

THE IRON HANDS

Numeration: The Xth Legion

Primogenitor: Ferrus Manus (also known as "The Gorgon")

Cognomen: (Prior) None officially recognised. The "Iron Tenth" – informal. {Note that the cognomen "Storm Walkers" was gradually gaining de-facto use immediately prior to contact with their Primarch, but was quickly extinguished in favour of the "Iron Hands"}

Observed Strategic Tendencies: Armoured and High-intensity Warfare, Line Breaker Attacks, Planetary Pacification and Suppression Campaigns, Anti-matériel Operations.

Noteworthy Domains: The Medusa system (Primary), sixteen other systems held in tributary fiefdom at the closure of the Great Crusade, numerous independently operated outpost way-stations and holdfasts established – full number and position remains unknown.

Allegiance: Fedelitas Constantus

"The dimension of mercy is above the warrior's thoughts and has no place in them; only cruel necessity and the solaces of victory constitute the warrior's philosophy, whole and entire."

Ruth'vann Magnar, Warlord of Albia, M.29

Renowned for their pride, cold-hearted brutality and remorselessness in battle, the Iron Hands were among the most powerful and famed Space Marine Legions of the Great Crusade. They were the hammer that had shattered countless foes in the Emperor's quest to liberate Mankind from the darkness of Old Night. Their Primarch was Ferrus Manus, a bellicose and uncompromising warlord and peerless weapon-smith, from whom the Xth Legion took their name and whose command was to them inviolate law. Caught up in the machinations of the Warmaster's treachery, they were undone by their own hubris and the blade of the traitor both, and paid a heavy price in the brutal slaying of their Primarch and the near-crippling of their strength. Though left a shattered Legion, the cold fury of the Iron Hands' bitter vengeance would afterwards be writ across the stars.

Origins: The Hammer and the Storm

The martial history of the Xth Legion is a relatively well-documented one, about which a great deal still survives on record to the present (in marked contrast with some others). Alongside the other proto-Legions created during the latter days of the Unification Wars on Ancient Terra, they were prepared and armed in preparation for the great work ahead, and their initial outfitting and organisation followed closely to the standard patterns set for the Legiones Astartes at the start of the Great Crusade. Their recruitment base is noted as being relatively widespread, with elements drawn from all over Ancient Terra, both from areas of longstanding Imperial support such as the Qavitine Plate cities, and from former enemy blocs such as Solus Stellax. In particular, the warlike culture and renowned brutality of the population of Old Albia, which supplied substantial numbers of recruits for the Xth, had a great deal to do with the Legion's early character (as it also did for the XIVth), lending them a fierce pride in a warrior ancestry that predated the Legion's founding.

Utilised as part of larger Legion taskforces in the closing stages of the battles on Ancient Terra itself, its first individual battle honours are recorded in the wider Sol system against the mutant 'Scythers' of the deep-orbiting Mican Aggregation and in the extermination of the xenos Lyasx enclave hidden beneath the ice of Oberath. In both of these prior engagements, the Xth had proved itself to be a remorseless and fiercely disciplined attacking force, fully capable of operating with remarkable co-ordination and tightly focused wrath to achieve tactical and strategic aims. On both occasions, the Legion had defeated a powerful foe with relatively few losses despite very heavy resistance, and while operating in environmentally hazardous conditions. Because of the constraints of these two battle environments – the first being a human-made space hulk, and the second, the airless and frozen caverns of a dead world – these victories, while notable, did not serve to distinguish them yet in the particular style of warfare to which they would later become most famed. Instead it would take the Legion's third large-scale engagement – the invasion of the planet designated 02-34 (or the "Battle of Rust" as it would be commonly known to Imperial military historians) – to show the Xth's particular martial gifts for what they were, and would do so with emphatic force.

Planet 02-34, or 'Rust' to give it its colloquial name, was an arid-waste world, rich in pyrochemical deposits, oxide deserts and the corroded remnants of vast, long-dead cities. In order to exploit these resources, the Orks of the powerful and expanding 'Krooked-Klaw' empire of Wardog Kulo, an empire which spanned more than sixty inhabited star systems to the galactic north-east of Seraphina, had made Rust a slave-mining colony comprising millions of Orks and a vast, shifting population of short-lived human slaves harvested in inter-stellar raids. Scouted out by the Rogue Trader Hedrik Zuckermann and identified as a primary target of the early Great Crusade, it was into this alien domain that the combined forces of the Legions, with the Emperor at their head, slammed with devastating force in 807.M30 in what was, at that early stage, the most widespread mass offensive of the era.

Setting the future pattern for attacks upon widely spread Ork territories, the Seraphina Offensive utilised the forces of eleven entire Space Marine Legions and hundreds of Imperial Army groups to assault scores of Ork-held worlds as simultaneously as the vagaries of Warp transit would allow, keeping the xenos forces fragmented and isolated so that they could be destroyed in detail. The task of taking the strategic world of Rust and the liberation of the enslaved human population there (thought to number almost a billion by some estimates) was entrusted to the Xth Legion, supported by two secondary battle groups, one of Urshan Velites of the Imperial Army and one comprising the Halgentine Covenant of the Legio Cybernetica.

Having already measured themselves against the savage threat of the Ork race in lesser battles previously, the massed forces of the Xth Legion, under the generalship of their Lord Commander Amadeus DuCaine, formulated a plan of attack which owed much to the feared and pitiless battle-craft of Old Albia; a tactic known as the Hammer and the Storm. After forcing a landing via the brute power of their ships from orbit, DuCaine ordered the Urshan soldiery to make planetfall in full strength. He had them form up in a triangular deployment zone, many kilometres on each side of the wasteland plain between the three largest Ork settlement-fortresses in the corroded cityscapes and dig in. In this they had successfully 'raised the storm'; the Orks, bestirred in their millions by the attack from above and, ever-warlike, poured from their warrens to attack the invaders.

Within hours the plain was a bloodbath of shot and shell, mangled machinery and bomb craters swollen with broken bodies, both human and Ork. Despite pleas for reinforcement or to be allowed to retreat, DuCaine waited until he was sure the bulk of the Ork forces were fully committed – swarming like a tide of black ants in numbers large enough to be visible from orbit like a spreading stain – before answering with the might of his Legion. They would be the hammer. Using gunships and assault landers to blast through the hurricane of flak and wings of Ork aircraft which vulture-swept the skies above the battle, the Xth tore open a hole into the bloated body of the Ork horde and deployed its full armoured might into a single massed spearhead, comprised in the main of heavy Malcador, Mauler and Land Raider tanks. In the shadow of these armoured giants, the Legion's squads and Dreadnoughts formed in close and disciplined ranks. Moving forward as a single, slow-moving mass, lashing out a relentless torrent of firepower, the Legion went on in unison like some immense harvesting machine through a field of ripe grain, destroying everything in its path. It crushed forward perpendicular to the half-overrun Imperial defence lines, the Legio Cybernetica and the Legion's own rapid-moving skimmer and jetbike squadrons spreading out in its wake to terminate any pockets of survivors and guard the hammer's flanks and rear.

On and on the Orks came to fight and to die. In response, the Xth re-armed and re-formed, meeting them in open counter-attack, unleashing their pent-up bloodlust and rage on the enemy until the wasteland plain was choked with bodies and broken war machines. After days of near-continuous fighting, the waves of alien assault grew fewer and further between, until they guttered and stopped at last. The Orks of Rust had not lost the will to fight, but had simply run out of blood and machinery to spend. At the end of the battle, the Legion had suffered less than a fifth of its number in fatalities; a far lower figure than might have been expected if it had been forced to attack the ancient warren-tunnelled cityscapes and take them one-by-one in gruelling attrition. The Urshan had also suffered heavy losses in the battle's opening stages, but afterwards they had been employed principally only in guarding the landing zones and supply lines while the Xth fought, and many had ultimately been spared, leading to Rust being hailed as a great triumph also on account of how little had been sacrificed to attain it.

Having gained much renown on Rust, the Xth went on to practise the Hammer and Storm tactic again successfully elsewhere against the Orks during the Seraphina Offensive, and from it a reputation for remorseless, highly-coordinated warfare grew, and a particular fame for successfully prosecuting 'set-piece' battles incorporating close armoured-vehicle support soon followed the Legion. The Xth's developing strategies were studied and indeed copied to varying degrees of success by several other Legions, such as the IVth and XIIIth in the campaign against the Krooked Klaw Orks and thereafter. This emulation was not universal however, and some Legions ignored the Xth's successes simply because they ill-suited either their temperament or fighting style (some also had already evidenced a lack of discipline of the kind that the Xth had displayed in order to carry it off). Very quickly, with its victories and developing tactics, the Xth Legion was forging an identity for itself in battle, and a name 'the storm walkers' had been coined for them by the Urshan who had come to view them with an almost superstitious awe. But what might have come of this independent progression, however, will never be known, as in a short span of years after the sundering of the Krooked-Klaw empire, news came that the Xth's Primarch had been found on a cold, merciless world named Medusa.

The Hour of the Gorgon

The Primarch of the Iron Hands, who had taken unto himself the name of Ferrus Manus (Lit. 'Iron handed' in the ancient tongue), was among the first of the Emperor's lost sons to be discovered and, like Horus and Russ before him, had risen to become a warlord in his own right on the world on which he had been cast.

Medusa was a cold, barren realm, driven for countless generations to incessant warfare through privation and hardship, but like much of Old Terra before the ascension of the Emperor, while its culture had regressed into barbarity and darkness, it had maintained a great deal of mechanical and technological lore, albeit steeped now in superstition and ritual. So it was that Ferrus Manus' transition from planetary warlord to general of the Great Crusade was a swift one, aided by his evident hunger for the task set before him and the uncompromising intelligence and diligent application to this greater calling he displayed.

