



Fayyah took a pack of rations out of her bag and cut into it, passing half to her son and keeping half for herself. It had been a while since they had last seen any other humans, and supplies were running slim. She had no intent on going back to the group though, not after before. Not after her husband.

She had seen the ships in orbit over Earth. The UCM were here to save them, and Fayyah would see her son saved, no matter what the Resistance said.

"Would you like some water hmm? Wash it down a bit?" Fayyah asked her son, who gratefully took a generous swig from the bottle.

A sudden crash alarmingly close startled Fayyah. Grabbing her rifle, she picked up her son just as the wall behind collapsed under a sudden impact; peeling away to reveal a serpentine tail. Fayyah's clamped her



hand over her boy's mouth to muffle his scream. If they were detected then they were as good as dead. She held her rifle in her other hand and moved into cover, close to where the impact was. She would not lose her son, she had promised her husband that.

The worm's tail was still close to the hole it had made, but it seemed as if it was more interested in something else in the distance. It was more of an accident that it had knocked through the wall. Keeping as quiet as she could, Fayah held her breath, pushing up against the remainder of the wall, praying that any prying eyes of the Scourge who peered in would not see them.

A loud boom outside caused Fayah to briefly glance outwards as another crash struck the house. She saw the open maw of the worm directly behind them both, and turned on her heel to run.

RESISTANCE

Of all the forces encountered by the UCM, the Resistance has changed the most. Initially a ragtag assortment of survivors stranded on the Cradle Worlds and Earth, the definition has expanded to encompass all groups that utilise pre-war technology, including the rogue Colony of Kalium.

Originally, all known Resistance groups were under occupation by the dreaded alien Scourge, remaining at large in the forgotten corners by a combination of luck, guile and the sheer determination to survive in the face of insurmountable odds. Isolated, these societies adapted tenaciously to overcome their own unique circumstances, resulting in a spectrum of cultures from the civilised to the savage. While enlightened leaders strive to uphold liberty, ruthless despots reign through merciless cruelty. What separates them from all other combatants is their diversity.

As the UCM's Reconquest armadas bring cataclysmic war to Earth and the Cradle Worlds, the oppressed must now stand and fight. The antique war machines and improvised armies of the Resistance are rising - their time has come to do or die.

RESISTANCE UNDER OCCUPATION

These are complex, disparate human survivor groups on the Cradle Worlds and Earth, currently occupied by the dreaded alien Scourge. Their very existence shaped UCM military planning for its Reconquest, which became a war of liberation rather than simply revenge. Indeed, the Resistance are responsible for this being possible at all, as they were able to activate and maintain Foldspace nodes on most Cradle Worlds, allowing UCM invasion fleets to jump to their locations accurately. Theirs is a tale of loss, grit and determination to survive in the face of insurmountable odds.

There is no single Resistance society, government plan or mindset. Groups exist more or less independently of others operating on the same planet and certainly of those off-world. Each has evolved independently over 160 years, often in very different circumstances. These forces generally have no fleet and no easy way of communicating beyond their immediate realms.



Until recently, most of these bands barely deserved their title. Without hope of besting an enemy with overwhelming technological and numerical superiority, their goal has been survival first and empty gestures second. They have often been at war with each other due to squabbles over territory, supplies, or on the whims of their most tyrannical warlords. Raids against the real enemy only occurred when certain materiel was desperately needed or, more rarely, when they felt they could deal damage vastly disproportionate to their strength.

As UCM scouts and subsequently armies began to arrive, the situation changed. Resistance societies finally became aware of a massive, cohesive human civilisation actually capable of mounting planetary invasions against their hated oppressors. Many stepped up their efforts to strike back and commit their most precious assets to the fight for freedom. Most have been all too willing to assist their potential liberators with every ounce of strength they can muster. However, as with all things concerning the Resistance, this situation is far from consistent.

ALLIES AND FERALS

Although a gross generalisation, the UCM uses two broad categories to describe humans at liberty on Scourge-occupied worlds: Allied and Feral.

Allied societies are those willing to assist the UCM. Although still highly divergent, these groups do behave in a vaguely similar way. Most are civilised, reasonably sophisticated and value government and the rule of law. Usually, these groups maintained the Foldspace nodes and are natural allies after their many years of planning, hoping and waiting. Some, however, are subjugated by the sort of despots normally associated with Ferals, although shrewd enough to realise what the future will hold once the UCM arrives in force. The UCM works with these kinds of leaders if they cooperate, however distasteful. However, rumours of a secret directive to remove all dictatorial leaders once victory is accomplished are spreading, making such individuals even less likely to work with the UCM.

Once a world or region is liberated, the fate of most Allied groups is to be absorbed into the UCM. Their ranks are prime recruiting grounds of the Legions. Although they have not yet been combat tested, there are high hopes for the newly raised Eden and Elysium Legions. Given the new equipment available through the UCM, they no longer require their ramshackle vehicles. This puts an end to most of their visual character and even their 160-year-old civilisations. While this saddens anthropologists, the actual individuals are usually more than happy to be rid of the hardship and privations of occupation.

So called Ferals are even more divergent, so much so that the word is often a poor descriptor. Nevertheless, the UCM identifies all groups that refuse to cooperate or are actively hostile as Ferals. These societies are often totalitarian; controlled by a single, merciless individual. They vary from well organised, subterranean dystopias where oppression and fear are enforced with ruthless efficiency, to literal savages, driven over the edge by their plight. The latter are especially feared, as instances of cannibalism and human sacrifice have been widely reported. State censors have even stepped in to silence such talk on occasion – it's devastating for morale when the very people you're trying to free want you dead. Feral warlords often take on grandiose monikers out of all proportion to their power – apparently, even the title of King has been used for the first time in over 300 years. Such individuals are loath to relinquish power, vice and adoration in exchange for "liberation". Even some enlightened societies are opposed to UCM intervention, seeing them as just another unwelcome conqueror, almost as foreign to them as the Scourge.

As a result, the only Resistance societies still extant on the conquered Cradle Worlds are in fact resisting a new occupation force – that of the UCM. It may be that, in time, the term "Resistance" is only used to describe those groups opposed to all outside dominance, be that Scourge, UCM or even PHR, in the case of Tlalocan Moons system.





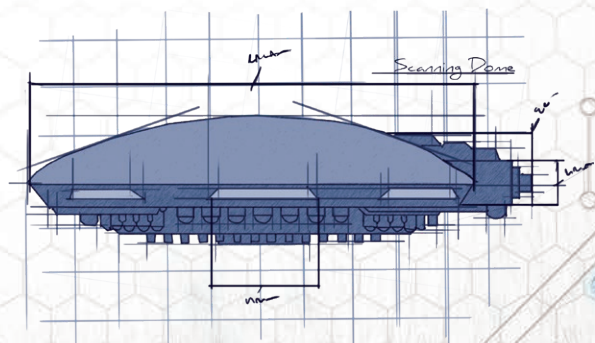
INDEPENDENTS

A third group of Resistance societies have recently emerged, muddying the waters further. These are those not under Scourge occupation but also not under the auspices of the UCM. Most commonly, these groups have been able to stay free through access to starships, generally those that escaped Earth and the Cradle Worlds but never made it to the Colonies. They have lived independently in space for over 160 years and are only now beginning to reappear, perhaps in answer to the Reconquest or the invasion of Earth.

A quirk of these so-called Independents is that they've generally not had to fight ground battles in their years of isolation. As a result, their forces are less experienced than their occupied Resistance counterparts, but usually feature low mileage vehicles and constructs. They also differ in that they have functional ships and the means of delivering and extracting their ground forces, making them an unpredictable, strategic element in the wars of the Reconquest.

