NEW WEAPON
RAPIER
by TOUMAS (TUBE) LÄHDEOJA

BACKGROUND

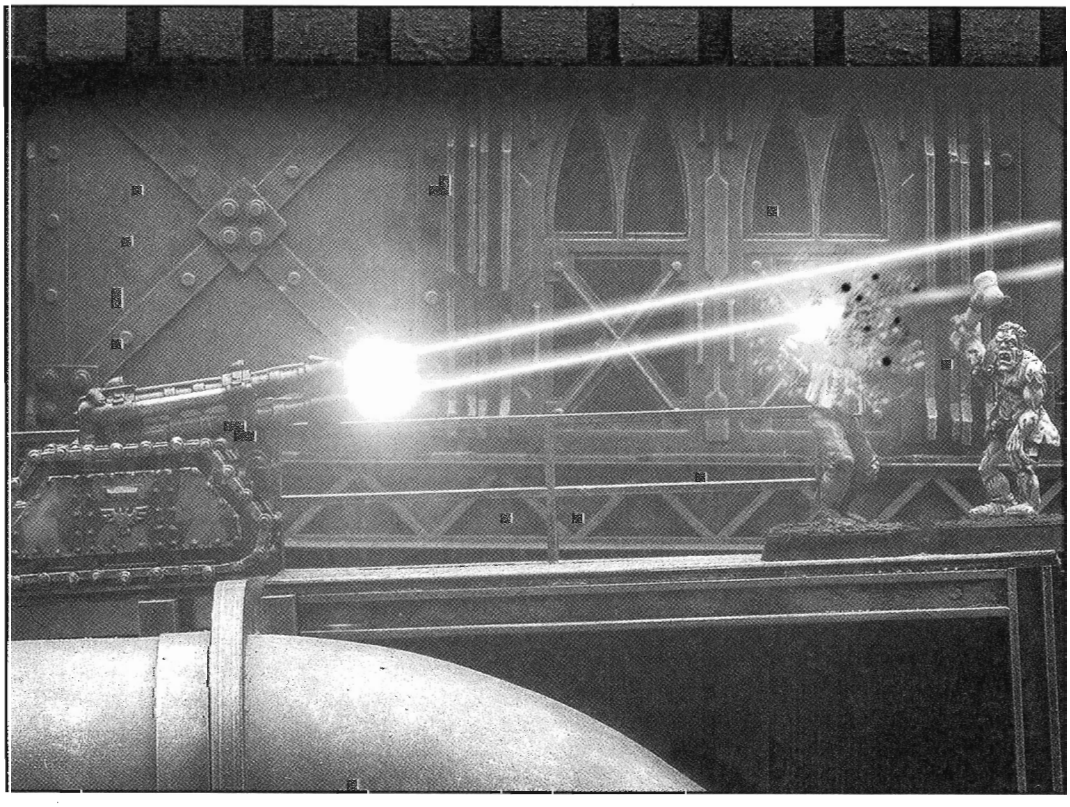
The Rapier Laser Destroyer is an archaic weapon platform widely used by the Imperial Planetary Defence Forces. It is a self propelled anti-tank gun originally designed for defending cities and fortresses, with just enough mobility to move into ambush positions in broken ground or forested areas.

It incorporates a weak machine spirit which takes care of target acquisition and targeting, making it a semi-independent weapon needing operator only for moving and operational mode selection.

The Rapier Cannon is considerably more powerful than the standard issue Imperial Lascannon used in a multitude of functions throughout the Imperial military machine. It's multi-barrel design allows the adjustment of the optimal armour piercing according to the range to the target. The machine spirit adjusts the convergence of the beams according to the range to focus the beams on a single spot at the target, thus achieving beam intensities simply not possible for single barrel weapons.

The price of the power is more maintainance due to the moving barrels, heat build-up due to the proximity of the multiple laser chambers, simple size due to effectively having several heavy weapons on a single platform and power requirements again due to multiple weapons.

The most widely used version is a two chambered gun. It's drawbacks are lessened due to minimal complexity, but it still has enough power to pierce a Leman Russ front armour at about one kilometer range. Alternative somewhat widespread design



The Imperial Guard generally do not make use of the Rapier, due to the unwieldiness of the weapon. The Guard Regiments, when compared to the PDFs, are offensive units with the ability to fight wide front assaults, sometimes advancing a hundred miles in a single day. While the Rapier packs slightly more punch than the lascannon favoured by the Guard, it needs more service facilities, power sources and lacks the anti-grav suspensors and compact power cells utilised by the Guard heavy weapons. All these factors relegate its use to second line formations.

