



Above the Moon, an apocalyptic void battle would determine the ultimate fate of the orbital. If the UCM forces were able to break through the Scourge defence line, the moon would be ripe for assault.

Whilst huge cruisers had engaged each other, smaller dogfights had emerged between the larger vessels and around orbiting debris from the very first Scourge invasion. Large chunks of the Moon had been ripped from its surface some 150 years ago, left to orbit around the various stations setup on its surface. Vicious battles broke out between pilots of the UCM and the Scourge as the space between the two fleets was fought over. The larger ships bristled with void and rail weaponry illuminating space with each volley, pummelling both fleets.

Sabina had experienced void battle many times in her simulation training. She had been the ace pilot in her class and she thought herself ready for combat. Nothing could have prepared her for how war actually felt. The thought briefly crossed her mind before she pushed it down. Now was not the time for distractions. Rolling to her left, Sabina spun to avoid more shots from the Scourge fighter engaging her. Spying a series of asteroids, Sabina moved to cover herself in them, the Scourge hot on her tail.



Nimble weaving through the asteroid belt, Sabina noticed that the larger Scourge ship struggled to manoeuvre as deftly as her own ship could. Rolling, Sabina exited the asteroid field and pulled hard on the reverse, spinning her ship to face the exit she had just left. The Scourge fighter turned the corner, not realising that the trap had been set.

Sabina opened fire, letting out a cry of emotion as the Scourge fighter was blasted from view. Panting from the exertion and adrenaline coursing through her, Sabina leant back to catch her breath. Her moment of triumph was cut short however, as her tactical visor alerted her to another Scourge fighter heading towards her. This was going to be a long engagement, Sabina grunted to herself.

UNITED COLONIES OF MANKIND

Forged in desperation, united by adversity and resurgent in power, the UCM exists for a single purpose – to wrest mankind's lost strongholds from the clutches of the Scourge. A collection of diverse and remote frontier worlds, the UCM is a restless cultural melting pot, bubbling with a righteous desire for vengeance.

One and a half centuries after the Scourge captured Earth and the Cradle Worlds, the UCM expanded beyond all recognition. Its militaristic society assembled the greatest army and fleet in human history and hurled it at its hated foe to recapture its lost territories. This monumental endeavour is known as the Reconquest, a galaxy-wide conflagration of war and death.

Its decision to exploit an early opportunity to invade Earth will likely define the future of the UCM and its place in the galaxy. Success would be a momentous leap towards final victory. Failure could mean an end to the Reconquest and hopes of a bright future for mankind.

RECONQUEST

Central to the entire UCM's very soul is the Reconquest, a species-wide effort to regain what was lost during the Scourge invasion of 2507. The key prizes are the verdant and bountiful Cradle Worlds and of course, Earth. This effort is virtually total, the resources of the UCM are almost entirely focused on the undertaking.

In the years since its inception, the Reconquest has claimed the lives of millions. The campaign was beset by problems, setbacks and delays, exacerbated by the involvement of the Post Human Republic and the Shaltari. However, the Cradle World systems of Eden, Elysium and Shangri-La are now fully in Colonial hands. Already, these conquered worlds are providing sorely needed additional resources and manpower.

Recently, the Reconquest has taken a dramatic and seismic shift - an opportunity to invade Earth itself came, and the UCM took it. Efforts to finally invade Olympus Prime were halted, production stepped up to unsustainable levels and shaky alliance known as the Triumvirate made with the PHR and the rogue colony of Kalium. The invasion of Earth is the largest military operation in human history - this total commitment is typical of the UCM's uncompromising will to win at any cost.



THE COLONIES

The UCM consists of a series of former frontier planets, once peopled only by desperadoes, ne'er do wells and enterprising characters, eager to forge new lives and seek fortunes. These worlds were not chosen for their beauty or amenity, but rather for their considerable mineral wealth.

The course of their development was irrevocably altered in the chaotic aftermath of the Scourge invasion, when scores of fleeing refugees descended on these obscure backwaters. A measure of the enterprising and hardy character of the original inhabitants influenced this massive influx of new blood, creating a new and dynamic civilisation.

Today, the Colonies are industrial powerhouses, churning out the mighty war machine required to take on the Scourge. Their extensive natural resources have proven crucial to mankind's spectacular recovery from total defeat. The estimated population of the UCM has recently exceeded 20 billion souls, although the millions of deaths in the Reconquest are taking its toll. However, millions of ex-resistance fighters on conquered Cradle Worlds, hardened veterans all, have added to the UCM's potential recruiting grounds. Newly raised Legions from these worlds are elite from day one, and may prove pivotal in the Battle for Earth.