A clear example of Independents would be the Vega Scrapfleet, formed of the battered survivors of the Battle of Vega. Although more prominent as a naval force, the Scrapfleet contains a significant quantity of antique ground assault units. Their recent arrival and commitment in force to the Solar theatre on the side of the Triumvirate may make a difference on the surface as well as in space, although they fully intend to remain independent of the UCM.

State censors are even more ready to quash talk of these "free" societies, lest public opinion of the UCM change irrevocably. The romanticism of a people living their lives without interference or military obligation is one that many colonies would welcome, even more so after the prolonged Reconquest and unpopular conscription during the Battle For Earth.



KALIUM KABAL

The most prominent example of an Independent Resistance group is the Kalium Kabal. Unlike the other Colonies that make up the UCM, the provisional government of Kalium chose isolation over accepting centralised control from Aurum. The deliberate deactivation of their Foldspace node paved the way for other worlds to do the same, removing themselves from the possibility of joining with the newly emergent UCM.

Since then, there have apparently been several civil wars and power struggles, resulting in a deeply troubling totalitarian regime. Such a society has not been known on this scale since the dark days of the 22nd Century. The Kabal – as the ruling body is known – is one and the same with their Army and the Fleet. Since its isolation, it has been using Kalium's shipyards and factories (bested only by those of Niccolum, Olympus Prime and Earth) to turn out large numbers of ships and vehicles to defend the Colony. Indeed, this is the most significant place where pre-war constructs are still built new, since the Kabal lacks the resources to match the technological progress of the UCM. As such, Kalium uses many units familiar to occupied Resistance groups and their armies can look superficially similar. However, Kalium is very much its own master and is emerging as a significant force and ally of convenience for the UCM, as a member of the Triumvirate.

Kalium armies are distinguished by the newness of their equipment. Since their operations have been offensive in nature and mounted from Strike Carriers, they use the AT-87 Voidhawk extensively, much like the Vega Scrapfleet. In addition, Kalium uses standardised, purpose-built military trucks over the home-brewed, modified versions used by ground-based Resistance. This gives their armies a unified, regimented appearance; modern ghosts of mankind's pre-war forces.

The jury is still out in President Belaque's government as to what to do about Kalium and its sinister Kabal in the long term. Few expect the alliance to last beyond the Battle for Earth, whatever the outcome. The rogue Colony has not yet involved itself openly in Colonial affairs, although rumours of spies among the Legions are rife. Unlike the PHR's agents, Kalium's infiltrators blend in seamlessly, just as human as any UCM citizen. Indeed, the very existence of Kalium has only recently been revealed – UCM counter-espionage simply wasn't looking for them. Given the current circumstances, Aurum has chosen a live and let live policy. Time will tell of the wisdom of this directive.



ENEMIES AND ALLIES

Due to their divergence, it's easy to understand why political alliances involving Resistance groups and other races are complex and varied. Each group approaches things differently.

While some will work actively with the Shaltari for example, others may have good reason to exterminate every alien they encounter. Indeed, Resistance-Shaltari alliances are especially convoluted, since both sides are unpredictable. Virtually any alliance or enmity exists between the Resistance and Shaltari somewhere.

By contrast, the vast majority of occupied humans hate the Scourge on principle and without exception. The only real point of difference is how they deal with their respective situations. Some try to avoid confrontation or contact, feeling they have survived this long by staying silent. Those societies far more likely to appear on battlefields are exploiting the opportunities afforded by the Reconquest, finally revenging themselves on their oppressors.

The interaction between the Resistance and the PHR is the most concerning and least understood. Agents of the Republic have been sighted with several Resistance leaders across multiple systems. More worryingly, it seems that the PHR prefer to deal with the most tyrannical, egotistical warlords they can find. Perhaps the PHR respect their power, but more likely these individuals are more easily manipulated by their brand of diplomacy. In any case, the carefully orchestrated, premeditated betrayal against UCM expeditionary forces in the Asgard system was certainly the work of the Republic. The UCM also has proof that at least one feral leader on Eden Prime, the infamous Salakahn, was in league with the PHR before his death.





THE ARMY

Resistance technology is so diverse as to be impossible to describe comprehensively. Every society is unique and certainly no two armies are alike; the result of 160 years of isolation and the wildly different fortunes each has had to deal with. Some found solutions to problems unique to them, although almost all had to deal with the reality of occupation by a deadly and unquestionably superior alien foe.

The most important distinction is that most Resistance armies have a two-tier tech and quality system that is unique to them. Firstly, their armies usually contain some ex-military vehicles and weapons inherited from humanity's pre-war government, the EAA (Earth Administration Authority). Although that name has virtually been forgotten, some of its hardware is still in use, despite being over 160 years old. They have inevitably needed repairs and modifications over the years, so no two vehicles (even of the same pattern) are exactly alike. The exception being those built by Kalium and the few Resistance groups that control factories.

Pre-war technology is not necessarily inferior to UCM machinery, although normally far more expensive, designed for very different circumstances and smaller production runs. These precious, irreplaceable assets have been used sparingly, only committed to battle when the situation was dire. Recently, they have seen more action as the Reconquest gathers pace, with a general sense that the time is nigh to do or die.

Secondly, Resistance armies often contain an eclectic mixture of re-purposed and modified civilian vehicles, tools and systems. Such ramshackle, second-tier units are generally considered expendable, although their crews usually aren't. These scavenged makeweights are far easier to replace than trained crew. They are even more diverse than their military counterparts, since there were thousands of

pre-war manufacturers, catering for the myriad needs of hundreds of different markets on multiple planets. These improvised units are extremely common - it is very rare to observe bands that do not go to war with an eclectic and eccentric array of improvised machines in the vanguard.

As time advanced, this distinction blurred, with military tech added to civilian vehicles and visa-versa, although it's easiest to think of the Resistance along these lines. If there is one constant among the Resistance, it's that there will always be an exception to any category, rule and term with which the UCM attempts to label them.

RESISTANCE GROUND FORCES

Resistance ground forces are eclectic, characterful and varied, from rusty, improvised contraptions to the new-built militaristic armies of Kalium.

Pockets of Resistance on the ground take so many forms that it is hard to identify overall tactics, particularly when each group is led by a distinctly different type of ruler. Regardless, most Resistance forces focus on large amounts of units, arriving onto the battlefield in a myriad of ways. Resistance use limited dropships, but make up for that by arriving via massive hovercraft or digging tunnels with subterranean drills laden with ground forces ready to spill out into the middle of the battlefield.

Standard Resistance combat doctrine incorporates teamwork to offset the often inferior qualities of their equipment. This requires experience and coolness under fire, skills most grizzled Resistance fighters have in abundance. These actions range from focused barrages to overcome countermeasures through sheer weight of fire, to focusing underpowered weapons on a single point, greatly increasing destructive potential.



Pre-war vehicles are the norm, whether ancient military designs saved from destruction, or re-purposed civilian vehicles with weapons and armour plates bolted to them indelicately. After the Scourge invasions, there were literally thousands of these ready for the taking.

While supplies have dwindled due to Scourge reclamation plants, they are still plentiful. Most commonly, they are up-armoured and equipped with various military surplus or homemade weapons. "Tricking out" vehicles has become something of an art form among inventive mechanics. Extra weapons or armour are constantly added, replacing damaged parts, or even changing out the majority of a vehicle if it is destroyed in battle or rusted out to a state that it is no longer usable.

Many vehicles feature more than just extra armour and bolted on weapons. Some incorporate whole sections built from scratch to more radically change the capability or function of the donor vehicle. Combat dais designs are common additions, although the most extreme example has to be the fitting of enormous, 800mm naval guns to Explorator walkers, creating fearsome Behemoths.

