

from which to draw. Think Tank gives a resource too, till you scrap it for a needed asset; if we count that anyway, that leaves seventeen resources free and clear.

The remaining eight Resource cards, however, just give aid to the resource-sucking mercenaries. They actually cost resources to bring into play! Now, I am not opposed to paying for some resources that provide worthwhile benefits, but eight of them seem a bit much. What exactly are you get-

turn. Early in the game, you'll probably be happier with another 'Mech, but the contracts are going to be very appealing later.

But our customer here is one smart cookie, am I right? You'll be monitoring your resource usage closely. Sacrifice a Mercenary contract in order to free up a resource. Delay paying for a resource as long as possible. And most of all, don't hire mercenaries until you're ready to use them, which should be no sooner than the middle of the game. You're going to think carefully about your options—do

right? I mean, you do value your source of income, right?

SHAWN: Well, of course I do. I love mercenaries—in moderation. Especially the best ones. And that brings me to my last point. Where in this vaunted deck are the best mercenaries available in the Inner Sphere—Wolf's Dragoons? They have their own 'Mechs, for cryin' out loud! The Imp, a massive hundred-tonner, is impressive by itself. I'd be willing to abandon the Davion forces just to get the Imp, which fits well with Contract with Wolf's Dragoons. After all, why buy a bunch of low-end contracts from Glenn when you could just as well pick up the top of the line from me?

GLENN: You have to admit the Dragoons are a trifle expensive. But hey, play with them if you like. I'm working to make your life better.

SHAWN: Uh-huh. Look, here's my advice to you, the customer. Managing a conflict in the hectic world of the 3050s is not something to take lightly. The command chair requires attention to detail as well as battlefield management. Why rest your whole strategy on mercenaries who would turn on you quicker than they could cash a C-note? If you want something done right, do it yourself. Don't rely on all those mercenaries to do a Mech-Warrior's job. Buy just the contracts you need and leave the rest alone.

GLENN: I couldn't agree more. Of course, our mercenaries would never sell you out, right Shawn?

SHAWN: Oh, indubitably. I just get caught up in the heat of the moment sometimes. Take anything I say with a container of salt.

Hey, now that's what I like to see—my salespeople agreeing on everything. You did agree on everything, right, guys?

SHAWN and GLENN: You can count on us, boss.

So...have we made the sale?

Mike, Glenn, Shawn, and Paul designed Mercenaries, and Charlie led the development of the expansion. Each of them has included a maintenance cost of ① 2P in their R&D contracts.

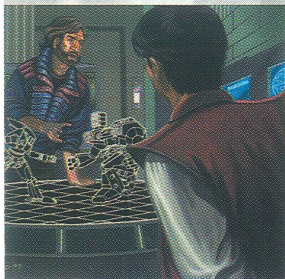


ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA WALD

Mercenary Deck Inner Sphere/Davion

Deck design by Charlie Catapult

Resources (25)

- 1 Black Market Connections
- 1 ComStar Support*
- 3 Mercenary Relations Division*
- 3 Outreach Mercenary Training*
- 11 Support: Assembly
- 3 Support: Politics
- 2 Support: Tactics
- 1 Think Tank

'Mechs (26)

- 3 Blackjack BJ2
- 1 Black Knight BL6-KNT
- 4 Centurion CN9-D
- 3 Hatchetman HCT-5S
- 4 Jagermech JM6-DD
- 1 Lancelot LNC25-01
- 6 Mongoose MON-66
- 2 Stealth STH-1D*
- 2 Zeus ZEU-9S

Other Commands (9)

- 1 Contract with Black Thorns*
- 1 Contract with Eridani Light Horse*
- 1 Contract with Gray Death Legion
- 1 Contract with Kell Hounds
- 1 Contract with Northwind Highlanders*
- 1 Contract with Snord's Irregulars*
- 1 Contract with 21st Centauri Lancers*
- 1 Rhonda Snord*
- 1 Sharilar Mori*

* from Mercenaries

ting? Outreach Mercenary Training gets you both Politics and Tactics, but at the cost of a resource. And then there are those Mercenary Relations Divisions you love so much, Glenn. They allow you to bring Mercenary cards back to your hand, but then you have to pay for the contract again and deal with the resource drain—again. While you're doing this contract shuffle, the average opponent will be using deployments to bring out efficient Resource cards and, more importantly, 'Mechs. A contract will mean little if you're outnumbered in the 'Mech department. You'd probably prefer to get out just one contract and use it as long as it lasts—which is the option I'd prefer for our customer here.

GLENN: Well, I'll grant you that if you're not playing smart, this'll kill you. And I'll even grant you that it's a pain to pay for those mercenary contracts every

you *really* need to play that resource now, or can it wait? That's why you aren't going to fall into Shawn's pit traps.

SHAWN: Unless, of course, you're playing someone who's as smart as you. Look at some of my options against this deck. I can use Assassination to pop those unique contracts, and the new Protection Racket to add ① 2P to the maintenance cost of each unique card. Death Commando Strike is also good in a pinch to scrap those contracts. I can use Myndo Waterly, the "retired" ComStar Primus, to tap all of your Politics-providing Resource cards. And I might just be playing with Politics myself, in which case I'll have a field day when you let those contracts swing over to my side.

GLENN: Now, Shawn, you're a loyal employee of the Mercenary Relations Division. You're certainly not telling me you'd never want to use mercenaries,