



# **Zhodani Commando Revisted**

## ***Author's Preface-***

*I want to take a moment and say thank you to Frank Chadwick and Loren Wiseman who were the authors of the article 'Zhodani Military Organization' that appeared in JTAS #11 and has inspired my own interpretation as seen here. Also a special thanks to Marc Miller for being the mastermind and "spiritual advisor" of the creative team that worked on Traveller® "adventure in the far future". –svw3*

## ***Introduction –***

Within the ranks of the Zhodani military establishment exists the paragon of elite light infantry forces in the universe. They are the commando forces of the elite Consular Guard. The commandos are a product of the synergistic fusion of technology, psionic development and applied military doctrine. Many in military circles would agree that the commandos' pre-eminence rests firmly on the extraordinary psionic capability of teleportation (the psionic jump), that is not to say that they are not on par with the Imperial Marines where tactical proficiency is concerned. Yet, it is this unique psionic capability that allows the Zhodani Military High Command to overmatch their opponents through tactical mobility and surprise. Thus, Zhodani commanders have an edge in maintaining the strategic initiative. Oftentimes commando missions can enhance ongoing military operations by inhibiting or sapping the initiative, tactical flexibility and or morale of enemy forces. This force multiplier effect is inversely proportional to the commandos' actual size and strength<sup>1</sup>. It is noted that the commando forces represent 2% of the actual combat battalions deployed in the Zhodani military theater of operations confronting the Imperium and it's allies in or near the Spinward Marches. Also, it stands to reason that they are the most feared unit of the Zhodani ground forces<sup>2</sup>.

## ***Doctrine and Training-***

The commandos by nature are light troops and as such are vulnerable to enemy armor and or artillery/orbtillery fire. They rely on stealth and mobility to carry the day. It is important to take into account that these elite troops usually go into combat with only their high-energy weapons, tac-missiles and battledress. They don't have the staying power and organic heavy support weapons of a normal lift infantry company/battalion. Thus, operations are planned to make use of: surprise (via jump capsule infiltration or psionic infiltration), speed, maximum violence in a short period combat exposure, and a sound exfiltration (either a physical retrieval or psionic) plan to minimize friendly casualties. Though they are capable of fighting pitched battles, they prefer to perform swift direct action operations that have a higher likelihood of force preservation. When they are committed in pitched battles they are often inserted at the critical center of gravity of operations. Often the case their insertion proves to be the *coup de grace* for the enemy and regrettably they can take heavy casualties in execution these operations.

It is important to discuss the commandos' unique capability of teleportation. The Zhodani military procedure for psionic infiltration begins with the *detachment directors* (clairvoyant/telepaths) constructing the mental image of the infiltration zone (IZ). The image is a combination the directors using clairvoyance to view the IZ and other intelligence data<sup>3</sup>. This image is then telepathically "downloaded" to the commandos, who concentrate on the image for the psionic jump. Operational commanders and staffs when selecting an IZ have to take into account items such as temperature, latitude and longitude, and velocity of the target compared to the jump point of origin<sup>4</sup>. If telepathic infiltration operational parameters are

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<sup>1</sup> "Commandos cause disruption and moral deterioration greatly out of proportion to their actual numbers", JTAS # 11 'Zhodani Military Organization' p.26.

<sup>2</sup> "Even though the 95 Groupments (battalion –sized units) known to be in the Spinward Marches represent only 2% of the combat battalions in the sector". p26.

<sup>3</sup> JTAS#11 'Zhodani Military Organization' p.28

<sup>4</sup> Book:3- Worlds & Adventures p.44

not heeded, they can have disorienting effects on the jumping troops and diminish combat effectiveness on the ground. operations have been aborted when troops are psionically infiltrated and are too disoriented or injured due to environmental factors or poor planning to execute the mission. These are important factors that have to be addressed when planning a psionic jump and are often avoided by a thorough proper reconnaissance (clairvoyant, electronic, visual, thermal and seismic) of the target and the IZ. Some telepathic infiltrations over distant ranges (5-50km) or operations with telepathic exfiltration can be very draining and as a precaution commandos take psionic booster drugs to enhance performance<sup>5</sup>. Another item of doctrine of critical importance is the disguising of the commandos from enemy intelligence collection efforts. The concealment of commando units from enemy intelligence multiplies the chances of a successful outcome of their employment in the theater of operations. Commandos' counter-intelligence (CI) sections work at great lengths to conceal the logistical and electronic signatures of commando formations. CI sections further conduct electronic warfare to inhibit enemy collection activities and broadcast misleading unit signatures to confuse enemy analysts. Operational security (opsec) surrounding commandos' movement and deployment is tight to prevent accidental disclosures of information. Successful missions occur when opsec is effective, it is in some part due to the fact that the opposition lacked the information that psionic commandos were in the area and countermeasures weren't taken. When Zhodani counterintelligence and opsec efforts fail the losses are devastating.

### ***Ground Operations-***

***Raids-*** The frequent tactical operational targets of the commandos in surface operations are: command and control centers, key logistic points, communication nodes, and staging areas for special weapons. Strategic missions are normally planetary raids in conjunction with naval forces along the periphery of the axis of advance or deep penetration operations hitting the rear area systems with the primary objective of tying down and otherwise obligating useful enemy military resources in a static defensive posture. The secondary objective is to destroy or damage targets of strategic value: governmental complexes, industrial centers, high-density population areas, and locations of cultural importance. Thus crippling the enemy's ability to execute the war from the home front and further lowering civilian morale and support.

