close beside or even moved past in order to catch them in a flanking attack. The way you distribute your forces is also significant. By default, the **BARRICADE**, **SCOUT**, and **SNIPER** will be deployed to the **EDZ/OZ**, leaving the **HORNET**, **PYRO**, and **SCOURER** to serve as reinforcements. Should the **ASSAULT** and **SENTINEL GRUNTS** come into play, you can either have the **ASSAULTS** deploy within the **EDZ/OZ** while the **SENTINELS** come in with reinforcements, or assign all of them to one of the two groups.

This combat introduces several new NPC classes: the **HORNET**, the **SCOURER**, the **SCOUT**, and the **SNIPER**. The **HORNET** is a fast-flying, disruptive controller that can shut down the PCs' ability to attack using **IMPALE SYSTEMS** and **UMBRAL INTERDICTION**. **HORNETS** have extremely high **EVASION** but low **E-DEFENSE**, meaning they can be hacked and targeted with **SMART** weapons more easily, and **RELIABLE** weapons can whittle them down in short order.

The **SCOURER** is a hard-hitting, single-target striker that wants to attack the same target repeatedly to activate its **Focus Down** trait. Its weapon gives itself heat and it overheats easily, though its **COOLING MODULE** can help with that if it's allowed to remain in place without moving. Remember that regular NPCs won't melt down if pushed past their **HEAT CAP**, they simply become **EXPOSED** until they **STABILIZE**. This means a **SCOURER** can continue to act and even attack when above its **HEAT CAP**, though it'll take double damage from most attacks.

The **SCOUT** and **SNIPER** work well as both solo operators and together as a team. The **SCOUT** is a support-role NPC whose **MARKER RIFLE** deals no damage but gives targets **LOCK ON**, denies them the benefits of **INVISIBLE** or **HIDDEN**, and forces them to become **SHREDDED** as long as they have **LOCK ON**. **SHREDDED** characters don't benefit from **ARMOR** or **RESISTANCE**, such as that granted by **BRACE**, which means the **SNIPER**'s **ANTI-MATERIEL RIFLE** will be able to deal its full damage on a hit. The **SCOUT** also has **DATAVEIL**, similar to the **MIRAGE** from the last combat, allowing it to give itself or allies **INVISIBLE**, and has a powerful **ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT** ability with which it can target the battlefield (in this case, directing missiles launched from the submarine).

The **SNIPER** has a potent **SNIPER'S MARK** that allows it to deal structure damage directly and which can't be reduced or resisted at all. **MOVING TARGET** allows the **SNIPER** to wait to fire its weapon until someone moves, daring PCs to approach it, or if its rifle is unloaded it can reload it for free instead. **SHROUD CHARGE** allows the **SNIPER** to blanket an area in a concealing cloud that blocks line of sight into or out of the area for all characters except the **SNIPER** itself, protecting itself and nearby allies while allowing it to freely shoot at targets while the cloud lasts, a potent combination with **MOVING TARGET**.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If there are more PCs in the **EDZ/OZ** than NPCs at the end of the eighth round, they will have secured the submarine. There are several possible outcomes depending on whether or not you want to continue exploring the narrative of Cressidium and the Vestan Sovereignty or simply treat this set of missions as something more self-contained. If you want to wrap things up more conclusively, then the PCs halt the submarine's departure and are able to successfully extract both Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee. If you want to leave things more open-ended for further missions on Cressidium, you might instead choose to have the PCs successfully rescue one of the two, while the other is evacuated ahead of the PCs on an underwater escape shuttle along with several of the submarine's command staff.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail to secure the submarine in time, then it dives beneath the water with both the captain and the ambassador aboard. Even with the jammers neutralized, the submarine's stealth capabilities are enough to allow it to swiftly vanish from sensors as it retreats with its prisoners in tow. Where things go from here are up to you.

BEAT 4 NEMESIS PYRE

The PCs only get a brief respite, but they should still be given the opportunity to **rest** and repair their mechs. Running multiple combats in a row without a rest is something that should usually only be done if the players are aware that its likely to occur in advance.

