MAD Cannon

The Magnetically Accelerated Deployment (MAD) Cannon is a troop movement option designed to deliver and supply warriors accurately to a planetary area. Some of these cannons are designed to deploy entire battalions at a time. "MAD Cannon" is a catch-all term for a group of very similar ground-based and voidship cannons of this nature, great or small. Category 1 MAN Cannons are centered around one infantryman and his equipment, Cat 5 MAN Cannons are able to launch over one-hundred individuals whole sale and even large vehicles.

Description

The idea of the MAN Cannon is fairly simple. Get a warrior on the ground quickly and without giving the enemy more than the minimal chance to impede them on the way. The execution of such is a little more complicated. Using a hybrid of electromagnetic accelerators and chemical rockets the sheer amount of energy required to launch an organism over large distances is spaced out to prevent them simply being crushed to death on launch, while at the same time braking and steering need to be considered.

On the inside a MAD Cannon may resemble a conventional smoothbore mass-driver of any design, as well as mechanisms for loading, aiming, and firing. However, its sheer diameter and relatively short length often will often give away its designed purpose. MAD cannons are most often visible on the aft section of specialized troop ships or in large strategic ground installations.

Operation

While MAD cannons vary enormously in size, their operation remains relatively the same. From one infantryman in a pod in the barrel, to five, to one hundred fire at once, they are all pushed out of the barrel at relatively low speed compared to most magnetically accelerated objects from such weapons. PA, vehicles, even heavy tanks and aircraft can be deployed in this manner from the larger categories of MAD cannons.

Almost all objects intended for deployment are placed either inside a specialized pod, or into a crash cage of some sort. The typical Infantry pod is designed to be steered during its terminal dive, allowing troops to select where they want to land relatively accurately compared to conventional means. Using a mixture of propulsion systems and flexible shield profiles these pods can modify their flight profile, increase or exceed their terminal velocity and air brake in time to hit the ground safely. The final braking retro-burn before impact is often dubbed the "Suicide Burn".[1]

Because MAD cannons are designed to fire their payloads extremely rapidly it's expected that troops will be able to land in very tight proximity if they so wish. Expect these troops to be fully combat capable within seconds if not as they land. Landing on single enemies is generally encouraged if they're isolated. Expect these troops to fight especially hard, they have no guaranteed ticket back to safety once they're deployed.

Tanks and other vehicles strapped inside crash cages will be able to land, right themselves if need-be

and detach themselves from the cage in under thirty seconds commonly.

Categories

Cat 1 "Man-sized"

Cat 1 MAN cannons are relatively easy to transport and set up, and mobile examples are often seen in battalion motorpools if such tactics are required. These cannons only fire one single pod per charge, but can be hooked up to capacitors and autoloaders to fire waves of troops in quick barrages, achieving a similar effect to larger cannons.

These cannons are also the common to use in resupply ops, with pods filled with necessary supplies loaded and accelerated towards the supply request. Because these pods bear no volatile organic cargo, their launches and landings are often much more violent, and can cause significant damage to any object it lands on. Such violence helps protect the pod from enemy interception.

Cat 2 "Squad-sized"

This term applies to any cannon capable of firing multiple pods at once, from two to a small platoon. These pods are rarely mobile, but can sometimes be found on trains and other large moving vehicles. These cannons supply more versatility to troops using them, and allow for greater density and volume of troops deployed.

Light vehicles such as patrol vehicles, terradrones, and light aircraft and aerodrones can be deployed via many of these cannons.

Cat 3 "Mob-sized"

This category usually specifies a cannon able to launch a small battle company in a single discharge, it is also able to deploy heavy armored vehicles and medium aircraft if they can fit. Very few mobile examples except on some blockade runners used to deliver high priority items to besieged planets and on some land carriers as specialist troop deployment.

Cat 4 "Kitchensink"

Cat 4 MAD cannons are the largest of their kind available, requiring significant resources to build and maintain. They are most commonly seen equipped to voidships and used from orbit, the mobile chassis making them much more cost-effective. Static ground models are usually purpose built into fortified bunkers and used by regional commands to quickly deploy troops across continents.

It is rare but possible to actually launch the smallest classes of chelti voidships using MAD cannons of this size.

Use As Weapons

While MAD Cannons were designed primarily to fire specialist payloads and other, more specialized artillery can more effectively deliver fire support to troops on the ground, MAD cannons can and have been used as weapons. Troops in desperate situations can throw beacons on top of enemy locations and send supply pods (which have minimal braking thrusters and land far harder) crashing on top of enemies. This force is usually enough to destroy buildings and demolish tank suspension or hover equipment at the very least if set correctly. This is usually a weapon of last resort, however.

Other methods could include packing a MAD pod with explosives and an impact fuse, delivering a primitive high-explosive shell as fire support, although with a longer flight time than most artillery, or by packing the smoothbore tube with dozens of regular artillery shells or bomblets fitted into a sabot and fired in the general direction of the enemy.

Notes

[1]: See War Rules, orbital drops section for additional information on orbital assaults and choice of landing zones.

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