

Combat and Transporter Drones

Now that the Warlord crew have finally got themselves a whizzo 3D constructor robot they are understandably keen to put it to work making all those vehicles and drones that we have been waiting for since the game came out. This is jolly good news for anyone – like me – who has been itching to favour their Boromites with a Hauler or their Isorians with a Mahran Vesh combat drone or Tograh transporter.

These are pretty big 'vehicle' sized machines, and our loyal whizz-bot is already churning out the necessary pieces without a murmur of complaint so far at least. Further projects planned for our new toy include variant pieces for many of the existing models. This brings us to the foothills of this very article. When I put together the Freeborn list I had one particular Freeborn House in mind: that of the Oszoni. However, at the same time it was acknowledged that there were any number of other Houses, some similar to House Oszon and others quite different, scattered across Antarean space; or at least those portions of it that contain human worlds in some density. So, the Oszoni are currently serving as a template, even though their feral auxiliaries are actually specific to them: the Mhagris.

The Freeborn list in its current form allows the use of Concord combat and transporter drones in the shape of the M4 and T7

plastic kits. One of the things we shall be doing is making a series of further weapon options for these vehicles in the hands of the Freeborn. We have already made a specific variant in the form of the Solar Skimmer command vehicle, but this is quite a major conversion on the part of the Freeborn (and our sculptor!). A far simpler option is to swap the typical Concord armaments for the more commonly used mag weapons such as mag light supports, mag cannons and twin mag light supports.

As the V2 versions of the Antares online army lists are almost ready, I thought I'd incorporate these options into the Freeborn list, and introduce some new variants of the standard T7 into the Concord list in anticipation of these developments. At the same time it made sense to revisit the capabilities and role of the Isorian Tograh transporter and Algoryn Defiant. The V2 lists incorporate all the unit types introduced for the game so far, including all the new units in the Chryseis Shard supplement. There are also some points value tweaks and - in the case of the transport vehicles described – some adjustments to the selectors that make these more practical to field in smaller games. All this is to come. In the meantime, let's take a closer look at the role of those big drones in Freeborn forces.



FREEBORN COMBAT AND TRANSPORTER DRONES

Freeborn houses trade military hardware throughout Antarean space. Much of this equipment is recovered from conflict zones as damaged or abandoned, before being rebuilt or substantially modified ready to be traded. Neither the Concord nor Isorians trade their weaponry to third parties directly. Only worlds that have opened their nano-networks to Concord or Isorian IMTel systems would be able to make practical use of such weaponry, and those worlds would fall within the orbit of the Concord or Senatex. As a consequence, the Freeborn have a ready market amongst worlds that have need of advanced weaponry, but whose populations wish to retain their independence.

The standard medium combat drone that serves the Concord forces is the M4 – 'M' for medium and '4' because it is the fourth version to be produced. M1 through 3 are no longer manufactured by the Concord Combined Command constructor shards, at least as far as is known, but examples turn up sometimes in modified form amongst armaments traded by the Freeborn. Some are still used by independent

worlds whose forces acquired them in the past. The tactical combat and transport version of the same drone is the T7 – 'T' for transporter and '7' because it is the seventh design type. As with earlier versions of the M4 combat drone T1 through 6 are no longer produced. The T1 is based on the old M1 format, the T2 to 3 on the M2, the T4 to 5 on the M3, and T6 and 7 on the M4. T6's share the same chassis-rail format with the current T7 but utilise an earlier type of carrier capsule. All of these variants are found amongst independent worlds, together with modified and rebuilt examples, and are traded by and between Freeborn Houses.

Some Freeborn Houses use replicator facilities to make their own combat drones, either for their use or for trade. These can be copies of other machines – often Concord or Isorian designs – or entirely new designs. The Freeborn House Oszon trades extensively within the Determinate but primarily trades Concord designed machines or copies of these. Other Freeborn Houses will favour Isorian or other designs, depending on what they have ready access to or what types are most in demand. Not all customers are capable of deploying drone machines of such sophistication, favouring crewed weapon systems instead.



Freeborn forces supported by a Solar Command Skimmer.