With the submarine having been dealt with (or having fled), all that's left for the PCs to do now is await their own extraction. One way or another, the tide in Nov Elysia has turned, in no small part thanks to their actions. It's only natural, then, that those actions have earned them unwanted and hostile attention.

As the dropship that ferried the PCs here circles back to pick them up at a suitable landing zone not too far from the pier, a searing beam of light splits the air beside the PCs and lances through buildings and shipping containers without pause, carving a glowing, molten path in its wake. The detonation of several ruptured fuel tanks sends enormous fireballs

into the sky, and the dropship veers off sharply to avoid both the explosions and whatever it was that caused them. The extracted VIPs, should they have been rescued during the last encounter, run to cover before the spreading fire cuts them off from the PCs.

Through the flames and heat-haze shimmering above flash-molten metal, you catch a brief glimpse of a mech just as it disappears with a crack of displaced air, reappearing elsewhere a second later. The design is clearly Vestan, but it looks more advanced than the others you've faced so far – sleek, menacing, and bristling with weapons.

As the mech stares you down, you hear a cold voice crackle over your comms. "Your interference ends now. Burn it all down," the voice says as more hostile contacts move into position, fire beginning to spread across the docks, "no survivors."

COMBAT 6 WAKE THE FURIES

SITREP: n/a

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **HIVE** (Driving Swarm)
1x **ULTRA OPERATOR** (Operator options: Fade Generator, Telefrag, Nova Missiles; Ultra options: Short-Cycle Lance, Limitless)
1x **PYRO** (Explosive Jet)

For 4 PCs: **HIVE:** Add **ELITE** template and **MOTILE SWARM** trait.

For 5 PCs: **OPERATOR:** Add **COMMANDER** template and **QUICK MARCH** trait.
PYRO: Add **VETERAN** template, +1 **ACCURACY** to **HULL** checks/saves, and **LEGENDARY** trait.

REINFORCEMENTS

Up to 4x Hornet, Scourer, and Sentinel Grunts (no more than 2x of any one class; see below for details).

DETAILS

The PCs begin this final battle of the mission in the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)**, while the enemy mechs deploy anywhere within the **Enemy Deployment Zone (EDZ)**. There are also four **Ingress Zones (IZs)** similar to the last combat, from which enemy reinforcements enter throughout the course of this fight.

Should the PCs **SCAN** the **OPERATOR**, they can choose to discover some information about its pilot, **Colonel Sorvan Kiros of Vestan Special Operations Unit 33** – also known as the Furies. Apparently he was responsible for orchestrating several key elements of the attack on Nov Elysia and has been active throughout the city during the invasion, leading his unit in various missions of their own. Files pulled from his systems also make repeated references to something called **TARTARUS**.

Placed around the map are a number of fuel tanks, which can explode when damaged (or automatically if Kiro's **SHORT-CYCLE LANCE** is turned upon them), similar to the overturned cars from **COMBAT 02: LOOK BOTH WAYS** (p. 19). These are **SIZE 1** objects with **EVASION 5**, **E-DEFENSE 5**, and they explode with a **BURST 1** area upon taking any **damage or heat**. All characters within the affected area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 explosive damage**, taking **half damage** on a success. The affected area then becomes a patch of burning fuel that counts as **dangerous terrain**. Characters who end their turn in this terrain or move into it for the first time in a round must pass an **ENGINEERING check** or take **5 burn**. Any cargo containers that are within the affected area are completely destroyed, removing them from the map.

The goal of this fight is simply to destroy the enemy forces and survive. Once destroyed, Col. Kiro's self-immolates in a gout of plasma, leaving nothing behind but slag and smoldering ash, and after his destruction no further reinforcements will deploy into the fight.

REINFORCEMENTS

The attackers are also accompanied by reinforcements. These reinforcements are **GRUNTS** drawn from the **HORNET**, **SCOURER**, and **SENTINEL** NPC classes. At the start of the second round, and at the start of any round thereafter, you may deploy up to **2 GRUNTS** however you like among the **IZs**, up to a maximum of **4** throughout the combat. No more than **2 GRUNTS** can be of the same class; if you've already brought a pair of **HORNET GRUNTS** onto the field, you need to choose other classes for subsequent reinforcements.