The Colonies are located far beyond the Western Spiral Arm of the Galaxy. While there are officially hundreds of worlds in the UCM, the majority are nothing more than barren rocks, with only tiny outposts and mining concerns. A relatively small number are of central importance and house the vast majority of its population. The grandest of these are colloquially known as 'The Big Dozen'.



Most important is Aurum, current seat of the High Council and most populous of the Colonies. Cuprum, Titania and Ferrum are the largest industrial powerhouses, servicing, housing and building much of the UCM's mighty Legions and armoured brigades. The planets of Maganum and Alumina are the bread baskets of the Colonies and provide much of the food for mankind's billions. The orbital slips above the blue gas giant of Niccolum house and construct the UCMF's mighty warships.

Previously isolated from the war, the Colonies have recently suffered a surprise Scourge counter-offensive. The factory world of Ferrum was the first hit. Second, the lightly defended ocean world of Alumina was forever defiled by the Scourge fleet at the close of 2671, followed by bloody fighting on penal world of Wolfrum from early 2672. Although the enemy were repulsed,

they inflicted disproportionate damage when counting the civilian population. The choice of targets seemed random, suggesting these were the only worlds the Scourge could accurately jump to. How they were able to break security protocols and lay Foldspace nodes at the targets haunts the High Council, though the weight of speculation lays the blame at the feet of the Shaltari.

Whatever the cause, the Colonies were clearly no longer able to direct the war from an aloof distance - the carnage had come home. High ranking officials are currently protesting that the colossal resources directed at the hastily planned invasion of Earth will leave the home front too lightly defended. War is unpredictable and the die is cast - the future belongs to those who fight to the very limits of their being.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

There are two levels of government in the UCM. Each planet has reasonable freedom to govern itself, and often laws, practices and institutions vary between Colonies. A sensible measure, since each has quite different concerns. Each planet is controlled by an elected assembly, chaired by a Planetary Governor, chosen by that assembly.

The concerns of the UCM as a whole are directed by a central government, currently based in Aurum's capital, the recently renamed Aurum City (its original namesake on the Cradle Worlds, Atlantia, has come to symbolise disaster after its destruction by thermonuclear fire). The majority of this assembly consists of the UCM Senate. The number of seats held by each planet is determined by population, but every Colony has at least one seat. One of the roles of the various planetary governments is to elect these representatives. In the Senate, decisions which affect the UCM in its entirety are made, predominantly diplomatic or military in nature. As such, the Senate plays a crucial role in directing the will of the UCM, and is largely responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Colonies.

Major policies and directives are normally proposed by a senior institution – the High Council. Each planet with a population over 500 million returns a representative to this body. During crucial sessions it is customary for the Planetary Governors themselves to take up this role. While serving, members gain the rank of High Councillor. Every eight years, the Council elects a President from among its ranks. He/she

immediately relinquishes all existing positions, concentrating solely on the weighty task of serving as first among equals. The incumbent is President Helena Belaquer, a strong, popular figure who has been serving since before the Reconquest began. Her inspiring leadership in countering the attacks on the home front have been instrumental in maintaining morale and galvanising the public towards further struggle.

Military figures have a prominent presence in both the High Council and the Senate. Supreme Admiral "Granite" Halsey and Supreme Marshal Zachiev (heads of the UCMF and UCMA respectively) have permanent seats – although they often send representatives, given the weight of their military responsibilities. Also, noted industrialists and powerful businessmen hold honorary seats in the Senate, representing many concerns, and serving a crucial advisory role. The President's foremost confidant, High Councillor Jonas Crowe is one such figure as CEO of CLAW (Cuprum Light Armour Works), although as a native of Wolfrum, he sits for that planet on the Council.

To the average citizen, the actions of distant institutions such as the High Council, Senate and even their own planetary government may seem far removed from their daily struggles. Directives made thousands of light-years distant often seem aloof, unsympathetic or even invasive. However, the ominous threat of the Scourge is a powerful force for cohesion. This has been sorely tested already and not yet found wanting. Perhaps, the success or failure of the Solar campaign will be the thing that forever secures the UCM's solidarity, or the cause of irreparable fractures.