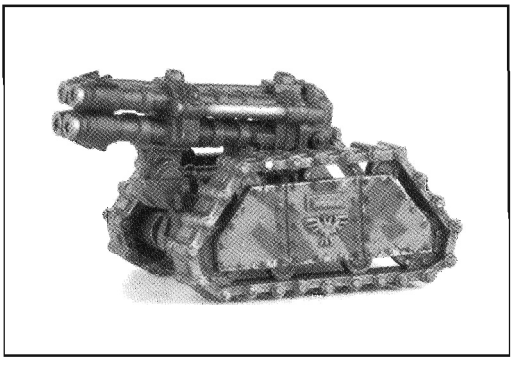
uses four convergent beams, but their maintainance is an almost lost secret and many which fail are never restored to working order again.

RAPIERS IN THE HIVE

The Rapier is a very popular weapon among the Necromunda Defence Force, as a Hive offers numerous positions to place the weapon and abundant power and coolant supply. Should the possible fighting take place inside a Hive, the narrow fire corridors and confined spaces the attacking vehicles are forced to use make the Rapier a very deadly weapon indeed.

When used against raiding ash waste nomads or more seriously, off world invaders, the standard doctrine is to drive the Rapier squadrons in prepared emplacements with power and coolant feeds. If the attackers breach the defence line, the (surviving) Rapiers are driven backwards to new positions in the second defense line. While in an emplacement, the Rapiers are set to defense mode, the machine spirit acquiring targets without a friendly IFF-transponder and firing at will. Against relatively slow targets such as main battle tanks the Rapier has a very high hit and kill probability. It is, however, of very limited use against airborne targets or pure infantry only. It can't really hit an aircraft, much less a space capable vessel. Against infantry targets it will only hit a single man at a time, even if the damage is almost always terminal.

The Rapier is controlled by a remote control device. The standard issue control device has two control sticks, one of which is used to move the platform forwards and backwards,



while the other controls turning. Other more and less sophisticated devices have also seen use, and some of the Rapiers have been reduced to being driven around. The remote control also has switches to set the weapon on various modes which vary from rapid fire to cool down. Some models also incorporate extensive programming possibilities, so that the weapon may be set to fire, change position to a new one, fire again, change position again thus making it less vulnerable to return fire.

The weapon is used in such huge numbers that one goes missing every now and then. A few of those find their way into the Undehive and into the possession of the gangs. Sometimes only the weapon system is acquired by a gang, and either mounted as a fixed emplacement or on a makeshift tracks, wheels or some more exotic carriage.

RAPIERS AND A GANG

The conditions of the Underhive are far from the ones found in the Hive City above. While power is relatively abundant, coolant lines are virtually nonexistent and the shape of warfare quite different. Instead of shooting at massed columns on an open plain at kilometer ranges, the vicious fights between the gangs take place in cramped maze of tunnels, pipelines and industrial structures and the targets are either human, or some mutated monstrosities crawling from the Hive Bottom.

Overheating and the somewhat slow targeting response of the Rapier make it of limited use in the Underhive, but a hit from a Rapier will almost without exception take a ganger down. It is an item of high prestige value, both displaying the wealth of the gang and the connections and ingenuity required to acquire such a rarity.

The Rapiers used by the gangs are seldom in pristine condition, and even more rarely have all the normal safeguards and automatic systems intact. Usually automatic heat monitoring systems are disabled, for in the Underhive often the rate of fire is more important than keeping the weapon functional.

The gangs make use of the cannon both in defending their home territory, and on offense. A village, hole or fortress defended by the laser destroyer is a fearful prospect for an attacker, as on an open ground its machine spirit is often able to find its mark. In a raid a Rapier is of less use, as it cannot move and fire at the same time. Nevertheless it is often brought to the front lines by the owners, if for nothing else but the sheer intimidation value of an anti-tank weapon!

RULES

There can only ever be one Rapier owned by a gang. A Rapier cannot be bought at the beginning of a campaign, but must be acquired over the course of a campaign. A starting gang cannot buy a Rapier.

ACQUIRING A RAPIER: In the Underhive Rapiers are uncommon but not unknown. Salvaged, surplus or stolen weapons do come up for sale on the Black Market via arms traders and the Merchant Guild. Unscrupulous Planetary Defence Force commanders are not above lining their own pockets by selling off their units equipment. Rapiers can be bought at the trading post like other heavy weapons.

Because a Rapier is a one off items they come at a premium price. They have a random price like a Rare item, but do not count as Rare.

A Rapier costs 350 + 2D6 x 10 credits.