GM TIPS

This encounter introduces the **ULTRA** template, a powerful upgrade that can turn a single NPC into a significant threat all on its own. **ULTRAS** have significantly more **STRUCTURE** and **STRESS** than even **ELITES** or **VETERANS**, being on par with PC mechs in terms of resilience, and they have a wide variety of additional capabilities and optional systems at their disposal. Like **ELITES**, **ULTRAS** take additional turns each round – **two turns per round** by default, increasing to **three per round** when fighting 5+ PCs. They also regain expended reactions each turn, automatically clear conditions from themselves, and more. **ULTRAS** tend to form the centerpieces of battles, though they benefit from having allies who can assist them and draw fire away from them as needed.

The **OPERATOR**, Col. Kiro's class, is a highly mobile enemy type that utilizes precision weapons from a distance. Unlike the **SNIPER**, the **OPERATOR** likes to remain mobile and has several ways to teleport

across the battlefield in order to line up advantageous shots with its **RAPTOR PLASMA RIFLE**. Teleportation doesn't require line of sight, which allows the **OPERATOR** to relocate behind obstructions that block line of sight in order to kite enemies, and its **NOVA MISSILES** have **SEEKING**, which allows it to attack while ignoring line of sight itself. The **OPERATOR** can also perform a powerful **BARRAGE** using both its plasma rifle and missiles together if it happens to have its targets lined up where it wants them.

One of the **ULTRA** options carried by Col. Kiro is the devastating **SHORT-CYCLE LANCE**, a system that can annihilate objects and deal **structure damage** to any PCs unfortunate enough to be caught in its path. A number of scattered shipping containers line the map, and while these are too large for the lance to annihilate completely, it will carve holes through them, which can open up new sightlines and passages. **LIMITLESS** allows Kiro to **OVERCHARGE** and take additional actions during his turn as well, though it does risk getting closer to his **HEAT CAP** with every use.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

With Col. Kiro and his lieutenants defeated, the remaining Vestan strike forces retreat or surrender. Rescue teams are able to clear a path through the raging fire, and the PCs are finally able to safely extract aboard a dropship along with those they rescued.

In addition to any files they pulled from Col. Kiro's mech prior to its self-destruction, combat data gathered during the fight concerning its weapons systems are flagged for further analysis, and following rapid prototyping one of the PCs is selected to participate in field-testing of a chassis-portable **MINIATURIZED LINAC COHERENT BEAM CANNON**, granted as a piece of **EXOTIC GEAR**.

PC DEFEAT

If the players rescued Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee during the last beat, then defeat here means that they're lost. This could mean that they've been killed, or it could mean that Col. Kiro has recaptured them once more; in either case, the PCs have failed to secure the VIPs.

The PCs themselves are also in danger of being killed until timely reinforcements arrive, dropships flying overhead and strafing the Vestan mechs with gunfire. With a parting look, Kiro and his men retreat into the flames and vanish from sight. Rescue teams clear a path through the fire shortly thereafter to pull out whoever remains.

Miniaturized LinAc Coherent Beam Cannon

1 SP, Exotic Gear, Unique, Full Action

Your mech gains an additional **CORE SYSTEM**, the **LinAc CBC**, that can be used 1/mission.