Resistance fighters often makes use of pre-war technology in the function for which it was designed, but not perhaps in the application envisaged. Units designed for mundane, peaceful tasks have often been pressed into a military role, with surprising effectiveness. Cutting tools, digging machines and other industrial hardware such as the Breaching Drill were found in abundance underground and are often creatively put to use on the battlefield. These were originally in place to bore out the warren of service tunnels under any pre-war city. In the hands of the Resistance, these are used to break the surface at carefully chosen points, creating a surprise entry and exit point for small units. In this way, the Resistance can strike from unexpected places, behind enemy lines. Though generally the size of a medium dropship, drills as large as a house have occasionally been seen in use.

Technologies favoured by the Resistance often permit extended operations in the field. This was a crucial factor in the survival of certain aircraft during the Scourge invasion. Only those with VTOL capability could stay at liberty long-term, since airfields were quickly overrun. Today, the Resistance are adept at operating VTOL fliers from swamps, caves and isolated outposts.

It is a fruitless task to talk of specific systems and patterns of weapons used by the Resistance. Humanity's pre-war arsenals dated from various decades, manufactured by a bewildering array of smaller companies. The military had developed and matured over years of relative peace, as opposed to the rigorous, focused determination of the UCM.

Since the Scourge invasions, weapons have been adapted, modified and even designed and built from scratch by what can best be described as cottage industry. As such, Resistance weaponry is classified by the UCM in general terms, providing a rounded understanding of their capabilities and mindset.

Technicians frequently utilise genuine military weapons in situations their designers would never have envisaged. Gunship missile pods strapped to trucks, ground AA emplacements welded to dropships and anti-tank mines carried by bikes have all been seen in use. Such ingenuity is effective and necessary when there is a surplus of some systems and a deficiency in others.

Resistance groups tend to use more traditional solid slug, chemically fired weaponry. Tried and tested, these weapons have been around for centuries and offer good (if unspectacular) performance. They are generally extremely simple, low maintenance and fire basic ammunition. Engineers can even machine new shells, something far harder to do with micro-precision railgun slugs. Simple explosives are also used in abundance, from grenade launchers to IEDs. These weapons pack a considerable punch for their size, though they lack in range. However, in the close confines of urban combat such weapons still have their place, especially when loaded with specialist munitions, such as chemical warheads.

There are many Resistance fighters that make their own weapons or craft from those looted from their enemies. Their understanding of alien technology is rudimentary, usually only extending to connecting power lines or simply picking up and using Scourge small arms. In human use, these weapons are even more devastating, as a result of overcharging. Such abuse quickly destroys the weapon, necessitating replacement after almost every battle. Unregulated power can even damage the user, especially with larger weapons, which have been known to haemorrhage molten plasma, with catastrophic results. The hastily constructed weapons they make are often unsubtle but increasingly deadly. Large flamethrowers and even crude but enormous gravity bombs have been seen. Very occasionally, Resistance groups control functioning factories, so may produce brand new versions of pre-war technology, or unique, new variants.



RECLAIMED VEHICLES

By far the most common of these are Technicals. Based on ordinary cars and pickup trucks, the rear is usually opened up to allow space for a mounted weapon and operator. Generally, this is either a rocket launcher or heavy machinegun. Rocket-armed versions overcome their modest firepower with skilled, coordinated teamwork. Larger civilian vehicles are known as Wagons. Given the bigger platform, the firepower dealt out by these are even more potent. Most imposing of all are the Thunder Wagons, which carry a single, enormous missile – though they may only fire once per battle, the results can be devastating.

Public transport buses are also made use of, generally as troop transports known as Battle Buses. They are always up-armoured and feature firing slits, allowing passengers to fire out. Frequently, they are augmented with firepower of their own, in the form of a bolt-on dais on the roof, a firing platform for multiple guns or rocket launchers. Sometimes, the capacious interior of a bus is filled with explosives. Simply known as Bomb Buses, these munitions on wheels are normally remote controlled toward their targets. The sheer amount of high explosives carried can cause extreme damage over a wide area, although such units are a danger to nearby friendlies, should they be destroyed before they clear the lines.

Pre-war walkers are also occasionally seen in use. These were costly to produce and generally reserved for specialist uses, where treads or wheels wouldn't suffice. Designed for hunting big-game in the jungles of the Cradle Worlds, the Cortez and Pizarro are large, bipedal walkers bearing superficial resemblance to predatory dinosaurs. Armed with heavy missiles or twin chainguns, both also sport enormous, industrial cutting claws. Such formidable weaponry was entirely necessary, as some mega-fauna can rip a battle tank to shreds.

BIKES

Small civilian vehicles are also pressed into service. Bikes are commonly used by the so called Freeriders: speed obsessed souls who embrace risk gleefully. These can race ahead of the army to scout locations, search structures or even attack enemy armour, by having the guts to ride up close and slap on anti-tank mines.

All terrain vehicles such as quadbikes are also useful to the Resistance. By adding a second crewman, these can mount a powerful weapon. Such units are generally known as Attack ATVs. Scout ATVs do as the name implies, but they also carry disruption arrays, which can be directed against enemy vehicles to confuse their targeting systems.



EX-MILITARY VEHICLES

Despite their relative scarcity, the Resistance uses several types of tank. Most common is the Hannibal, the standard pre-war main battle tank. Armed with a turret-mounted 120mm cannon and a hull-mounted 90mm cannon, it offers respectable firepower and survivability akin to a modern heavy tank, though it requires a crew of three. The Hannibal chassis is used for other, rarer variants, such as the Zhukov. This carries a gen-1 railgun – too weak for anti-tank use, its extreme muzzle velocity is instead pressed into an AA role, where its low rate of fire is offset by the fact that a single shot can down a medium dropship. The Mehmed is another variant, designed for siege warfare, replacing the 120mm with a wide-bore howitzer. Perhaps the most unusual variant is the Constantine, which carries a bulky active countermeasures system to protect nearby units – useful, since most improvised civilian vehicles have none of their own.

The Resistance has access to a true APC: the Jackson. This half-track is somewhat smaller than the UCM's Bear, offset by the fact that a Lifthawk dropship can carry three of them. The Jackson is also equipped with a grenade launcher, which accepts a variety of useful warheads.

The largest Resistance tank design is the mighty Alexander super-heavy, an exercise in pre-war excess. Armed with an array of potent weapons,

these precious assets are usually reserved for Resistance commanders. Those who favour the very best in excessive firepower often choose its variant, the Napoleon. This mounts two Banisher cannons – one of the largest Gatling-type weapons to see service on a tank – which shreds armour like its smaller cousins rend flesh.

HOVERCRAFTS

Air-cushion vehicles are almost unique to the Resistance and are generally used as transports for improvised civilian units. The most ubiquitous is the Kraken – an open-topped flatbed with the capacity of a medium dropship. Also armed with a 90mm cannon, the Kraken is a useful assault transport, as its cargo can begin firing as soon as its deployment ramp is dropped.

A much larger hovercraft also exists: the Leviathan. This monster is almost too wide to fit down a city street, but can safely ferry hordes of Wagons and Technicals into the fray. The areas above its engine cowlings are also prime mounting points for weapons, where AA guns or missile racks are usually bolted on. The rarer Thunderstorm is based on the Leviathan hull, but replaces some transport capacity with generators. Though used primarily for powering mobile bases, the Thunderstorm can be customised for war with looted Scourge Plasma Cannons, creating a powerful if unstable chariot for the most ostentatious of Resistance warlords.





