

NEON ARMADA

SOLAR STORM

PILOT'S FLIGHT HANDBOOK

FOREWORD

READ THIS PART, AT LEAST

NOTICE TO THE HOLDER

This handbook is issued to you personally and remains fleet property. It is written on the assumption that you have been rated to fly, that you can read, and that you have approximately forty minutes before someone needs the launch bay back.

Revision C withdraws Revision B in its entirety. Revision B contained an error in the section on shield regeneration which the Office regrets, and which the four pilots affected have been asked to regard as a learning experience.

The situation, stated plainly, is this. Something is coming inward through the solar system, it is not ours, and it is not stopping. It arrives in waves, from every direction at once, and it has so far declined every opportunity to explain itself.

You will be flying a single ship against those waves. This is not because the fleet has run out of ships — it is because the combat plane at these engagement ranges is thin enough that a formation is a liability and a single hull is a rounding error. You will be alone out there. The Office wishes to be honest with you about that early, rather than have you work it out somewhere over Venus.

What you will have instead of a wingman is a bridge, a budget, and a supply chain that is functioning far better than anyone expected. Between engagements you will be able to buy, fit, discard and rebuild almost every system on your ship. Pilots who survive tend to be the ones who treat that as the primary weapon and the guns as an afterthought.

The Office has been asked to include an encouraging sentence here. Consider it included.

— OFFICE OF FLIGHT TRAINING, ON BEHALF OF FLEET COMMAND

HOW TO READ THIS HANDBOOK

Sections 1 to 3 cover the controls and the flight model. If you read nothing else, read those. They are short on purpose.

Sections 4 to 8 cover the bridge: ships, weapons, modifications, systems and the research facilities behind the supply chain. This is the part of the handbook that rewards being read twice.

Section 9 is the route briefing. It covers the engagements as far as they have been planned. It stops where the planning stops.

Section 10 is a xenology appendix that the Office was instructed to append and would rather you read after a meal.

ON THE TONE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Fleet Command has received correspondence regarding the tone of previous revisions. The Office maintains that a handbook nobody finishes is a handbook that has failed, and that the alternative — forty pages of unbroken procedural prose — has been tried, at length, with results that are now classified.

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PLANET
URANUS

WAVE
WAVE 20 · 2/3

TIMER

41

HORDE INCOMING



ENGAGEMENT, WAVE THREE

A typical mid-wave picture. Note that contacts are arriving on all four approaches simultaneously; there is no flank to hold and no direction that is meaningfully safer than any other. This is normal. This is, in fact, the entire job.

SECTION ONE

PILOT DOSSIER

You were not the first choice. The Office says this not to wound you but because you will hear it eventually from someone less tactful, and it is better that you hear it framed correctly.

The first choice was a fleet action. Eleven capital hulls, staggered approach, layered point defence, the whole doctrine as written. It went in over Mercury on a Tuesday and by Wednesday the doctrine had been quietly reclassified as historical. The swarm does not engage formations the way things are supposed to engage formations. It comes from everywhere, it does not tire, and it does not appear to mind losses in the slightest.

What worked — what has kept working, to the ongoing bafflement of the tactical staff — was one ship. One hull, thin enough in profile to not present a target worth coordinating against, fast enough to be somewhere else, and refitted so aggressively between engagements that it is effectively a different ship at every planet.

That is your posting. You are the doctrine now. The Office is aware of how that sounds.

Your file says you have logged enough hours to be trusted with something expensive and that you have never lost a hull you were not told to lose. It also notes, in a margin, that you asked what happens after Neptune and were told that the briefing covers Neptune. You are welcome to ask again. The answer will be the same, and it will be the same for the same reason.

— PERSONNEL, HSDF, ATTACHED TO FLIGHT FILE

TERMS OF SERVICE, ABRIDGED

You fly outward. At every world you will meet three waves and whatever is commanding them. Clear a world and the fleet unlocks another hull for your use — the yards have been running salvage and prototype programmes in parallel, and they release what you have earned rather than what you ask for.

Between waves your bridge comes up and you spend what you have earned. Nothing you buy is permanent beyond the run. Everything you learn is.

SECTION TWO

CONTROLS

There are two controls. The Office is aware that this section could have been a card, and considered it.

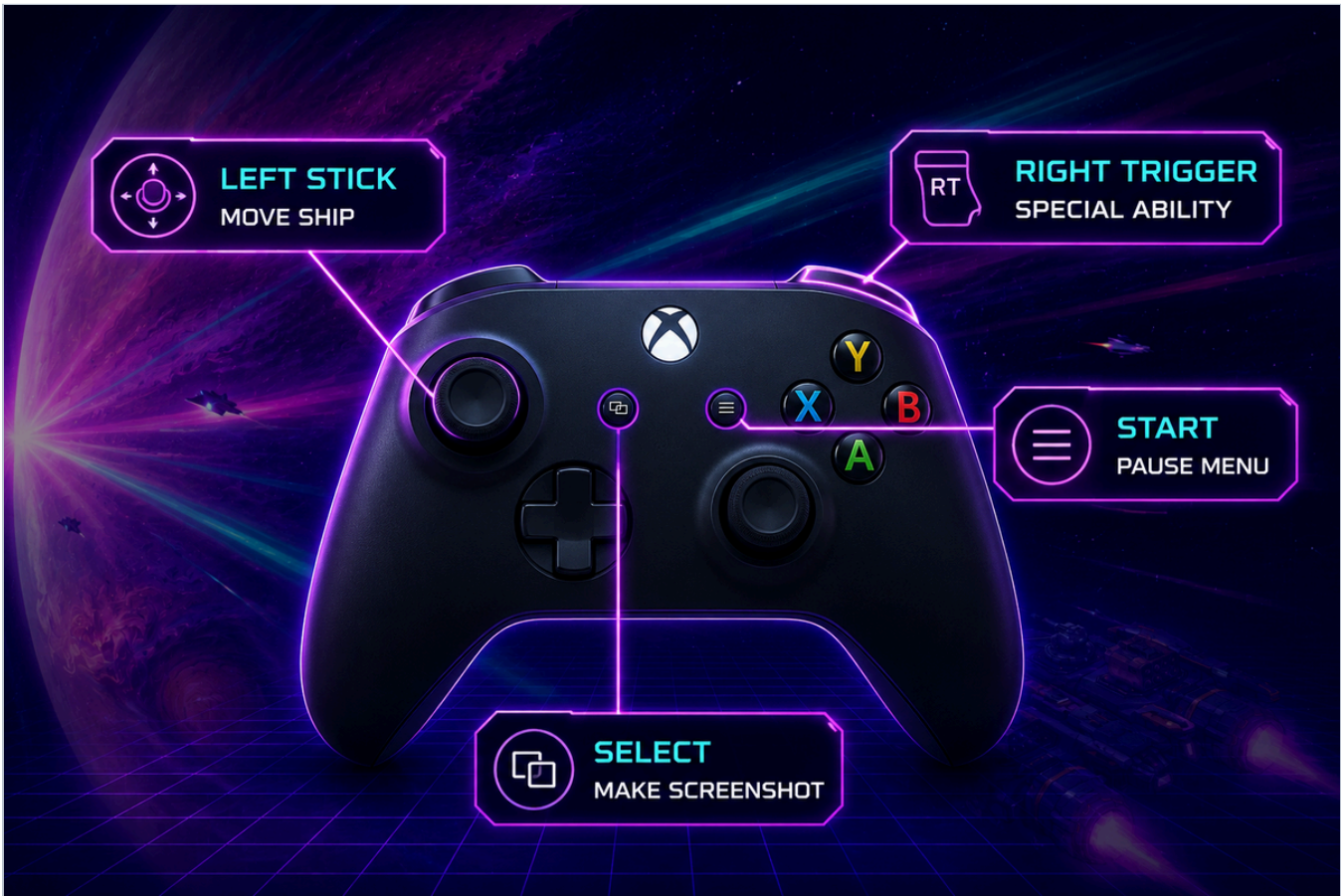


PLATE 2.1 Standard gamepad layout. Left stick flies, the trigger burns, and the guns handle themselves.

