

THE GHOST BEAR SPEAR



A BATTLETECH SCENARIO



CONFLICT BACKGROUND

Following saKhan Ragnar Magnusson's speech to the Rasalhagian government in 3070, there was a brief, curious trend amidst the clan. With a naivete born out of a limited understanding of Inner Sphere culture and an overwhelming, nearly desperate desire to prove themselves friends to the people of the FRR, several high-ranking clansmen began to send out gifts to the valdherres and heltigs of the remaining republic planets. While clan culture understood the importance of gifts, the style varied greatly, with star commanders, merchant leaders and even scientists trying to win the most honor for themselves with the most ostentatious of gifts. One such object was the Ghost Bear Spear, valued at approximately 2,000,000 C-bills.

With some long-term beliefs of the opulence of the spheroids remaining amidst the clansmen, especially those who did not interact with them outside of a military setting, it was not a big surprise that several of these gifted objects were thus gaudy and tasteless, yet very valuable.

Commissioned by Star Captain Johannes Rand of Beta Galaxy, the Ghost Bear Spear is a truly useless piece of decoration, reminding more a prop from a poorly made fantasy movie than a weapon. It is believed that those civilians whom Johannes consulted on creating the item thought to see just how far they could take the joke, but this has never been confirmed.

A grip of Ghost Bear skin protects a haft made of bone, with 304 jewels of differing size representing the 304th Assault Cluster set onto it. 14 bands of gold are attached, with names of mechwarriors from the illustrious 14th Battle Cluster inscribed with extreme care. In the end, it weighed enough that even an Elemental would have struggled to throw it.

The spear took close to a year to complete and was a great source of pride and accomplishment, symbolizing the work between both warrior and civilian castes and the unity of the warrior-spirit of the clans and the riches of the Inner Sphere.

Of course, the existence of such an obvious symbol of unity also gathered plenty of unwarranted attention...



It is unknown who, exactly, paid the Black Band mercenary group to seize and destroy the spear before it could be given to its new owner in Dehgotlan, but many theories exist. Anti-clan terrorists and nobles from the Draconis Combine or the Lyran Alliance could potentially benefit from sour relations between the FRR and the Ghost Bear Dominion, while political rivals and the other clans could benefit from the personal humiliation of Captain Rand.

Of course, there are also conspiracy theories ranging from alien avians to the spear being wanted for the personal collection of the legendary master thief from Canopus, Lord Magnanimous himself, though he denies knowledge of the incident (which is exactly what someone who had committed the crime would do, according to supporters of this theory).

With forged entry codes, the Black Band arrived in the Maule system, posing as a Rasalhagian delegation, welcomed with open arms into the Dominion.

The mercenaries knew full well that trying to challenge the Ghost Bears into a fair fight would be suicidal, and their cover could only hold for so long.

Therefore, once they learned that Captain Johannes would come meet them in his Kodiak to present the weapon, they decided on an ambush. Smash the spear, exfiltrate back into the dropship, and collect the rest of their paycheck. Easy money, and a bloody nose for the clans.

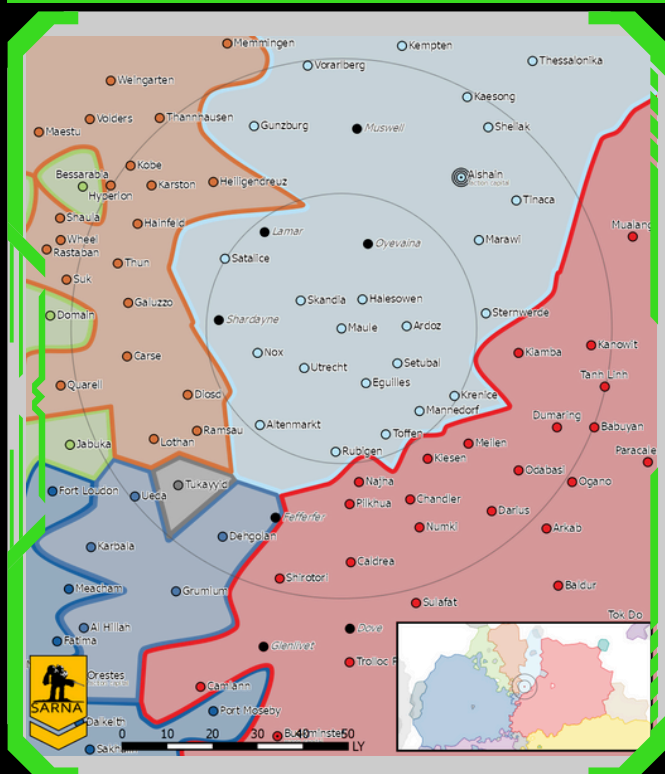
"Ah, Hallo, this is Minister Jansson from Rasalhague Republik, we would like to inspect the spear, javisst? You have the coordinates, ja?" The mercenary gave a thumbs up to his compatriots, who were mostly wincing at his horrible attempts at swedenes. There was no way this would work. Tension rose in the dropship as the speakers crackled.