In a scant few years, Ferrus Manus was transferred full control of the Xth Legion which he took command of body and soul, renaming it and remaking it in his image. Sweeping away much of what had gone before by way of organisation at a stroke, the Primarch took the Xth apart with

the precision and intent with which an artisan might deconstruct a mechanical chronograph, reconfigure its components and re-assemble it in a fashion more to his liking. The Xth, under their Primarch's command, would become, perhaps more than any other Legion, a literal 'engine of war'; a purpose-built machine—unsubtle, efficient and dedicated to a particularly brutal and direct method of warfare. Under his tutelage and direction, the Legion's already evident preference for order and systematised combat was refocused and increased, while the Primarch, no doubt seeing an echo of his own belligerent soul within the Legion's Astartes which bore his blood, harnessed the wellspring of anger and pride which burned in the hearts of the Legion with unbreakable chains of discipline, logic and order. In response to their Primarch's own values, the newly renamed Iron Hands valued superiority in terms of weaponry and wargear as much as they did zeal, valour or discipline, and the Legion saw a concentration of technological expertise seldom matched by other Legions. Victory, by the most direct and efficient means possible was the Legion's mantra; they would be the hand that reached out and crushed the enemies of humanity, as unfeeling, relentless and coldly implacable as the Iron Hand they had so fittingly taken for their name.

From the beginning, it was clear Ferrus Manus would prove a harsh but constant overlord. The Primarch was utterly intolerant of failure and swift to anger, but also rigidly and rationally controlled in the application of the wellspring of wrath that was never far from the surface of his thoughts and actions. To his Legion—just as he had been on Medusa to its barbaric inhabitants—he was "the Gorgon"; a figure from myth come to life; a being whose strength and intelligence was more than superhuman, in whose veins hot metal flowed like blood and whose silver gaze it was said, could kill. Quick to scorn and rare to praise, Ferrus Manus set utterly uncompromising standards for his Legion, which he saw as an extension of his own body and will. In truth the Primarch also held himself to those same unmatched standards and despised duplicity and dissemblage as much as he did weakness, and for these reasons, more than any others, the warriors of the Xth loved him as sons love a hard-hearted father, with a scrap of his praise worth more to them than any laurel of victory.

Very quickly because of the Primarch's influence, a mind-set was crystallised in the Legion that meant that failure to the Iron Hands was intolerable. Failure was weakness, and weakness was the greatest sin—weakness had led to the terror of

Old Night, just as on Medusa the weak endangered those around them in the daily battle for survival—weakness threatened all. Where this weakness manifested in others who succumbed to degradation of the body or mind such that they denied the Great Crusade (and in doing so threatened the safety of humanity), it engendered the coldest hate in the Iron Hands. Likewise, if weakness was found in their own ranks, that of their aspirants, or in those who fought beside them, it would be purged so that only the strong remained and so were further strengthened. Such was the harsh and absolute creed the Iron Hands' father ingrained in his children.

With the Gorgon at their head, the Iron Hands Legion quickly became renowned for its ability to confront the enemies of the Great Crusade head-on; gaining a reputation as a ruthless, calculating Legion at its strongest and most effective where the din of battle was the greatest, and the clash of arms at its most absolute and direct. Building on the talents and tactics the Xth Legion had already displayed, Ferrus Manus and the Iron Hands excelled at high-intensity warfare both against technologically advanced

opponents and xenos species such as the Orks, whose sheer physical power and vast numbers constituted an overwhelming threat to the success of the Great Crusade. This ability in the Iron Hands being recognised by the Emperor, and the challenge such foes represented being relished by Ferrus Manus and his Legion alike, the "Iron Tenth" as they became commonly known, was deliberately deployed to battlefronts where set-piece engagements against massed armies of advanced war machines were likely, creating a circular effect which caused the Legion to both become more specialised at its chosen field, and in ever greater demand as the Great Crusade's favoured weapon to meet this need. As a consequence of this, the Legion's common opponents in battle

NAME: MEDUSA
CLASSIFICATION: WASTE WORLD,
LEGIONES ASTARTES HOME WORLD,
IRON HANDS LEGION

SYSTEM DATA: Vx/5577//1500/ΣΩ
STELLAR GRID: 05-OV25/995
SEGMENTUM: OBSCURUS/THULE

NOTATION: SUB-ARCTIC CLIMATIC CONDITIONS,
DENSE ATMOSPHERE OWING TO EXTENSIVE DARK
AGE OF TECHNOLOGY RESOURCE EXTRACTION SPOIL
REDUCING SOLAR PENETRATION TO DANGEROUS
LEVELS. EXTREMELY EXTENSIVE DARK AGE RELIC
TECHNOLOGY/DETRITUS EVIDENCE IN ORBITAL SYSTEM
AND SUB-SURFACE DEPOSITS. WARNING: SEVERE
MAGNETO-ÆTHERIC ANOMALIES CONSTITUTING
NAVIGATIONAL HAZARD TO CLOSE-ORBITAL TRAFFIC.



often included intransigent human factions who actively resisted unification and had retained some fragment of the technological might of the lost Dark Age of Technology. In such conflicts it was common, due to strategic necessity, for the Iron Hands to fight closely alongside elements of the Mechanicum and the Titan Legions, with whom a cultural relationship inherited from Medusa was shared, and over years of battle these ties of allegiance grew. In these battles, the Iron Hands' rapidly developing skill and renown as weapon-smiths and artificers would also come into play, allowing them both to innovate new forms of armaments and defences where needed, and to quickly counter previously unknown weapons employed against them, acquiring them alongside the Mechanicum for the Imperium's later study and use as required. The Great Crusade would also see the Iron Hands serve alongside many other Legions directly, often employed as shock troops in major campaigns, as well as a senior element in a larger army group, with Ferrus Manus taking an overarching battlefield command role over other, later-found Primarchs on many occasions. The long term results of these joint endeavours would be mixed for the Legion, leading to close and lasting allegiances in some cases, as with the Emperor's Children and their Primarch, and lingering resentment and malcontent bordering on internecine strife in others, as with the Alpha Legion.

In distinct counterpoint to the Iron Hands' noted strengths, as time progressed it became clear that there were certain avenues of warfare and exigencies of the Great Crusade to which the Iron Hands were decidedly unsuited, either by doctrine or temperament. Where once on Rust, the Xth had been mindful of the cost to the allies of their

tactics, such niceties were now forgotten, viewed as weakness that would no longer be tolerated to go on; better the bloody price paid on the battlefield now, went the Iron Hands' reasoning, rather than risk the prize of unifying humanity and the peace that would bring one day. Further to the notoriety this stance brought them, particularly with elements of the Imperial Army, as the years passed the Iron Hands also gained an increasingly belligerent reputation with their fellow Legions as lacking both patience with others and subtlety of action, both in the person of their Primarch and the character of the Legion's rank and file.

While the ill-feeling these negative factors provoked in some quarters was still far from the acrimony and distrust the nearly uncontrollable bloodlust displayed by the World Eaters or the catastrophic cost of the arts of war practiced by the Death Guard engendered, or indeed the suspicions created by the fickle unpredictability of the White Scars, the Iron Hands' ruthlessness in battle and their seemingly callous indifference to the price of victory made them conquerors, not liberators. This plain fact was acknowledged both by the Iron Hands themselves and by the Emperor in employing them accordingly. It is also consequently true that Ferrus Manus and his Legion cared little for the minutiae of the Great Crusade, they saw their task as a clear one; to expand the borders of the Imperium and destroy its enemies—nothing more—they disdained the politics of the Imperial Court and the pursuit of glory as empty trifles, and left the task of winning over the hearts and minds of those they brought into Compliance and the rebuilding of what they had shattered to those better suited to the task. When once asked of his Legion's role in the Great Crusade, Ferrus Manus is apocryphally held to have simply said; *"Make war and move on, and again, and again, until nothing breathes which stands against us. All else is sophistry and pretty lies."*

As the Great Crusade progressed, the Iron Hands Legion was in constant service at the front line of expansion, both at the head of its own battle groups, compliance and extermination taskforces, and wielded as a part of larger Expeditionary fleets, fighting alongside other Legions where needed. After more than a century under its Primarch's command, the victories of the Iron Hands could not easily be counted and, indeed, it is believed many of its battles went unrecorded, as the Legion itself became increasingly insular in many ways, and uninterested in sharing the details of its independent operations in anything but the most perfunctory way. To the wider Imperium it presented a cold, brutal façade; the Legion as a calculating, prideful and powerful engine of war that did not stoop to deal with petty concerns or affairs of state. Such secrets the Iron Hands Legion did keep, it kept well.

The Ascension of Horus

Although considered one of the finest and most senior field commanders in the Imperium, and an individual of great and sometimes barbed pride, Ferrus Manus did not display any outward signs of displeasure at Horus Lupercal's promotion above him as Warmaster, although as one of the most veteran of the Primarchs, he might have expected such consideration. Both he and his Legion continued to serve closely with the Sons of Horus after Horus' ascension and remained a key part of the Warmaster's strategic deployments throughout the dying years of the Great Crusade. Despite being part of the Traitors' close orbit, and the fact that a particular comradeship had developed between Ferrus Manus and the Primarch Fulgrim of the Emperor's Children, the Iron Hands never became fully ensnared in the dark conspiracy that would tear the Imperium asunder. It is of some note that the Traitors clearly did believe that such an entanglement was possible (whereas they did not with certain other Legions), although whether this was because of binding ties on the Legion Horus believed outweighed those to the Emperor, the reputation and nature of the Iron Hands Legion itself or some other unknown factor is unclear and now unknowable. It is salutary to consider, however, that if this had been the case; had Ferrus Manus and the power of the Iron Hands also sided with the Traitors, then the outcome of history might well have been very different.

