

# HORIZON WARS

SCIENCE-FICTION COMBINED-ARMS WARGAMING

## METAFORMERS

The concept of a mech able to reform itself into a different battlefield role is almost as old as the idea of mechs themselves. The first British designers of fully battle-capable mechs dismissed such functionality very early in the conceptual stages, partly due to the inherent structural weaknesses it would have forced into the frame structure, but mainly due to the fact that it was “bloody stupid”.

However, once mech capability was established in battlefield doctrine, other nations and cultures were less constrained by British preconceptions and willingly engaged with the necessary compromises. Far eastern nations were only drawn into the chaos of the Burning late into the conflict, giving their national military-industrial complexes far more time to pursue their own interpretations of emerging principles. Both China and South Korea pursued alternate-form mechs (North Korea claimed to have done so, but their alleged supermech apparently collapsed during testing). But the pre-eminent masters of the style were the Japanese.

Their mech designs were among the most sophisticated and flexible of the early models. They proved very poor-performing in extended operations or separated from close logistical and engineering support. However, when given the right support and the luxury of near-constant maintenance, they were amongst the most effective and deadly of the world's earliest mech forces.

For copyright reasons, transforming mechs were known as "metaforms". The utility of metaforms was such that it was, to be fair, really impossible to say that a metaform was a "mech that could change into something else". They were multi-formed elements: as much tanks that turned into mechs or aircraft that turned into tanks as much as they were mechs that turned into something else.

### **Including a Metaformer in your Battles**

Any era can include mechs with metaforms, except for battles set during Operation PLANTAGENET.

### **Metaform (upgrade)**

*Metaform* is an upgrade available to a mech or to an aircraft. For the purposes of clarity, any mech or aircraft with the metaform upgrade is referred to as a "metaformer".

A metaformer may have a number of metaforms equal to its P, excluding the baseform (the starting form of the mech or aircraft). So a P1 metaformer may have a maximum of one metaform. A P3 metaformer may have up to three metaforms.

A metaform may be any mech, conventional element or aircraft of the same P as the mech. However, a metaformer may not have a metaform that is the same type as its baseform. So a mech can't have a different mech as a metaform.

The first metaform costs the baseform 1 stat point. The second costs 2, etc. In addition, each metaform must be paid for separately. So a P3 mech with a P3 heavy cavalry metaform, which we'll call Triton, will

cost 3 points for the mech and another 3 points for the metaform

A metaform may be any of the following elements that are the same P as the baseform:

Mech (P1+)  
Aircraft (P1+)  
Heavy Cavalry (P3)  
Armoured Artillery (P3)  
Light Cavalry (P2)  
Heavy Infantry (P2)  
Light Artillery (P2)  
Recon (P2)  
Mobile Infantry (P1)

#### **Design Note**

Heavy Infantry and, to an extent, mobile infantry represent a metaformer that can break up into several smaller parts that can operate in an infantry role.

In an army list, the metaformer must be shown with all of its baseform and metaform statlines together, clearly indicated as a single element.

Metaforms never count towards the number of conventional elements in a Battle Group, and metaforms never benefit from points-cost discounts due to a conventional CHQ. However, CR may be spent on upgrades to a conventional element metaform. The metaform counts as being a separate type to any other similar conventional element for the purposes of allocating CR. So Triton's P3 Hvy Cav metaform may have CR spent on it without CR needing to also be spent on other Hvy Cav elements in the same BG, and vice versa.

A metaformer with an aircraft baseform may not be a CHQ, regardless of the form in which it begins a battle. However, a metaformer with an aircraft baseform may be part of a reserve or advance force that normally excludes aircraft of its type, as long as it begins the battle in its non-aircraft metaform.

Metaformers gain the same special rules that would normally apply to an element of their type when they are in the relevant metaform. So Triton will gain the special rules Vanguard and Vehicle when in its heavy cavalry metaform, but will not have those rules when it is in its mech form. So if Triton takes damage in its heavy cavalry form, it must change to its mech metaform before it can perform Recover actions.

#### **Metaforming**

To move from one form to another is called "metaforming" and it is a special action that can also be performed as a reaction. Simply remove the token as normal and replace the model of one form with a model representing the new form.

#### **Metaformers and Miniatures**

It is possible to simply represent each form of a metaformer with a different model from your regular collection. But it is a far more to either use models that are designed to represent the two versions of a single unit (such as the Northern Lynx from Dream Pod 9, or the Robotech Valkyrie) or to take two copies of a single model and to convert one to be a different form of the other. The EM4 heavy mech is especially good for converting, but a brave or accomplished hobbyist might try to cut apart a tank or other miniature to create a mech version.

Players are encouraged to makes sure that the various forms of their metaformer look like each other!

### Metaformers and Damage

When a metaformer takes damage, it has a single damage track that applies to all of its metaforms. In addition, when an active stat is reduced or increased, this is applied to the same stat for all its forms.

The normal effects of damage on active stats apply only to the current form of the metaformer. However, if the A stat of a metaform drops to 0 or if any other active stat drops to a negative value, that metaform is no longer available to the metaformer and cannot be used again in the current battle, even if Recover actions would raise the stat back to a positive state.

### Metaformers in Adventures

A metaformer provides only as much Momentum as the Presence of its baseform.

## EXAMPLE METAFORMERS

### Hyundai “Tripton” Mk3 MetaMech, Codename METATRON

	<b>P</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Special Rules</b>
Mech form	3	3	3	5	5	Metaform (1)
Tank form	3	4	5	5	1	Rapid, Vanguard, Vehicle
Aircraft form	3	3+5	6	3	2	Vertical thrusters

Metatron was part of the first wave of metaformers deployed by Japan to Okinawa in response to Chinese naval aggression in the region. Concealed as rapid, if lumbering, tanks, the squadron proved no deterrent to an opportunistic Chinese landing on an isolated island in the archipelago. The tanks re-formed as aircraft that rapidly deployed to confront the invasion, and overwhelmed the attackers in their mech form, driving them back to their ships and then pursuing them closely in aircraft form. It looked like a categorical endorsement for metaformers, but the single squadron had consumed a vast development/manufacturing budget and subsequent Japanese metaformers were limited to light mechs and aircraft with a single metaform.

### Combinatronics “Bluestreak” MultiMech

	<b>P</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Special Rules</b>
Mech form	2	7	2	2	1	Metaform (1), Drop Harness
Heavy Infantry form	2	3	4	3	3	Dig In, Infantry

The US Bluestreak programme sought to use their established heavy infantry development programme to close the capability gap they suffered as mechs became a dominant battlefield technology. The system allowed a five-person heavy infantry fire team to link their hardsuits into a nimble and fast-moving mech. The squad leader was mounted as the torso and acted as pilot, whilst the other team members were locked into their suits. Tactically the development was a huge success: the Bluestreak in its mech form could drop into a battlespace and move with exceptional speed to vital locations before breaking into its heavy infantry form to occupy and fortify their position. However, the experience of fireteam members in the “limbs” was so disorientating that volunteers were exceedingly hard to come by, leading to a limited deployment of the system in combat.