INFANTRY

Given their low resources, Resistance armies often rely on humble infantry to get the job done. Unlike those of the UCM, Resistance Fighters have known war their entire lives – a fact which more than makes up for their inferior equipment. Since self-reliance is always important to them, each man also carries a crude, single-shot RPG, providing some anti-tank capability.

Elite Resistance soldiers are known as Occupation Veterans. They are generally given the best equipment available, which means looted Scourge plasma rifles. These weapons are even more deadly in these hands than their former owners', due to superior marksmanship and the practice of overloading. Since humans have no way of recharging Scourge power packs, the vastly shortened service-life that results is of no concern.

Sometimes, the stresses of alien occupation become too much, and individuals lose their grip on sanity or even civilisation. These Berserkers arm themselves with the most brutal, satisfying close combat weapons to hand, such as clubs and chainsaws. Almost as crazy but far more calculating are the Sappers – experts at rigging a battlefield with hidden IEDs, planted ahead of battles and triggered at opportune moments.

DROPSHIPS

The Resistance make far less use of dropships than other races. With the exception of Independents and Kalium, they almost never have orbital assets from which to deploy. Instead, they generally use the low-ceiling AT-77 Lifthawk to ferry high-value troops from concealed surface bases to the frontline. Tough and easy to repair, these workhorses are only risked in dire circumstances. A Carrier deployable variant, the AT-87 Voidhawk also exists. The Voidhawk has a much higher combat ceiling, granted by a newer, refined hull and engines, precursors to the types used by the UCM. This allows it to be deployed at similar altitudes to the UCM's Condor. Occasionally, Lifthawks are modified for unique purposes. Feral groups sometimes bolt on a capacious infantry pod and multiple extra weapons, creating the brutal (if unsafe) contraption known as the Skulltaker, favoured by Berserkers.

Another aerial transport used by the Resistance is the AT-90 Strikehawk Tiltrotor. This uses conventional rotors so is low-tech and not resource-intensive but does not have the thrust of the Lifthawk. As such, it's generally used for troop transport in a similar way to other faction's light dropships, although it's far larger and tougher. Its size permits the use of powerful missile pods, classifying it as a gunship as well.

AIRCRAFT

The Resistance use several gunship designs. The Cyclone attack helicopter carries an array of anti-tank missiles. Multiple Cyclones can also combine their fire into a withering barrage, overcoming countermeasures with sheer weight of fire over a wide area. Its variant – the Typhoon – replaces the missiles with a pair of Azrael chainguns, for strafing multiple light vehicles or focusing on one, heavy target, boring through to its core with hot lead.

Although the term “gunship” is loosely applied, the so-called Barrel Bomber is another home-brew oddity. Some of the crazier Resistance

mechanics utilise the grab-points of a standard Lifthawk dropship to carry massive, improvised explosives, designed to hit multiple vehicles in a single blast or level structures.

The only fast-movers in service with occupied Resistance forces are VTOL types, since runways are too vulnerable to Scourge attacks. The Hellhog is by far the most common. Although it can be armed with AA missiles, its true strength is in the close air support, ground-attack role, where its heavy Satan chainguns can destroy almost anything that moves. It can soar over the battlefield or enter hover mode, to loiter for extended periods and sustain fire.





BEHEMOTHS

In some cases the Resistance has greater experience operating Behemoths than the UCM. Pre-war, several designs were developed and produced, albeit for specialist, non-frontline purposes. Such extravagant concepts were abandoned early in the UCM's development, in favour of mass tank formations. Since the Resistance is adept at making use of anything to hand, the value they place in such imposing relics is not hard to understand.

Since the invasion, the Resistance has been finding uses for a range of pre-war mega-vehicles, from exploration bases to gigantic mining machines. When modified, these colossi represent the pinnacle of home-brew workmanship and engineering.

Given their extreme rarity and irreplaceable nature, most of these Behemoths have been kept carefully concealed from the Scourge and well maintained, for the day in which they would finally be deployed. For those on the Cradle Worlds of Eden and Elysium Prime, that day may have already been and gone. However, on Earth, the battle is reaching a point where every asset no matter how precious must be unleashed to final victory or death.

Although there are a wide variety of known Resistance Behemoths, (many of them unique), there are a few designs which see repeated use through multiple systems, either through a sort of convergent evolution or standardised existing parts.

MINING ENGINES

Sub-surface excavation was common on Earth and the Cradle Worlds. Mankind had long-since learned to hide the uglier aspects of urban development for the aesthetic surface populace, necessitating warrens of tunnels and subterranean chambers. It was typical for whole factories to be built underground, for instance. Also, mining in the traditional sense was widespread, given the rapacious appetites of mankind's pre-war industries for raw materials.

The scale of these diggings required similarly gargantuan machines. For the Resistance, these became prime targets for all sorts of modifications – the vast majority not for battlefield roles, but some have proved surprisingly effective. By far the most commonly used is the Avernus platform, a quadruped design with heavy armour, designed to cope with tunnel collapses and uneven, virgin cave formations. Unusual legs assist in this, since they are lined with tank-like treads, allowing the walker to traverse flat terrain extremely quickly, and using more traditional walking legs to navigate up and over almost any obstacle up to its own height.

Several derivations of the Avernus platform see combat in the 27th century, with two configurations making up a large proportion of Resistance Behemoth activity. While technically the Avernus is the designation of the platform, the name has been adopted by the most common armament, one that has remained

from its pre-war usage. It mounts a massive Mining Laser, designed for neatly cutting and shaping existing cave structures. Often, rocky protrusions from the roof of caves would require levelling. The shock-waves caused by explosive charges often had unintended consequences, so something more precise was needed: one of the first ground-based laser weapons manufactured in volume. It took the UCM another century and a half to miniaturise the technology enough to fit on a tank. On the battlefield, anything powerful enough to neatly slice through meters of solid rock could do the same to an armoured column.

The other variant to often see use is known as the Cerberus pattern mining engine. This version swaps out the mining laser for a device even more deadly - although often to its operators. Miniaturised versions of the cannons seen on starships, the Vent Repeater is a remnant of technology from before the Scourge arrival, even before the White Sphere, long ago retired for its unstable results. The massive generators of the Avernus are often retained on this pattern of walker, and finely tuned to extract run-off power for its weapon. The Cerberus operators will overcharge the Vent Repeater, causing a massive spike in damage output at the price of personal safety. If the generators malfunction during this process the results are often catastrophic. At best the operators of these vehicles suffer severe burns, and at worst the mining engine itself is damaged beyond repair. It is for this reason that the Cerberus is rarely seen in smaller battles, as these relics of technology are much prized by Resistance fighters, and it's not without dire need that they are risked in frontline combat.

EXPLORATORS

These are the largest, most impressive walking vehicles mankind produced before the Scourge invasion. They were designed for a specific purpose: to act as mobile bases for the exploration of the Cradle World's thick jungles. Often infested with dangerous mega-fauna, these regions were perilous to navigate. Anything with treads or wheels was out of the question, and such a vehicle would need to clear its own path through the jungle. As a result, a two-legged, four-armed design was chosen, able to walk on its hind legs but generally using the arms for motion as well. Each arm is tipped with an enormous cutting claw, intended for logging and forest clearance purposes. However, that which can fell a Shangri-La Redwood can also slice a main battle tank in half with ease.

All Explorators came equipped with four nose-mounted, long-barrelled Azrael Chainguns - weapons which have already proved their worth as fauna exterminators on the much smaller

Pizarro. These could clear the path ahead, assuring that no creature would trouble the Explorer or its crew. The only Resistance group currently known to construct new Explorators is Kalium. Given its ultra-militarist nature, it's unsurprising that the Kabal found the idea of these gargantuan machines appealing. Since Kalium was one of the major pre-war suppliers, all the tooling was already in place.