FUNCTION	GAMEPAD	KEYBOARD & MOUSE
Fly	Left stick	W A S D
Afterburner	Left trigger	Shift
Fire	Automatic	Automatic
Ability	Face button	Space
Bridge / pause	Start	Esc
Aim manually (optional)	Right stick	Hold left mouse button

2.1 ON NOT AIMING

Your guns acquire and track the nearest hostile inside **260 units** without being asked. This is not an assist and it is not a training mode — it is how the fire control system is designed to work, and the recommended way to fly.

The consequence takes most pilots a wave or two to internalise: **your position is your aim**. You do not point at a target, you get near one. Which contact is closest, and therefore which contact you are shooting, changes constantly as you move. Good pilots do not fly to survive and shoot as a side effect; they fly to choose targets.

2.2 MANUAL AIMING, FOR THOSE WHO INSIST

There is an optional aiming mode in **Settings** → **Gameplay**, listed as *Right-stick / mouse aim*. It is **off by default** and the Office recommends leaving it off until the automatic system feels predictable.

It is worth understanding that it is not a mode switch. It is a **hybrid**: push the right stick, or hold the left mouse button, and you take over aiming and firing for as long as you are actually doing it. Release, and automatic tracking resumes on the next frame without ceremony. Manual reach is shorter than automatic acquisition — **140 units** against 260 — because the reticle is not permitted to float somewhere your guns cannot reach.

RECOMMENDATION

Fly the first world on automatic. If you then find yourself wanting to shoot something other than the nearest thing — a healer at the back, a specific mine layer — turn the option on. Wanting it is the correct reason to enable it. Assuming it must be better because it is manual is not.

SECTION THREE

FLIGHT & GUNNERY

3.1 THE COMBAT PLANE

Engagements take place on a single plane. There is no climbing away from a problem and no diving under one. Every pilot tries both in their first hour; the Office has stopped recording it.

Waves enter from the edges — all of them, not one at a time. The arena has no corner that is safer than any other corner, which sounds like a design flaw until you notice it also means no corner can trap you.

3.2 MASS

Everything you bolt on weighs something. Weapons list their mass in tonnes and your hull lists what it can push. Add enough and you will feel it in acceleration, top speed and turn rate before you see it in a stat readout.

This is the handbook's single most ignored paragraph. A ship carrying eight heavy mounts has magnificent throughput and the turning circle of a moon.

3.6 INSTRUMENT ANATOMY

Everything you need mid-wave is on the glass. Nothing on it requires interpretation.

3.3 THE AFTERBURNER

Your only real defence. Not armour, not shields — distance. The burner buys it, briefly, and then needs a moment it will not have.

Pilots who die with the burner available outnumber pilots who die with it spent by a margin the Office finds genuinely upsetting.

3.4 POWER

Weapons draw from your reactor. Fit more draw than output and systems begin making choices on your behalf, none of which you will enjoy. The bridge shows draw against output at all times, in the corner, in a colour chosen specifically to be noticed.

3.5 YOUR ABILITY

Every hull carries one signature manoeuvre on a cooldown — a blink, a nova, a seismic slam, a killshot down the long axis. They are listed on the hull's page in Section 5. They are called escape abilities in the fleet paperwork, which undersells several of them considerably.



- 1 Hull integrity — the number that ends runs
- 2 Shield. Absorbs first; recovers on most hulls
- 3 World and wave — here Mercury, wave 2 of 3
- 4 Wave timer. Survive it and the bridge opens
- 5 Confirmed kills this wave
- 6 Credits held — your budget at the next refit
- 7 Research points, for facility investment
- 8 Signature manoeuvre — charge state and cooldown
- 9 Your hull. Guns already tracking; you need not ask

PLATE 3.1 Mercury, wave two. Twenty-three contacts on the plate at capture, arriving from two edges simultaneously.

3.7 WHAT IS DELIBERATELY NOT ON THE GLASS

There is no minimap, because the arena is the screen. There is no ammunition counter, because mounts draw power rather than consuming stores. There is no target readout, because your target is whatever is nearest and it changes as you move.

Your **power budget** lives on the bridge rather than the glass. It cannot change mid-wave, so displaying it mid-wave would be decoration.

What replaces all of it is the **telegraph**. Heavy and command-class contacts wind up visibly before they commit, and that wind-up is the whole of the counterplay. Nothing on the instrument panel will warn you; the enemy will.

Pilots who complain that the interface is sparse are usually pilots still reading the interface. The intended attention split is roughly nine parts arena, one part the numbers in the corners, and the corners are large and coloured so that a glance suffices.

ON THE KILL COUNTER

Item 5 is the only number on the glass that has no mechanical consequence whatsoever. It is there because the crew asked for it, repeatedly, in writing. See also the Kill Tally Board in Section 9, which is what happened when the Office said no.

SECTION FOUR

THE BRIDGE

Clear a wave and the bridge comes up. This is where runs are won, and it is worth taking seriously even when it does not feel urgent.

4.1 CREDITS

Kills pay. Bosses pay considerably better. Credits do not carry between runs, so a credit unspent at the end of a run was simply wasted — there is no saving for later, because there is no later.

4.2 OFFERS

The bridge presents a small selection drawn from the fleet catalogue: weapons, modifications, ship systems and personal effects. What appears depends on how far out you are and on what you have invested in — see Section 10, which is the part of this handbook that actually explains why you keep being offered missiles.

4.3 REROLLING

Offers can be rerolled for a fee. The fee is small and the temptation to hoard against it is strong and wrong. A

rerolled offer that completes a link set is worth more than the credits you were saving for a rainy wave.

4.4 FITTING

Weapons occupy mounts; your hull has a fixed number. Modifications go *into* weapons and drones rather than onto the ship. Systems fill their own class slots. Personal effects simply take up residence and improve your day.

4.5 IT SAVES HERE

The bridge is a safe point and the run is written to disc every time it opens. You can stop after one world and pick the same run up later. Waves run thirty to ninety seconds; a world is a handful of minutes. The Office mentions this because a surprising number of pilots believe they must finish in one sitting, and then make decisions accordingly.

THE ONLY REAL ADVICE IN THIS SECTION

Do not buy the thing that is best. Buy the thing that makes what you already have better. A modest weapon holding a completed link set will out-damage an excellent weapon holding nothing, and it will do it by a margin that embarrasses the excellent weapon.

