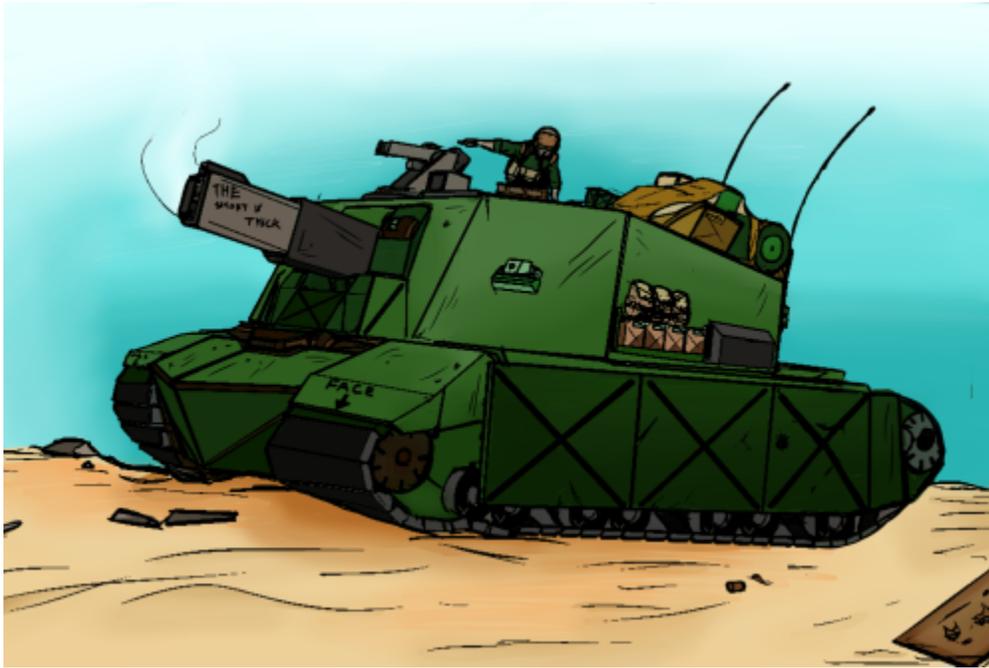


Pontifex Mk.1 Gun Motor Carriage

The Pontifex is a specialized variant of the [Maximus Heavy Main Battle Tank Mk. 2](#). Developed alongside the [Maximus RUSE](#) program, it implements select features from that program, as well as introducing new features of its own, reflecting its unique purpose as a gun carrier. The Pontifex is built on the same chassis as the Maximus RUSE, and shares many parts between the two models.



About the Pontifex

In order to emphasize the Nepleslian commitment to combined arms strategy, in early YE 38 a number of new weapons programs were submitted with the goal of making Nepleslia the most strategically and tactically flexible military in the galaxy. One piece of this new puzzle is the Pontifex Mk. 1 Gun Motor Carriage.

Unlike the Maximus, the Pontifex is not a main battle tank, but rather a gun carrier. Whereas the Maximus is an offensive tool, the Pontifex is a defensive one, more comfortable in static defense or ambush than its MBT cousin. Sporting a NAM [Plasma Artillery launcher](#) PAL-01a from the defunct FIRE power armors in a fixed casemate, the Pontifex is equally comfortable firing directly against enemy entrenchments or tanks, or used in the indirect role with its 200km range.

The biggest difference is the emphasis on stealth. The Pontifex features stealth systems adapted from the M10 Raider power armor, most prominently the [NAM Fluctuating Pigmentation Coating "Snakeskin"](#) and the [Mass Mesh Device](#). This allows the Pontifex a greater first shot capability against enemy vehicles and positions, and combined with its 200km range, limits the effectiveness of enemy counter-battery fire.

Unlike the Maximus it was built on however, the Pontifex lacks a rotating turret, and must rely on other units for close-range fighting since it only sports a pittance of anti-infantry weapons.

Key Features

The Pontifex has the following key features:

- Stealth Capabilities
- Indirect and direct fire support capabilities (The Main gun can also double as artillery as the new combat AI can offer the firing solutions)
- Parts commonality with the Maximus RUSE

Appearance

Like its cousin, the Maximus RUSE ¹⁾, the Pontifex is large and imposing, but its silhouette is much different from its turreted cousin. Instead of a turret located in the center of the chassis, a tower-like casemate protrudes from the middle, with the Plasma Artillery Launcher in a fixed mount in the center front of the 'tower'. The PAL ²⁾ mount allows the gun to depress and elevate, as well as offering limited horizontal traverse. The top of the 'tower' (henceforth referred to as the 'casemate') features a commander's hatch, and a RWS ³⁾ Dual-HPAR mount.

