



Ar-sen-a-l! Ar-sen-a-l!



BattleTech's New Alternate Modes of Transport (and Mayhem)

BY ROBERT GUTSCHERA

The battlefield in the 31st century is still ruled by BattleMechs and their pilots, but, as anyone who has played the BattleTech board game or roleplaying game knows, there are other contributors to the chaos and carnage of postmodern warfare. Among these are tanks, helicopters, and other military vehicles piloted by the Inner Sphere, and the suits of powered battle armor worn by the giant Clan warriors known as "elementals." Until now, vehicles and elementals have been represented by only a few token cards such as Hovortank Detachment and Elemental Point. With the *Arsenal* release, 25 new vehicles and half-a-dozen new elementals and battle-armor units (the Inner Sphere equivalent of elementals) appear. With the release of *Arsenal*, the BattleTech trading card game will change forever as these new units are unleashed. There will be a host of new 'Mechs, missions, and pilots, and many other cards that will change the game's environment. And players will be able to explore both sides in the conflict with the introduction of Clan *trials* and Inner Sphere *legacies*.

The vehicles in *Arsenal* range in size from the 20-ton Warrior H-8 Attack Helicopter to the 100-ton Behemoth Heavy Tank. In game terms, vehicles function much like 'Mechs, but with an important difference: whenever they take damage, there is a one-in-six chance they will be completely destroyed due to their greater vulnerability to critical hits. So why would anyone want to play with them? Well, for starters, a vehicle will usually have better attack, armor, and structure values than a 'Mech of the

same cost, and vehicles have configurations that you just won't see on any 'Mech. Take a look at the SRM Carrier that has an armor and structure of only 1 each, but has an attack value of 9! Vehicles like the SRM Carrier won't survive close combat, but if you can keep them away from enemy 'Mechs and pound your opponent's Stockpile, you can rack up huge amounts of damage in a big hurry. And a lot of vehicles have useful special abilities, such as the VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) ability possessed by helicopters and gunships, which prevents them from being blocked by patrolling 'Mechs or vehicles without VTOL.

Clan players shouldn't despair at the thought of all this Inner Sphere firepower, though. The Clans will also get new elemental units in *Arsenal* that represent enormous, genetically engineered Clan warriors in groups of five, each wearing powered battle armor. These units don't generally pack as much punch as a 'Mech, but their low cost means a Clan player can get them out early and attack with them often, swarming before the other player has a chance to recover.

In addition to elementals, Clan players will get to try some new strategies with the introduction of the Clan Trial cards. Trial by combat is fundamental to the Clan way of life, and Clan decks can now reflect this fact by including cards such as Trial of Possession, which allows you to gain control of any one of your opponent's Clan cards, or Trial of Bloodright, which allows you to search your Stockpile for and immediately activate any pilot—without paying that pilot's cost!

Inner Sphere traditions are reflected in *Arsenal* with the new Legacy cards. Those familiar with the BattleTech universe will know the important individuals who lived before the period represented in the card game—people like Janos Marik and Maximillian Liao. For a long time the BattleTech TCG designers wanted to put these personages on cards, but were stymied by the fact that they were, well, dead. But even so, their influence on the Houses of the Inner Sphere lives on: Janos Marik's Legacy makes all your 'Mechs cost 1 less to construct, and Maximillian Liao's Legacy allows you to activate Subterfuge cards at no cost. Each of the five major Houses has a Legacy card associated with it, and each of those legacies has a powerful effect on the game.

In addition to the big themes such as vehicles, elementals, trials, and legacies, there will be new Mission cards like Strength of the Bear, a Ghost Bear card that doubles the armor value of all your 'Mechs; new pilots like the O'Bannon sisters—if you play one of these twin pilots, the other one will join you for free; and new Terrain cards like Desert Wasteland, a very