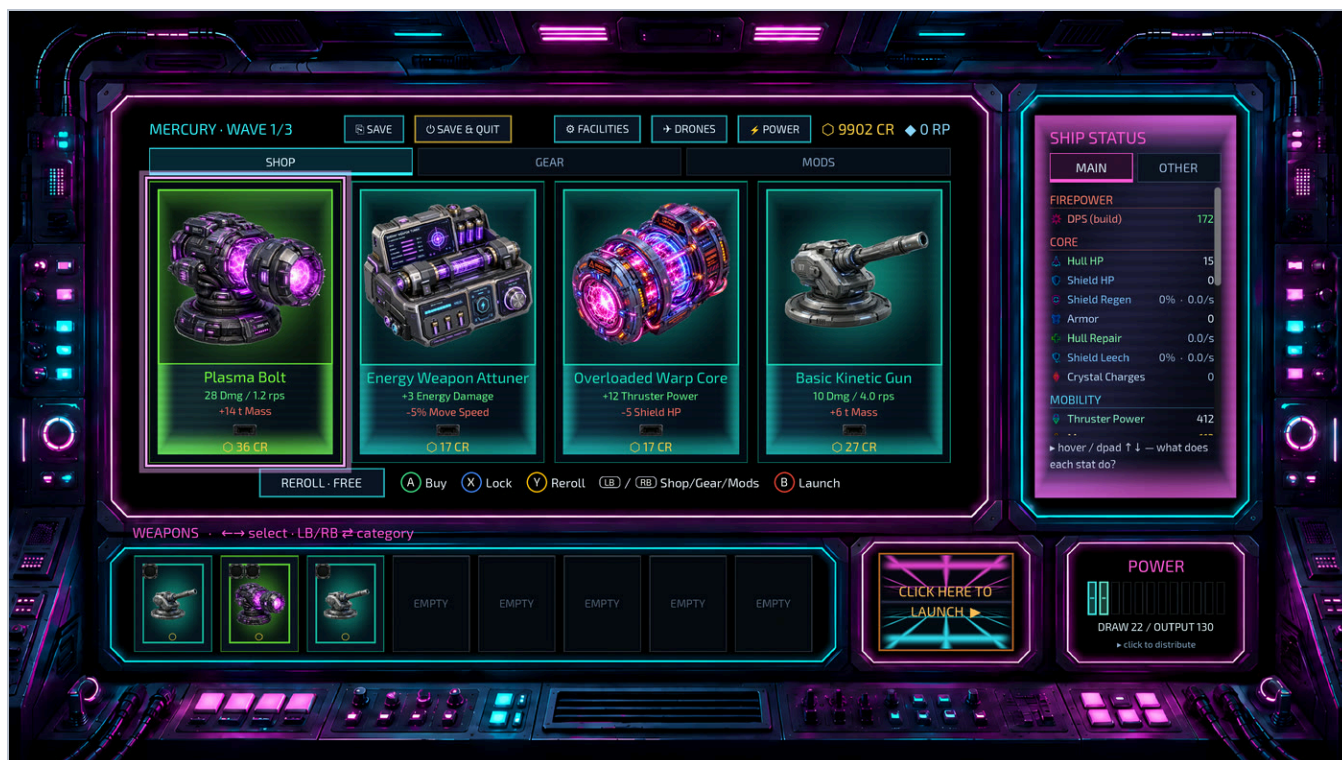


PLATE 4.1 Four offers at Mercury: a weapon, two systems and a second weapon. Ship status right, weapons rack below, power budget lower right — twenty-two drawn against a hundred and thirty available. Note the reroll is free on the first refit of a wave.

SECTION FIVE

SHIP CATALOGUE

Ten rated hulls. You begin with one. The other nine are released by the yards as you clear worlds — not on request, and not in an order anybody consulted you about.

HULL	RELEASED ON	CHARACTER
Vanguard	Issued at posting	Balanced all-rounder
Bulwark	Clearing Mercury	Fortress hull — massive shields, no regen
Dart	Clearing Venus	Velocity kills — fire rate scales with speed
Golem	Clearing Earth	Hollowed asteroid — alien crystal core
Barrage	Clearing Mars	Martian ordnance platform — missile specialist
Salvation	Clearing Jupiter	Capital rescue frigate — ten mounts
Bastion	Clearing Saturn	Fortress mode — stand your ground
Junker	Clearing Uranus	We weren't ready — scrappy survivor
Raptor	Clearing Neptune	Surgical strikes — devastating crits
Wraith	Clearing Planet X	No guns — you <i>are</i> the weapon

READING A SPECIFICATION PAGE

Hull and **shield** are what you have before anything is fitted. **Armour** reduces incoming damage rather than adding to a pool.

Mass is what the hull weighs empty — everything you fit adds to it. **Thrust** against mass is what actually determines whether the ship feels responsive. **Mounts** is how many weapons it will carry, and is the number most likely to decide your build.



PLATE 5.1 Hull selection at posting. Released hulls appear here permanently once earned.

VANGUARD

BALANCED ALL-ROUNDER

ISSUED AT POSTING



FIG 5.01

SPECIFICATION

Hull	15.0
Shield	5.0
Armour	0.0
Mass	84.0 t
Thrust	103 750
Max speed	206
Rotation	8.0
Reactor	100
Mounts	8

The HSS Vanguard is the Toyota Corolla of Earth's defence fleet — utterly, maddeningly reliable. It has no signature weapon, no revolutionary drive system, and no interesting stories told about it at bars. Every engineering review concludes with the phrase ‘performs adequately,’ which its pilots have started printing on t-shirts. The Vanguard will not make you famous, but it will get you home, and in the current job market that counts for rather a lot.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — EMERGENCY BURN

Cooldown 10.0 s. A hard directional burn that buys distance you had no right to. Associated facility: Drive.

FLYING IT

Nothing about the Vanguard argues with you, which makes it the correct hull for learning what everything else does. Eight mounts, average mass, average thrust, no special mechanic to work around. Every other page in this section is a deviation from this one.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE

Pilots frequently abandon the Vanguard the moment anything else unlocks, then return to it around Saturn having learned what they actually wanted. There is no shame in this and the Office has stopped commenting.

PILOT NOTES

BULWARK

FORTRESS HULL — MASSIVE SHIELDS,
NO REGEN

RELEASED ON CLEARING
MERCURY



FIG 5.02

SPECIFICATION

Hull	25.0
Shield	5.0
Armour	2.0
Mass	126.0 t
Thrust	103 750
Max speed	206
Rotation	8.0
Reactor	100
Mounts	8

The Bulwark was designed by engineers who fundamentally misunderstood the concept of ‘defence’ and ended up inventing what is essentially a flying castle. Her shields are magnificent — vast, shimmering, and absolutely incapable of regenerating on their own, a design choice that the original team insists was intentional and not, as widely rumoured, the result of forgetting to order the regeneration module before the budget meeting. Pilots describe the experience as ‘bringing a fortress to a knife fight, except the fortress is on fire and nobody packed lunch.’

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — SHIELD NOVA

Cooldown 16.0 s. Discharges the shield outward as a 600-unit blast at triple effect. Associated facility: Shield.

FLYING IT

Fifty per cent more hull than the Vanguard and the first armour rating you will fly with, paid for in fifty per cent more mass. The shields do not come back on their own, which reframes them: they are not a renewable defence, they are a single large resource, and the nova exists so you can choose to spend it rather than lose it.

PILOT NOTES

DART

VELOCITY KILLS — FIRE RATE SCALES WITH SPEED

RELEASED ON CLEARING VENUS



FIG 5.03

SPECIFICATION

Hull	7.5
Shield	3.75
Armour	0.0
Mass	58.8 t
Thrust	129 688
Max speed	206
Rotation	8.0
Reactor	100
Mounts	8

The Dart's design philosophy can be summarised as: 'What if we removed everything that wasn't an engine?' The hull is so thin that on quiet nights the pilot can hear space. She has no armour, shields that might charitably be described as 'decorative,' and a structural integrity rating that her insurance company has simply annotated with a question mark. Standing still in a Dart is not so much inadvisable as it is a philosophical statement about the brevity of existence.

SPECIAL MECHANIC — VELOCITY DRIVE

Rate of fire rises with your speed. Movement is not a way of staying alive on this hull; it is the weapon system.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — BLINK

Cooldown 8.0 s — the shortest in the catalogue. Associated facility: Drive.

FLYING IT

Half the Vanguard's hull, a quarter more thrust, and the lowest mass you will fly. Every incoming hit is close to fatal, which is survivable precisely because nothing should be hitting you. The Dart punishes hesitation harder than any other hull and rewards it with a rate of fire nothing else can reach.

PILOT NOTES

GOLEM

HOLLOWED ASTEROID — ALIEN CRYSTAL CORE

RELEASED ON CLEARING EARTH



FIG 5.04

SPECIFICATION

Hull	30.0
Shield	3.0
Armour	5.0
Mass	140.0 t
Thrust	95 000
Max speed	175
Rotation	5.5
Reactor	90
Mounts	8

Found drifting in the asteroid belt, already hollow and humming at a frequency that made three scientists simultaneously decide to retire. Earth's engineers, operating on the principle that anything can be a spaceship if you bolt enough engines to it, attached thrusters to what is essentially a haunted rock and declared it combat-ready. The crystal core at its centre glows, pulses, and occasionally rearranges itself when no one is looking. The official classification is ‘vessel,’ though ‘geological anomaly with an attitude problem’ would be more accurate.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — SEISMIC SLAM

Cooldown 12.0 s. Seizes a contact inside 400 units, deals 150, and throws it at 1 100 for 280-unit area damage. Associated facility: Ordnance.