"This is Star Commander Johannes Rand, Beta Galaxy. I will come to the location in my Kodiak to present the Valdherres gift personally." the gruff, terse reply came.

"A Kodiak? Is that really necessary, Kommendör? Wouldn't en hovercar be better för-" the protest died down as the speakers boomed once more.

"I will offer the Valdherres representatives the respect of meeting them in my 'mech."

Silence settled over the room as the connection was cut. "Well, 'Herr Jansson', looks like our job just got a lot harder..."



THE SPEAR CARRIERS

Expecting no actual combat, Captain Rand did still ask two mechwarriors to accompany him, thinking that it would honor them. Once the ambush became evident, however, he was glad to have done so, as his Kodiak was certainly not fast enough to escape the ambush and keep the spear safe.

MECHWARRIOR HANNAH, 4 / 5 FIRE FALCON A

Considered to be an “unluckily lucky” Mechwarrior by her peers, Hannah has had a thoroughly uninteresting career in the Ghost Bear Toman. She has no notable victories, yet somehow doesn't seem to lose her 'mechs either, always managing to pull her weight, but never truly excelling in combat. While this does not gain her personal glory, even the clanners have become appreciative of her fire support giving them an edge in a fight when not fighting under the rules of Zellbrigen.

STAR CAPTAIN RAND, 3 / 5 KODIAK STANDARD

A veteran of the Combine-Dominion wars, Captain Johannes Rand especially relishes in bringing his extreme firepower to bear on smaller 'mechs, faking heavy damage to his 'mech in an effort to lure opponents in before disintegrating their 'mechs with the devastating weaponry of his personal Kodiak.

A warrior by heart, he is still politician enough to understand the necessity for change and of building a rapport with their would-be-allies of the FRR. Thankfully, this sentiment is shared by many of his comrades.

MECHWARRIOR SULAMESH, 3 / 5 PACK HUNTER STANDARD

A bondsman originating from Clan Wolf-In-Exile, Sulamesh has nevertheless risen back to the position of a mechwarrior in his new clan. Piloting the Pack Hunter the Bears claimed as Isorla, he was taken aback by the honor being able to join Captain Rand's honor guard for delivering the spear.

“Captain! Reactor startup! 7'oclock!” Hannah's voice alerted Rand. His grip tightened on the controls of his 'mech in anger. The bastards! He should have expected this kind of trick.

...In a way, he had. With a low, rumbling chuckle, he brought his Kodiak around and armed it's weapons.





STAR CAPTAIN JOHANNES RAND WITH HIS CHOSEN ESCORTS

"So boss, I was just thinkin'..." a voice drawled over the tight-beam communication. Josh was getting bored, lieutenant Groom thought, sighed, and clicked the channel open for a reply.

"You're not paid to think, you're paid to sit in your 'mech and destroy that spear." he replied. He considered chastising him for inane comm-chatter, but he'd rather the heavy-hitter be just surly, rather than upset with him, in the coming fight.

"That's just it, boss. Why's we got to destroy the spear? I read up on the papers, said it's worth over two-mill C-bill." he sounded obviously pleased with the rhyme.

"For the love of Terra!" he cursed, took a deep breath, and continued slowly, as if explaining to an overgrown child. "Even ignoring that being a breach of contract, which would mean we won't get further jobs, what, exactly, would we do with it? Fence it? Yeah, right. And as long as we had it, we'd have the entire Care Bear Team chasing us across the Sphere. We're paid to smash it, so we'll smash it."

"Could just smash it and grab the jewels..." came the annoyed reply.

"And we will, if we have the time. Now shut up, I've got our friend on the radar. Looks like he bought two friends. As soon as they're past us, initiate reactor startup..." Groom said, then began to work on startup procedures. Time to get paid.

THE BLACK BAND MERCS

For many employers, a small, no-name mercenary unit down on their luck is the perfect asset to throw against a stronger enemy while wanting to remain anonymous to your opponent. And if they happen to fail, it's a lot cheaper than having thrown some of their own forces into the grind.

