

Battletech Forces Design Notes

by Alan Oliver

Basically an attempt to explain the DCMS force list, and those to follow.

Mech selection

The selection of mechs and armour on the force list may seem a little arbitrary, and to be honest, it is. The mechs were selected based on the figures painted in DCMS colours in my collection, the point being to make an existing army functional. Obviously the list will not be a perfect fit for other people's collections, but this is only the starting point. I have two other inner sphere lists and three clan lists to follow, and between them hopefully most mechs will be covered, and for those that aren't then this might provide a good baseline.

The use of cobra and apache gunships on the force list is due to a lack of Battletech VTOLs in my figure collection. They have been stated up as Battletech VTOLs rather than the actual helicopters.

Basic Concepts

The idea is to make mechs somewhere between tanks and titans in terms of power, the idea being to use FWC to be able to play reasonably large forces of mechs with ease.

They haven't been given shields for three reasons, firstly it reduces the cost of them, secondly there is nothing in the background that would indicate any shield like technology, and thirdly to make them less powerful than titans.

The addition of Big as apposed to massive came about from play testing, where an all massive mech force proved to be too vulnerable to enemy fire, due to the reduction in cover protection on massive units. While it does reduce the capabilities of the smaller mechs somewhat, it also makes the overall force list less vulnerable. Later play testing showed that the bulk of a mech force being the big mechs, with only a few massive mechs was effective.

Heat has not been ignored completely, however it is assumed that the command rolls to some degree represent mechs losing effectiveness from heat. Given that a turn in FWC is at least six times as long as a Battletech turn, mechs would have to fire on six orders to be firing continually in battletech terms, and that's just not that likely. Each FWC turn therefore represents a sequence of firing and cooling by the mechs.

The 3050 period mechs of the inner sphere are stated as average tech level, while the clan forces were made advanced tech level. I will eventually put together a primitive tech level 3025 list, however this isn't top priority. This makes clan mechs cheaper on the clan lists than they are on the IS lists.

Originally was planning to have all command units in mechs, operating pretty much as skirmish command units. However this was changed, now the IS CO is a normal command unit (with the DCMS list having a Cyclops mech CO as an option) while the clan COs will be mounted in mechs. Both forces have both normal HQs and mech HQs, but mechs under the command of a normal HQ are at a command penalty. No mech warrior wants to take orders from infantry or armour after all.

Elite mechwarriors can be bought for any mech, which removes the penalty to assault but more importantly reduces the suppression dice by one, as otherwise mech forces were very vulnerable to suppression, especially HQ and CO mechs. Now you can make your important mechs elite and keep them operational a bit longer.

I've not gone into individual aerospace fighters for providing air strikes, there's just too many of them, so have just provided a generic list of aircraft on the list. This is mainly because I have no aerospace figures, I'm not likely to get them, and so it would just be a lot of work for little result.

Statline

Move was based on running speed times three to get a move in cm. Jumping mechs generally had their jump distance instead, but a few were better off using their running speed. Where mechs have MASC or similar, I've used their enhanced speed, as the order system covers its erratic nature.

Hits were based on the size of the figure rather than the tonnage of the original mech, to keep with the general FWC idea of what you see being what you get. The Archer and Warhammer are the old 'unseen' figures, somewhat smaller than the new sculpts.

Weapons are covered in more detail below, but most big mechs were simplified to one, or occasionally two, weapons, while massive mechs normally have two weapons. This would often mean that the backup weapons on mechs would not be represented in the attacks.

Armour was based on the amount of armour for it's size that the mech has in Battletech, but after play testing this was increased somewhat in the massive mechs to increase survivability.

Assault values were increased for having hands, melee weapons and TSM, but also for short ranged weapons where not suitable to be a main weapon.

Force limits, the numbers in [] on my list simply show the number of figures available in the force. If you have access to large numbers of a particular mech, then you may need to put further limits on those designs, but most players collections have a wide range of mechs in small numbers, so this shouldn't be an issue. The House mech minimums are intended to give each army list a different feel. The alternative option, that I didn't use, was to make these house mechs cheaper for the operating House or Clan, however I wasn't certain that this wouldn't unbalance the entire force list.

Stabilised and restricted, while normally all massive walkers should have both, I've taken the liberty of dropping one or other on some mechs. The more flexible or agile mechs are not restricted, and there are even a few that I've made 360, such as anti-air mechs. There are also some mechs that are not suitable to be firing on the move, especially those with heavy gauss cannon.

Weapons

I've attempted to stat the weapons as found on the mech and classed certain weapons with special rules. For the lighter mechs I've simplified the weapons to one, or occasionally two, weapons, as they can only fire one. For the massive mechs I've still had to simplify in places, especially with mechs that mount a wide array of weapons.

Gauss cannon, PPC and ERPPC all became hyper velocity penetrator weapons, about 2.5 AD for a gauss cannon or clan ERPPC, and 2 AD for an inner sphere PPC or ER PPC.

Pulse lasers and LBX auto-cannon have become high impact weapons, to cover their innate accuracy. AD are less exact, roughly around 1AD per 7.5 points of damage from pulse lasers and 1AD per 5 damage from LBX, but this has been adjusted slightly in places to fit the size of the figure.

LRMs have become auto linked weapons with a slightly extended range. Target designators then were fitted to mechs with either narc beacons or TAG, simulating guided LRMs. This is a bit of a stretch for the BT technology, but does make the presence of TAG/narc mean something. ATMs have also been made auto linked weapons, with a shorter range than the LRMs, but getting attack dice for less tubes. LRMs are getting one attack dice per 8 tubes or so, while ATMs are getting one per four tubes.

Ultra auto-cannon, lasers, MRMs and SRMs are all just normal attacks without special rules.

Figures

For non mech COs, I'm using the old mobile command centre and the Morningstar command vehicle for the IS forces.

For IS non mech HQs I'm just using whatever buggies, jeeps and HUMVEEs I can find. For the clans I'll use single elementals with a distinctive paint job.

For clan FAOs I've used some of the variant power armour single figures while for the IS I'm using savannah master hovercraft.

Clans do not operate FACs, the mech command units call in air support, while the inner sphere again use Savannah master hovercraft.

Infantry for the clans are elementals, I've got a single elemental as a light squad, two as a medium squad and 3 on a base as a heavy squad, less than is traditional, however it's cheaper to put figures on the table that way.

For the IS I've just used old 6mm from another range that I already had, so any 6mm human infantry will serve.

IS recce units are light recon mechs, although may add some recon vehicles if I get any. However recon mechs doing scouting is definitely part of the background. For the clans I'm using lighter protomechs, as I had them hanging around, and hephestus scout hovercraft.

Mechs and tanks are just that, mechs and tanks. I do have a number of the older unseen figures which are included in the list. The statlines for mechs are based on the original books for each year listed in the name. I don't have the new books I'm afraid so haven't been able to adjust for them. RB in the name indicates it's the reborn new version of the mech figure, and based on the project phoenix TRD stats.