FLYING IT

Twice the Vanguard's hull, five points of armour, and the worst rotation in the catalogue. The Golem does not evade; it declines to care. Its shield is nearly ornamental — armour and hull are doing the work, and armour scales differently, reducing every hit rather than absorbing a fixed pool.

A NOTE THE OFFICE IS OBLIGED TO INCLUDE

Regarding the core: survey has confirmed the material is not of terrestrial origin and is not of any origin currently on file. See Section 12. Fleet Engineering considers the hull safe to fly and has declined to elaborate on the qualifier.

PILOT NOTES

BARRAGE

MARTIAN ORDNANCE PLATFORM — MISSILE
SPECIALIST

RELEASED ON
CLEARING MARS



FIG 5.05

SPECIFICATION

Hull	18.0
Shield	5.0
Armour	1.0
Mass	100.0 t
Thrust	103 750
Max speed	190
Rotation	6.5
Reactor	100
Mounts	8

The HSS Barrage is a Martian Ordnance Platform, which is the military's way of saying 'we put so many missile tubes on this thing that the structural engineer resigned.' Her wide-aspect hull exists solely to present the maximum possible number of launch tubes to the target simultaneously, a design priority that left very little room for crew amenities, or crew. The flight manual's tactical section simply reads 'point at problem, hold button, problem goes away,' which has proven surprisingly comprehensive.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — BOMBING RUN

Cooldown 13.0 s, duration 2.0 s. Associated facility: Ordnance.

FLYING IT

The hull the missile archetype was built around. Slightly slower and slightly heavier than the Vanguard in exchange for three more points of hull, and an Ordnance affinity that makes the Ordnance Lab investment in Section 10 more attractive than it looks on paper.

PILOT NOTES

SALVATION

CAPITAL RESCUE FRIGATE — TEN
MOUNTS

RELEASED ON CLEARING
JUPITER



FIG 5.06

SPECIFICATION

Hull	25.0
Shield	8.0
Armour	1.0
Mass	168.0 t
Thrust	130 000
Max speed	180
Rotation	6.0
Reactor	150
Mounts	10

The HSS Salvation was a deep-space rescue frigate, which is to say she was built to be comforting, spacious, and absolutely not involved in combat. Then the swarm arrived and her captain, displaying the sort of lateral thinking that gets people either court-martialled or promoted, welded every weapon on the station onto the hull. She now carries ten weapon mounts where the patient recovery ward used to be. The rescue stretchers are still in there somewhere.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — FLARE BARRAGE

Cooldown 16.0 s. Twelve flares at 30 damage each. Associated facility: Ordnance.

FLYING IT

Ten mounts and a 150-point reactor — half again the fleet standard — which together make the Salvation the hull on which you can finally fit everything you want at once. She is also the heaviest thing in the catalogue at 168 tonnes empty, so ‘everything you want at once’ arrives slowly and turns like weather.

PILOT NOTES

BASTION

FORTRESS MODE — STAND YOUR
GROUND

RELEASED ON CLEARING
SATURN



FIG 5.07

SPECIFICATION

Hull	25.0
Shield	8.0
Armour	5.0
Mass	140.0 t
Thrust	90 000
Max speed	180
Rotation	5.0
Reactor	130
Mounts	10

The Bastion was a perfectly respectable mining platform before the war, notable mainly for being too heavy to move quickly and too stubborn to care. When someone bolted weapons to it, the crystal core began amplifying weapons fire whenever the hull was stationary — a phenomenon the engineering team has written fourteen papers about, none of which contain the word ‘understand.’ Her pilots have elevated ‘refusing to move’ from a character flaw to a tactical doctrine. The Bastion does not retreat, not out of bravery, but because by the time she’s turned around the battle is usually over.

SPECIAL MECHANIC — FORTRESS MODE

Standing still amplifies weapons fire. The only hull in the catalogue that rewards not moving.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — LOCKDOWN

Cooldown 16.0 s. Seizes a contact within 350 units for 5.0 s, reflects damage at double within 300 units, grants 10 armour, and permits a throw at 2 400 for 1 800 damage inside a 3.0 s window. The most elaborate entry in this section by a considerable distance. Associated facility: Fortress.

FLYING IT

Ten mounts, five armour, the worst rotation and lowest thrust in the catalogue. Every number here argues for holding position, and Fortress Mode pays you for agreeing.

PILOT NOTES

JUNKER

WE WEREN'T READY — SCRAPPY
SURVIVOR

RELEASED ON CLEARING
URANUS



FIG 5.08

SPECIFICATION

Hull	12.0
Shield	3.0
Armour	0.0
Mass	95.0 t
Thrust	90 000
Max speed	195
Rotation	7.0
Reactor	80
Mounts	8

The Junker was not so much ‘built’ as ‘accumulated.’ Dockworkers welded salvage hulls together using whatever weapon mounts they could pry off nearby wrecks and a generous interpretation of the word ‘airworthy.’ No two Junkers are alike, in the same way that no two car accidents are alike. She comes with an underpowered reactor and a warranty that expired before the ship was finished. The survival rate for first sorties is technically classified, but the recruitment posters have stopped mentioning it.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — EMP BLAST

Cooldown 13.0 s. 500-unit radius, 35 damage, 2.5 s stun. The widest effect radius of any signature manoeuvre. Associated facility: Automation.

FLYING IT

An 80-point reactor against a fleet standard of 100, which is the whole hull in one number: you cannot afford what you would like to fit. Twelve hull and no armour means the EMP is not an opening move, it is the thing that buys you the 2.5 seconds in which you leave.

PILOT NOTES

RAPTOR

SURGICAL STRIKES — DEVASTATING
CRITS

RELEASED ON CLEARING
NEPTUNE



FIG 5.09

SPECIFICATION

Hull	15.0
Shield	3.5
Armour	0.0
Mass	84.0 t
Thrust	103 750
Max speed	206
Rotation	8.0
Reactor	100
Mounts	6

The Raptor carries only six weapon mounts, a fact that caused considerable alarm at the procurement board until someone pointed out that each one hits with the focused malice of a very expensive freight train. Her targeting arrays are so precise that they once achieved a confirmed kill on a drone that hadn't technically been deployed yet. Raptor pilots tend to develop a certain smugness about accuracy that makes them deeply unpopular at fleet social gatherings.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — KILLSHOT

Cooldown 13.0 s. 200 damage down a 2 000-unit line, 30 wide. The longest reach of any signature manoeuvre in the catalogue. Associated facility: Targeting.

FLYING IT

Six mounts against everyone else's eight or ten, which sounds like a penalty and is actually a mass budget. The Raptor flies with Vanguard handling while carrying a quarter less weapon weight, and the crit affinity means the Targeting Array investment compounds rather than adds.

PILOT NOTES

WRAITH

NO GUNS — YOU ARE THE WEAPON

RELEASED ON CLEARING PLANET X



FIG 5.10

SPECIFICATION

Hull	15.0
Shield	4.0
Armour	0.0
Mass	84.0 t
Thrust	103 750
Max speed	206
Rotation	8.0
Reactor	100
Mounts	8

The Wraith was a classified close-assault interceptor whose entire design brief was ‘fly directly into the enemy ship and start cutting.’ The forward lances are technically hull-cutters, not weapons, which means the Wraith is officially classified as a mining vessel for tax purposes. She carries no guns because someone at naval intelligence decided the most terrifying thing you could do to an alien was show up with a ship that very clearly intended to be inside their ship. The test pilots described the experience as ‘intimate.’

SPECIAL MECHANIC — FRENZY

The hull is the weapon. Everything about how you fly changes accordingly.

SIGNATURE MANOEUVRE — UNSTOPPABLE

Cooldown 14.0 s, duration 2.5 s at 600 speed, 80 damage, 1 200 knockback. Associated facility: Drive.