Statistical Information

Used By: NSMC, Private Contractors (“dumb” model)

Type: Gun Motor Carriage Class: Vehicle Designer: [Terratech](#) Manufacturer: [Terratech](#) Production: Limited Mass Production Price: 35,000 DA (20,000 DA to make the “dumb” model) Crew: Three Maximum Capacity: Three inside, several outside on the hull Passenger Capacity: Eight non-PA infantry, 4 PA Width: 5.25m, 6m with Applique armor Height: 3m, 3.5m with the RWS Length: 13.5m Mass: 105 tons Ground speed: 87 kph on road, 68 off road Range: 2 days of uninterrupted use on full power load Lifespan: 12 years Damage Capacity: 30 SP (Armor Scale)

Interior

The Pontifex is comprised of one compartment for the crew. The driver is located in the same place as the [Maximus RUSE](#). The Commander sits above the gunner, and the gunner sits next to the breech of the [Plasma Artillery Launcher](#), beneath the commander. Despite the casemate construction, great effort was made to keep crew and equipment positions roughly the same as the Maximus RUSE, sans the loader position, which is not utilized in the Pontifex.

Despite the proximity, the crew must communicate via [personal headsets](#) with microphones on their

helmets or secured at the neck for easy access. It is far too loud during maneuvers and combat for the crew to communicate without it. Alternately, kicking the driver's shoulders is another means of direction.

The commander's seat is more cramped with electronics and the new override controls to the gunner's station, which also doubles as the controls for the RWS mount over the turret. Each crewmember has the potential to control a single, armored [monoeye](#) mount on the casemate (with the driver having his own next to his hatch), although each one can also be controlled by the commander. There are also regular periscopes in case the optical equipment is disabled.

Underneath and behind the commander's seat is a space dedicated to house the tank's combat [AI](#). The equipment is protected by a reinforced Nerimium "box" and is right next to the tank's internal air conditioning unit.

The gunner's seat, right under and to the front of the commander's on the right side of the casemate has the gun controls. To his front, are the gun controls, which receives the firing solutions from the gun carrier's AI situated on the back of the fighting compartment. The AI also operates the PLAs on the casemate that act both as an anti-personnel measure and the tank's APS⁴⁾. The gunner has large hatch directly to his right on the side of the casemate that is his primary egress point, though he can also use the commander's hatch if the commander has already escaped.

There is no magazine, or ready magazine for shells. Instead, the 'breach' of the plasma artillery launcher consists of two hefty powercables that run into the engine compartment. On the exterior of the tank, on the casemate itself, there are mounting points for minimissile racks, but these are rarely utilized on the Pontifex.

The driver's seat is the safest place in the tank to when buttoned down, located right behind the thick frontal armor and a little to the left of the hull. The driver "sits" in what initially may look like an awkward position, like someone leaning too far down on their comfort chair. Despite that, the driver's seat is comfortable and driving the tank like that becomes no challenge, since the new helmet's visor, which can be linked to the driver's Monoeye, helps with the poor visibility. Should the monoeye be knocked out, the driver's hatch still has a set of periscopes for him to use.

Cargo Capacity

Although the inside of the gun carrier is very cramped, and only really carries the crew and ammo⁵⁾, all of the other cargo for the Pontifex is stored outside. To the sides of the casemate there are two large stowage bins on each side, which allow the Nepleslian crew to carry vital supplies to their survival and functioning, such as water, booze, rations of cigarettes and porno magazines.

Additional tools to work on field repairs for the vehicle, as well as spare parts are stored over the track guards along the sides on on the top of the gun carrier's hull, or over the engine deck as long as they don't block the air intakes for the engine.

Armor and Design

Physical armor composition remains mostly unchanged from the Super Maximus, consisting of layered [Nerimium](#) and [Durandium](#), and the energy weapon resistant coating. It remains SOP⁶⁾ to apply this special, proprietary coating in between missions. The front of the casemate is where the armor is thickest on the Pontifex, with the sides and rear of the casemate being much thinner. The hull's armor composition and layout remains the same.

Little was changed in the NBC⁷⁾ protection systems, and the gun carrier remains fully protected against all NBC threats and can work with a recyclable oxygen supply for a week. It is also rated for combat in a complete vacuum. It, like the Maximus RUSE, also has an air conditioning system, which is mainly used to keep the computers cooled in a hot environment.

The Pontifex also shares with the Super Maximus driver's safety measures against land mines and IEDs, in the form of a dynamic safety seat. This removes all contact between the driver and the gun carrier's hull, save for the pedals, which removes the driver from the shockwaves produced by a blast.