IRON HANDS LEGION EXAMPLE CLAN COMPANY HERALDRY



CLAN VURGAAN



CLAN AVERNII



CLAN KAARGUL



CLAN MORRAGUL



CLAN RAUKAAN



CLAN SORRGOL



CLAN FELG



CLAN ATRAXII



CLAN UNGAVARR



THE SEAL OF THE EYE OF VIGILANCE

For many years before the bloodshed of the Horus Heresy, the Iron Hands Legion had fought closely alongside those who would turn traitor and once called them brother. The Warmaster Horus, in particular, valued the Legion's ruthless power and expertise as well as the generalship of Ferrus Manus. As a result of the Iron Hands' successes, many laurels of victory were conferred among them, and nascent warrior lodges were founded in the Legion, but never fully took hold, perhaps owing to the Iron Hands' cold dependence on logic and rationality. One award in particular, known by the Iron Hands as *'The Seal of the Eye of Vigilance'* was bestowed by the Warmaster on the Iron Hands who served beside him in battle and was held in high regard. It was with bitter spite that some Iron Hands still bore this decoration on their armour at Istvan V, vowing only to deface them with the blood and bone of the enemy.

THE MEDUSAN INHERITANCE

A cold, barely life-sustaining planet several times the size of Terra located in the outer darkness of the Segmentum Obscurus, Medusa is the fourth world orbiting a supergiant star known in the ancient Terran charts as Sthenelus. In the lost days of human might during the High Dark Age, the lore of the Mechanicum holds that Medusa was a world deemed of great importance, its depths mined for rare core-strata deposits by vast, tireless engines and its riches guarded jealously from rival species by sleepless guardians. So it was that when the shadow of the Age of Strife fell and all was given over to bloodshed and anarchy, Medusa, unlike so many other lost domains, was not forgotten on Mars nor on Old Earth but remained a legend of glory and wealth.

As Expedition fleets broke out of the Segmentum Solar, following the warp-tides to the edge of the uttermost unknown, famed Medusa was high upon its list of targeted goals, although its exact position was now uncertain. When a Mechanicum Warp-runner, more than a year out and alone in the darkness ahead of the main fleets first broke from the Emphyrean into

the Sthenelus star system and rediscovered Medusa, the sight that greeted them was both unexpected and bleak. The whole range of the system's inner sphere was littered with the debris of shattered ships, fogs of silicate dust, dead hulks and fractured planetoids, all as cold and silent as the grave. Around Medusa itself, the legendary Telstarax —the colossal planet-circling orbital ring-station which had girthed Medusa in the Dark Age of Technology to plunder its riches and carry them aloft into space on immense tether-conveyors— was a tortured ruin, much of it having fallen back to the planet with no doubt catastrophic force. As the Warp-runner closed with the planet, it found itself beset by many dangers, from sudden ionic squalls to erratically functioning mines and autonomous weapons systems —ancient, but still deadly— hiding in the debris fields, but wounded, still it went on, lured by the myth of Medusa.

Reaching close orbit, it scanned through the thick and shrouding atmosphere, casting its hard glare on the planet below. It found a world almost lifeless and shuddering with dangerous and near-constant tectonic instability. From the Warp-runner's high

vantage, it could see the worm-coring of played-out mine workings deep beneath the sheet ice and tundra, Medusa's cold ground further riven with immense scars and impact craters, although whether from sky-fallen debris or some ancient orbital bombardment, it could not ascertain. It also heard signals; the ghosts of vox-traffic in half-familiar tongues and distorted tech-cant codes, and alongside this its auguries registered the scattered heat-bloom heartbeats of crude but massive thermic reactors at the heart of huge machines crawling across Medusa's broken lands, and within these the sparse Ætheric signature of human life.

The glory of Medusa in the Dark Age of Technology had fallen into a wreckage of devolved ruins and barren rock, its wealth spent and ripped from it during the Age of Strife. But amidst the emptiness and despoil, its deep searching of the radiation and signals found something else, something unique that all its kind had been tasked to quest for—a treasure beyond price—it found a Primarch.

Much about the formative years of Ferrus Manus on Medusa remains unknown, not

so much through any deliberate veil of secrecy perhaps, but because what was later retold by the Medusans themselves was filtered through the barbaric folk-memory of their culture, while the Gorgon himself was taciturn on the matter to any save the Emperor perhaps. There have been many who have studied the formative situations of the Primarchs who have drawn parallels between the conditions in which Vulkan found himself on Nocturne and Ferrus Manus encountered on Medusa; both were found on savage, barren worlds riven by hostile conditions and both held primitive cultures, long cut off during the Age of Strife. But beyond these surface features, the two worlds and, in particular, those who dwelled upon them could not have been more different.

The exact origins of the human presence on Medusa is uncertain, and genetic evidence reveals that it is most likely to have been the result of several different survivor groups, some perhaps dating back to the Dark Age of Technology, others almost certainly the stranded remnants of star-wrecks and pre-Navigator sleeper ships launched by the Mechanicum during the Age of Strife to find this fabled world. These antagonistic survivor-waves of the population, confronted by the near-unlivable surface conditions created by the planet's harsh climate, violently unstable geology and lack of native flora and fauna, devolved into techno-barbaric savages. Further forced into a nomadic existence by a constantly shifting landscape where mountain ranges and seas could be forged or unmade in a season, the Medusans retained by rote and shrouded in a degenerate superstition-ridden faith based around the dim memories of the Machine Cult, a vastly uneven trove of weapon-crafting, cybernetic and mechanical lore, but lost all semblance of civilisation beyond that of the basest hunter-gatherer. They formed into mobile, semi-tribal clans, the largest of which were centred on massive fortified land-crawlers (based in part on ancient STC designs for mining and harvesting engines), from which raiding and foraging parties set out to claim meagre resources and make ceaseless war on the other clans. They were a savage and unforgiving people; slavers and killers to whom the battle to survive was an unrelenting, bloody struggle in which only the strongest prospered.

Into this milieu Ferrus Manus came, but if what can be gleaned from the Medusan

folk tales holds true, it was not into the clan-ranges he first fell in a blaze of light that Sundered the grey, shrouding skies of the planet, but in the northern polar regions, shattering Karaashi, the Pinnacle of Black Ice. This locale was one of many places the Medusans considered the accursed abodes of the malign shades of the dead and slumbering iron-skinned monsters of legend. This set the scene for the Primarch's entrance into mythic history, and the legends teach of him wandering the northern realms, casting down hulking storm giants, performing superhuman feats of cunning and strength, and slaying monsters and murderous machine-creatures left relic beneath the black ice of Medusa from bygone ages of war and slaughter. The most renowned of such fables featured the deathless horror of the great wyrm Asirnoth, whose quicksilver-skin had marked the Primarch in its death-throes and now perpetually coated the Primarch's own hands and forearms, lending him his common name.

When the Gorgon, as he had become known, strode forth from the forbidden realms of Sundered Medusa to batter the disparate clans of his world into submission to his overlordship, he was already thought of as a living god by its natives. But while he did not require of the Medusans worship and did nothing to encourage it, he demanded obedience to his will, and bloodily broke any who would contest his word. Nor did he quell conflict or bring peace upon the planet, but instead he gave the Iron-Fathers —the half Tech-Priest, half shaman who ministered to the clans' spiritual and technological needs— the fruits of his own invention in exchange for the secrets they had kept down the generations. Through the Gorgon's teachings the clans then forged better weapons and stronger machines with which to fight to prove their worth to survive.

Ferrus Manus also led the bravest warriors of the clans to delve into the frozen realms below, breaking open long-sealed vaults and intruding into ice-buried fragments of the great machine-works that had plunged from the skies in ancient days in search of salvage and strong metal. In the depths, the warrior-bands and the silver-eyed giant who led them fought degenerate mutants, living-dead cyborgs whose decayed flesh hung in tatters from corroded metal bodies, and subdued the dark-engines of the nightmare

ages that had gone before to take their plunder. By the time the Emperor had come to claim him for the Great Crusade, Ferrus Manus was warlord, demi-god and sage to the people of Medusa, and it is said that he was waiting, and that he more than half suspected the purpose of his creation.

When Ferrus Manus took charge of his Legion, he, like most of the other Primarchs, used his foster-world as the base and principal headquarters of his Legion. In doing this he wedded the two: the Medusan people and the Terran-founded Xth Legion together forcibly, creating something new that shared aspects of both that had gone before and eradicating with bloody-handed ruthlessness anything that would not yield to his will. Where once there had been chapters, there would now be Clans, but this was no mere symbolic union, and Terran Space Marines were ordered to displace the existing Clans' rulership both temporal and spiritual in the only way that the Medusans knew; by brute force.

So the Iron Hands became the new Medusans; the Legion's Astartes walking among them as demi-gods, and the people of the nomad clans under their thrall fighting and dying not simply just to survive any more, but ultimately for their children to prove worthy to join the Legion's ranks. The installation of the Iron Hands on Medusa and the establishment of Imperial Compliance did little to alleviate hardship, halt conflict or undo the barbaric superstitions of the natives, Ferrus Manus saw to that, for the trials and hardship of life on Medusa would winnow the weak from the strong and see that only the physically fittest, most warlike and psychologically 'suitable' recruits would join the ranks of his Legion. To counteract the potential flaw of Medusa's small population base, Ferrus Manus saw to it that on suitably recalcitrant human worlds his Iron Hands conquered by force, he exacted a tithe in perpetuity of strong male youths, taking them in early adolescence and selected at his behest by mendicant priests of the Mechanicum as tribute to Medusa: there to live, struggle, fight and survive if they were strong enough, as fresh blood for its clans and should they prove worthy, aspirants for his Legion upon attaining their majority. So it was the bloody inheritance and bleak creed of Medusa was spread to successive generations of the Iron Hands, forging it into a weapon of unparalleled ruthlessness.