Following some bad Ops, The Black Band is exactly such a unit. Only lance-strength, they are willing to accept any mission for a chance to get their fortunes reversed.

LIEUTENANT GROOM, 4 / 5 **NIGHTSTAR NSR-9J**

Keeping the Black Band together with his force of personality and the promise that the next job will let them hit it big, Lieutenant Dante Groom is a man on the edge. Trying to juggle maintenance costs, work offers and the morale of his unit is wearing him down.

Still, it's just like he tells his unit. Sooner or later they'll get their big break and be able to retire to a cozy life somewhere in the Successor States.

SERGEANT DREST, 4 / 5 **AXMAN AXM-IN**

Josh Drest is a brute. His choice of 'mech reflects this, as he prefers hitting things smaller than his Axman with the immense hatchet it carries, or blowing them to smithereens with the heavy autocannon. Or better yet, blowing a leg off and finishing the opponent off with his Hatchet.

Not the smartest tool in shed, Drest puts his trust in Lieutenant Groom's plans, even if he doesn't always understand them.

SERGEANT MAJOR PARK, 3 / 5 **MERCURY MCY-99**

The current second-in-command of the Black Band, Yun-Hee Park has secured her position by process of elimination. While a much better pilot than Lieutenant Groom, she has all the interpersonal and leadership skills of an exceptionally aggressive bulldog. A trait which serves her well in her Mercury. Once she's on someone's tail, she will not relent before her prey is disabled or destroyed.

SERGEANT CASH, 4 / 5 **GRIFFIN GRF-3M**

Sergeant Alex Cash comes from a long line of Mercenaries, ensuring that his Griffin's ownership is kept by him, no matter his contract, allowing for him to jump sinking ships once the going gets tough, which seems to be what fate has in store for the Black Band too, though Cash is curious to see if Lieutenant Groom's promises for hitting it big will hold true.

He'll just stay with the band for one more job...



THE BLACK BAND, READY TO INTERCEPT AND DESTROY THE SPEAR



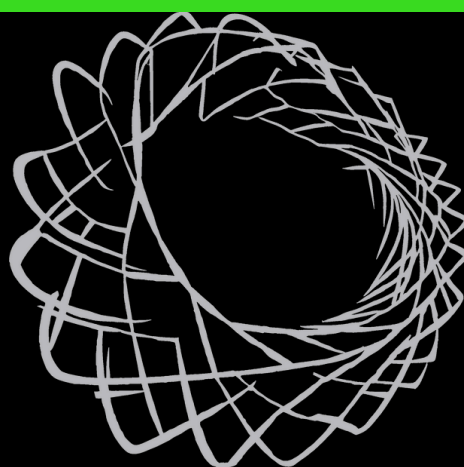
"You're paying us how much to do what..? Yeah, 'course I've heard of the Spear, everyone has."

"I mean, sure, sure, just don't know why you'd-"

"Yeah, yeah, you're right. Don't need to know why, just gotta do it. Yeah. Consider it done."

-Overheard in a Mercenary hiring hall.

The emblem of the Black Band is a stylized, spiky mobius strip, representing the convoluted bond that holds all mercenaries together. The name of the group is usually written in highly stylized letters, reminding them of their namesake from the medieval times of ancient Terra.



Black Band

GAME INFORMATION

SCENARIO RULES

As per the rules from the fanmade 'Instant Action' supplement, V4 playtest edition. Both sides made forces worth 6000 BV with no restrictions on pilot skill levels. After this, they selected an agenda for their force.

HOUSE RULES

The following additional rules were used:

- Floating criticals (Tactical ops)
- Careful stand (Tactical ops)
- Unequal number of units (Initiative deck)

MISSION SELECTION

GHOST BEAR AGENDA: CONFRONT

BLACK BAND AGENDA: DESTROY

MISSION: DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

MAPSHEETS: SCATTERED WOODS AND BATTLETECH

GHOST BEAR ESCAPE ZONE



GHOST BEAR DEPLOYMENT ZONE

The hills and forests allowed for the Mercenaries to hide their 'mechs in ambush with relative ease, while also not being too much in the way, allowing for open fields of fire for what should be an easy job. However, if the Bears forces could reach the woods, it would be hard to keep up with them...

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

[CONFRONT VS DESTROY]

"I'd rather see our standard tattered or burned than in the hands of a pirate. Move to intercept. I don't care how many of them you have to kill. I don't care how many of you come back alive. Do not let them get away with our colors. This is for the honor of the flag."