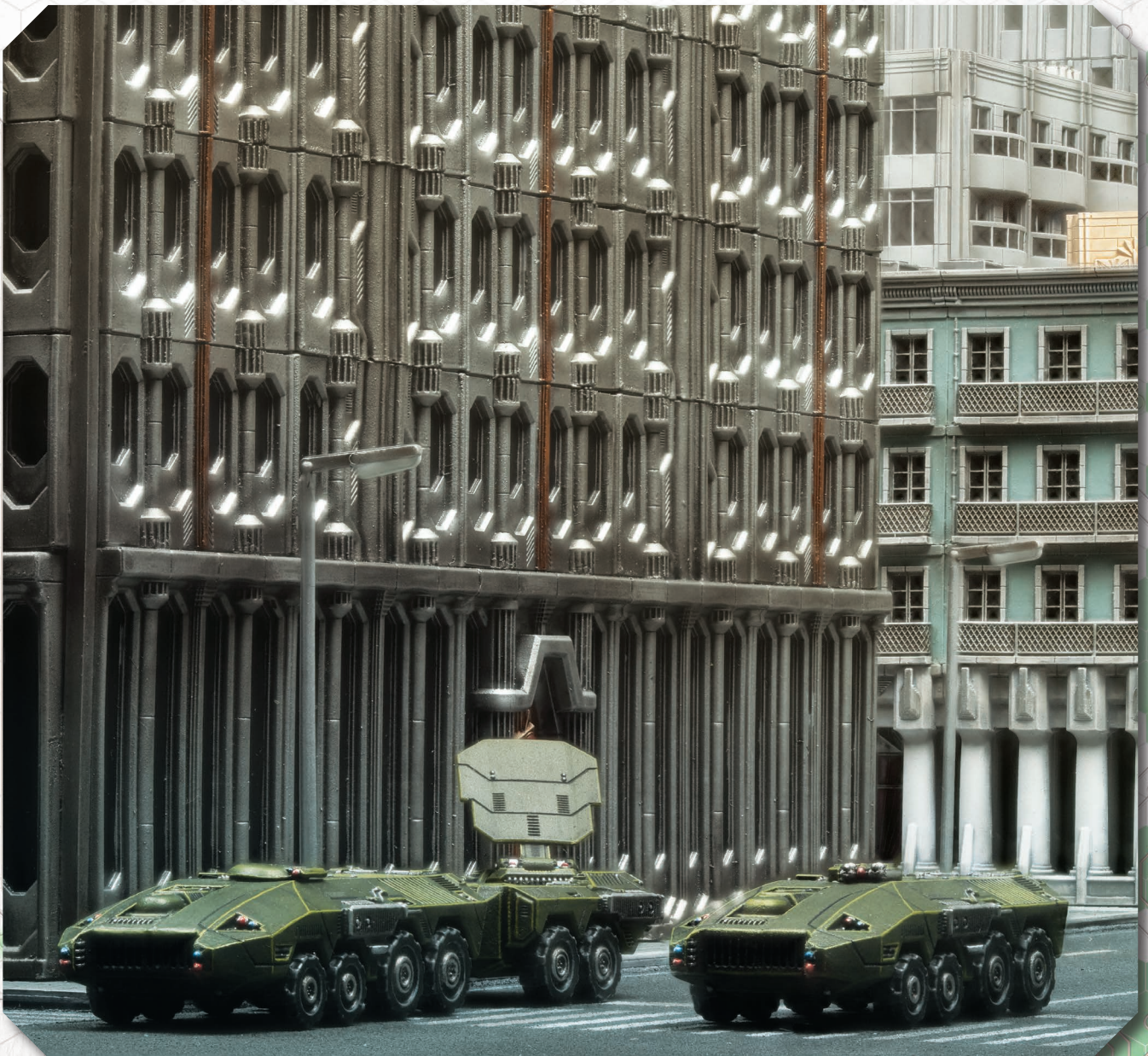
MILITARY STATE

Despite its democratic underpinnings, the UCM is essentially a military state. This has arisen not through tyranny, but necessity. Many senior army and fleet offices come automatically with Senate or even High Council seats. Most civilian politicians recognise the need for defence issues to supersede all other concerns and are still firmly behind the Reconquest. The UCM has essentially been in a state of war since its very foundation.

Most citizens live austere, often harsh lives, human toil being the lifeblood of the Reconquest. Most accept this with stoic determination, hoping to one day see the bountiful Cradle Worlds and even Earth itself with their own eyes. These distant jewels have a place in the heart of many who once listened in awe to their grandparents' tales of great cities, verdant gardens and lives of leisure. All understand that a free future can only be theirs through annihilating the Scourge.

Military service is seen as paramount for the survival of mankind, especially now. Today, over 5.2% of the population are mobilised – a higher percentage than at any other time in history and a figure which has actually risen since the outbreak of hostilities, despite massive casualties.

In total, the UCM has over a billion men and women in uniform, although only a small fraction are “bayonets”, as every armed force needs multitudes in support roles. Military service was voluntary, until the onset of the Battle for Earth. Reluctantly, the Senate used the UCM's constitutional provision for conscription for the first time. This has proven predictably unpopular, inciting protest rallies across many Colonies, but has provided a crucial boost in manpower, perhaps enough to tip the balance. However, conscription is viewed as a gross breach of human decency and has the potential to turn public opinion against the military-led status quo, should a quick victory and return to voluntary service not occur.