The spall liners that are placed throughout the vehicle to protect the crew members from flying pieces of metal within the gun carrier are made of the Nepleslian-made SynAraS⁸⁾. It is recommended that these are checked after every engagement, even if the crew didn't think they had been hit.

Unlike the Maximus RUSE, the Pontifex contains no VSP⁹⁾ shields. In its place, it uses the [NAM 'Snakeskin' visual camouflage](#) and a [Mass Mesher](#) device adapted from the [M10 Raider](#) power armor for the Pontifex's use. This allows the massive vehicle a surprising degree of stealth given its size and weight.

Onboard Systems Descriptions

Engine

The Pontifex uses ten [UCF-04a](#)¹⁰⁾ on its power pack to power the entire tank. Each UCF unit is located in separate "cells" on the engine compartment of the gun carrier. Unlike the Maximus RUSE, the Pontifex is in constant use of eight of its UCF units, since the Plasma Artillery Launcher is much more energy-hungry than the Maximus RUSE's 155mm main gun, using two of the generators solely for powering its output. 2 are kept in reserve as backups in case of failure.

To cool the engines, the tank possesses two superchargers to draw the air from outside into the air filters in an atmospheric environment; if the tank is operating in a vacuum, then it can be set to run on a "closed loop" before being deployed, although this comes at the cost of less efficiency.

Fire Suppression

Inside the tank there are several [fire extinguishers](#) placed and automatically triggered in case of a fire.

ACE AI Suite

Located behind and below the commander's seat and next to the engine compartment, the [AI](#) handles the fire control system for the main gun, the PLA and several other subsystems.

Monoeyes and Optical Sights

Throughout the casemate and on the front of the hull of the gun carrier there are a total of four [Monoeyes](#) to be used by the tank's crew. Each crewmember has their own, but the commander can override each one as he sees fit. These sensors have a variety of uses to the crew, included but not limited to providing target acquisition and range finding for the weapons, feeding visual and sensor data to the tank's crew and the onboard AI, providing direct laser comms between units in the event the electronic counter measures are activated.

Electronic Counter-measures

The Pontifex possesses the [Brainspammer](#), which is designed to complement the ACE AI Suite.

NAM "Snakeskin" Pigmentation Coat

The Pontifex utilizes the [Snakeskin](#) system as the basic visual stealth system. There is usually a shimmering effect when one looks at the active Snakeskin system. While this is a visual giveaway, it is often difficult for enemies using unaided optics, like eyes, to accurately place the cloaked gun carrier, let alone hit it.

Mass Mesher Device

The Pontifex also utilizes [Mass Mesher](#) Device which makes the gun carrier all but invisible to the visual spectrum. This makes it ideal for direct-fire ambushes, and severely limits the effectiveness of enemy counter-battery fire when attempting to detect the Pontifex.

Weapons Systems

Main Gun

The main gun of the Pontifex is the [NAM Plasma Artillery launcher PAL-01a](#), a long range, dual purpose plasma cannon that can be fired directly against enemy vehicles or entrenchments, or indirectly if given a firing solution. It can be fired accurately stationary or on the move, but the PAL's limited ability to traverse in its fixed mount usually means it will be fired from a stationary position.

Since the power reserves of the Pontifex gun carrier are much greater than the power supplied to the gun through 'plasma clips' in the original iteration, the PAL on the vehicle can put out shots once every

seven seconds. This is due to the two fusion generators slaved directly to the gun.

Commander's RWS

Sitting behind the commander's hatch is the Remote Weapon System, the same used in the [faction:nepleslia:vehicles:maximus_ruse|Maximus RUSE]]. The common loadout for this mount is Dual [HPAR's](#).

Pulse Laser Array PLA-01a

Situated around the casemate of the gun carrier are four [PLAs](#). The laser arrays act as both the active defense system of the gun carrier against solid munitions like missiles, as well as a measure to deal with non-power armored infantry.

Optional Weapon Systems

Nepleslian Miniature Missile Systems

There are provisions for mounting 2 racks of the [Nepleslian Miniature Missile Systems](#) on the sides of the casemate, but the option does not come default on the Pontifex. It is up to local commanders in theater to decide if the tactical situation warrants the mounting of this particular weapons system.

OOO Notes

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1)

Reliability Upgrade for Selected Equipment

2)

Plasma Artillery Launcher

3)

Remote Weapon System

4)

Active Protection System

5)

for the remote weapons system HPAR's

6)

standard operating procedure

7)

Nuclear, Biological, Chemical

8)

Synthetic Arachnid Silk

9)

Vehicular Shield Projector

¹⁰⁾

Ultra Compact Fusion Generator

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