FLYING IT

The last hull the yards release and the only one that inverts the entire flight model. Every other page in this section treats closing range as a risk to be managed. This one treats it as the delivery mechanism. Pilots either adapt within a wave or never do.

PILOT NOTES

SECTION SIX

WEAPONS

Sixteen standard-issue mounts, in three archetypes. Everything here is available from the bridge without condition. Other mounts exist; they are earned rather than issued and are not covered by this handbook.

Each entry lists **mass** in tonnes and **power** draw. Both matter more than the damage figure. A mount you cannot power is decoration, and a mount you cannot carry is a handling problem you chose.

6.1 GUNS

Direct-fire mounts. Nine of the sixteen. The archetype you will spend most of the run in.

BASIC KINETIC GUN 10 dmg · 4.0 rps · 6 t · 8 pwr

The universe's most dependable weapon, in the same way that a cheese sandwich is the universe's most dependable lunch. It won't impress anyone, but it'll do. Gains +3 damage per additional copy fitted.

HEAVY CANNON 25 dmg · 2.0 rps · 14 t · 12 pwr

A weapon designed by people who believe that any problem can be solved by throwing a sufficiently large piece of metal at it. They have yet to be proven wrong.

SCATTER SHOT 6×3 dmg · 3.0 rps · 10 t · 10 pwr

Fires a generous handful of projectiles in roughly the right direction. Accuracy is not so much a goal as a vague aspiration. What it lacks in precision, it makes up for in enthusiasm.

RAPID BLASTER 5 dmg · 8.0 rps · 8 t · 8 pwr

Subscribes firmly to the 'quantity over quality' school of weapons design. Each individual shot is about as threatening as a strongly-worded letter, but there are rather a lot of them.

FLAK CANNON 8×5 dmg · 1.5 rps · 12 t · 14 pwr

The close-quarters equivalent of opening an airlock on a room full of angry ball bearings. Devastatingly effective at short range. At long range, devastatingly useless.

RAILGUN 35 dmg · 0.8 rps · 16 t · 15 pwr

Accelerates a metal slug to a meaningful fraction of the speed of light. The slug arrives at its destination before the sound of firing does, which is fortunate, because the sound of firing is deeply upsetting. Sniper profile, strong crit synergy.

LASER CANNON 12 dmg · 3.0 rps · 10 t · 10 pwr · energy

A perfectly respectable energy weapon that does exactly what it says on the tin. It fires lasers. From a cannon. The naming committee went home early that day.

PLASMA BOLT 28 dmg · 1.2 rps · 14 t · 14 pwr · energy

Superheated ionised gas compressed into a ball and flung at high velocity. It's essentially the universe's most expensive game of catch, except nobody wants to catch it. Penetrates, with 50% falloff.

BEAM RIFLE 20 dmg · 1.5 rps · 12 t · 12 pwr · energy

A focused energy beam that punches through multiple targets and leaves a lingering afterimage, like a very aggressive torch being pointed at a very aggressive queue. Pierces two.

6.2 MISSILES

Ordnance mounts. Heavier, slower, and the archetype with the highest single-shot figures in this section.

TORPEDO LAUNCHER 80 dmg · AoE 120 · 18 t · 18 pwr

Fires torpedoes with all the urgency of a civil servant on a Friday afternoon. They are slow, they do not home in, and they cannot be reasoned with. But they do explode rather impressively.

HOMING MISSILE 40 dmg · homing · 12 t · 12 pwr

A missile that follows its target with the single-minded devotion of a golden retriever chasing a tennis ball. Unlike the retriever, it explodes on contact.

ROCKET POD 30 dmg · 1.5 rps · 10 t · 10 pwr

A pod full of small, enthusiastic rockets that go exactly where you point them and nowhere else. Like training a very obedient dog, except the dog is on fire and moving at Mach 3.

6.3 FIELD MOUNTS

Persistent-effect mounts. They do not fire at things so much as make the space around you unpleasant. Four of the sixteen, and the archetype most often overlooked.

PLASMA TORCH 9 dmg · 6.0 rps · 9 t · 10 pwr

An industrial cutting tool that someone, against all advice, mounted to a spaceship. Fires fast, wide-spread plasma gouts at close range — more a welding arc than a weapon, but nobody's told the plasma that. Plasma and thermal dual-type.

MINE LAYER 25 dmg · 1.5 drops/s · 8 t · 10 pwr

Scatters proximity mines behind you like cosmic breadcrumbs for anyone unfortunate enough to be following. The mines are polite enough to wait until the enemy is right on top of them before detonating. Maximum twelve; cleared between waves.

TESLA COIL 10 dmg · 4.0 tps · 10 t · 14 pwr

Named after a man who would be simultaneously thrilled and horrified to see his work adapted for deep-space violence. Arcs electricity at anything nearby, which in space is both impressive and deeply questionable. **Overload:** shocked kills explode.

FIREWALL 8 dmg · 4.0 tps · 10 t · 12 pwr

A ring of fire that surrounds your ship. Not the Johnny Cash song, though the emotional experience for enemies is broadly similar. Slows anything that enters it, presumably out of sheer surprise. Slows by 20%.

ON THE TESLA COIL

Overload chains. A shocked contact that dies explodes, which can kill other shocked contacts, which explode. Fleet Engineering has confirmed the cascade terminates. Fleet Engineering was asked twice.

SECTION SEVEN

MODIFICATIONS & LINK SETS

This is the section that decides whether your build works. If you skim anything in this handbook, do not let it be this.

7.1 MODIFICATIONS GO INTO WEAPONS, NOT ONTO SHIPS

A modification is fitted **inside** a specific weapon or drone. It affects that mount and nothing else. Two identical weapons carrying different modifications are two different weapons.

7.2 SLOTS SCALE WITH RARITY

How many modifications a weapon will hold depends on what the weapon is:

WEAPON RARITY	MODIFICATION SLOTS
Rare and below	1
Unique	2
Epic	3
Legendary	4

This is the real reason to want a better weapon. The damage figure improves; the *capacity* improves more.