THE ARMY

The United Colonial Army (the UCMA) has greater manpower than the fleet, though fewer materiel resources. The bulk of the UCMA's soldiers form the mighty Colonial Legions. Each numbers around a million fighting men and women plus support staff and is generally raised from the same planet. More populous colonies raise many Legions. Some of the most potent are actually the newest - the Eden 1st and 2nd, the Elysium 1st and the currently forming Shangri-La 1st have all been raised from newly conquered Cradle Worlds and consist almost solely of ex-resistance fighters. These grizzled soldiers have a lifetime's worth of experience in killing Scourge and will surely prove their worth on Earth, where they are even now being deployed for the first time.

The Legions are supported by the Colonial Armoured Corps, vast formations which include all ground vehicle crews and support staff. The CAC includes the formidable Colonial Tank Battalions, some of the most potent fighting entities anywhere in the galaxy.

The most recent branch of the CAC is the so-called Anvils: brigades consisting solely of Behemoth class battle mech operators and support crew. These towering engines bestride the field like avatars of destruction, dwarfing super-heavy tanks. These additions to the Colonial arsenal were developed in response to similarly gargantuan machines deployed by other races. Although the UCM took years to develop and deploy Behemoths of its own, these first operational units have proven more than up to the task of felling their opposite numbers.

Their arrival has been timely, to say the least - a huge morale boost for the lowly troops fighting on Earth. The tactical uses of such colossal death machines are different from those of regular ground forces, so the Anvils enjoy a good measure of autonomy.

The UCMA's ground troops are delivered to the front by the Army Air and Space Corps (AASC). This organisation includes all dropship and gunship crews and their support staff. The AASC works closely with the fleet, as they are the vital interface between ground troops and ships in orbit.

The UCMA is commanded by Army Headquarters (AHQ), possibly the most influential military body in the UCM, although the Admiralty would beg to differ. AHQ also includes Army Intelligence as well as the Military Science Division, although the latter also works closely with the Admiralty.

Inter-service rivalry is mostly a source of light amusement rather than conflict, although occasionally friction does flare up. Recently, accusations have been levelled by AHQ at the fleet due to perceived lack of support or over-zealous bombardment, as was the case in Star-Casablanca. Casualties are inevitably higher in the UCMA, the greatest source of friction between army and fleet. However, those with access to a full and uncompromising picture of the Reconquest and its needs rarely make such comments and understand that death in the void can be just as visceral and more often total.

THE FLEET

The United Colonies of Mankind Fleet (UCMF) is the smaller military body in manpower although it has the greatest share of materiel resources - shipbuilding is the single biggest drain on the UCM. However, it has been deemed that can be no such thing as "too many ships" in this war.

Home port to the UCMF is Niccolum, a blue gas giant ringed by mineral-rich rock containing rare metals and materials central to shipbuilding. Most UCM vessels are built here using mainly local resources. Niccolum's population is the largest ever to live out their entire lives in space. Niccolum is encircled by thousands of orbital installations, shipyards and defence emplacements. Though the Scourge control the surface of Olympus Prime, the capture of its vast orbitals has recently granted humanity a second, epic shipyard. Although only beginning to be brought back online and reconfigured to build modern ships, the extra capacity will be a huge boon for the Admiralty.

The Admiralty oversees the actions of the fleet, plans and directs its operations, frequently in person. All commissioned officers above the rank of Lieutenant are members. Given the decisive, destructive power it can unleash, it is said that the Admiralty is the most powerful institution humanity has ever known.

The Battlefleets themselves include thousands of ships, from the smallest lighter to the largest dreadnought. Though they hadn't fully recovered from the Battles of Olympus and Ferrum, they boasted over 4250 fighting vessels of frigate tonnage, 1114 cruisers, 103 battleships, 14 dreadnoughts and 11 supercarriers before the invasion of Earth. However, the truly cataclysmic engagements there have so far reduced this strength by almost a third.

The second-largest fighting body in the UCMF is the Fleet Air Arm, which includes all strike craft personnel from Fighter Command, Strike Command and the Air Logistical Corps. These pilot and maintain the UCMF's fighters, bombers, shuttles and other ancillary craft. They are the only part of the UCMF to see much action on the surface, in support of ground troops.

The Colonial Marine Corps is responsible for ship security and close protection for surface landings. The Corps includes the elite Marine Force Recon (MF-R) and the shadowy Marine Force Black (MF-B) - the latter directed by the Office of Naval Intelligence, a mysterious organisation which is said to have the ear of the President. ONI conducts counter-espionage and keeps tabs on prominent citizens and officers. The extent of the latter is not widely known, but such activities have increased tenfold, given the suspicion of PHR agents in senior positions; even as far as the High Council. In an unexpected development, ONI recently uncovered an extensive Kalium spying within the UCMA. The ONI is also tasked with answering some of the greatest questions troubling mankind, such as seeking the location of the PHR homeworlds.