AMMO ROLLS: As the Rapier does not roll to hit as such, ammo rolls are handled in a bit different way than usually. If the targets dodge roll comes up as one, the Rapier must make an ammo roll, which is passed on a 4+.

Of the Rapier fails its ammo roll the Isotropic Fuel rod used to power it is lost (or more like used up). The Rapier cannot be used in future games until the gang acquires a new one (or digs one up from its stash).

ATTACKING THE RAPIER: The Rapier can be shot at or attacked in close combat. In close combat all attacks hit automatically, but it can be only attacked if there are no other models in base to base contact with the attacker. The Rapier has Toughness of 7, Armour Save of 4+ and 2 wounds. After taking one wound the Rapier must roll on the Malfunction chart at the start of every of its turns.

CONTROLLER: The Rapier must be controlled by a Heavy (who has the remote control device). Alternatively a Heavy in base to base contact with the Rapier can control it. An enemy Heavy in base to base contact with the Rapier must roll 5+ to figure out the proper controls and make the weapon do his bidding. Technically the remote control device has an unlimited range, but due to the obstacles and junk littering the Underhive, the controlling heavy must pass a Ld test to be able to move the Rapier if he does not have line of sight to it. Changing modes can be done without LOS with no difficulty. When controlling (driving, changing mode or programming) the Rapier the heavy may make a normal move, but may not do anything else (such as shoot, run or hide).

IFF TALISMANS: Members of the gang owning a Rapier are given Identify Friend or Foe Talismans, which are said to guard them from the Rapiers wrath. The existence and

Hanging down from the ceiling in the bar room of Black Rose flop house in Little Light is a spider shell. It is somewhat of an attraction, a huge monstrosity as it is.The story was that it had crawled from the Sump and somehow found it's way all the way up to the Underhive, feasting on both gangers and green hivers on the way. It had ravaged the area for weeks, even the combined efforts of the local gangs had only driven it off, not killed it. The bounty grew to proportions unheard of, but no-one could bring the beast down. Until one day a stranger, a burly Goliath by the looks, came to collect. He drove a sand crawler, and slumped on its carriage was the spider.

It is said that single hole in its side, a hole the size of a barrel lid through the foot thick chitin was made by a Rapier.

purpose of such talismans is well known in the Underhive tales, so an enemy may try to steal one of these from a downed ganger. Each time a ganger is taken Out of Action, leave a suitable marker to signify the corpse. An enemy may search the downed warrior for the Talisman, an initiative test being required to find and identify the talisman. While searching the warrior may do nothing else, but is not likely be shot at by the Rapier as it reads the downed warriors IFF to belong to the searcher as well (see rules for shooting). Once a model has looted an IFF Talisman, it counts as being one of the gang the Rapier belongs to for purposes of being shot at by it.

MOVEMENT

The Rapier is driven around in much the same fashion as radio controlled toys of Ancient Terra. The platform may move 4" per turn and turn up to 45 degrees during its move. There must be enough room on the tabletop for the Rapier model to physically fit through doors or other confined areas of the hive. The Rapier must fit completely onto a ledge, driving it with part of the other track hanging over nothing would only invite disaster. The Rapier cannot, obviously, climb ladders or stairs, but can be moved between levels by a lift or on a ramp.

MODUS OPERANDII

Instead of driving the Rapier, the controller may set it on one of the following automatic modes of operation. In other words the Rapier can either move *or* carry out one of these activities.

FIRE: If there are targets in its fire arc the Rapier will take one shot per turn. See rules for shooting later. If the Rapier has no eligible targets, this counts as Holding.

RAPID FIRE: As Fire, but the cannon will fire twice per round. The drawback is that the cannon will overheat in this mode without the coolant feeds available in prepared emplacements. See rules for overheating and heat points.

OVERWATCH: The Rapier follows the usual rules for Overwatch and Fire modes. Models appearing to or disappearing from view get an additional +1 to the initiative test for diving out of harms way. The +1 for possible hard cover applies if the target either emerges or disappears behind hard cover.

HOLD: The Rapier does nothing. The purpose of this is to cool down the barrels.

PROGRAMMING

Instead of driving or shooting the Rapier, the controller can program the Rapier to carry out activities in a sequence. During the controller's movement phase simply write down the modes in order on a piece of paper. The Rapier will be in the first mode for the current turn, then in the second mode written for the second turn etc. The operator can cancel the programming at the beginning of any of his turns and re-program the Rapier if he wishes. If not programmed, or if the program ends, the Rapier will stay on the mode last used, or in case of a program, the last mode of the program. Note that the Underhive versions of the Rapiers cannot be programmed to move, as there are far too many obstacles and dangerous falls for programmed movement.