FREEBORN TRANSPORTER DRONE T7 TYPE

This is a Freeborn manufactured or refurbished C3 Transporter Drone that conforms to the standard Concord design pattern. It is generally known as a T7 'type' because that is what it otherwise resembles. The T7 type does vary a little in detailed design even as constructed by the C3, and this even more the case with machines made by the Freeborn. None-the-less customers throughout the nexus understand what is meant by a T7 type or Concord standard Transporter Drone.

Freeborn manufactured or refurbished drones lack the extremely sophisticated machine-intelligence functioning that distinguishes both Concord and Senatex drone machines. This is less of a technical limitation than a consequence of functioning within a less pervasive IMTel environment. However, for those customers with the expertise to utilise IMTel type nano-networks, drones can be upgraded to Concord equivalent specification allowing them to operate more effectively as fully independent drones.

Transporter drones are protected by a nano-composite skin that acts as a carrier field for a reactive kinetic shield. These shields are very effective when it comes to protecting machines or resilient constructions. However, they don't work very well when it comes to protecting humans or other living creatures, which are generally unable to withstand the forces generated. This doesn't matter if the drone is transporting non-living materials, supplies, or other drones, but it is not entirely safe for transporting a living crew. The transport pod is therefore downgraded for human transport, and is protected by a composite shell and fixed emission armour. The pod's shell is sufficient to protect the crew against most light weapon fire, whilst the armoured envelope will disperse heavier munitions by converting energy to a mixture of light, heat and sink-mass which can be more easily absorbed by the drone.

Freeborn-built vehicles often dispense with kinetic shielding altogether and substitute an overall fixed-emission hyperlight envelope. This is a less sophisticated solution and one that is both easier to replicate and maintain in service. This means it is often favoured by customers looking for a practical but cheaper machine. Such variants don't offer as much protection, but can be upgraded with kinetic generators where necessary, so there is little practical disadvantage. Even Concord C3 transporters are sometimes built with this lower spec of armour where they are intended to perform only light duties, for example as base transports, run-arounds or general purpose cargo carriers. Such lightly armoured version of the T7 are known as General Purpose Transporter Drones.

Whilst the 'gold standard' weaponry of Antarean space is undoubtedly various kinds of plasma gun, there are few



military forces able to equip entire armies with these costly and temperamental weapons. Plasma weapons require constant maintenance if they are to continue to function. C3 and Isorian weapons are sharded to the combat squad that carries them, and are integrated into the unit's combat shard via complex nano-systems that also monitor their effectiveness. Most independent Antarean forces, including those of relatively large condominiums such as the Algoryn Prosperate, reserve plasma weaponry for elite units, bodyguards, and troops allocated to special duties.

When it comes to providing transporter drones with weapons this same principal holds true. The most common armament carried by Freeborn-built transporters is the Mag Light Support, a rapid firing high-density magnetic weapon ideally suited to an infantry support role and self-defence. A more aggressive option is to double the firepower in the form of a 'Twin' Mag Light Support, although such massive capability is rarely needed when the drone is used in a purely transport role. Another even more powerful weapon is the Mag Cannon, which can just about be squeezed into the small space allocated to the transporter's turret. This effectively turns the transporter drone into a combat drone with transport capacity. This combination is especially suited to the close-support tactics of some military forces, especially when faced by very well armoured opponents.

Although almost any type of support weapon or similar sized weapon can be fitted into a T7 type drone with some modification, not all transporters are armed at all. Machines that are designed to function beyond the immediate combat zone might lack armament altogether. Others substitute the usual weapon mount for sensor modules of one kind or another. This reflects the tremendous adaptability of the standard design, as well as its potential for further development.

Vehicle	Ag	Acc	Str	Res	Init	Co	Special
Freeborn T7 series General Purpose Transporter Drone	5	5	1	11	7	7	MOD2, Transport 10, Large

Vehicle Type: General Purpose Transporter Drone.

Propulsion: Suspensored vehicle with reaction thrusters.

Armament: Can be equipped with a wide variety of armaments or sensor modules.

Protection: Fixed-emission armour encompassing drone and transport pod. Optional kinetic armour upgrade available. Batter Drone and Shield Drones can be assigned to the drone shard.

Special Rules: Vehicle, Transport 10, MOD2, Large, Self-Repair (optional), Enhanced Machine Intelligence (optional).