While unglamorous, the Fleet Logistical Corps is the third-largest employer in the UCM, responsible for the supply of the UCM's forces. Without it, the entire Reconquest would instantly grind to a halt. The FLC controls almost as much tonnage as the Battlefleets, mostly supply haulers and support staff. Many joke that if they were ever armed, the Reconquest could be over in a year, although of course the jokers seldom care about how their last meal got to them or where their tank's fuel and ammunition came from.





UCM GROUND FORCES

UCM ground forces are distinctly utilitarian and compact, designed for mass orbital insertion and efficiency in manpower and resource consumption. Their vehicles are a far cry from the lumbering contraptions of the 20th century. They are necessarily lightweight, since Colonial military strategy calls for efficient planetary assault from orbit. Almost all UCM materiel has been designed with this in mind, from the heaviest dropship to the humble assault rifle.

Most UCM vehicles feature a single driver or pilot. Advanced control systems and limited automation allow a single individual to operate a main battle tank. This makes best use of valuable crewmen. The UCM shuns the use of drones en-mass, as they are far too vulnerable to electronic warfare. There is also a strong feeling in AHQ that there's no substitute for the split second, nuanced judgements made by a living pilot. A common theme in UCM tank design is an extremely low profile. This allows for maximum transport efficiency and presents a smaller target. This necessitates cramped crew compartments, where operators often lay prone inside their machines.

To assist the pilot and defence of the vehicle, all UCM fighting vehicles feature a broad suite of active counter-measures. These include point defence lasers, sub-munitions and even local energy shield projection. These systems have a low power consumption compared to true energy shields, since they are only temporarily activated over a small area. They are ineffective against directed energy weapons, and can be defeated by a high velocity projectiles or close range attack.

The best defence the UCMA has is nothing to do with advanced technology or the layered composites used to armour their vehicles though; it is the sheer numbers of units able to be fielded. The UCM's colossal industrial base churns out armour at a staggering rate, with many Colony Worlds expending the vast majority of their workforce on the construction of materiel for the war effort.

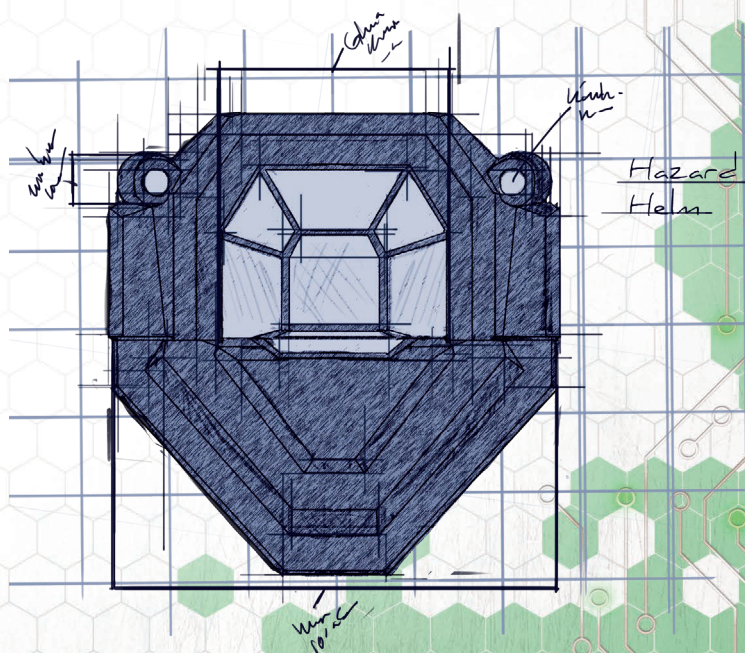
A common component on UCM vehicles are weapons mounted on armatures which can fold flush to the hull. They also facilitate rapid target acquisition and tracking. They can also be raised, allowing the vehicle to "peek" and fire over terrain whilst keeping the hull in cover.

Many vehicles are armed with railguns: the UCM's premier anti-armour, kinetic energy weapon. Railguns magnetically accelerate a disc-shaped, melon-sized projectile, delivering tremendous energy downrange. Limited

effectiveness against active countermeasures is achieved through staggering velocity. The projectiles ignite the air through sheer friction, often exposing the shooter's position. The most common is the UM-100 "Avenger", although larger versions of this weapon exist, right up to the colossal UMH-1 used by the Anvil's Behemoths.