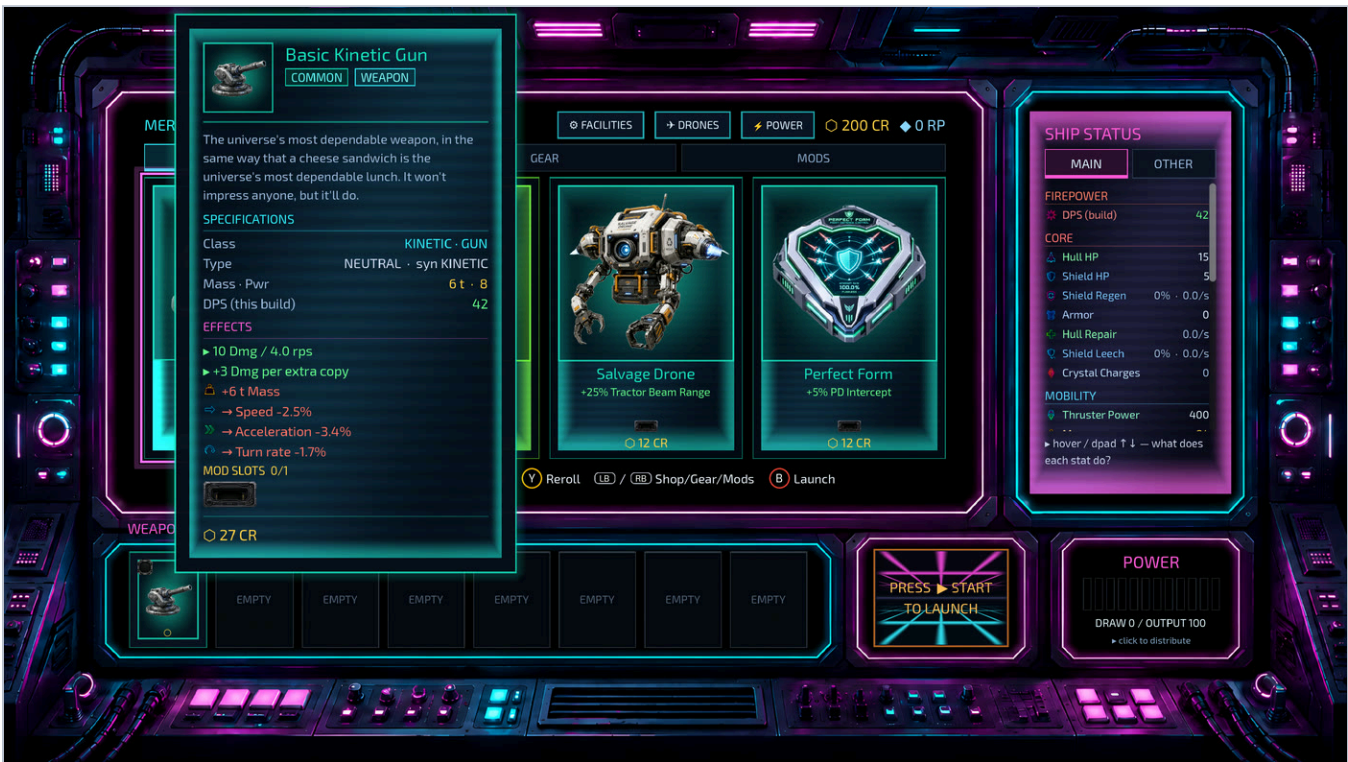


PLATE 7.1 Inspection card for a Common weapon. Note **MOD SLOTS 0/1** near the foot: a Common mount holds exactly one modification, so it can never carry a link set. Note also the three penalties beneath the damage figures — speed, acceleration and turn rate, all charged against the six tonnes this mount adds. Every weapon in the catalogue is priced in handling as well as credits.

7.3 LINK SETS — THE PART THAT MATTERS

Every weapon modification belongs to a **link category**. Fill a single weapon with modifications that **all share one category** and that weapon's output is supercharged. Mix categories and you get the individual bonuses and nothing else.

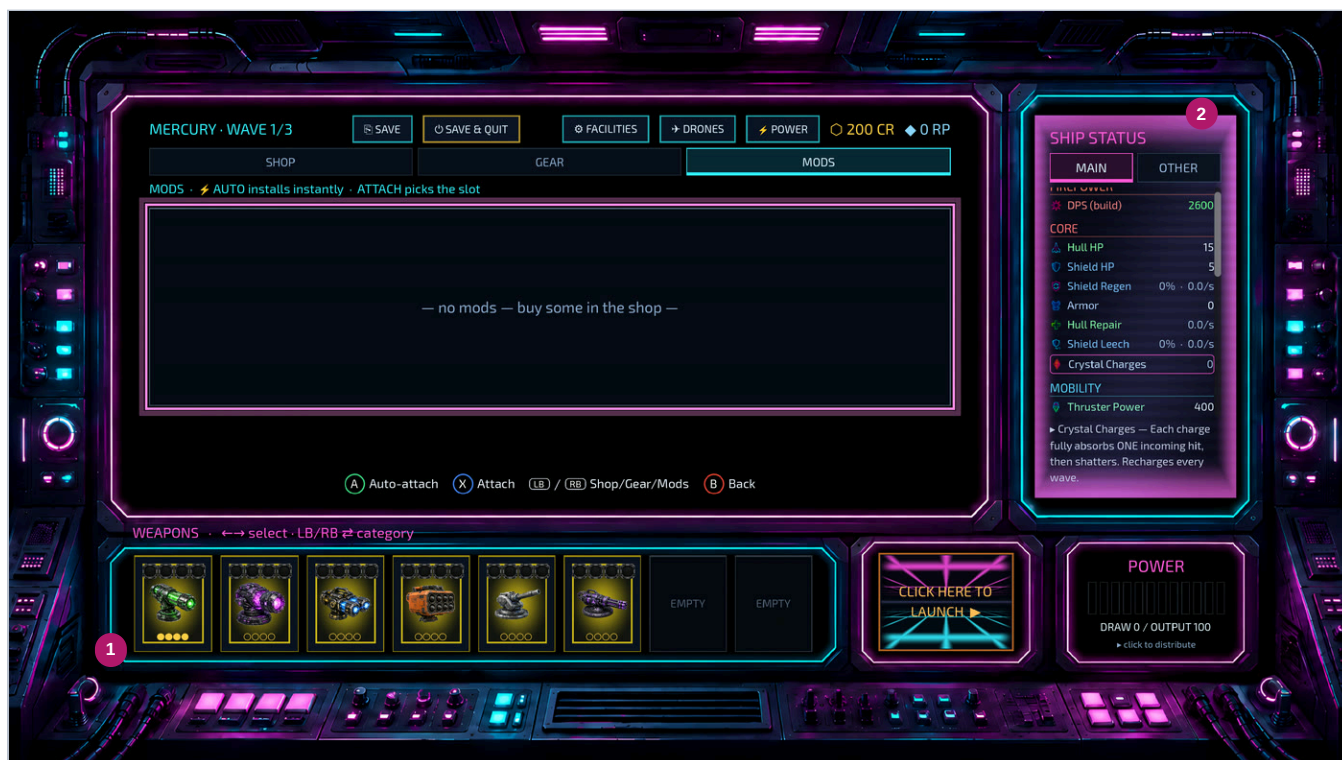
THE RULE, STATED ONCE, PLAINLY

Same category throughout one weapon → substantial supercharge, scaling with that weapon's own output.

Any mismatch → no set bonus at all.

You may hold only **one of each specific modification** per weapon, so a set must be assembled from *distinct* modifications of one category. You cannot fill a Legendary with four copies of the same cheap part.

The consequence is a supply-chain problem rather than a shopping problem. A Legendary weapon with four slots needs four different modifications of one category, and the bridge offers what it offers. Section 10 exists largely so you can lean on the odds.



1 Four filled slots on one Legendary mount — a complete set

2 Resulting build output: **2600**, against 42 unmodified

PLATE 7.2 A completed four-modification energy set on a Legendary mount. The pips beneath the leftmost weapon are the filled slots; the figure top right is what completing the set did to the build. This is the single largest multiplier available to you, and it costs nothing but the discipline to buy matching parts.

7.4 DRONES LINK SEPARATELY

Drones carry their own modification slots and generate their own set bonus, independently of anything on your hull. A drone wing running a completed set is a second build inside your build.



PLATE 7.3 Fleet modification catalogue. The scrollbar is not lying to you. One hundred and fifteen parts are in circulation across eleven link categories — ammunition, energy, armour, shield, repair, thruster, reactor, targeting, point defence, drone bay and drone processing.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE

New pilots buy the highest number. Surviving pilots buy the third piece of a set. The difference in outcome is larger than any single upgrade in this handbook, and it is the reason the reroll fee in Section 4.3 is worth paying.

SECTION EIGHT

SHIP SYSTEMS

Nine classes of component. Each occupies its own slot and each takes modifications of its matching category. Representative examples are given; the catalogue is larger than this handbook.

ENGINE

Thrust, top speed and how quickly the ship agrees to change its mind. The first thing to upgrade on a heavy hull and the last thing to neglect on a light one.

ION DRIVE tier 1

Propels the ship forward by politely suggesting ions move in the opposite direction. Gentle, efficient, and about as exciting as watching paint dry.

FUSION THRUSTER tier 3

An engine powered by nuclear fusion that propels your ship with the raw fury of a small star having a tantrum.

REACTOR

Power output. Every weapon draws; the reactor is the ceiling on what you may fit. Fitting a weapon you cannot power is the most common build error in the fleet.

COMPACT REACTOR tier 1

All the power of a regular reactor, compressed into a space roughly the size of a microwave oven. The engineers assure everyone this is perfectly safe.