UNIT ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LEGION

As is perhaps unsurprising from so calculating and methodical a master as Ferrus Manus, the Iron Hands Legion was a highly structured military force, with numerous tactical and strategic divisions of power and organisation within its ranks. However, on close inspection, the precise nature of this structure is a very particular one, instituting a system of 'organised compartmentalisation' within the Legion. This stands in contrast to other highly-structured Legions such as the single overarching hierarchy of many fine gradations as was found in the Emperor's Children or the Imperial Fists. Nor did the Iron Hands subscribe to the utterly rationalised clarity and dogmatic adherence to order and stricture espoused by the Ultramarines. The Iron Hands Legion was instead deliberately composed from a series of interlocking components, each with its own specialisation, duties and chain of command, beholden only to itself and its immediate superiors. Each of these components; be they Legionary squad, armoured vehicle squadron, support elements, etc, came together first as companies in the broadly standard model. But beyond this, each company was a part of a larger grouping with its own independent command, support and logistical network, armoury and ships created for a particular campaign or battle. These formations were referred to as Orders and were superficially equivalent to a specialised battalion in general Legiones Astartes terms, but far more concrete in makeup and isolated in operation. Inside an Order, the component companies were configured in such a way that each unit's function combined together to form a gestalt whole whose tactical and strategic capacities, like the components of

a machine working together in unison, were capable of actions outweighed by the sum of their parts. In battle each Order was given a specific task which it was expected to fulfil without needing assistance and succeed it would at any cost, for pride, honour and sheer belligerence would allow no other outcome. Orders were often formed from a larger single Clan grouping, and sometimes units from different clans fought together within them, often as rivals for glory and achievement.

Clans were notionally the Iron Hands' equivalent of the chapters of other Legions but again, on close inspection, were in practice of distinct character, being patterned to a larger extent on the Medusan feudal system and were linked to the planet's nomadic barbarian populations as recruiting bases. These Iron Hands Clans were in fact 'pocket Legions', fully self-sufficient and self-supplied, and each had a single Chieftain or Iron Lord to rule them by Primarch-given right. Each Clan had a very real and distinct identity and each vied against each other for glory, attainment and for resources, as well as for the favour of their Primarch.

The level of integration and strength the Iron Hands Legion's system manifested was extraordinary if somewhat inflexible. Whether deployed as a single company or a full Legion in scale, it was a crushing leviathan when in action; extraordinarily difficult to stop, but also at times brutally intractable and slow to change course through its single-minded pursuit of its starting objectives. This was Ferrus Manus' deliberate intention, and as part of that design he invested authority and initiative with the few, not the many. Accordingly he created several distinct tiers of organisational structure where field commanders wielded absolute power and authority, and were to be obeyed without question by those beneath them, ensuring any responsibility for failure would be identified and dealt

with with merciless efficiency. Within the Iron Hands Legion, command carried with it the power of both life and death; Each Shield-Centurion was empowered to enact at will both reward and preferment, as well as immediate punishment—including execution, over any Legionary beneath them without recourse, hearing or trial. Likewise, at the higher echelons of the Legion, an Iron-Captain had the same rights over their War Leaders and other subordinate officers within their Order, and the ranks beneath them, an Iron-Lord over the Iron-Captains in their Clan, and so on. Overarching this structure, Ferrus Manus was the single judge, ruler and master over all in his Legion without contest or gainsay.

The Iron Hands were a Legion whose numbers remained relatively constant throughout the latter phases of the Great Crusade, balancing their intake of new recruits largely with losses in the field. This was achieved despite the fact that many failed the Legion's notoriously rigorous and unforgivingly harsh training and assessment methods on Medusa. They were, however, known to maintain a particularly extensive and sophisticated arsenal of war engines—particularly tanks, armoured vehicles and Dreadnought walkers—the equal of any Legion save perhaps for Perturabo's IVth. Thanks to long-standing ties to elements of the Mechanicum and the technological aptitude displayed by many in their number, they possessed access to numerous cybernetic implant systems seldom seen outside the Machine Cult, and they were also able to widely reproduce and maintain large stockpiles of grav-weapons, conversion-beamer and laser-destroyer systems, and other arcane and esoteric machineries of death. This range of matériel extended both to extensive numbers of servitors (often created from failed Legion aspirants and, it has long been rumoured, prisoners taken in battle), and advanced super-heavy tanks such as the Fellblade. In addition, battle-automata and troops from the Mechanicum were preferred by the Iron Hands Legion for strategic support when available as the Legion was largely dismissive of most Imperial Army units as unfit for frontline work.

It is also worthy of note that the Iron Hands Legion, and its master Ferrus Manus, was at the forefront of the introduction of a number of weapons systems and armour patterns

over the course of the Great Crusade. The fruits of some, such as their contribution of the prototype Indomitus pattern to the Tactical Dreadnought Armour project and the powerful Stormbreaker pattern thunder hammer, would later be widely disseminated to the rest of the Legions. While the secrets of certain other weapons and metallurgic and cybermantic crafts, they kept to themselves and their most trusted confidantes within the Mechanicum.

The strength of the Iron Hands pseudo-feudal system of organisation created a highly disciplined and motivated force which both despised and punished failure and weakness, and rewarded and glorified strength, accomplishment and success. This created an environment in which the most competent and strongest-willed rose quickly within the ranks, and those who did not make the measure were quickly weeded out. It also provided a set of boundaries and strictures which channelled the raw aggression and adversarial tendencies of the Iron Hands themselves, many of whom shared their Primarch's volatile temperament, kept in check through a mixture of coldly-imposed Legion discipline and with Medusan cultural values of bloody-minded pragmatism which were taken as the Legion's creed.

It also had the effect of creating not inconsiderable friction and indeed direct competition between the Legion's Clans, both to attain glory and praise in their Primarch's eyes and to outdo each other in battle. This competitiveness had a very practical consideration also as the most successful Clans were favoured by their Primarch with a greater proportion of recruits and additional resources—a matter not of favouritism but logic in their master's eyes—a distribution weighted to prefer the Clan who had proved itself most able to utilise what it was given in the Legion's service. For the rest the message was equally clear; it was a matter of the survival of the fittest; adapt, grow strong, overcome—or fail and wither to destruction. It has been argued by some that the embodiment of this philosophy, particularly in the person of its Primarch Ferrus Manus, contributed greatly to the crisis and mental shock endured by the Iron Hands Legion after the dire events of Isstvan V.

War Disposition

At the outset of the Horus Heresy, the Iron Hands Legion is commonly estimated to have had an operational strength just in

The Bloody Echo of Isstvan

In the death of Ferrus Manus, to the minds of his Legion, there was failure and there was weakness. For some of the Iron Hands survivors, their Primarch, who they had held up as the paragon of strength and intelligence, had been shown to be weak by his death, and by extension the Iron Hands had been shown to be weak themselves and perhaps deserving of destruction when judged by their own creed by following him. Others laid the blame purely on the treachery of those who had turned from the Emperor, descending into a fratricidal hate that consumed everything else. Others within the Legion would turn inwards, despising their own perceived failings of hubris and weak flesh, and still yet others would go on to harbour the seeds of bitter scorn and distrust for those who had failed their Primarch, both as brothers and as allies in the battle, failing either by their actions or by allowing themselves to be duped into being sent far away when the traitors had struck. Regardless of where the blame truly resided, many within the Iron Hands Legion, now fatherless, dealt with this traumatic crisis on a personal level in a simpler and more direct fashion; they went violently insane.

excess of 113,000 Legiones Astartes, with a huge operating reserve of wargear and supplies, alongside a diverse fleet of around a hundred capital vessels of various classes. This placed the Iron Hands within the mid-tier of Legion strengths recorded at this date by their numbers alone, but in general terms, their resource in wargear, war matériel and supply made them a considerably greater military power in practice than their number alone would suggest.

At the time the events at Isstvan III were taking place, the major constituent of the Legion (believed to be around two thirds its strength both in terms of manpower and ships, comprising the majority of its most powerful Clans), were under the direct command of their Primarch, forming the 52nd Expeditionary fleet. Owing to the perfidious treachery of Fulgrim, and the uncontrollable wrath of Ferrus Manus in response, the Iron Hands Primarch broke ranks from this force and reached Isstvan V with only an elite cadre chosen from his then-favoured Avernii Clan alongside him, almost all of whom were annihilated with their slain Primarch during the Dropsite Massacre. A great many more vessels of the 52nd Expeditionary fleet following on behind their Primarch were also destroyed, along with tens of thousands of Iron Hands on board as they later transited into the Isstvan system, rushing unknowingly into a death trap from which only a few ships were to escape. Taken together, these losses were great, although this left more survivors from the Iron Hands Legion in number than could be ascribed to the Dropsite Massacre's other victim Legions overall. This was largely the case as large groups of Iron Hands were presently engaged elsewhere and unable to heed, or ignorant of, their Primarch's rushed call to

assault the traitors at the Isstvan system. The Legion was nevertheless savagely reduced; the survivors scattered physically and utterly shattered spiritually by its losses.

Initially sent reeling and psychologically devastated, the Irons Hands Legion's survivors fractured, and the full story of what happened to its scions remains clouded to this day. It is known, however, that some Clans re-organised a council of Iron-Fathers on Medusa to take charge of the ravaged Legion, and speeded the recruitment and creation of new Space Marines from the extensive stores of gene-seed kept there with the goal of rebuilding the Legion. Alongside this, it is widely believed that in the aftermath some Iron Hands units and, in some cases, entire Clans shunned the Medusan Council's assumed authority and went their own way, consumed by their own hatred and need for revenge. These fractured forces fought their own war and it is widely believed some delved into the use of dark and forbidden forces from humanity's ancient past to do so, although this has been strenuously denied since by the Iron Hands Clan Council.