The UCM still routinely deploys chemically fuelled rockets. These offer negligible power consumption, low cost, portability and lethality. However, despite recent advancements, their airspeed is relatively low, and thus best employed at close range and in urban environments, where they might overcome countermeasures. The UM-105 "Phoenix" provides man-portable, anti-armour firepower while its multi shot cousin – the UM-105B – is utilised by light scout vehicles.

While the ground forces of the UCMA are more and more frequently fielding advanced weaponry like the experimental UMX-1 "Marksmen" laser, they still rely quite heavily on traditional chemical-propelled weapons. From the small but multi-purpose UM-3 Modular Assault Weapon (a standard for all UCMA armed forces due to its adaptability to fulfil a variety of roles, with interchangeable barrel length, sights and calibres), all the way to the UM-40 "Retributor" which provides merciless killing power with negligible power drain at over 300 rounds per minute. Traditional gatling and machineguns are also commonplace, often due to the saturation of air-based units on the battlefield. High rate of fire is still one of the best ways to deal with enemy units, even those with advanced counter-measures, where sheer weight of numbers can still shred a tank in seconds.





TANKS

UCM tanks come in a wide variety of sizes. The smallest currently in the field are the Katana and Fireblade light tanks, designed for additional speed over ultimate armour protection. These share the same footprint as the stalwart Sabre Main Battle Tank, the most common type found in the Colonial Tank Battalions. Several variants use the Sabre chassis, such as the anti-air Rapier.

The next largest chassis is the Gladius Heavy Battle Tank, the standard variant packing fully twice the firepower of the Sabre. This platform is also used for the experimental Scimitar tank-hunter and the Maul self-propelled mortar. The most formidable chassis currently in the field is the Broadsword Super-Heavy, which packs an enormous railgun and an articulated hull, allowing its massive frame to cope with uneven ground. The rarer Claymore is also based on this platform.

WHEELED VEHICLES

The UCM makes considerable use of traditional vehicle types. Generally, these are in auxiliary roles rather than in the vanguard, since they tend to be lighter than tanks. By far the most common to see action is the ubiquitous Bear APC, which gets most mechanised Legionnaires to combat with a good degree of protection. The Kodiak command vehicle uses the Bear hull, although the interior is heavily modified and a comms trailer is added.

Wheels can be faster than treads in urban environments, and as such they are often used on scout vehicles such as the Wolverine LAV.

SUPPORT VEHICLES

More unusual types generally fit into peripheral, unorthodox roles. The Longbow and Crossbow, for example, are dropship-deployed artillery pieces which cannot move themselves but are designed for rapid re-deployment.

The Ferrum class Drone Base is one of the largest vehicles the UCM has that is capable of dropship deployment. This is effectively a mobile airstrip for the release and control of Starsprite drones. The Ferrum chassis is also used for the Chromia class Orbital Relay Base.



INFANTRY

Although the UCM boasts colossal numbers of armoured vehicles, it is the humble Legionnaire that makes up the bulk of the UCMA's manpower. Each Legion numbers roughly one million men and hails from a single Colony or – more recently – a Cradle World. Legionnaires are decently trained and equipped, but – save those recruited from the Resistance – very few have more than a couple of years' combat experience. Legionnaires are equipped with a variety of weapons, the largest of which are served by a two-man crew. These are deployed as distinct Flack and Mortar teams, for example.

More elite than the Legions, the Pretorian Corps fulfils the role of army special forces. These are consummate urban assault specialists, especially lethal at room clearance and rapid insertion. Within the Praetorians, there are several specialist vocations, such as sniper teams.

The UCM's heavy infantry go into battle wearing Hazard Suits – hulking, armoured exoskeletons originally designed for dangerous jobs on hostile worlds. They enhance the strength of the wearer, allowing them to carry a light railgun and its associated power-pack.

DROPSHIPS

Virtually all first wave or fast tactical operations are deployed from aerial dropship. UCM types are especially light and utilitarian, eschewing heavy armament in favour of efficiency. The most common type is the Condor, specifically the Ferrum pattern, although many other patterns regularly see battle. This can carry up to three medium battle tanks, two APCs, or even single super heavy tank. A single UCM New Orleans class Strike Carrier carries 100 Condors in its capacious hangars.

The UCM's typical light dropship is the Raven, which can either carry ten infantrymen or a pair of Wolverine LAVs. Ravens are rarer than Condors and less efficient in manpower requirements, but much faster, so generally reserved for scouting or infiltration type missions. Ravens are also used to deploy Longbow and Crossbow artillery pieces.

The UCM's premier heavy dropship is the Albatross, which can carry a colossal nine medium battle tanks, or even a single Ferrum Drone Base. Given its high capacity and relatively low armour, it is the most efficient dropship delivery vehicle per ton, but is also a tempting target, necessitating careful use.