LinAc CBC

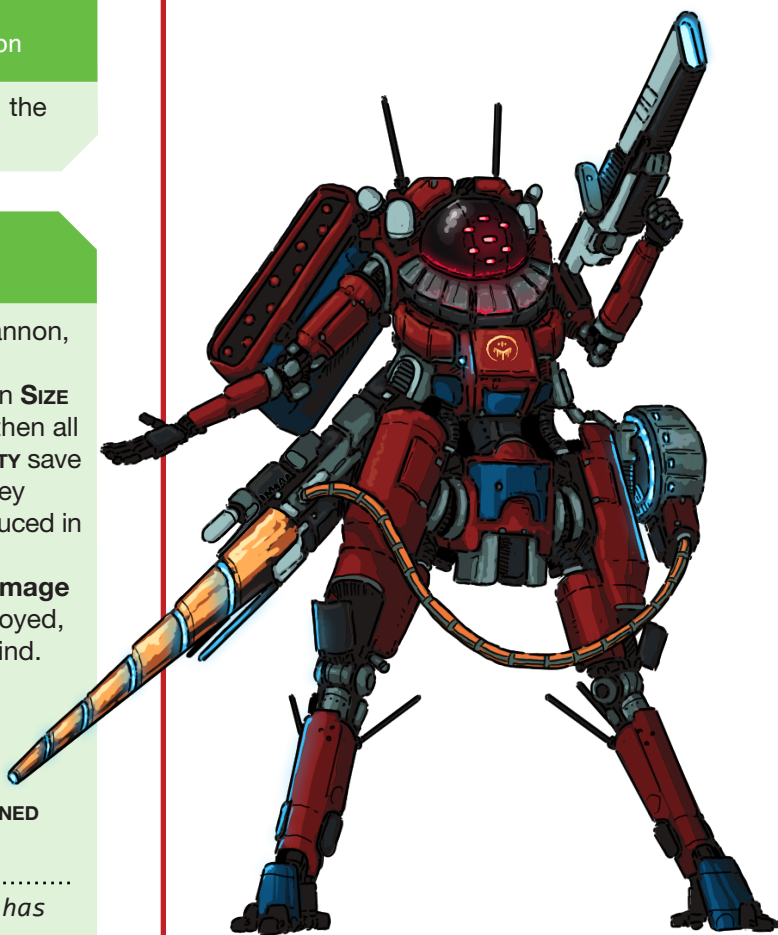
Active (1CP), Full Action

Activate this devastating charged particle cannon, firing it in a **LINE 30** path. All sources of cover, terrain, objects, and deployables smaller than **Size 5** in this area are boiled away instantly, and then all characters within the area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **14 energy damage**. On a success, they **take half damage**. This damage can't be reduced in any way. Characters with **7 HP or less**, only **1 STRUCTURE** remaining, and no **IMMUNITY to damage** are instead instantly and automatically destroyed, annihilated utterly and leaving no wreck behind.

You can take no other actions on the same turn you activate this particle cannon except for your standard move or **Boost**, and the stress of firing it causes you to become **STUNNED** until the start of your next turn.

.....
Cressidium's self-imposed isolation has led to a number of divergent technological advances over the centuries, among them the pursuit of more compact lance weapon development as opposed to further exploration and refinement of naval long-cycle weaponry. Weapons engineers looked to miniaturization, incorporating chemical and exotic-metal batteries and rapid-charge fire-cycling systems suitable for use on smaller and smaller platforms, ultimately including mechanized chassis. This example, reverse-engineered from combat data gathered by Union pilots during an engagement against Vestan Sovereignty special forces, appears to be a descendant of old linear accelerator coherent beam cannon designs – weapons now considered out of date by contemporary naval standards but which are nonetheless exceedingly lethal when employed at this scale.

VSAF EX-101 NEMESIS (OPERATOR NPC)



Little is known about the EX-101 Nemesis, a next-generation Vestan chassis incorporating advanced technology and weapons systems. Though it has yet to see use in an open warfare scenario until now, LSA intelligence suspects the Nemesis has been deployed in a growing number of covert operations directed against the LSA, including the recent destruction of an oceanic research platform and monitoring station that was publicly attributed to a catastrophic reactor malfunction. What is known from intel reports and forensic reconstruction is that the Nemesis appears to possess some sort of stealth and/or non-realspace drive system as well as powerful directed-energy weaponry, though given its role it seems likely that its exact loadout is customizable. No further information is known at this time.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT: OPERATION SOLSTICE RAIN

With the jammers neutralized and LSA reinforcements continuing to push Sovereignty forces out of the city, the battle of Nov Elysia soon comes to an end. Sporadic pockets of Sovereignty resistance left behind during the retreat will be mopped up in the days to come. For now the battle is over, though what has happened here may simply be the opening salvo in a much greater war.