MISSION BRIEF

The Confront force has captured some crucial component of the Destroy player's honor - a copy of the Remembrance, a regimental standard, or an important aristocratic pilot. The Confront player's objective is to escape the battlefield with this item, while the Destroy player's goal is to destroy the objective to keep it out of enemy hands. The Destroy can destroy the objective. To do so, a unit must pick up the objective and then spend no MP in the following turn. If it still holds the objective at the end of that turn, it is destroyed.

The Destroy player sets up the battlefield. The Confront player begins by choosing a short map edge to be their home edge. The opposite edge is the Destroy player's edge. The Confront player then secretly chooses one of their units to start carrying an objective. Their goal is to deliver the objective to the Destroy player's map edge.

The Confront player sets up their units within eight hexes of their own map edge. Then the Destroy player sets up half their units within three hexes of the Confront player's map edge. The other half of their units will move onto the map during the first turn, starting from either of the long map edges and at least five hexes from any of the Confront player's units. After these units move onto the map, the Confront player reveals which unit was chosen to carry the objective.

VICTORY

The Confront player wins if a unit carries the objective off the Destroy player's map edge. The Destroy player wins by destroying the objective. If neither player has won by the end of turn 8, the game is a draw.

(Instant Action written by Rawbert, the 'Death Before Dishonor' mission description copied here from the Version 4 playtest version of the supplement for the sake of simplicity and used without permission)

THE CHASE BEGINS



The trap is sprung, the Ghost Bears scattering to force the mercenaries into dividing up their forces. This is successful, as only the Mercury is able to keep up with the Fire Falcon, expected to be holding the objective. Expecting for the Kodiak to advance, the Griffin runs past it, and realizes that while the clanner is slow and large, he's not stupid. The Nightstar and Axman emerge from the south edge of the map, immediately closing in with the Kodiak and Pack Hunter.

A lucky shot from the Mercury blows the right torso off the Fire Falcon, but the mercenary fire otherwise fails to do much, nor can the Axman hit the pack hunter... While the Griffin learns of its mistake as the Kodiak's UAC and array of lasers drill through the center and right rear armors, destroying the right torso and taking the 'mech out of the game on the first turn!



"I've got the big one!" Sergeant Cash called out into the comms, rushing to give chase to the lumbering Kodiak. Seeing the Pack hunter run past, he took a quick snap shot with his PPC, which went wide.

Irritation was soon replaced by confusion, then shock. How did he manage to be outmaneuvered by a damn Assault 'Mech!? Cursing his rookie mistake, he hit the eject button as the damage alarms began to shriek, filling the cockpit with noise...

Yun-Hee Park activated her MASC, 25-tons of steel and myomer pounding after the temporarily slower clan 'mech. "Yeah, doesn't feel so good when you're not the fastest, does it..?" she gloated, letting fly with everything she had as soon as she got close, tearing through the thin rear armor of the 'mech, watching smoke pour out. That was definitely an engine hit. Only, it didn't stop just there.

She was surprised to see the right arm of the 'mech blow out as the ammunition of the Fire Falcon cooked up from her laser fire. That had been a devastating blow, the Clan 'mech teetering for a moment before resuming it's awkward run. The package was as good as hers. She would love to see how long it would take to pound the reinforced container into unrecognizable debris in the dirt.

Only, it wasn't there. The Falcon's awkwardly-slow run had been a trick. A glance out the viewport confirmed that it hadn't been strapped to the blown-off autocannon either. She could feel blood rushing into her head as she opened up the comms again. "Lt, the bird doesn't have it. it's on you to spot the goods."

The response was swift. "Pack Hunter's got it, Josh had a chance to grab it but missed, the lug. Get over here and grab it!" the commander ordered.

"Aye aye..." she stopped, turned, and took running again, looking as the Pack hunter soared through the sky to get free of Josh's Axman. "You're not going anywhere if I can help it..." she vowed, glancing at the damaged Fire Falcon's icon sixty meters to her right. "...And after I break the spear, I'll tear your other arm off." she vowed, raising her 'mechs arms to fire at the Pack Hunter.



Good positioning from the Clanners left the mercenaries unable to do much, except for the lucky hit against the Fire Falcon. Had the hatchet or AC20 of the Axman struck home, the situation could have been decided on the first round of the game.

What had originally felt like wide open terrain suddenly showed just how much cover there actually was available once the fighting began...