What cannot be contested, however, is that other lone Iron Hands and small scattered groups cast off their Legion's livery entirely and either fought on alone or went renegade—Iron Hands no more. Regardless of the hidden truths of these terrible times, the Iron Hands Legion in the years that followed the Dropsite Massacre, and largely under the auspices of the Medusan faction, managed to re-enter the fight against the Traitors with devastating results on several outer worlds, but it was as a shadow of its former strength; no longer a Legion whole, united or entirely sane.

IRON HANDS TACTICAL LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY KARATACUS
SQUAD TRENGUIT, TACTICAL COMPANY,
ORDER QUARII, CLAN VURGAAN
ISSTVAN V DROPSITE MASSACRE,
BATTLE OF PHASE LINE UPSILON DELTA XV

Squad Trenguit is known to have deployed to the surface of Isstvan V as part of the assault in support of the second stage landings with the Legion's armoured contingent. As such, the fate of the squad's members is largely unknown, although a handful of uncorroborated accounts suggest they survived the landing and fought for at least forty-three minutes before the maelstrom of battle consumed them somewhere in the vicinity of the feature designated Phase Line Upsilon Delta XV.

As a veteran of several decades of service, Legionary Karatacus went into his final battle wearing the suit of MkII power armour that had served him well throughout dozens of campaigns.

The numeral '4' identifies Legionary Karatacus as belonging to the 4th Order (or Order Quarii) of the Isstvan V assault force.

Panoply of War

1. **Iron Hands Legion icon:** common armorial use.
2. **Phobos pattern boltgun.**
3. **MkXIX thermic charge:** Surviving records suggest that at least half of the squads in Clan Vurgaan's tactical companies were issued with these charges to facilitate breaching operations against the heavy Traitor fortifications.



I.



2.



3.

IRON HANDS LEGION TERMINATOR

VETERAN LEGIONARY MOKAN
SQUAD DEMETAE, TERMINATOR CENTURY,
ORDER QUARII, CLAN VURGAAN
ISSTVAN V DROPSITE MASSACRE,
ASSAULT ON SALIENT 7-7

Veteran Mokan was assigned to the leading edge of Clan Vurgaan's deployment to the surface of Isstvan V. While many of the Clan's companies deployed via drop pod, the Terminator Century of the 4th Order (Order Quarii) is known to have teleported directly to the dropsite in order to secure the landing zone. While the massed Terminators of the Avernii Clan assaulted the Traitor fortress-line, Squad Demetae is known to have survived into the battle's third hour before destruction under heavy bombardment.

Veteran Legionary Mokan is depicted here wearing a suit of Cataphractii pattern Terminator armour, which had received numerous embellishments and modifications at the hands of the Legion's master artificers.

Panoply of War

1. **Charatran pattern power-chainaxe:** This pattern was instituted in the second decade of the Great Crusade, during the war with lords of the Fade Continuum.
2. **Phobos pattern combi-melta:** One of a range of armaments issued to Terminator squads, the combi-bolter offers a balance between tactical assault and anti-armour firepower.



I.



2.

IRON HANDS BREACHER LEGIONARY

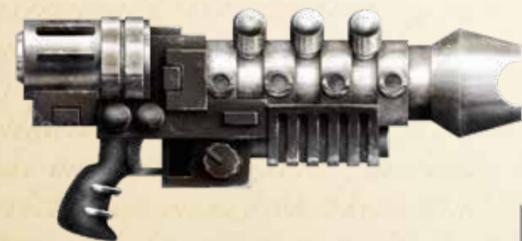
LEGIONARY MAELOC
 SQUAD CUNAEDA, ORDER PRIMII, CLAN GAARSAK
 ISSTVAN SYSTEM PENETRATION,
 COUNTER-BOARDING ACTION

The 1st Order (or Order Primii) of Clan Gaarsak are recorded in surviving accounts of the Battle of Isstvan V as having taken part in the fleet actions that took place in and around orbital space as Iron Hands Legion warships attempted to reach their brothers on the surface. In the event, the majority of these operations were unsuccessful and countless Legionaries perished in the transport holds of their battle-barges, consumed by the ravaging fires of Traitor broadsides.

Squad Cunaeda is believed to have launched a daring counter-boarding action against the World Eaters battle barge *Retiarius* at the height of the fleet action. It is likely the squad was on board the *Retiarius* when their own vessel was destroyed, and how long they might have fought on against an entire warship filled with savage enemy warriors cannot be known.

Panoply of War

1. **Autotellurian pattern graviton gun:**
Specialised weapon as useful in disrupting enemy counter-assaults as it is in engaging the foe.
2. **Phobos pattern bolt pistol:** Standard issue, vital for close-in fighting against enemies who survive an initial assault.
3. **Panoply Belicosa:** Melta bomb, frag grenade and krak grenade.



1.



2.



3.

IRON HANDS LEGION TERMINATOR

UNIDENTIFIED VETERAN LEGIONARY
 UNKNOWN SQUAD DESIGNATION,
 ORDER PRIMII, CLAN AVERNII

Isstvan V Dropsite Massacre

This otherwise unidentified Legionary's insignia is that of the 1st Order (Order Primii), Iron Hands Avernii Clan. Many of these warriors had been slain at the hand of the Primarch Fulgrim and his Phoenix Guard before the full extent of the rebellion had even revealed itself. Many more fought in the Isstvan V Dropsite Massacre at the side of Ferrus Manus, determined to avenge the deaths of their brothers. Their fate instead was to fall beside their master, loyal and resolute to the end.

The Legionary is depicted here clad in a suit of Tartaros Terminator. This pattern was held as one of the most advanced products of the Tactical Dreadnought Armour program.

Panoply of War

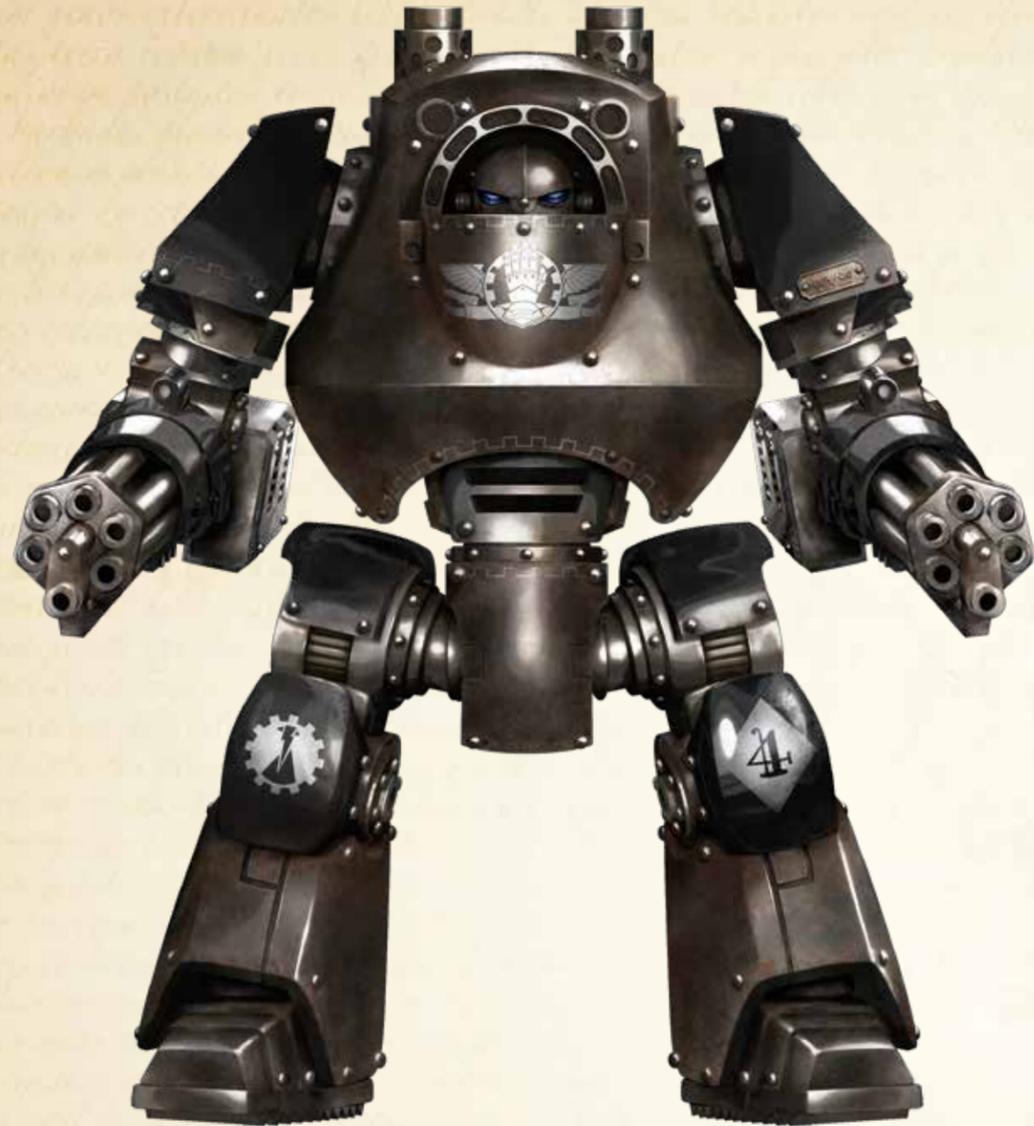
1. **Meridius pattern power Maul.**
2. **Anvilus pattern heavy flamer:** A common weapon amongst Terminator armour clad warriors assigned to boarding actions and similar 'Zone Mortalis' engagements, where contact with numerous enemies in confined battle zones is anticipated.



1.



2.