Whether the PCs ultimately succeeded or failed in their mission, they've gone through a trial by fire and come out the other side largely intact, an impressive first outing for any untested squad of pilots. War is never bloodless, nor is it kind, and sometimes survival is the best anyone can hope for. In the aftermath will come medical treatment, debriefings, and well-earned sleep, along with celebration and congratulations if the mission was a success or solemn drinks and commiserations if it wasn't. Deservedly or not, the outcome of a mission such as this will influence how others view the PCs, and may very well plant the seeds of future reputations and rivalries.

Regardless of the outcome, the PCs are granted another **FULL REPAIR** and another **LL**, bringing them to **LL2**. This is the first level at which they can unlock manufacturer-specific **FRAMES** other than those offered by GMS, giving them access to more specialized mechs with new sets of traits and core powers. They may also decide to use this opportunity to reallocate some of their talents or their existing licenses (*Lancer*, p.18).

WHAT COMES NEXT

Operation Solstice Rain ends here, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the PCs' time on Cressidium has to end with it. While you can elect to move on to new locations and new missions from here, the conflict between the LSA and the Vestan Sovereignty remains a crisis sufficient to serve as the basis for an ongoing campaign, especially if either Captain Farris or Ambassador Bannerjee remain prisoners of the Sovereignty; Union won't simply leave them to their fate, and the PCs may find themselves called upon to finish what they started.

Should you decide to continue exploring the story of Cressidium, here are some questions that can serve as potential plot hooks to explore in future missions:

- Taking and holding a city the size of Nov Elysia, even with the element of surprise, is extremely difficult, and chances are that Sovereignty forces would inevitably have been forced to retreat. What was their objective with this attack, then? Was it simply to disrupt the negotiations and capture valuable Union prisoners for leverage? Or did they have another objective being carried out even as the PCs were on their own mission? Perhaps Vestan Special Operations Unit 33 was tasked with locating and securing military secrets, prototype technology, or another VIP. Perhaps their true objective lay elsewhere, and the attack on the city was a feint?
- Representatives from the Vestan Sovereignty were attending the diplomatic negotiations along with the LSA right up until the attack on Nov Elysia. Though they weren't nearly as receptive to Union's offer of membership, openly going to war seems like a drastic escalation from the established political situation. Is this truly what the Sovereignty wants for its people, or has a hardline militant faction within the government forced this conflict for its own ends?
- What is TARTARUS? Files extracted from Colonel Kiros's mech repeatedly reference it, but even when decrypted they remain vague, noting only that "operations are proceeding as planned." Is TARTARUS the codename of an agent of some sort? A clandestine program? A weapon? And how does it relate to the attack on Nov Elysia, or to Special Operations Unit 33?



As the dropship lifts off and the smoldering harbor falls away beneath you, for the first time in days you feel like you finally have a chance to breathe. No one ever knows what their first mission will be like, no one ever knows if they'll rise to the occasion, but you're still here to wonder and that has to count for something. What was that old saying about landings, again? Any one you can walk away from is a good one.

Over comms you can hear other units checking in one by one, reporting their status. The Sovereignty's being pushed out of the city, and while there may be more to come in the weeks and months ahead, for now at least your part here is done.

"All Union elements, I send drawdown," Rio announces on all channels, "Repeat, drawdown. Primary threats have been neutralized, and ground observers are confirming corridor-clear for return approach. Rendezvous at designated egress zones and await liftoff back to the Rio Grande. Come on home."

There'll be more missions in your future, maybe here on Cressidium, maybe a hundred worlds away, with new wonders to experience and new threats to face – new powers to contend with and new causes to champion. There's a whole galaxy out there beyond the peace and safety of the Core worlds, waiting for someone like you to come along and make a difference.

Time to get to work, pilot.

APPENDIX:

NEW OPTIONS

NEW TALENTS

The following talents can be chosen by players when taking new talent ranks.

DEMOLITIONIST

Explosives and warfare go together like alcohol and bad decisions. The power of a bomb in the palm of your hand is a great equalizer, and a well-placed satchel charge or two has brought even the mightiest of fortifications tumbling down. Forget bullets with names etched on them, the packages you deliver go out addressed "To Whom It May Concern," and you've got plenty to go around..



