



Paying the Cost to Be the Boss

How to Manage Your Mercenaries

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Hello and welcome to the Mercenary Relations Division. Here at the MRD, we strive to give our customers everything they need in the way of full-bore firepower, on time and under budget! Glenn here will give you the upside of our most ambitious package deal, and Shawn—well, Shawn will discuss some of our less ambitious plans. After all, here at the MRD, an educated customer is a quality customer.

Boys?

GLENN: Hi there! Check out the deck on page 62. It's got bells, it's got whistles, it's got—heck, it's got everything! But you've got to read the fine print, or you're going to get our people killed. And if you think it's expensive to rent 'em, think about what it costs to replace 'em.

To get the best effort out of your MechWarriors, and especially mercenaries, you need to know what makes them tick. The same is true of this *Mercenaries* deck, so that's what we're going to cover in this briefing. By the time we're done, you'll know the proper way to use its advantages and hide its disadvantages.

The *Mercenaries* deck follows a fairly standard ratio of cards, with twenty-six 'Mechs, twenty-five resources, and nine miscellaneous cards. So on the surface, you'd probably guess that there are no surprises here, right? Close, but not quite. Seven of the cards are unique mercenary contracts. Now, before you start thinking you can't afford so many of our fine divisions, consider the—

SHAWN: That's what I like about you, Glenn, always hawking for the maximum commission. Dear customer, I'd like you to consider a lower mercenary complement, say, one or two mercenary contracts. Glenn here would have you clog your deck with seven. Is there, maybe, a lack of confidence? Those seven mercs could easily be replaced with more worthwhile cards, like, say...missions?

Glenn's strategy uses Tactics, yet there are no Mission cards in the deck; any change of circumstance in the middle of combat will surely be against you. No last-minute pushes or evasive maneuvers for you, my friend. Your mercenaries, all seven of them, are your sole source of combat modification. You've got no sur-

prise element, with the cost of a card, a deployment, and continual resource drain for each Merc. *Bon appetit!*

Exactly what kind of combat modifications will all these mercs provide, you ask? Well, they do give 'Mechs a boost in battle, but for the commander who fails to pay the ① 2P cost to keep each contract going, they will only provide the enemy with more firepower. It really starts to add up—especially if you find yourself without Politics in play. Now, what could you be using these resources for if you weren't spending them on mercenaries? How about, I don't know... 'Mechs?

GLENN: Now, Shawn, don't be chasing away my customer. All the 'Mechs are pretty cheap. Only four of them cost four or more resources, and the majority of them cost one or two. Cheap 'Mechs like these are easy to deploy and will give you an advantage early in the game, and that's when you want to be winning. This deck is designed to hit fast and hard so your opponent never has a chance to recover. If the game starts to drag on, your 'Mechs are going to start looking pretty weak compared to your opponent's.

These merc contracts are beautifully specialized, for you, the educated consumer. Contract with Eridani Light Horse—hired only by a little old MechWarrior on Sundays, mind you—is going to let the air out of your opponent's Saturation Bombings before they get any steam. But they're not gonna do you any good if they're just sitting behind the lines waiting for enemy attacks.

So my advice to you, the customer, is: Attack, attack, attack! You'll normally have a large 'Mech advantage early in the game, so make good use of it. If you can't hit your opponent's Stockpile, go for the