Explorators came in many variants, given the main hull's spacious, usable interior. Those of limited military use have typically long-since been converted into something more powerful. Two notable current forms are the Juggernaut and Tempest.

The Juggernaut is a catch-all term for a Home class Explorer retrofitted with a massive weapon. The Home was the most common class pre-war; lightly armed for its size, its main purpose was to house research scientists and cartographers on long missions. Though the Resistance still uses many of these as mobile bases, on the battlefield, modified versions are more useful. Typically, the internal spaces will be gutted, fuel space and weight reduced, and a custom-built howdah fitted to its back, akin to the war elephants of ancient Earth. Onto this, a gun is usually mounted. The most common is the 800mm calibre Golgotha cannon, a pre-war naval defence gun, designed to strike at atmospheric-capable starships. On the ground, this weapon is ludicrously devastating, its obvious impracticality usually dismissed by Resistance commanders all too keen to build them.

The Tempest retains its original pre-war designation and design, one of the few that required no major modifications to be a powerful battlefield presence. Although never actually under the auspices of the pre-war military, this carries additional offensive weapons. During exploitation missions, one or two Tempests would accompany other, more harmless variants. Firstly, the Tempest carries four AA missile pods, originally designed to guard against aerial mega-fauna, such as Vampires. Instead of space for labs and accommodation, the Tempest features internal missile launch tubes. Originally, these were loaded with wide-area defoliant warheads, designed to clear whole swathes of forest for forward base or airfield construction. In the service of the Resistance, these have almost all been packed with conventional high explosives and additional armour, giving them the chance to overcome countermeasures, at the expense of range. These munitions are several stories high, and predictably devastating. Very occasionally, these have been known to carry nuclear warheads, giving them strategic application when an enemy missile halo is disabled, as in the prelude to the Battle for Earth.





“It’s bloody falling apart!”

Head Engineer Minn Ji-ae heard the cry through the crackling radio. Her Foldspace mechanic always had a flair for the dramatic.

“Well, Brooks, I suggest you fix it quickly!” She replied curtly, pressing the button on the side of the receiver. It had been sticking for a while, and she had to really force it off in order to hear the response from the engine room.

“Are you kidding? It’s done for! We overdid it as it is.” Brooks chattered down the line. Ji-ae could hear the panic coming over the static.

“Brooks – Michelle. You’re the best damn mechanic we’ve ever had on this boat. That Foldspace drive was falling apart *ten years ago* before you took over. You need to fix it.”

Ji-ae knew the drive was beyond repair, and knew it was unfair to bring up that day, but needs must and



it would get Brooks working again. Ten years ago they were dead in the water. Life support had failed and they needed to make a jump in order to rendezvous for supplies. The previous engineer had been impaled when part of the engine ruptured, leaving only Michelle and Ji-ae in the drive core. Ji-ae had promoted her on the spot, and forced her to carry on working – the blood of the man who previously held the job dripped from the tools as the two of them patched up the Foldspace drive. Ji-ae could still taste the iron in the air, and she knew just mentioning it would have sent Brooks back there as well.

“Michelle, I know I’m asking a lot, but this is the big one. We just need one last jump.”

“That’s what you said last time, Head Engineer.”

“And the time before that too, mechanic.”

She thought she could hear Brooks grin down the radio.

“And the time before that! Give me five minutes, ae-in. We’ll make that jump.”

RESISTANCE FLEETS

Any non-UCM, non-PHR human forces with access to starships may be classified as Resistance. Beyond this basic criteria, these fleets are wildly varied in composition, culture and origins. What they all share is continued use of antiquated, pre-Scourge invasion designs, since none of these societies are advanced enough to develop wholly new starships.

Often, these groups have had to fight for their very survival for over 160 years of hardship, galvanising them into supremely independent, resilient forces. Unlike those poor souls on Scourge-occupied worlds however, these groups have been entirely free to make their own choices and shape their destinies, within the limits of their capability. This, and the inherent power that comes with starships, makes the Resistance in the void a strategic factor in the unfolding Battle for Earth – an un-looked for force whose actions could represent the difference between victory and defeat. Though antique, they still have teeth and will surely make an impact, wherever they choose to act.

ORIGINS

The cataclysmic events of 2507 unleashed utter chaos on land and in space. The treacherous Battle of Vega decimated humanity's fleet. The Scourge invasion just two days later ended mankind's ability to wage war. The only survivors were those able to flee, those too far from the fighting and those able to hide on the surface beneath the enemy's notice. The poor souls in the last category would continue to struggle against the great enemy, stranded on the surface of Earth and the Cradle Worlds, without the facility to escape or shape the larger conflict.

For fleet elements within the Cradle World systems, hiding or resisting in any meaningful way was impossible - the only ships to survive the slaughter were those that fled. Initially, the undisturbed Colonies took in refugees by the millions. The ships that fled there formed the seed of the force that would go on to become the mighty UCMF. Indeed, some of these ships are still in service today.

However, it was decided very early into the exodus to reconfigure the Foldspace nodes on the Colonies. Such a grave choice was not taken lightly, as it would make it impossible for ships without the codes to accurately jump to their location. Although it would isolate millions of fleeing refugees, the decision was made to prevent an enemy follow-up.

The only option for ships' captains fleeing the carnage was to simply make blind jumps away from any accessible jump point. Most ships carry onboard nodes, so small groups of ships could occasionally escape together if codes were shared. If they wanted to remain vaguely in control of the destination, these would need to be short jumps, which are relatively accurate without nodes.

Totally unable to resist the enemy and entirely outclassed, these blighted remains of mankind's once great naval power were forced to ply the galaxy in darkness. Survival was their one and only concern. Keeping vast ships fuelled, maintained and supplied is an entirely different challenge to that faced by their erstwhile comrades on the ground. Most likely, many of these desperate bands slowly faded into frozen





death in the void. Their harrowing tales of resourceful survival and tragic failure will likely never be known.

Recently, bands of surface-based Resistance fighters reactivated old pre-war surface nodes in desperate bids to bring any free remains of humanity to their aid. Some have even been maintained and kept from the eyes of the enemy since the invasion. In 2670, this call was finally answered by the newly resurgent and vengeful UCM and their spectacular Reconquest campaign.

The lighting of these nodes also brought some hope to stranded ships and flotillas out in the darkness. Some even made desperate jumps back to their former homeworlds, often driven by critically depleted supplies or just an insatiable need to discover what has become of their species. Often, these ships jumped straight into an active warzone, something they surely didn't expect!

Some lucky ships made contact with stunned and delighted UCMF forces and were immediately escorted back to the Colonies for some of the most emotionally charged reunions on record. Others faced their final demise unlooked for amidst the titanic battles being fought in the void.

These isolated, surviving elements of the pre-war EAA Terran Grand Fleet have been designated as Remnant by the UCMF. A popular naval colloquialism for them is Loaners, being insignificant groups of ships without any kind of strategic mindset. General orders call for

their immediate extraction for debrief back at the Colonies. The kind of people able to survive over 160 years of deprivation while keeping a starship functioning usually make exemplary recruits. However, it also breeds staunch independence, leading to results one might not expect. Successful encounters, while of course rare, are frequently seized upon by the Office of Morale and Media for use in stirring propaganda content for the embattled populace.

Unfortunately for the UCM, the choices Remnant elements make before they encounter the Colonies are entirely beyond their control. To return at all, each stranded ship or flotilla must make a fateful choice to return to a Cradle World with a functioning node - an insanely risky leap. As such, Naval Intelligence estimates that hundreds or possibly even thousands of Loaners still hang in the void, awaiting their moment of bravery or desperation to open the door back to their former homelands.