FRAG AND CLEAR

When you use a **GRENADE**, you may choose one character in the affected area to ignore its effects. Additionally, at the end of each scene, you restore 1 charge to each **LIMITED** system with the **MINE** tag for each undetonated **MINE** you deployed from that system.



QUARTERBACK

Your **GRENADES** gain **+3 RANGE**, and you can plant **MINES** up to **RANGE 3** (or add **+3 RANGE** to them if they have one). Additionally, you do not require line of sight for **GRENADES** and **MINES** as long as it's possible to trace a path to the target.



FIRE IN THE HOLE

Your explosive charges have been enhanced with customized payloads. 1/round, you may choose one of the following:

- When you throw a **GRENADE**, up to three characters within **RANGE 3** of the targeted space take **2 explosive damage** and are **knocked back 1 space** in a direction of your choice by explosive shrapnel.
- When a character fails a save against one of your **MINES**, they take **+1d6 explosive bonus damage**. If the mine deals no damage normally when detonated, whether it forces a save or not, one character in the affected area takes **1d6 explosive damage** instead.

SYSOP

Modern systemic warfare is a filthy mess of code-worms, logic bombs, and adaptive viruses, to say nothing of all the physical detritus that litters the battlefield, and you're the one responsible for keeping things clean. System operator or system optimizer, formatting software barriers or tuning servos, your command of diagnostic programs and deep-level hardware overrides gives you all the tools you need to push your squad's limits beyond manufacturer spec with orderly, surgical precision.



INOCULATION

When you **BOLSTER** an allied character, the additional **ACCURACY** they gain lasts until their next skill check or save.



FIREWALL

When you **BOLSTER** an allied character, tech attacks against them receive **+1 DIFFICULTY** until the end of their next turn.



AGGRESSIVE COUNTERMEASURES

1/round, when you **BOLSTER** an allied character, you induce a special cycle in their reactor. They reduce the next amount of heat they would take from a hostile character to **0**, and that character takes **2 heat** and becomes **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn. This effect does not stack, and lasts until triggered.



GMS CHOMOLUNGMA

Everest Variant
Controller/Support

The Chomolungma is an advanced GMS chassis that all characters have access to from **LL0** onwards. This variant Frame is not mutually exclusive with the **EVEREST**.

While the public perception of GMS may be that of a stolid, conservative manufacturer, Union devotes substantial resources to the research and development of new armaments and technological breakthroughs in order to maintain or exceed parity with galactic-tier actors such as Harrison Armory or the Karrakin Trade Baronies. Under development by Union's Advanced Projects Special Research Agency in conjunction with General Massive Systems, the Chomolungma is a newer and more technologically advanced frame using the standard GMS Pattern I design as a base.

The Chomolungma is a specialist chassis, trading out weapon hardpoint mounting capability for additional sensors, comms/transmission arrays, and advanced GMS e-war systems including cutting-edge systemic intrusion software packages and recursive-weave hyperprocessors. In light of recent conflicts, Union has begun increasing distribution of Chomolungma licenses among both regular and auxiliary units to keep pace with evolutionary developments in battlefield tactics and technologies.

CORE STATS

Size: 1	Save Target: 11
Armor: 0	Sensors: 15
HULL	SYSTEMS
HP: 10	E-Defense: 10
Repair Cap: 4	Tech Attack: +1
AGILITY	SP: 7
Evasion: 8	ENGINEERING
Speed: 4	Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

BRILLIANCE

1/scene, the **CHOMOLUNGMA** may take any **QUICK TECH** action as a **free action**, and then may either **BOLSTER** or **LOCK ON** as a free action.

DATA SIPHON

Whenever the **CHOMOLUNGMA** makes a **tech attack** against a hostile character, it may also automatically **SCAN** them.

REPLACEABLE PARTS

While resting, the **CHOMOLUNGMA** can be repaired at a rate of **1 REPAIR** per **1 structure damage**, instead of 2 Repairs.