IRON HANDS CONTEMPTOR-MORTIS DREADNOUGHT

VENERATII URIEN
ORDER QUARII, CLAN VURGAAN
ISSTVAN V DROPSITE MASSACRE, PHASE PENULTIMA TERMINUS

Veneratii Urien was once Centurion of Clan Vurgaan's 4th Order (or Order Quarii), a warrior feared for his uncompromising rule. Urien was a Terran rather than a Medusan, and one who had fought with the Xth Legion long before its union with its Primarch. He fell during a battle against the xenos Psy-Gore less than a decade before the Battle of Isstvan V, and was subsequently interred within a suit of Contemptor-Dreadnought armour, curtailing his rise to high command, but ensuring he would continue to serve his Legion.

Veneratii Urien's Dreadnought armour is configured according to the Mortis sub-pattern, mounting a pair of Kheres assault cannon, as well as highly advanced targeting systems. The primary use of this configuration is to engage enemy aircraft, several dozen of which Urien is believed to have shot down in the one hour and twenty seven minutes he fought for, having set foot on the bloody ground of the Isstvan V dropsite.



IRON HANDS CONTEMPTOR DREADNOUGHT

ANCIENT MORN
ORDER PRIMII, CLAN AVERNII
ISSTVAN V DROPSITE MASSACRE, PHASE TERMINUS

The warrior interred within the Dreadnought armour depicted here was one of Clan Averonii's most respected warriors.

The gold winged lightning bolt marks Ancient Morn out as one of only a handful of surviving veterans of the Battle of Lox. Ancient Morn once served in the Averonii's Terminator Centuries of the Iron Hands Primarch's honour guard, fighting alongside Ferrus Manus himself throughout countless battles. Morn fell in battle at the height of the Battle of Gardinaal Prime, his body crushed beneath the iron tread of one of the gargantuan walkers fielded by the Lords of Gardinaal. Interred within the armoured sarcophagus of a Contemptor Dreadnought, he continues his sterling service to his lord and master.

Morn's service is thought to have come to an end amidst savagery and bloodshed as he fell defending the decapitated body of his slain Primarch upon the blood-soaked ground of the Isstvan V.

IRON HANDS LEGION BATTLE TANKS

The core of the Iron Hands armoured units, though limited in number by the capacity of the *Ferrum*, held some of the finest war machines and crews in the Legion.

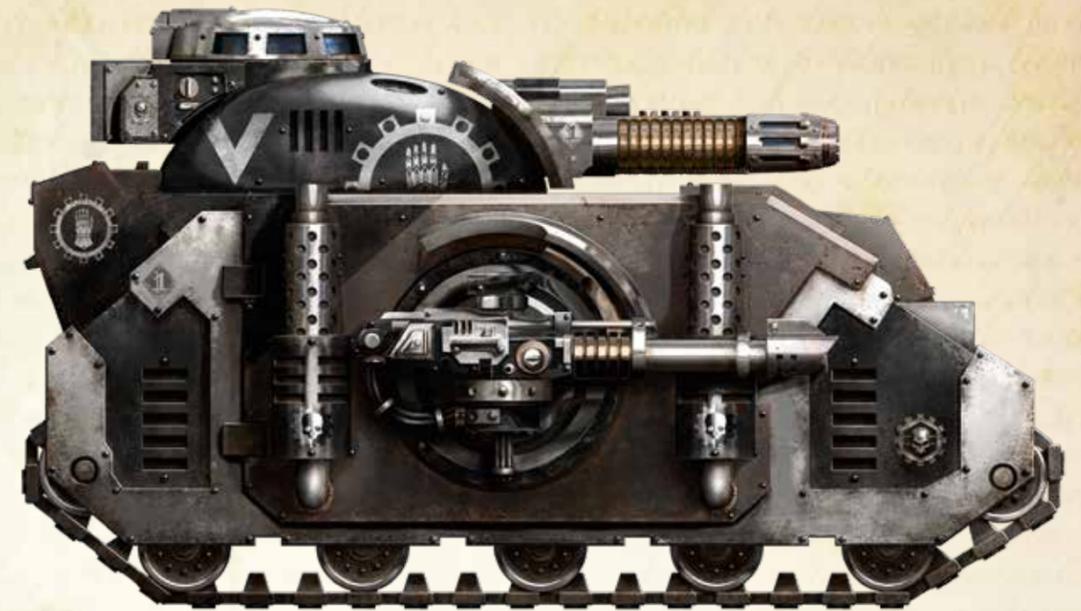
Tragically, when the Legions of the second wave revealed themselves as Traitors and opened fire upon the sons of Ferrus Manus, Vulkan and Corax, many of these

war machines were oriented towards the fortifications of the Sons of Horus, the Emperor's Children, the Death Guard and the World Eaters. Their less armoured rear facings were therefore facing towards the guns of the Word Bearers, Night Lords and, in particular, the Iron Warriors. As a result of the treacherous bombardment from the rear, they suffered staggeringly high losses

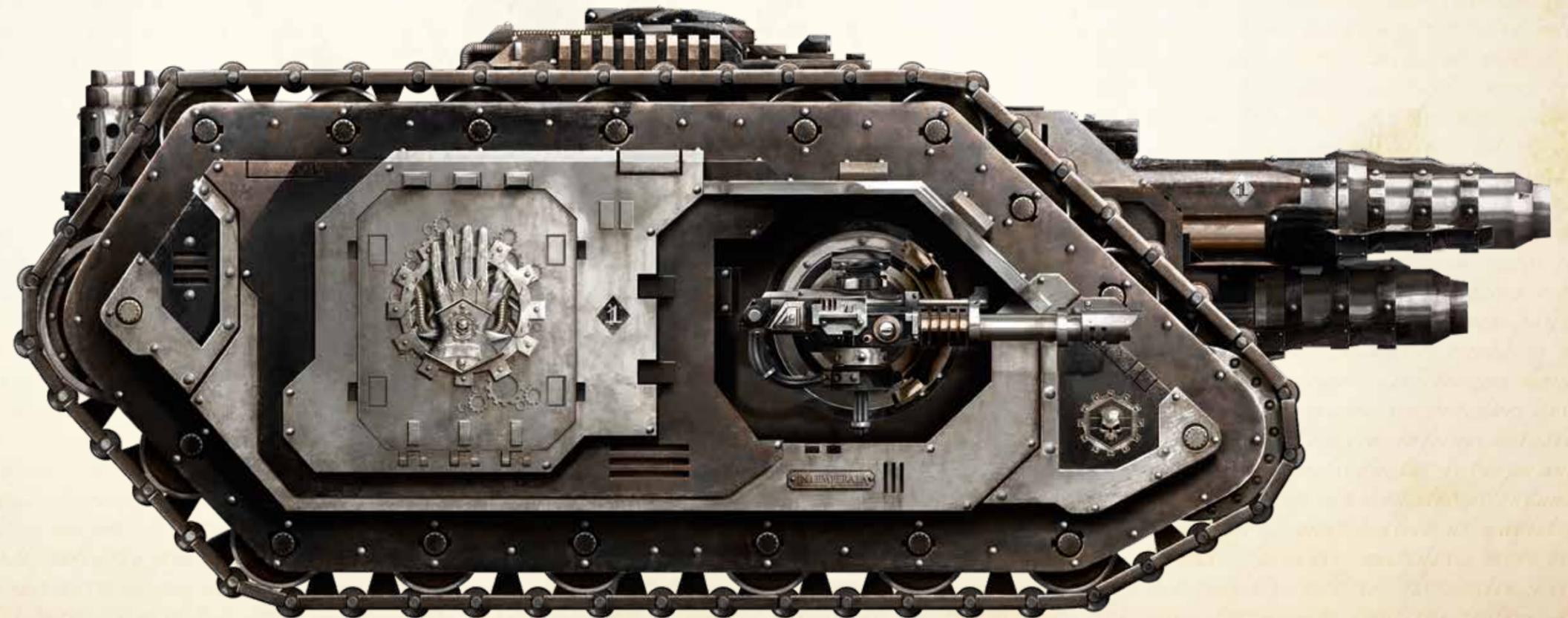
in the first minutes after the treachery of Lorgar, Curze and Perturabo was revealed. Nonetheless, the crews of every type of armoured vehicle in the service of the Iron Hands fought on boldly, many sacrificing themselves at the last so that the surviving infantry could break out of the trap and disperse into the surrounding wilderness to fight on.



Legion Cerberus 'Intemperata': The *Intemperata* was one war machine in an armoured wing of a dozen deployed to the surface of Isstvan V. The engine took part in supporting the Iron Hands' assault and, in so doing, screened an entire Terminator Century of its parent Avernii Clan from the heavy guns of the Death Guard. The *Intemperata's* unit came under punishing and sustained fire from massed batteries of laser destroyers and graviton cannon when the Iron Warriors revealed their true allegiance, all but the *Intemperata* itself reduced to flaming wreckage within minutes. The war engine was last seen engaging the Traitor God-Engine known as the *Dies Irae* in order to draw its fire from Iron Hands infantry squads, a noble sacrifice for which the *Intemperata* will always be honoured.



Predator Executioner: This unnamed Predator battle tank of the 1st Order of the Avernii Clan bears the symbol of a heavy support unit upon its turret, indicating its primary tactical role within the Iron Hands. The vehicle bears several conspicuous icons of the Mechanicum upon its flanks, suggesting that it was bequeathed to the Iron Hands directly from the forges of Mars.



IRON HANDS LEGION ARMOURED ECHELONS

The Iron Hands Legion utilised its many war machines as support for individual companies and orders, but also fielded large units of heavy battle tanks as distinct units. Such formations ranged in size from squadrons of less than a dozen vehicles to company, even order-sized units of scores of vehicles. In the case of super-heavy tanks such as the Fellblade, between three and five vehicles would be considered more than a match for any foe less powerful than a battle Titan. Units of Predators or Land Raiders might consist of forty or more vehicles and be sub-divided in numerous commands.