Once these ships are guided to the Colonies, they are assessed for their space-worthiness. Many are barely intact rust buckets, fit only to sadly limp their way to Niccolum's breakers yards under their own fading power. Others are surprisingly well maintained and are refitted with more modern scanner and ECM suites to join the UCMF. Ships are always in short supply and are welcome despite their age. Indeed, the UCMF still maintains a reserve fleet made up of pre-war survivors from the initial exodus - it is with these forces that Loaners usually serve.



INDEPENDENTS IN THE VOID

There are also a handful of forces out there that are large enough to play a strategic role. These groups tend to be more active and far less desperate – a common theme being staunch independence and successful self-reliance. Unfortunately, most of these groups have been unwilling to merge into the UCM, preferring to stay in control of their own destinies, rather than be cogs in a larger – seemingly unfeeling – machine. Their recent involvement in the Battle for Earth has led the UCM to describe them as a third category of Resistance, designated Independents.

The largest of these groups known to the UCM is the Vega Scrapfleet. This sizable force is formed of the battered survivors of the Battle of Vega. In the aftermath, surviving ships still able to jump were ordered back to Earth and the Cradle Worlds immediately, instructed to leave stricken vessels in situ to await repairs and resupply. Few relief vessels arrived of course, since the Scourge invaded two days later. Those adrift in the wreckage-strewn void of Vega IV were forgotten, amidst greater troubles. Eventually, the survivors sabotaged Vega IV's node, making it impossible for any to jump to their location accurately. This made any rescue impossible, but possibly saved them from eventual Scourge pursuit.

Those stranded survivors faced unimaginable hardships, trials and challenges but emerged with a functioning fleet of pre-war ships larger than any other, such was the scale of the battle and the resulting scrapyard of spares. Many are still stranded over Vega IV without functioning Foldspace drives, but others were repaired. Early in 2671, representatives of this new, unexpected force made contact with the UCM by jumping to Eden Prime.

Initially, relations were surprisingly frosty, as far as the UCM were concerned. This force confidently declared itself beyond Colonial authority. The UCM's assumption that they would be willing to amalgamate themselves into an unfamiliar society proved insulting. However, both parties agreed to keep dialogue open and the Scrapfleet retained control of any passage of ships, since they could jump to Eden but the Colonials didn't have Vega IV's new node codes.

After the initial void battles over Earth and once the Triumvirate had established beachheads, the Scrapfleet threw in its lot with the rest of humanity to participate in the struggle to win back the home planet. Given the age and condition of their ships, their losses have been surprisingly low so far, largely due to the superior skill and experience of their captains and through avoiding major confrontations.

THE KALIUM FLEET

The Vega Scrapfleet isn't the largest operator of pre-war naval designs though – that distinction belongs to the Kalium Kabal. Their fleet orbits the rogue Colony of Kalium, intact, unbroken, and greatly expanded since the Scourge invasion. At the time, Battlefleet Kalium's Grand Admiral took the White Sphere's Warning seriously, but was loathe to follow an alien AI into the unknown. As a result, he held his fleet in port, ignoring orders from Earth to assemble over Vega IV. He suffered few mutinies – Kalium was famous for brutal discipline, even then.

This decision saved Battlefleet Kalium from the colossal battle, though historians still argue over what difference they might have made. As the Scourge invaded, Kalium was the first Colony to propose reconfiguring their nodes to stop Scourge pursuit and, consequently, cut off the refugees. In doing so, Kalium decided to splinter itself from the rest of humanity, and forged a new path separate from that of the UCM.

Today, Kalium is the only known major manufacturer of older types of starship. Given their isolation, they have not been able to advance as the UCM has. Instead, its government has always focused its spending on

quantity and reliable, proven equipment. This has resulted in a fleet that's far from state of the art, but much larger than one would expect from a single (albeit productive) Colony.

While many of Kalium's ships are new, or at least, have ages still measured in two digits, their fleet composition is very similar to Independents like the Scrapfleet. Kalium maintained and expanded upon several pre-war weapons programs now banned within the UCM, such as Vent Cannons. The Kabal cares less for the safety of its conscripts than it does for ultimate destructive power. Independents have also been known to do the same thing, but in their case due to desperation or expediency rather than a lust for power.

As events began to unfold that would expose Earth to a potential invasion, Kalium – previously dismissive of the UCM – proposed an alliance to undertake the venture. Given the unsavoury and uncooperative nature of the Kabal's regime, the UCM might have been inclined to refuse. However, numbers were sorely needed beyond even the UCM's capability, and the size of Kalium's fleet and its many Legions swayed them. Shortly after, the PHR joined this alliance of its own volition, forming the shaky coalition known as the Triumvirate.





ANCESTORS AND INHERITANCE

Besides Independents, Kalium, and the UCM, the biggest inheritor of pre-war ships was the Post Human Republic. Those that mutinied and escaped during the Battle of Vega formed the core of the PHR's embryonic Grand Fleet. Although only observed in rearguard actions, it seems some of these ships are still in active service. Given the PHR's presumed lack of numbers, it's logical that resources are not wasted. While technologically grossly outclassed by Republic-built vessels, these old ships fit better into PHR fleet doctrine than they do with the UCM. This illustrates how the pre-war fleet was the grandfather of both branches of modern humanity.

The use of broadsides, for example, is at odds with the UCMF's current ethos, making many old designs square pegs in naval strategy. However, having a different tool to work with is often a boon to a skilful Admiral in the right situation, where these dinosaurs can remind modern upstarts that their fighting days are not yet over.

Ships in use with Independents are typically hamstrung by obsolete electronics, leading to low scan range and primitive target acquisition. Refitted examples in the UCMF and the Grand Fleet are modernised where possible. Unfortunately, pre-war ships generally feature inferior point defence compared to modern equivalents. Their only pre-war opponents were other human ships or Shaltari, neither of whom favoured close assault. Captains paid a heavy price for this when faced with the Scourge, an enemy that prefers to do its killing at close range.

VARIABLE DESIGNS

Although wildly variable in motive, history and size, all fleets that use older types of ship are characterised by a common set of attributes. Before the Scourge invasion, starships were built very differently than they are today in the UCM. Very few named standardised classes of vessel existed. Instead, thousands of smaller, independent companies made anything from turrets, to engine banks, to armour plating. Other companies would assemble these parts into complete ships, with the best prices, contracts, requirements and political whims of the military changing almost daily. Some of the ships that resulted were one-offs and were seldom given a class designation. Generally, they were defined by their tonnage and armament, for example, "sixteen-gun armoured cruiser".

Although commercial entities are very much part of the UCM's procurement processes, in the pre-war days, everything was commercialised in a virtually unregulated, free-trade capitalist environment. Though colourful and highly competitive, most modern analysts describe this system as "a shambles", if they're being generous. About the only things that were standardised to any degree were the attachment points between major systems, allowing, say, a competing drive manufacturer to take over a contract at short notice, should the original go under.

Certain companies held virtual monopolies over parts of the shipbuilding industry. For example, Earth's Polar Works Inc. was by far the most prolific yard for core superstructure fabrication, giving most tonnage classes at least a standard central hull. So successful and ubiquitous were certain designs that they were able to license it to shipyards across the Cradle Worlds. Also, Titanmetal, based over Saturn's moon, was by far the largest caster of naval gun barrels, making many ship's armaments recognisable.