FUSION CORE tier 2

Contains a small, perpetually angry star that converts hydrogen into electricity and existential anxiety in roughly equal measure.

SHIELD

A regenerating pool that absorbs damage before hull. Shields recover between engagements and, on most hulls, during them.

HEAVY SHIELD tier 2

A shield generator the size of a small bathroom that projects a barrier capable of absorbing weapons fire, micrometeorites, and the crushing weight of expectation.

CRYSTAL RESONANCE SHIELD tier 2

A crystalline matrix that absorbs one fatal blow per wave by shattering dramatically. The crew have started calling it ‘the understated life insurance.’

ARMOUR

Reduces every incoming hit rather than absorbing a pool. Armour is worth most against many small hits and least against one enormous one — the exact inverse of shields.

ABLATIVE PLATING tier 2

Layers of sacrificial armour that peel away under fire like an onion, if the onion were made of tungsten and the person peeling it were trying to kill you.

COMPOSITE ARMOR tier 3

Multiple layers of exotic materials sandwiched together like the universe's most paranoid club sandwich.

REPAIR

Recovers hull during combat. Hull does not come back on its own; this class is the only thing that argues with that.

HULL REPAIR MARK 3 tier 3

A heavy-duty hull medic module with redundant manipulators and industrial plasma welders. Fast, precise, and unnervingly confident.

MEDICAL BAY tier 3

A dedicated medical compartment staffed by an AI with the bedside manner of a battlefield surgeon.

TARGETING

Critical chance, critical damage and weapons range. The class that multiplies everything else rather than adding to it.

PREDICTIVE TARGETING tier 3

Calculates where enemies will be before they know themselves. This occasionally produces results that seem to violate causality, but since the enemies are not around to complain, the matter rests.

QUANTUM TARGETING ARRAY tier 4

Targets enemies across all possible quantum states simultaneously, ensuring that no matter which universe they try to exist in, they get shot in all of them.

POINT DEFENCE

Shoots down incoming projectiles. Invisible when it works, which is most of the time, and therefore chronically undervalued.

CIWS BATTERY tier 3

Close-In Weapon System — a last line of defence that fills the air around your ship with a blizzard of high-velocity metal.

AEGIS DEFENCE GRID tier 4

The final word in point defence, a system so comprehensive it can shoot down missiles, harass brute-class enemies, and still find time to judge the pilot.

DRONE BAY

How many drones you may field. Drones fight independently and carry their own modifications and their own link set.

DRONE BAY MK4 tier 4

A capital-grade drone wing. Five cradles, magnetic launch rails, and an autoloader that can scramble the entire flight in under a second.

DRONE PROCESSING

How well those drones fly. A bay without processing is a garage.

DRONE PROCESSOR tier 1

A dedicated computing unit for drone management. Without it, drones tend to fly in circles and bump into things. With it, they fly in calculated circles.

NEURAL UPLINK tier 3

Connects your brain directly to the drone network. You can now think at your drones and they'll obey, which is magnificent right up until you think about something else.

SECTION NINE

PERSONAL EFFECTS

Items that occupy no slot, draw no power and weigh nothing worth recording. Fleet Requisition classifies them as morale materiel. Pilots classify them as the reason the run worked.

Over a hundred are in circulation. A representative selection follows. The Office notes that it did not choose these for their statistical value and declines to justify the selection further.

MOTIVATIONAL POSTER

Features Commander Roxy 'Ace' Johnson clinging to a satellite dish with the caption 'KEEP EM FLYING, TIGER.' The pose was, she insists, a controlled micro-gravity manoeuvre and not in any way accidental. Surprisingly effective against existential dread and alien invasions alike.

OVERCLOCKED COFFEE MACHINE

In the vast emptiness of space, the only truly essential piece of equipment. Wars have been lost for want of a functioning one.

CONTRABAND STIMULANTS

Technically illegal in forty-seven jurisdictions, but out here the nearest magistrate is roughly eight light-minutes away and unlikely to care.

LUCKY DICE SET

Statistically, carrying dice has no effect on combat performance. The universe, however, has a well-documented sense of irony.

TARGETING DECALS

Someone has drawn little crosshairs on the viewport with a marker pen. The gunnery officer insists it helps. Nobody has the heart to tell him the viewport is purely decorative.

KILL TALLY BOARD

A holographic projection above the weapons console that streams a live kill list, complete with sprite portraits and increasingly creative cause-of-death annotations. The crew have added a league table, a points system, and one very aggressive commentator module nobody will admit to installing.

BATTLE HYMN SPEAKER

Blasts Wagner at volumes that would make a supernova feel self-conscious. The enemy can't aim properly if they can't think properly. Neither can you, but that's rather beside the point.

CAPTAIN'S PLAYLIST

A curated selection of the captain's favourite tracks. Contains an alarming amount of 1980s synthwave for someone commanding a warship in deep space.

WEAPON OIL KIT

Contains seventeen types of lubricant, none of which are for the weapons. The manual was lost sometime around Jupiter, but a well-oiled gun is a happy gun, probably.

REQUISITION NOTE

The Office has received a query as to whether the coffee machine is load-bearing. Following review: yes.

SECTION TEN

RESEARCH FACILITIES

Ten facilities sit behind your supply chain. Investing in one does two things at once, and the second is the one pilots miss.

First, it raises a statistic permanently for the rest of the run. **Second**, it **changes what the bridge offers you** — unlocking higher tiers and weighting the odds toward that facility's category. Investment is therefore not only a purchase; it is a way of telling the supply chain what kind of pilot you intend to be.

FACILITY	RAISES	UNLOCKS & STEERS
Kinetic Facility	Fire rate and kinetic-weapon damage	Kinetic weapon tiers, ammunition mods
Energy Facility	Energy-weapon damage and <i>all</i> weapon range	Energy weapon tiers, range mods
Ordnance Lab	Missile and explosive damage, area radius	Missile tiers, ordnance mods
Targeting Array	Critical chance and critical damage	Targeting Computer Mk3/Mk4, targeting mods
Shield Facility	Shield leech and shield capacity	Shield Projector Mk3/Mk4, shield mods
Fortress	Armour and in-combat hull repair	Armour Mk3/Mk4, Hull Repair, armour mods
Automation Hub	Point-defence intercept and range, drone damage	Drone Bay/CPU Mk3/Mk4, PDC, drone mods
Drive Facility	Thruster power and movement speed	Thruster Mk3/Mk4, engine mods
Reactor	Reactor output, reduced weapon drain	Advanced powerplants, reactor mods
Salvage Yard	Credits earned and shop quality	Economy mods, richer stock throughout

10.1 HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS

Spreading investment thinly across ten facilities produces a ship that is unremarkable at everything and cannot complete a link set in any category, because the odds were never bent far enough in any direction to matter.

Committing to two or three produces a ship with an obvious weakness and an answer to every question inside its specialism. The second ship finishes runs.

The **Salvage Yard** deserves a specific mention because it is the facility that improves every other facility: more credits and better stock means more investment and better offers. Early credit spent there compounds. Late credit spent there does not.

Note also that hulls carry facility affinities — the Raptor toward Targeting, the Barrage and Golem toward Ordnance, the Bastion toward Fortress. Flying with the grain of your hull is cheaper than flying against it.



PLANET

EARTH



WAVE

WAVE 9 — BOSS



TIMER



60

HORDE INCOMING



COMMAND CONTACT

Every world holds one. They do not share the swarm's indifference to losses and they do not repeat themselves twice in the same way. The route briefing overleaf lists what is waiting; it does not list how to beat it, because that part is yours.

SECTION ELEVEN

ROUTE BRIEFING

Nine engagements, outbound. Three waves per world and one command contact, except where noted.