AIRCRAFT

The UCM employs several VTOL aircraft for persistent close air support of ground forces, generally based on dropship airframes. The Falcon-A is the most common and is designed for the anti-tank role. The rarer Falcon-B carries AA missiles and is particularly lethal against enemy dropships.

A heavier gunship is also in service – based on the Condor airframe, the Eagle carries a pair of massive underslung railguns and missile pods, designed for stand-off ranged fire support. However, by far the largest gunship is the Phoenix, a massive aircraft which packs a plethora of offensive weapons as well as a command suite. An even more formidable development exists, nicknamed the “Super-Phoenix”.

Under the auspices of the fleet rather than the army, high speed, fixed-wing aircraft are occasionally brought in to support ground forces. The Archangel is the most common, a single-seater interceptor also capable of strafing runs against lightly armoured targets.

The heavier Seraphim is designed specially for the ground-attack role. The regular variant carries four bunker busters on under-wing hardpoints and the internal Heavenfire system: one of the UCM’s first combat-ready plasma weapons. A variant of the Seraphim known as the Retaliator also exists, configured more for an anti-armour role.





BEHEMOTHS

The UCM has only recently accepted that such gargantuan, costly units are necessary for victory. In general, their existence opposes the UCM's mantra of high-volume, high efficiency. These gods of the battlefield require considerable resources to produce, maintain and deploy – so much so that many argue the UCMA would be better off with more tanks. However, only a Behemoth is a true match for another, and given their increasing use by other races as the conflict intensified, AHQ eventually bowed to the inevitable.

However – as is often the case with the UCM – once it committed, it did so with dynamic, forceful gusto. In less than two years, combat-ready groups of Behemoths, known as Anvils, were deployed for the first time in the assault on the surface of Earth. Besides their obvious destructive power, this proved a huge morale boost for the troops on the ground, who stared up in awe at the towering death-machines their

commanders had sent to aid them. The Office of Morale and Media were quick to capitalise on this. Possibly, the numbers of new recruits emboldened by these poster-children for Colonial warfare may outweigh their actual effectiveness on the battlefield.

The UCM took several cues from known Behemoths of other races, choosing to focus on walker designs seriously for the first time, deeming treads too inflexible for something this large. AHQ refers to their constructs as Battle Mechs, to distinguish them from the generic “walker” term used for the machines of other races. A parallel development was the Drop-Harness system, derived from the PHR's Behemoth delivery system, since these war engines are far too large for dropships.

Currently, there are two broad types of Behemoth types in service on the front line with the UCM. However, this is new technology for the Colonies, so many more are in development or awaiting their first combat deployment.



LIGHT BATTLE MECHS

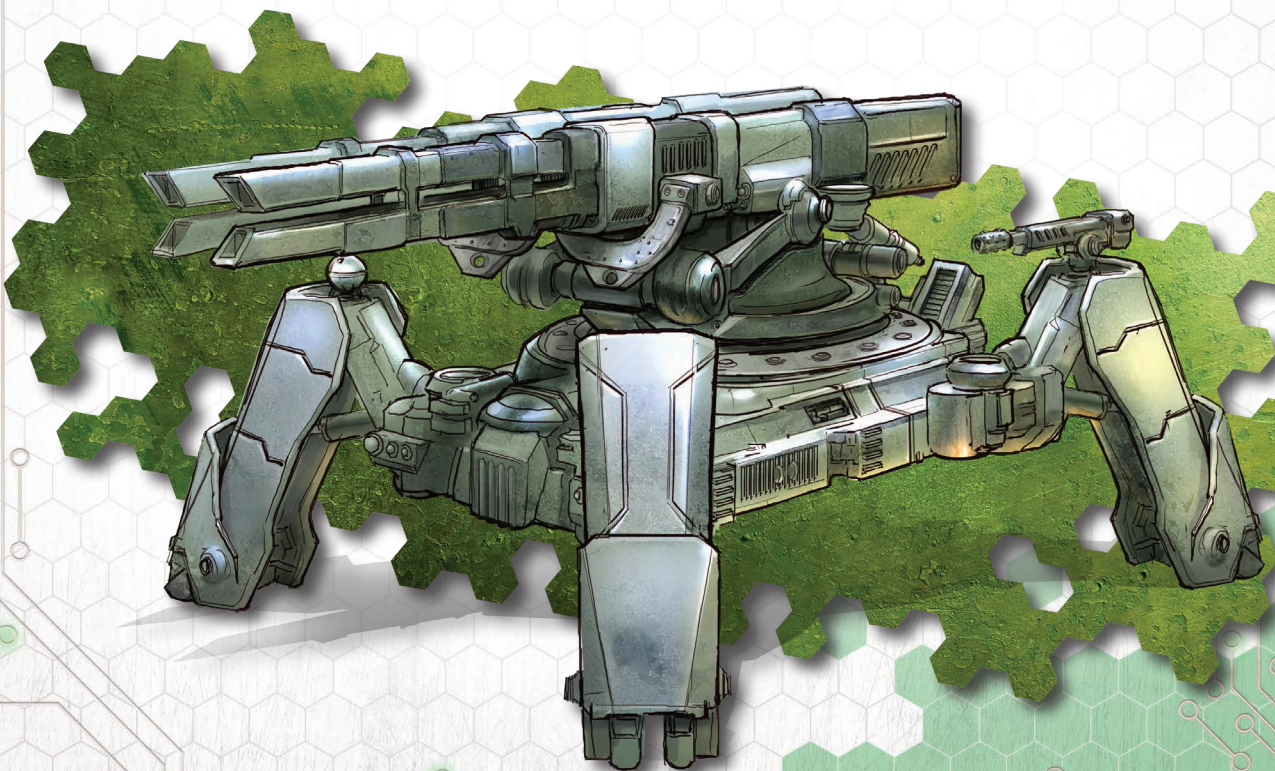
Although the Heavy was actually the first to hit the frontline, AHQ intends the Light form to overtake the Heavy in terms of numbers, given its lower cost and greater practicality. Lights are perhaps less glamorous, but more dangerous relative to their size, since their designers chose to focus on power rather than quantity for weaponry.