SHOOTING

The Rapier has a narrow 45 degree fire arc (22.5 degrees to both sides from a line directly in front of it). When on fire or rapid fire mode the machine spirit will first target the closest model in its fire arc. If the closest model wears an IFF Talisman, roll a die. On a 2+ the Rapier will target the next closest model (or no-one, should there be no others in the fire arc). Continue rolling in this fashion until either an enemy is targeted or an IFF Talisman fails. For the purposes of fights in the cramped underhive of Necromunda the Rapier has an unlimited range.

Once locked on the Rapier will hit automatically. The target may, however, try to dive out of the way, as establishing the lock-on will take a while and an alert Underhiver might notice the vengeful machine aiming at him. Diving out of the way requires an initiative test – rolling equal or less than initiative on a d6. A roll of 6 always fails. Being in hard cover (but not soft, as anything classed as soft cover offers very little protection against a Rapier) gives the model a bonus of +1 to their initiative. If the model succesfully dives out of harms way it counts as being pinned just as if hit by any other weapon.

If the Rapier hits, it automatically does d6 wounds to the target with no saves for normal armour allowed. Unmodifiable saves offered by power fields or skills may be taken. Any model reduced to zero wounds by a Rapier is automatically taken Out of Action (it's NOT just a flesh wound...). In addition, the devastation caused by a hit from a dedicated anti-tank weapon is quite unnerving – any fighters testing for broken nerve due to ganger going out of action after a hit from a Rapier suffer an additional –1 to Ld.

In rapid fire mode the Rapier will target a second target if the first one was disabled (ie. taken Out of Action). If the first target successfully dives out of the way or otherwise miraculously survives, the Rapier will fire at the same target again.

Only techno skills affect the performance of a Rapier. A Rapier counts as being a heavy weapon for purposes of allocating equipment and skill effects. Due to the advanced targeting system of the Rapier and general care given to it by the owning gang stray shot rules and weapon explosions do not apply to the weapon.

Should you need normal weapon stats for the Rapier (for some scenario involving tanks or structures, for which the rules above do not apply, or very long open fire corridors) it has range of 100", strength 10, does 2d10 wounds and has –6 armour save modifier.

OVERHEATING & MALFUNCTION

As mentioned above, the Rapier on Rapid Fire builds up heat. Normally the heat build-up is controlled by thermal fuses, but in the Underhive these are usually disabled or simply broken.

Every turn used in Rapid Fire mode accumulates one heat point. Every turn spent holding removes one heat point. On normal fire mode or if moving, no heat is dissipated.

If the Rapier has one or more heat points at the start of its turn, roll a D6. If the score is equal to or less than the number of heat points, a malfunction has occurred. Roll 2D6, adding any heat points accumulated to the roll and consult the table below.

2-4 HEAT SHUTDOWN.

The machine spirit overheats, a power coupling loses conductivity or the laser chambers lose coherence. The net effect is to render the Rapier to hold mode until all the accumulated heat points have dissipated.

5 THERMAL NOISE.

Thermal noise in the machine spirit make it work unreliably, making it confuse friend and foe. The IFF Talismans will only work on 4+ instead of 2+ for the rest of the game.

6-7 OVERHEATING

Overheating of the wide-spectrum target acquisition machine spirit eye leads to unreliable lock-ons. Instead of hitting automatically the controlling player has to roll 4+ to achieve a lock-on.

8 WARPED OPTICS

Beam coherence and convergence systems are damaged by the heat, warping the delicate machinery and magno-optics. The laser loses much of its coherence and power, but spreads to a wider area. For the rest of the game follow the normal targeting procedure for a Rapier, but instead of automatic wounds it counts as having strength 4, does one wound with save modifier of –1 and has 1.5" blast marker (which is centered on the targeted model).

9 BURNOUT!

The laser chamber is burnt out by the intense heat. The Rapier is useless for the rest of the game, but will be repaired for the next one.

10+ MELTDOWN!

The energy stored in the laser chamber and power cells is released as a critical control circuit melts. The Rapier explodes in a blast of superheated chemicals and flying shrapnel. The Rapier is destroyed (for good) and any model within 2" takes a S5 hit (with normal shooting rules applying, including pinning).

Because the Rapier is a highly prized piece of equipment and it can be dragged off the scene of an encounter by gangers or juves, different rules for the Post-Battle sequence apply. If the Heavy is killed or captured (in the serious injury chart), the Rapier is NOT lost if the owning gang won the fight. If the owning gang lost the battle, follow the normal rules for death of a ganger and captured fighters.