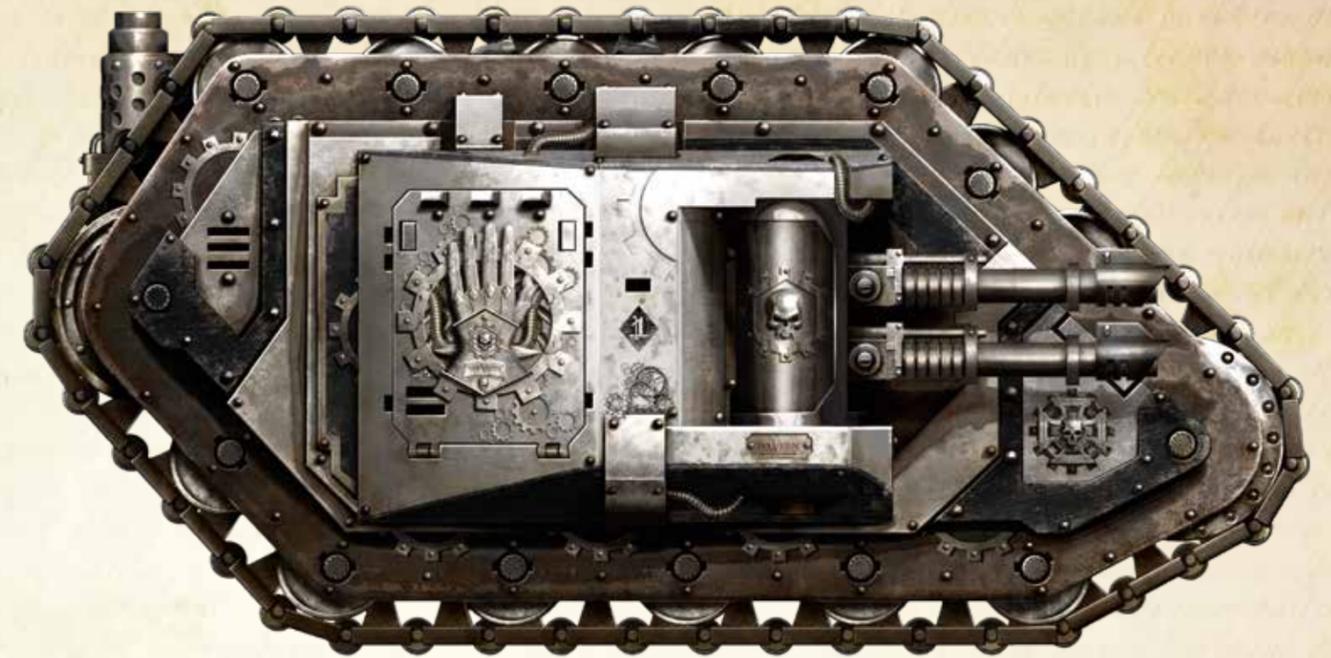
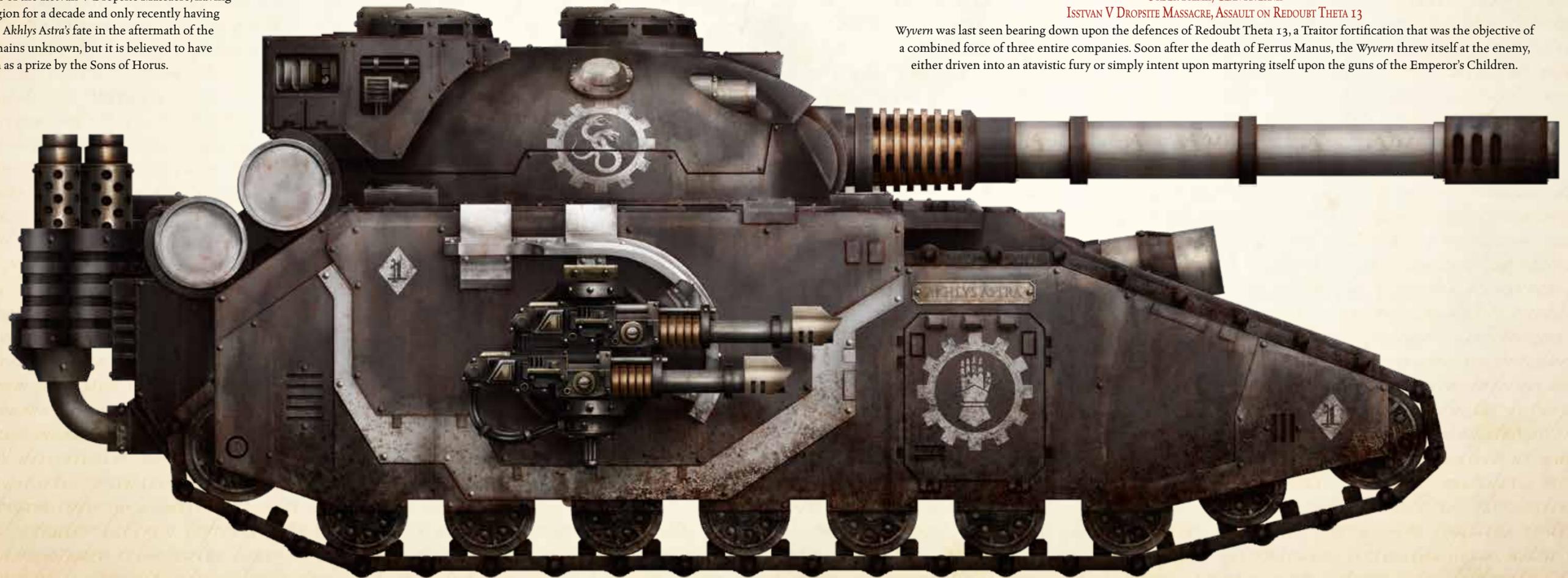
The armoured formations committed to the Istvan V operation, were deployed as part of the second phase of the Iron Hands Legion's attack. Their orders varied enormously, some committed to frontal assault and breakthrough actions, others to wide flanking manoeuvres. Some armoured formations were tasked with engaging those of the Traitor Legions' as the Loyalist Primarchs were well aware that the enemy had had plenty of time to prepare for battle and access to a great many war machines.

Despite their power, almost all of the Iron Hands Legion's armoured formations

are thought to have been destroyed under the guns of the Traitors' overwhelming numbers. The heaviest formations, such as the Fellblade companies serving under Clan Ungavarr and the Land Raider echelons of Clan Avernii, are known to have been engaged by Traitor Titans and to have suffered incredible losses despite valiant attempts to concentrate their efforts against these mighty foes. Of the few eye witness accounts committed to record in the aftermath of the Dropsite Massacre, few fail to make mention of the bold attacks of the Iron Hands armoured echelon against staggering odds.

Legion Fellblade Super-heavy Tank 'Akhlys Astra':

This vehicle was part of the 1st Order of Clan Ungavarr, and was named 'Akhlys Astra' in reference to an ancient legend of Medusa. The *Akhlys Astra* was a relatively untested war machine at the time of the Istvan V Dropsite Massacre, having only served the Legion for a decade and only recently having earned its title. The *Akhlys Astra's* fate in the aftermath of the dropsite battles remains unknown, but it is believed to have had its wreck taken as a prize by the Sons of Horus.



IRON HANDS ARMOURED PROTEUS LAND RAIDER

'WYVERN'

ORDER PRIMII, CLAN AVERNII

ISTVAN V DROPSITE MASSACRE, ASSAULT ON REDOUBT THETA 13

Wyvern was last seen bearing down upon the defences of Redoubt Theta 13, a Traitor fortification that was the objective of a combined force of three entire companies. Soon after the death of Ferrus Manus, the *Wyvern* threw itself at the enemy, either driven into an atavistic fury or simply intent upon martyring itself upon the guns of the Emperor's Children.

IRON HANDS FLEET AUXILLIA

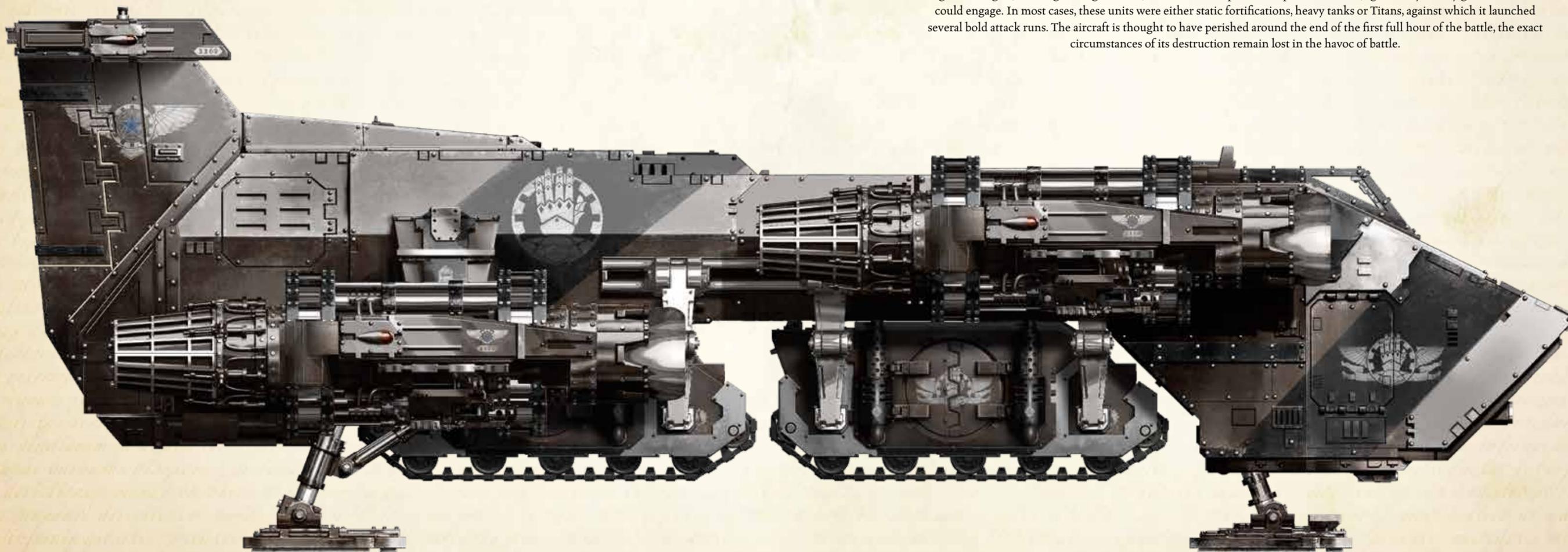
In addition to heavy ground units, the Iron Hands committed every available air and sub-orbital asset at their disposal to the Isstvan V drop. In the case of the *Ferrum's* complement, this primarily consisted of Thunderhawks and Caestus Assault Rams. Such vessels were utilised in a range of different roles, from that of gunship to ferrying troops around the battlefield directly in the face of enemy guns.