THE HUNTER BECOMES THE PREY

After the initial confusion, the Mercenaries bought all their weapons to bear on the Pack Hunter, who, instead of moving away from the heavier 'mechs, trusted in support from his allies and his mobility to break through the Mercenary lines.

Winning initiative helped immensely, leaving the heavier 'mechs unable to bring their full firepower to bear or avoid the fury of the advancing Kodiak, which brought the Axman down with a gyro hit. While the Fire Falcon was harassing the Nightstar, it failed to cause any noticeable damage.

On the mercenary side, the Mercury was worth more than it's tonnage in gold, being able to catch up to the Pack Hunter and pressure it as the larger, lumbering merc 'mechs were trying to decide on targets, the ambush very rapidly turning into a confused melee instead of the carefully-coordinated execution it was supposed to have been.



Star Captain Rand noted with satisfaction that the Axman was having trouble standing up, feeling the thud-thud-thud of his autocannon shots reverberating through his 'mech as he poured the fire on.

"Sulamesh! Take refuge in the woods up ahead until relief forces arrive. Hannah! Support him! I will hold them off."

"Star Captain—" Sulamesh began in protest, but was silenced by his commander.

"These surats don't deserve a fight. Saving our gift to the Rasalhagians takes priority. Go. Now." he growled, kicking the prone Axman contemptuously to keep it down as he took aim at the Nightstar...

THE SPEAR FALLS

While the Pack Hunter was able to easily avoid the Axman, the Mercury stayed on him. A lucky Gauss rifle shot heavy woods, combined with the fire from the Mercury, tore through it's Right and Center Torso, destroying it and forcing it to drop the spear in the hex in front of it.

The Kodiak was bringing it's awesome firepower to bear on the Nightstar, while the Fire Falcon took the opportunity to harass it, dividing the pilots attention. It worked, as trying to track three targets while under fire made Lieutenant Groom lose control of his 'mech and fall down.

Ignoring the Axman proved to be a mistake, however, as it was able to bring it's AC/20 to good use against the Kodiak despite failing to get up, leaving the Kodiak between two heavy inner sphere warmachines.

With the Fire Falcon heavily damaged and the Kodiak far out of reach, it was bad news for the Bears.



The fight turned into a desperate melee as the heavier 'mechs tried (and failed) to keep up with the Pack Hunter and Mercury.

"Weapons systems offline" the computer helpfully informed Sulamesh, as if he couldn't notice the arm flying into the distance, torn from his Pack Hunter's shoulder by the Gauss shot ravaging through his 'mech's internals as if it was made of paper.

"Engine heavily damaged" the computer continued, heat rising within the cockpit already as the heat sinks struggled to dissipate the extra heat from the breaches in his reactor shielding. He dearly wished for the voice to shut up as he tried to juke to the left to spoil his opponent's aim. Too late, he felt the damage to his 'mech.

"Gyro damaged" the computer told him and he felt himself lurch to the side, spinning into the dirt, the heavy magnetic container holding the spear thrown into the dirt before him. The Mercury ran past him, clearly intending to trample it into the dirt.

"Torso crit-" the voice cut out. Impotently jerking the controls of the dead warmachine, Sulamesh thought that he should have been careful what he wished for.

DUTY AND SACRIFICE

With the two remaining Ghost Bear 'mechs, it was obvious what they should do. Rushing forward, the Fire Falcon managed to grab the package, with mechwarrior Hannah having to slow down dangerously to maneuver so that it's magnetic clamps would attach onto the leg of her 'mech with the Mercury savaging her 'mech, she managed to keep herself upright. In a stroke of luck, the Mercury's kick hit her undamaged leg, rather than tearing the Left Leg off of her 'mech.

The Axman got up and gave slow chase to the Kodiak, who was rushing towards the Mercury, intending to destroy it before it could get away. Ignoring hideous damage from the two merc 'mechs, Star Captain Rand kept advancing to assist Hannah, but could not yet strike at the Mercury, the heavy forests in the way blocking off his shots.



The forests past the ambush point provided a lot of cover, and if Mechwarrior Hannah could advance less than half a kilometer, she could lose her pursuers in the dense woods and claim victory for the Clan. Sergeant Major Park was not going to make that easy, however.

"Turn back and fight, you honourless coward! What, am I not good enough for you? I'll tear the legs off that bird of yours and beat you to death with it and trample that spear into the dirt, you bastard!"