MOUNTS

**MAIN/AUX
MOUNT**

**FLEX
MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

ADVANCED INTRUSION PACKAGE

Advanced Intrusion Package

Gain the following options for **INVADE**:

Balance Control Lockout: Push your target **2 spaces** in any direction and knock them **PRONE**. If they are already **PRONE**, they become **IMMOBILIZED** until the end of their next turn. You may only **IMMOBILIZE** each character this way **1/scene**.

System Crusher: Your target takes an additional **2 heat**, for a total of **4 heat**. If this **INVADE** causes them to exceed their **HEAT CAP**, they take **4 burn** as well. This can only be used **1/scene** on each character.

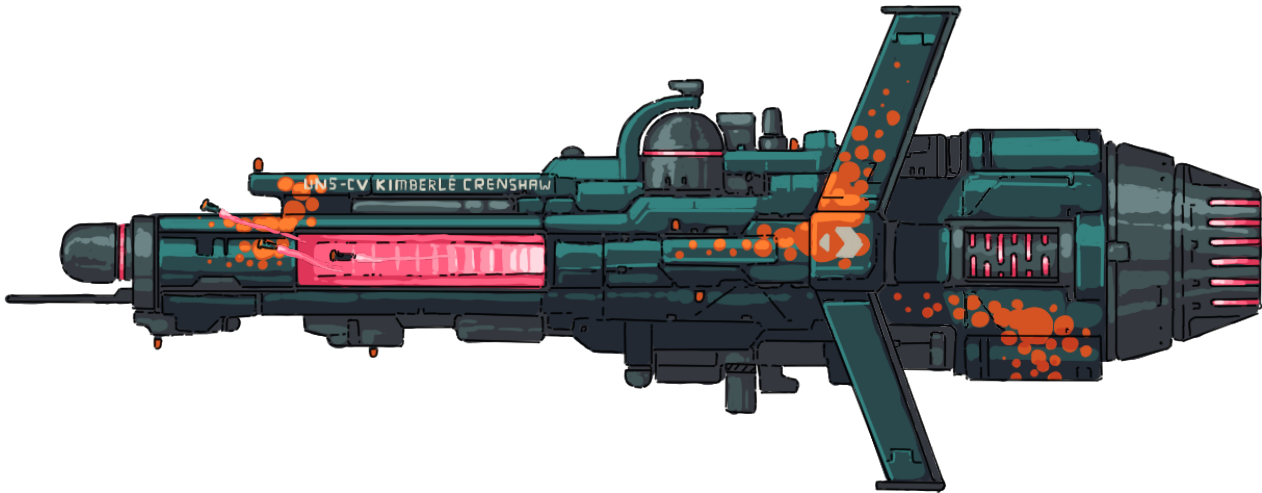
Wide-Area Code Pulse

Active (1 CP), Full Action

Choose any number of hostile characters within **SENSORS** and make a special **INVADE** tech attack against them, ignoring **INVISIBLE** and line of sight. On hit, apply the effects of **INVADE** as normal, choosing options for each target. On miss, targets become **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn.

NEW BATTLEGROUP HULL

The following **CARRIER** hull is available for use in *Lancer: Battlegroup*, a game of tactical naval combat set in the *Lancer* universe. You can find *Battlegroup* at APP.PLAYROLE.COM/GAMES/LANCER-BATTLEGROUP



GMS

EBRO-CLASS LIGHT CARRIER

POINTS	HP	DEFENSE	OPTIONS
3	14	15	2 Wings

Produced in modest numbers during Union’s Second Expansion Period, the Ebro-class light carrier was most often utilized as a capital-tier escort vessel accompanying second-line naval units, filling gaps and providing close-proximity carrier support as needed. Following the rise of the Third Committee and its reorganization of Union’s navy, the Ebro has seen a resurgence as a fast and flexible alternative to full-sized line carriers such as the Amazon-class. Though smaller than its siblings, the Ebro is nonetheless capable of fielding wings of strike craft, and it serves just as effectively in fleet-level operations as it does as a patrol vessel, its sleek and compact profile allowing it to quickly respond to the shifting lines of battle.

Escort Formation Trait

This ship can be assigned to a **DEFENSIVE SCREEN** as though it was a **FRIGATE**.