The ultimate fate of many of these aircraft is a salutary example of the spirit in which the Legiones Astartes were forged. Even as the full and dire extent of the rebel Legions' treachery became clear, Loyalist Thunderhawks and other similar sized classes of aircraft worked tirelessly and entirely without consideration for their own safety to aid the beleaguered ground forces. Those aircraft that were able to do so launched ceaseless strafing runs against the enemy, while those whose ammunition

was expended attempted to evacuate their brothers to orbit. Others fought desperately to fend off the attacks of enemy aircraft, while a few sacrificed themselves by crashing into the densest concentrations of enemy forces they could identify. Though noble in the extreme, such glorious acts of self sacrifice failed to stave off the death of the Primarch Ferrus Manus and the near total destruction of the ground forces so perfidiously betrayed in the Dropsite Massacre at Isstvan V.



Caestus Assault Ram, Order Octii, Clan Averni: This Caestus Assault Ram conducted numerous attacks against ground targets, utilising its magna-melta, one of the most potent weapons of its class, against any enemy ground unit it could engage. In most cases, these units were either static fortifications, heavy tanks or Titans, against which it launched several bold attack runs. The aircraft is thought to have perished around the end of the first full hour of the battle, the exact circumstances of its destruction remain lost in the havoc of battle.



Thunderhawk Transporter (Legion Forge, war engine designated '1169'): This Thunderhawk Transporter belongs to the Iron Hands Legion Forge. The craft is known to have conducted at least six interface missions during the three hours or so of the battle, each time returning to orbiting warships laden with wounded Legionaries before returning to the surface with reinforcements, every spare square metre of its interior filled with ammunition.

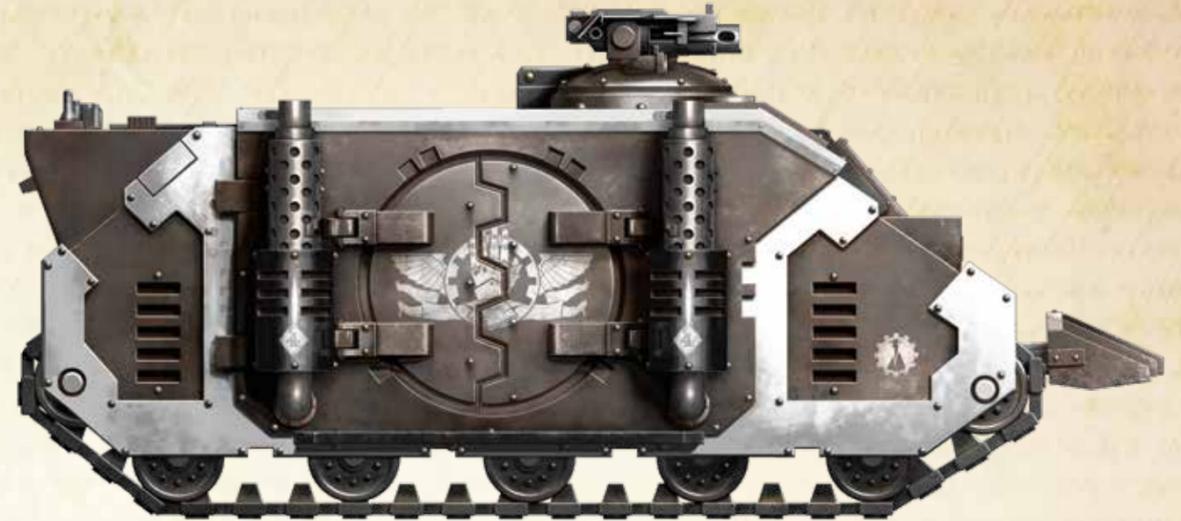
IRON HANDS LEGION RESERVE

The Iron Hands Legion maintained a notably large pool of reserve and second line vehicles of all types and classes. Such vehicles included many more commonly seen in the service of the Imperial Army, or since made obsolete by the discovery and exploitation of new Standard Template Construct imprints. Much of the Legion reserve consisted of war engines either awaiting attachment to a specific Clan, or otherwise intended for use in operations that required more vehicles than the Clan had immediately available.

The crews assigned to operate the vehicles of the Legion reserve for the Istvan V drop operation were drawn from many and varied sources and combined in the confines of the *Ferrum's* hold.

Regardless of the unconventional circumstances of their assignment, it is generally held that all of these crews comported themselves with honour and skill, regardless of their station within the Legion. In one case, a Legion Baneblade commanded

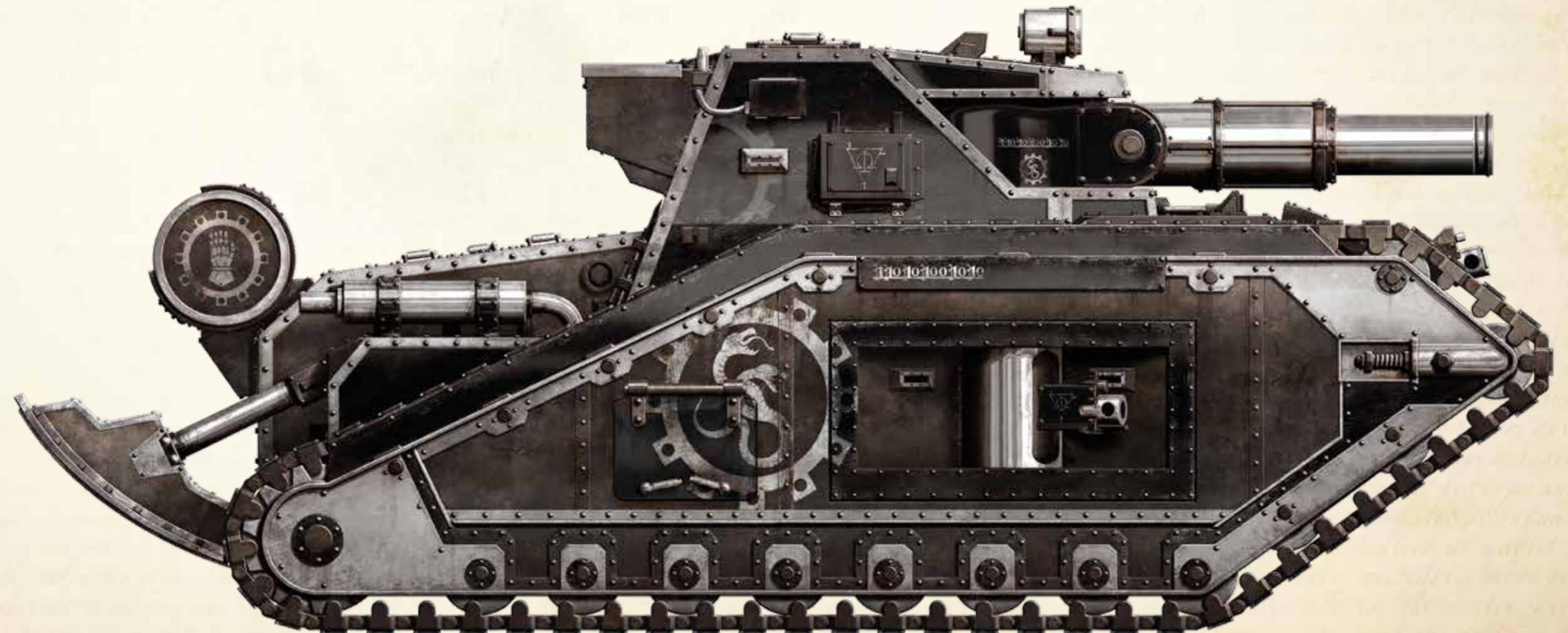
by an Iron Hands sergeant is known to have been struck by a Titan class weapon, its turret breached and its command crew slain. In the heat of battle, the Legion serf manning the forward secondary weapon station assumed control and kept the vehicle fighting for an estimated further eleven minutes before it was overrun by World Eaters infantry and all surviving crew were slain.



Rhino, ceded to Order Quarii, Clan Vurgaan: This Deimos pattern Rhino was withdrawn from the Legion reserve, having been stored aboard the auxiliary fleet tender *Toil of Krater* in anticipation of such need. The vehicle was assigned to the 4th Order of Clan Vurgaan and served with one of that Order's Devastator companies during the initial stages of the Istvan V drop. It is thought that it was destroyed when the Iron Warriors unleashed a fearsome counter battery barrage against the Devastator positions, its exact fate unknowable amongst the unimaginable devastation unleashed that day.



Legion Malcador, ceded to Clan Ungavarr: This Malcador battle tank was withdrawn from the Legion reserve having been stored for well over a century. The binary coding displayed on the vehicle's flanks refers to its position within the reserve's vast storage facilities and, having been assigned to the small Clan Ungavarr detachment of armour aboard the *Ferrum*, the twinned serpent symbol of that Clan has been applied.



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