The result of all this is that no two Resistance fleets look alike. However, a peculiar advantage is that ships are remarkably flexible – if interesting – to repair. Though no two jobs are the same, on ships of similar tonnage, almost any major system can be swapped-out with a donor part from another ship, even if very different from the original. This allows for a rapid return to service, although should the drive itself need work, engineers usually find them over-complex and riddled with proprietary, impossible to come by parts. This fact alone probably made it possible for the Vega Scrapfleet to exist at all.

Given the commercialised nature of the shipbuilding industry, it is unsurprising that manufacturers sought the widest possible markets for their components. As a result, military ships shared many systems and visual similarities with civilian ones, the obvious differences being lack of armour and armament. From the point of view of the Resistance, this is a distinct advantage, as it widens the pool of spares considerably and allows for harmless vessels to be converted into military ones.





OLYMPUS-BUILT

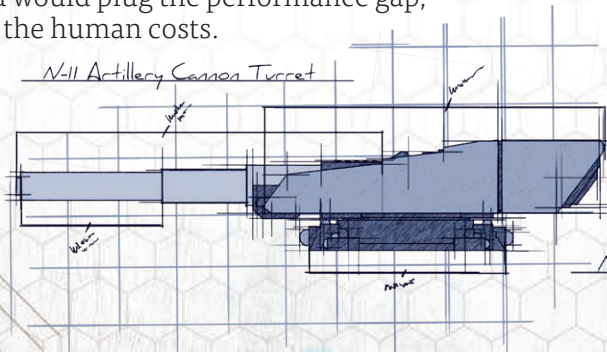
The major exception to the free market system was the trailblazing conglomerate Trident Industrial, based on the Cradle World of Olympus Prime. This was the only true vertically integrated yard, made possible by a series of ruthless takeovers. Ships built by them were laid-down en-mass and as standard classes. While they did bring in components from other companies, they did the majority of the work themselves. Any Resistance ship with a class designation was likely built by them, or at least under license. This model would later be adopted by the UCMF as the best way of building a modern, consistent fleet.

RESISTANCE VOID FORCES

Resistance fleets do not generally favour a single mode of attack, as a result of the mostly unfocused nature of pre-war naval architecture. Many ships offer broadsides and turrets, but generally at a lower output than examples in the PHR or UCM. Being able to do both has its advantages though, especially in the hands of skilled captains who know how to get the most out of each weapon system. Of course, given the variety of designs available, admirals with a large pool of ships from which to choose a strike force will be able to find something fit for almost any purpose.

While most of their technology is second-rate, the crews of Resistance ships certainly aren't. Most UCMF personnel have only a few years' combat experience, if that. Resistance crews have often lived their lifetimes in space and know their ships better than most humans know their loved ones. Often, this more than makes up for their technological shortcomings.

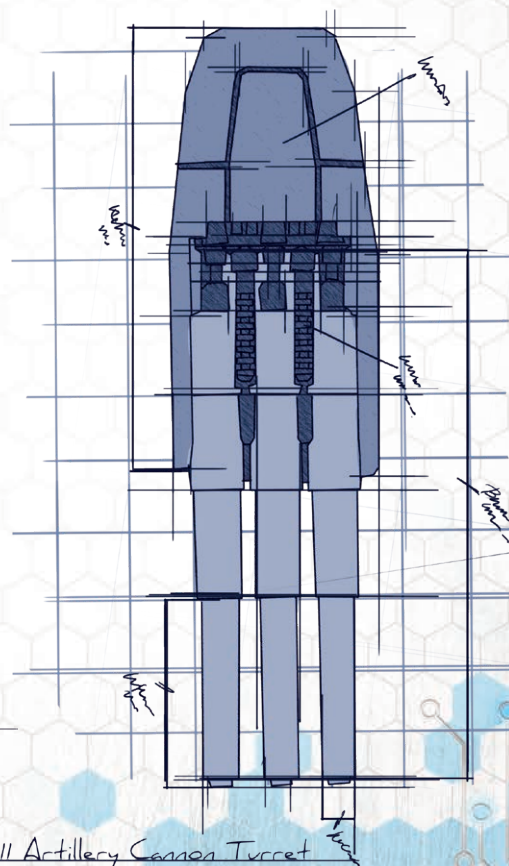
Much like the UCMF, Kalium's fleet is also relatively green. However, the difference there is early, compulsory service, brutal discipline and extended training regimes. Kalium has been able to prepare its fleet at its own pace, never intending to throw itself wholeheartedly into a make or break campaign such as the Reconquest. Fully aware they would be sailing in obsolete ships, the Kabal made sure its flesh and blood would plug the performance gap, whatever the human costs.



GROUND FORCES AND ALLIANCES

Resistance fleets incorporate planetary invasion elements, making them a fully-fledged strategic factor. With the exception of Kalium, they don't have Legions at their disposal, but usually maintain sufficient troops to launch taskforce-level engagements. Much like other races, they utilise Strike Carriers for insertion by dropship, or bulk landers and Troopships for mass landings.

Whenever these deployed forces make contact with stranded, surface-based Resistance bands, they frequently make fast allies, given their shared technology and hardships. Such comradeship is far more likely than with the UCM even, since neither side feels inferior and can understand each other in ways only the truly hard-up can fathom. Indeed, in rare cases, void-based Resistance elements have extracted surface-based ones, merging into a single force with experience on the ground and in space. This is especially desirable for civilised bands who do not wish to join the UCM. Currently, the Provisional Colonial Commission on Eden Prime is considering brokering such mergers with the Vega Scrapfleet, as otherwise it will have no choice but to fight and inevitably destroy these belligerent groups.





FOLDSPACE DRIVES

Much like gravity nullifiers, Foldspace drives are essential to any ship's usefulness. A major issue in Resistance fleets, however, is service life. Even UCM Foldspace drives need complete overhauls every thirty or so jumps. Given that many Resistance ships escaped by making multiple unguided, short-ranged blind jumps (to arrive vaguely where required), they are often dangerously depleted.

Only the largest forces – such as the Scrapfleet – have the capability to service Foldspace drives, since they must be removed from the ship's superstructure. As such, each jump is a precious commodity, especially for Loaners. Indeed, risking a final jump is often a reason why they chose to return to Earth or a Cradle World in the first place.

Due to the lack of serviceability and the constant threat of enemy attack, Resistance fleets have learned to perfect their Foldspace jumps.

Through 160 years of living without Foldspace nodes to jump to, their skills at landing exactly where they need to have been enhanced beyond measure. To jump too far away from a system would mean they could alert their opponents before being able to close in, or even potentially run power cores down to critical levels to power their sublight engines before being able to repower them.

Due to these extreme needs, the service crew aboard Resistance ships have become particularly adept at jury-rigging their Foldspace Drives and making hundreds of minor tweaks to improve their performance. Dabbling with such powerful technology is not without its risks though – risks usually deemed too high by other groups. A malfunctioning Foldspace drive on a UCM ship is removed immediately, and the ship not sent out to the field until safety checks are



approved. With no such checks in place in the Vega Scrapfleet or even on the cold, calculating world of Kalium that cares not for the safety of its conscripts, the tweaks to Foldspace drives are deemed a necessary tweak to improve performance.

Between the tweaks to the drives and the daring nature of the Resistance, they have become particularly adept at making extremely precise jumps. The admirals call this Threading the Needle, and it means that Resistance ships are able to arrive far into a system's gravity well. Their ships may be lower in technology than that of other races, but the advent of such quick arrivals leaves their enemies scattered and unable to mount a decent defence until the battle is already underway. This was particularly apparent in the Battle of Sol, where the Vega Scrapfleet's arrival was instrumental in turning the tide against the Scourge.