The standard UCM Light Battle Mech chassis is quadruped and omni-directional, with no front or back legs as such. It sits low to the ground, ensuring that should multiple legs be destroyed, it will only be immobilised, not destroyed. The knees also function as hardpoints for two optical targeting clusters and two UM-88B chainguns for close-protection. The crew compartment is buried in its centre, requiring a single operator, but normally using two for redundancy and load-sharing.

The two variants currently in use are the Brazil and the India.

The Brazil class is optimised for anti-Behemoth operations. Its primary armament is a pair of UMH-2 Mass Drivers. These are lower powered than the UMH-1 carried by Heavies, however they are still utterly lethal, high-energy weapons able to lay low larger foes.

The India class is a rare example of a Behemoth optimised for an anti-air role. For this, it mounts four UMH-19 Flak Cannons in two pairs, with limited independent traverse. These massive weapons are high enough energy to down strategic fliers, such as Bulk Landers – the India's primary target. Against tactical, battlefield-level targets such as dropships, the UM-19s are laughably overpowered. However, almost as soon as it was deployed, commanders quickly realised how effective they were against enemy tank formations and began to value the India for its ability to wipe anything short of a Behemoth from the battlefield.



HEAVY BATTLE MECHS

These are enormous, bipedal monsters, heavier in sheer tonnage than all other known Behemoths. Their massive weight is partly due to their first-generation nature, but also the vast firepower on offer. However, as with all UCM designs, the Heavy is not without practicality. The legs feature an ingenious folding system, allowing the machine to fold down to a surprisingly compact package, for maximum efficiency aboard ship or bulk-lander. These legs can also extend considerably, providing a superior vantage to all but Shaltari Dragons.

A weakness of this bipedal design is lack of redundancy – if the legs are targeted effectively, it is possible to immobilise or even bring down a UCM Heavy without having to contend with the extremely thick composite armour of its hull. Besides this weakness though, these are some of the toughest war engines anywhere – a spectacular feat of engineering and an unequivocal success for a first attempt.

Befitting the UCM's usual practices, the Heavy has a low crew requirement: three at full compliment, but intelligent systems allow the entire edifice to be operated by a single individual, if necessary. The additional crew are of benefit in load-sharing for target acquisition and tracking.

The current classes of Heavy Battle Mech in service with the UCMA share the same hull and chin armament: a battery of six newly developed Vindicator MKII Gatling Cannons. They also feature the shoulder-mounted Hailfire Missile System, which may be loaded with heavy munitions optimised for anti-Behemoth use, or light munitions for laying waste to swarms of lesser vehicles.

There are two broad variants currently in use: the America and Russia.

The America is armed with a pair of mighty UMH-1 Mass Drivers. This is a term for familiar UCM railgun technology once it reaches a certain gauge, more commonly associated with starships. These weapons are as tall as an apartment block if stood upright and powerful enough to tear into the core of the toughest armoured machines known to man.

Meanwhile the Russia is a bit more general-purpose and slightly cheaper to produce. Instead of Mass Drivers, the primary arm weapons of the Russia are chemically fired rotary UMH-9 Stormcrow Cannons. The low power consumption of these weapons gives the Russia extended endurance, though its ammunition takes up more physical space and depletes quicker, given its blistering rate of fire. Not as high energy as the UMH-1, the Stormcrow is best employed against Behemoths with lighter armour or concentrations of conventional units, which may be expeditiously pummelled into dust.