#	WORLD	COMMAND CONTACT	WAVES
01	Mercury	BRUTE	3 + boss
02	Venus	SOLAR VANGUARD	3 + boss
03	Earth	LUNAR SENTINEL	3 + boss
04	Mars	IRON VANGUARD	3 + boss
05	Jupiter	STORM COLOSSUS	3 + boss
06	Saturn	RING WEAVER	3 + boss
07	Uranus	VOID PHANTOM	3 + boss
08	Neptune	TIDE LORD	3 + boss
09	Planet X	THE NEXUS	single engagement

11.1 NOTES ON THE ROUTE

Mercury is the shortest world you will fly and the only one the Office would describe as forgiving. Waves run thirty seconds. Use it to learn what your guns choose to shoot when you move.

Earth is a formality politically and is not one tactically. Pilots consistently report the third world as the point at which the wave sizes stop feeling like a tutorial.

Jupiter onward, wave duration has reached its ceiling of ninety seconds and stays there. Every engagement from here is as long as an engagement gets; what increases is what is in it.

Uranus introduces a contact designated VOID PHANTOM. The designation predates current survey findings and the Office has been asked not to revise it pending review. See Section 12.

Planet X is a single engagement rather than three waves and a boss. There is no approach phase. You arrive and THE NEXUS is already aware of you.

Clearing Planet X releases the Wraith, the last hull the yards will issue against this briefing.

ROUTE TERMINATION

This briefing ends at Planet X. That is not an omission and it is not an editing error — the planning ends there too.

The remainder of the route will be briefed in flight. Pilots who have asked for it in advance have been told the same thing in a variety of tones, and the Office would like to save everyone the trouble.

Survey material bearing on what lies beyond is appended as Section 12, at Fleet Command's instruction and over the Office's stated preference.



PLATE 11.1 Mars, second wave. Note the telegraph on the heavy contact centre-left — command-class and heavy units announce their attacks. The announcement is the entire counterplay.

SECTION TWELVE · APPENDED AT FLEET COMMAND INSTRUCTION

XENOLOGY APPENDIX

RESTRICTED · REV C

The following is a condensed survey summary. It is included because pilots keep finding this material themselves and drawing conclusions in the mess, which the Office considers a worse outcome than briefing it properly.

12.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Since the first Mercury engagement, fleet salvage and survey teams have recovered **non-human hull material at eleven separate sites** inside the solar system. None of the sites are near the current engagement corridor. None of them are recent.

The material is consistently found **embedded**: inside asteroids, under planetary crust, in one case within a body that had not been surveyed since the original outer-system charting pass. It is not debris in orbit. It did not arrive and settle. Whatever these hulls were doing, the rock formed around them afterwards.

12.2 WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM

The alloys are not on file. Not rare, not exotic, not difficult to manufacture — simply not present in any metallurgical reference the fleet holds. Three independent laboratories have declined to characterise them further without additional sample.

The geometry does not match a yard. Ships built in a yard carry the yard's habits: tooling marks, seam conventions, a preferred way of joining a stress member to a plate. These carry none. Survey has been unable to determine which end was the front.

The dating is the problem. Every site returns an age older than it should be. Substantially older. The Office has been instructed not to reproduce the figures in a document issued to flight crew, and will observe only that the numbers were checked four times, by four teams, who each assumed the previous team had made an error.

The Golem. The hull described on Fig 5.04 was recovered from one of these sites. It was already hollow. Its core material matches the embedded samples. It has been rated for flight because it flies, and because the alternative was leaving it where it was, humming.

12.3 THE PART NOBODY WILL WRITE DOWN

The swarm you are fighting arrived from outside and is moving inward. The material in Section 12.1 was already here, and has been for longer than the fleet is prepared to print. Survey has been careful to state that these two facts are not known to be related.

Survey has been equally careful not to state that they are unrelated.

Several contacts on the current route carry the designation *Void*. That naming convention was assigned by an analyst on the second week of the campaign, on the basis of observed behaviour and nothing else, and predates all of the above. The Office notes that the analyst has since asked, twice and in writing, whether the designation might be changed. Both requests are ████████ pending review.

GUIDANCE TO FLIGHT CREW

None of the above changes your briefing. Fly the route in Section 11. If you encounter material matching these descriptions, do not attempt recovery, do not attempt analysis, and report it at the bridge.

You are advised that recovery of intact examples has, on two occasions, resulted in the yards releasing a hull nobody had authorised them to build. The Office mentions this not as encouragement but because it is the sort of thing pilots hear about anyway.

SECTION THIRTEEN

BEYOND THE BRIEFING

A short section, for a situation the Office is required to document and cannot usefully describe.

If you reach the end of the planned route and are still flying, the run does not have to stop. You may continue. There is no further briefing, no chart, and no stated objective beyond the obvious one.

13.1 WHAT CHANGES OUT THERE

Two things, and they are related.

The opposition stops growing arithmetically and starts growing geometrically. Everything you fought on the route got harder in steps. Past the route it compounds. A build that was comfortable at the end of the briefing will be inadequate surprisingly soon, not because it got worse but because the curve changed shape.

A class of equipment becomes available that appears nowhere on the route. Fleet Requisition has no catalogue number for it and the Office has seen only the requisition summaries. What those describe is equipment whose purpose is to remove the ceilings your route-issued gear is already pressed against — the limit on how fast a weapon may cycle, the limit on how quickly a shield may recover, the limit on how much of your ship a single impact is permitted to remove.

Those limits exist for reasons. The equipment removes them anyway, and it is priced accordingly: some of it is paid for in hull, and some of it in hull and armour together. You are buying capability with survivability, knowingly, at a rate that becomes worse as you go.

THE ONLY GUIDANCE THE OFFICE WILL OFFER

Additive improvement cannot answer geometric growth. Out there, a build that adds is a build that has already stopped working. The equipment that matters multiplies.

There is no completion condition. There is only how far you got, and the fleet does record it.



PLATE 13.1 Late-engagement capture. Fleet Records has declined to caption this image further.

SECTION FOURTEEN

GLOSSARY

BRIDGE

The between-wave refit interface. Also a safe point — the run is written to disc whenever it opens.

COMBAT PLANE

The single plane on which engagements occur. There is no vertical axis. Pilots stop trying within the hour.

COMMAND CONTACT

The boss-class unit at the end of a world. One per world, no repeats.

DRAW / OUTPUT

Power consumed by fitted weapons against power produced by your reactor. Draw above output is a problem the ship solves without consulting you.

ESCAPE ABILITY

The fleet's term for a hull's signature manoeuvre. Considered a misnomer by anyone who has flown the Bastion.

FACILITY

A research investment. Raises a statistic and steers what the bridge offers. See Section 10.

FIELD MOUNT

A weapon archetype that maintains a persistent effect around the ship rather than firing at a target. Four exist.

LINK CATEGORY

The family a weapon modification belongs to. Eleven are in circulation.

LINK SET

A weapon filled entirely with modifications of one link category, all distinct. Supercharges that weapon. The single most important mechanic in this handbook.

MASS

Tonnage. Hull mass plus everything fitted. Governs acceleration, top speed and turn rate.

MOUNT

A weapon hardpoint. Hull-dependent: six on the Raptor, ten on the Salvation and Bastion, eight elsewhere in this catalogue.

OVERLOAD

The Tesla Coil trait by which shocked kills detonate. Chains. Terminates, reportedly.

PERSONAL EFFECTS

Slotless, massless morale materiel. Section 9. Includes the coffee machine, which is load-bearing.

REROLL

Paying a fee to replace the current bridge offers. Underused.

TELEGRAPH

The wind-up animation preceding a heavy or command-class attack. The announcement is the counterplay.

WAVE

One engagement. Thirty seconds early in the route, rising to a ceiling of ninety.

CREDITS

Neon Armada: Solar Storm is built in Godot 4. This handbook was typeset from the game's own data files; every statistic, designation and description in it is drawn from those files rather than written for the occasion. Any discrepancy between this document and the ship in your hangar should be resolved in favour of the ship.

ERRATA

Revision C corrects the Revision B statement regarding shield regeneration on the Bulwark hull. The shields do not regenerate. They were never going to regenerate. The Office apologises to the four pilots concerned and notes that all four survived, which Revision B would not have predicted either.

END OF HANDBOOK