-From the external speakers of the Mercury



Poor initiative rolls allowed for the Fire Falcon to avoid fire for one important turn.

THE GHOST ESCAPES

While the Mercury went and blocked off the most obvious route the Fire Falcon could take, good initiative from Mechwarrior Hannah allowed for her to shift away.

While his Kodiak was still being pounded by Autocannon fire, Star Captain Rand burst through the forest and brought all of his weapons to bear on the Mercury for what was supposed to be an absolutely devastating Alpha Strike. However, only one medium laser struck home, the Ultra autocannon already out of ammunition (luckily, as on the same turn he expended his final shots, the bin had suffered a critical hit) and the Streak SRMs failing to acquire a target lock. Even the double heat sinks on his 'mech could not handle such a heatload, forcing the Kodiak's engine into an emergency shutdown to cool off, leaving it easy prey for the two mercenaries, who closed in and absolutely destroyed the Kodiak's Left and Center Torso, turning it to scrap.

However, while Star Captain Rand was ejecting from his 'mech, Mechwarrior Hannah had made a final run for it. Only the Mercury could catch up to it now, deciding to cut through the shallow river between the forests to do so. However, a failed piloting check sent the Mercury down, suffering an embarrassingly light amount of damage in the process. However, lying prone within the river stopped him from engaging the Fire Falcon, the riverbank cutting off his sight from what would otherwise have been a sure kill.

On the last turn of the game, Mechwarrior Hannah sprinted to safety, leaving First Sergeant Park raging as he climbed out of the river, raging as the Fire Falcon vanished deep into the woods.

END RESULTS

BEGIN TALLY

THE SPEAR CARRIERS

KODIAK STANDARD - DESTROYED

Right Torso destroyed
Center Torso destroyed
Right arm blown off
XL engine damaged
Gyro damaged
Approx. 35% of armor remaining

PACK HUNTER STANDARD - DESTROYED

Right Arm destroyed
Right Torso destroyed
Center Torso destroyed
Gyro damaged
XL engine damaged
Approx. 60% of armor remaining

FIRE FALCON A - ESCAPED

Right Arm blown off
Right Torso destroyed
Left arm damaged
Left torso damaged
Left leg damaged
Approx. 60% armor remaining
Mechwarrior injured
XL Engine damaged



THE BLACK BAND MERCS

NIGHTSTAR NSR-9J - COMBAT READY

No internal damage
Pilot lightly injured
Approx. 30% of armor remaining

AXMAN AXM-IN - DAMAGED

Right arm destroyed
Gyro damaged
Approx. 65% of armor remaining

GRIFFIN GRF-3M - SALVAGEABLE

Right Arm blown off
Right Torso destroyed
XL engine damaged
Gyro damaged
Center torso damaged
Approx. 90% of armor remaining

MERCURY MCY-99 - DAMAGED

Right Arm damaged
Approx. 65% of armor remaining

END TALLY

"In other news, the Ghost Bear Spear has been recovered and handed over for transport, leaving system today, accompanied by a full trinary of the Ghost Bears finest warriors.

After surviving an Ambush by a mercenary force, the courageous Mechwarrior Hannah avoided capture and safeguarded the spear against further harm at great personal risk..."

-Excerpt from Local News, 3071

MINOR CLAN VICTORY

AFTERMATH

With the Fire Falcon disappearing into the woods beyond the reach of the mercenaries, retrieving and destroying it became impossible. With knowledge that reinforcements would be arriving, the mercenaries salvaged what they could and made for their dropship.

It was the following day that the wounded Mechwarrior Hannah returned in her heavily damaged 'mech, the spear unharmed within it's container. She had her wounds dressed immediately and was cleaned up and taken in front of cameras to be used for propaganda purposes. These interviews and reports of her survival made her something of a local celebrity amongst both the civilians and warriors stationed on Maule.

Star Captain Rand fully understood that only by her actions, was this military disaster not the end of his career. The loss of two 'mechs was an embarrassing personal defeat and a great financial problem for the Clansman. Atleast with the spear retrieved, he could claim that honor had been upheld.

While they were able to retrieve all of their 'mechs, the Black Band had, objectively, failed in their task.

An investigation would be launched as to who had employed the Black Band for this raid, but as none of their mechwarriors had been caught and they understandably kept a low profile after the failed mission, it remains a mystery to this day.



With luck and skill, Mechwarrior Hannah evaded capture and completed her objective, leaving the Spheroids raging at their own incompetence despite the hideous amounts of damage they inflicted on the Ghost Bear forces.

