



Aerospace fighters predate the BattleMech, having been introduced when Terran Alliance military commanders needed a means to cover their landing parties as they descended on a wayward colony from space. While orbital craft provided sufficient escort for transport shuttles, their inability to enter the atmosphere and effectively fight their air-breathing conventional fighter siblings necessitated the development of dual-role aerospace fighters, craft that have outperformed even their original designer's wildest hopes.

While sometimes treated as an afterthought, fighters still play a vital role in any battle plan. Not only as more powerful and accurate artillery when performing ground-support operations, they also fill a guardian role against enemy fighters attempting to do the support their own troops. A force attempting to exploit a weak point can be beaten back with timely fighter support from squadrons that can traverse battlefields in mere seconds. Sometimes, victory can be secured without a shot when one side fields fighter support and the other side does not.

Critics will point out that an air combat force can neither take nor hold planetary ground—only boots on the ground can. While this is true, a well-trained and well-equipped air combat force often acts as a significant force-multiplier to a friendly ground unit, softening up (if not outright destroying) enemy units before the two armies on the ground ever make contact.

Nearly every BattleMech regiment contains several squadrons of aerospace fighters for various duties including intercepting enemy transports, deep-space escort, and ground support. Their pilots have held onto a degree of honor and nobility rivaled only by their ground-based cousins, the BattleMechs. In fact, in House Davion, there was once a major rivalry between the two arms of the military when people began idolizing the aerospace pilots over the MechWarriors.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Victor, previous Technical Readouts have not mentioned the upgraded versions of aerospace fighters that have come out in the past twenty years. So for the sake of ease, instead of going back and attempting to distribute errata and amend those files, I have instead included the updated versions in a small section called "Upgrades." I have also included in this section the *Samurai*, a fighter that has been overlooked for some time. —Focht]