Of course, constant changes to Foldspace drives and jumping into gravity wells doesn't come without its risks. Gravity wells distort Foldspace jumps, meaning that split-second decisions and calculations are required. If a ship jumps out of Foldspace at the wrong time it could twist and warp, crushed under the weight of gravity suddenly rippling through it. Sometimes different parts of a ship can jump out of Foldspace at slightly different times, splicing the entire vessel in an explosive display. Worse still is if the calculations fluctuate and a ship can be displaced beyond measure. Sometimes these ships appear in the darkest places of the void, so far away from their intended destination that they won't be able to return in a hundred years. Other times the ships will appear within a celestial body, ricocheting into an asteroid or even appearing within a star. It's always a risky endeavour trying to Thread the Needle, but one that has been necessary and instrumental to the Resistance's survival over 160 years of Scourge occupation.

SHIP SYSTEMS

Resistance ships use many similar systems to UCM vessels, albeit ones that are bulkier, slower, and less sophisticated. The parts used on a ship are often from two dozen other ships, fitted to repair failing Scrapfleet vessels, or merely because a set of standardised parts were never used on the design in the first place.

Resistance vessels use older models of the fusion cores typical in UCMF starships. The design of such generators hasn't changed considerably in three centuries. In fact, some parts are actually interchangeable with UCM models. Since every system on a Resistance ship is somewhat less efficient, 20-30% more of these cores are needed for a ship of equivalent tonnage. This is necessary as older systems tend to drain energy faster too. Resistance scanners and comms tend to be over-complex and underpowered. However, they are still serviceable and provide reasonable targeting and tracking abilities. As a result of these shortcomings, Resistance ships value the presence of energy spikes on a target more than most other forces.

Many Resistance ships feature old designs with an exposed, obvious bridge. This gives unequalled optical visibility and a sense of connection to the battle, at the cost of worrying vulnerability. Over the years, efforts have been made to add in redundancies; reducing the risk to the ship's operation should the bridge be destroyed. Still, many Resistance admirals wouldn't trade the connection they have to a battle for an enclosed – if safer – bridge like those on UCM vessels. The sheer skill demonstrated by Resistance ships seems to confirm this, their bridge crews often operating on instinct more than data.

All ships live or die by their crew, but this is especially the case for Resistance vessels. Indeed, their flesh and blood are probably their most potent asset, given experience and stoic resilience. Resistance ships generally require more crew than modern equivalents, although engineers have strived to reduce this over the years, since lives are even more irreplaceable than ships.

To protect the crew, a lot of ships make use of ablative armour. Often made out of ceramic compounds, it is costly and slow to produce, so has fallen out of favour with the UCM. The expansive, seamless armour panels lend superior protection but are very expensive to replace. In addition, their effectiveness drops dramatically once damaged. Usually an optional refinement in anything but Trident Industrial's vessels, which used it as standard, sitting close to the hull. Ships not fitted with such armour have to make do with conventional patchwork skins.

As with all starships with human occupants who want to hold on to their dinners, gravity systems have always been essential. Gravity generators are similar to other ships; the only difference on Resistance ships is that in some areas, these systems are beginning to fail, terminally. They are fiendishly difficult to repair, necessitating replacement. As spares run low, areas of ships are sometimes left in zero-G, undamped (so off-limits during manoeuvres), or both. Unlike others, Resistance fleets do operate ships whose gravity nullifiers have failed, but they are restricted to deep-space operations only so seldom see combat.





SHIP-BORNE WEAPONS

Resistance weapons are equally as interchangeable as their main systems, meaning that it is impossible to classify each build of ship. Even each individual ship may change weapons between engagements, completely reconfiguring the section for whatever is available. Their weapons tend to be older models, from pre-war shipyards.

Traditional, chemically-fired guns have almost completely fallen out of use in the UCM and the PHR. Ammunition storage takes up more room aboard ship and they offer inferior muzzle energy compared to mass drivers. However, they are extremely reliable, very simple and consume negligible power. Skilful Resistance captains take advantage of this, since they can be fired during extreme manoeuvres which would shut thirstier weapons down.

Mass Drivers are put into use by the Resistance. Magnetic acceleration weapons were relatively new before the Scourge invasion, so are not as ubiquitous in Resistance Fleets. When they do appear, they are invariably large, as the art of making smaller ones powerful enough had not yet been perfected. This most common design is the Titanmetall 9KAccelerator, a derivative of which, the UF-9000, is still in service with the UCMF. Transition Mass Drivers are more commonplace. These hybrid weapons feature a chemically fired first stage, much like a conventional gun. The projectile is then accelerated further electromagnetically. This allows for a shorter barrel length and lower power consumption than the pure mass drivers of the day.

Vent Cannons are a type of weapon unique to the Resistance. Though powerful, further development was banned within the UCM, due to unacceptable accident rates. In essence, these weapons vent unrefined, unregulated energy direct from the ships' fusion cores. This leads to unstable but frequently devastating performance. Such weapons were experimental even then, though since they are surprisingly simple, many have been "home-brewed" by Resistance engineers. The only entity pursuing the technology on a serious, military level is Kalium, whose Kabal is happy to sacrifice a few lives in exchange for power.

Orbital Bombardment Cannons are relatively simple weapons, unchanged for centuries. Dropping a low-velocity, heavy mass from orbit and letting gravity do the rest has always been effective. Resistance types are always chemically fired, not that it makes them any less apocalyptic for unfortunate targets on the surface.

Before the Scourge invasion, close action weapons were out of favour. The only opponents the Terran Grand Fleet could envisage were other humans or Shaltari - orbital combat was reckoned to be a stand-off affair. The Scourge exposed this error, and captains had few answers to the enemy's aggression once they got close. Because of this, Resistance ships tend to have a lower number of point defence weapons compared to modern ships. They mostly use the recognisable Aegis - that still used in the UCMF - though older MkII or MKIII models compared to the Colonies' MkV. Any ships with potent close action missile bays are prized and given priority for repairs, and Kalium manufactures 400% more of such ships, proportionately, than the EAA did. This allows Resistance fleets to still maintain a decent offensive force when engaged in close fighting.

STRIKE CRAFT

The standard pre-war void-capable interceptor was the V-98 "Mustang", named after an illustrious 20th century fighter. Somewhat smaller than the UCMF's Voidblade, the Mustang offers superior manoeuvrability at the expense of speed and firepower. However, most Resistance fighter pilots are in a position to take advantage of these traits, given their extensive experience. They are some of the best dogfighters humanity has to offer and would shame most in the UCMF.

Following the old naming tradition, the most common anti-ship strike craft in service with the Terran Grand Fleet was the V-44 "Superfortress". Slightly smaller than its modern counterpart (the UCMF's Voidhammer) the Superfortress is nevertheless lethal. It has a larger crew and superior defences, if slightly lacking in ordnance bay capacity.

Though more popular at the time than they are with the UCMF today, torpedoes are very rare in Resistance fleets. This is mainly because they cannot easily be replaced, being



too large to manufacture aboard ships. Many have since been expended, malfunctioned or jettisoned, leading to their replacement with more serviceable systems. However, when they do appear, they are just as devastating as UCM types, since not much development budget has gone into them since.

Bulk Landers are even rarer than dropships in Resistance fleets (excepting Kalium). Troopships with tens of thousands of regimented infantrymen aboard are – understandably – not typical Resistance fare. However, when the

engagement calls for it, such massed ground forces can be assembled aboard such ships and brought into action. They can sometimes be augmented with modified civilian vehicles that were never designed for dropship insertion, making up for the Resistance's lack of manpower. The standard pre-war bulk lander was the BV-9 Beluga - though still massive, it is less than half the size of the UCM's Heavylift-IIB.