***Prisoner Snatches-*** Commandos are used in detachments (squads) to infiltrate enemy formations and snatch prisoners for interrogation and tactical intelligence exploitation. Sometimes, if an enemy ranking officer's whereabouts are known, a commando raid to snatch the target is launched for the value of gaining strategic intelligence.

***Intelligence Collection and Deception Missions-*** Small sub-detachments of two to three commandos will infiltrate and establish observation points in enemy held areas to collect intelligence and act as forward observers. Sometimes pathfinder teams infiltrate in advance of operations in order to provide security or further collect Intelligence on the IZs. Many teams could be infiltrated and act as decoys in order to deceive the enemy as to the true target and tie down counter-attacking forces.

***Disruption Operations in Support of Conventional Forces-*** High profile missions conducted by the commandos are often in conjunction with conventional forces offensive or retrograde operations<sup>6</sup>. These types of direct action missions offer the senior military commanders the ability to react at a moments notice to a change in the fluid tactical environment. Commando units further act as a strategic reserve to exploit any breakthroughs. Units are directly inserted into the combat area are: to lay ambush at vital enemy chokepoints; to overwhelm and seize fortified strongpoints; to materialize behind enemy spearheads to disrupt or ambush follow-on forces<sup>7</sup>.

***Counter Insurgency Operations-*** The operational capabilities of the Consular Guard Commandos usually facilitates a very quick mop up of insurgency forces. The Psi-abilities of the direction team combined with proper intelligence gives a comprehensive target package. Acting as an area fire force swift and often

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<sup>5</sup> *JTAS #11 'Zhodani Military Organization' p.26-27*

<sup>6</sup> *p.28*

<sup>7</sup> *p.28*

surgical application of the commandos neutralizes or eliminates insurgent high profile or value targets and it allows Zhodani field commanders to maintain the initiative in COIN ( counter-insurgency) operations.

### ***Naval Operations-***

A commando groupment is always attached to a fleet command. Commando troops or detachments are dispersed to various ships and squadrons within the fleet. There they spearhead (via teleportation) boarding actions that have lead to the capturing or crippling of enemy naval vessels<sup>8</sup>. They are also frequently are employed in advance of operations (using either teleportation or Jump Troop capabilities) to support the *Zhodani Special Naval Landing Forces* (ZSNLF) seizure of star ports, orbital stations, and in establishing Beachheads on the surface.

### ***Operations other than war-***

It is rare in Zhodani society that the military is seen aiding civil authorities against it's own citizens. There are documented times that the commandos have been used in hostage rescue operations and special tactical situations that demand their area of expertise. Usually the commandos in these cases are operating against non-Zhodani or extreme fringe groups (rare though present within the Consulate). It is also known that the Tavrchedl' are now retaining in times of peace commando squadrons that operate in special tactics and hostage rescue roles<sup>9</sup>.

Also, the commandos are sometimes detached to special security duties guarding members of the supreme consulate. This duty is highly prestigious and the selection for such an assignment is competitive. The duties include personal and site security whether at Zhodane or aboard the renowned *Dranzhrin Class* Consular Corvettes. Those commandos selected often attend select special courses pertaining to VIP security, advanced unarmed and blade combat, and special protocol training in how to interact with non-Zhodani dignitaries. This special assignment lasts an Olympiad and the benefits are increased chances for promotion and social advancement.

### ***Training-***

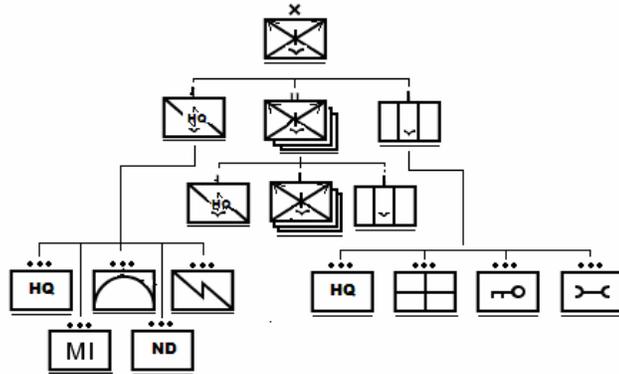
The selection and training of the commandos contrast somewhat with the normal practices of the military. The nature of Zhodani society as being one that embraces psionics enables potential commando candidates to be identified at early ages. The Consulate through state sponsored youth programs and psionic institutions accurately gage the aptitude and fulfill the training of Zhodani youth who show significant psionic potential<sup>10</sup>. Many of these adepts are recruited early on for service in the Consular Guard. Recruits possessing the teleportation talent and strength required for the commandos are enticed by strong incentives (financial and social) to enter that respective branch of the Consular Guard. Commando volunteers undergo an intense two-year training syllabus: heavily stressing light infantry skills and tactics; military teleportation attunement and procedures; jump capsule and protected forces training; and not to be left out are the basic cascade of commando skills. Upon completion of training, they are promoted to the grade of *commissioned specialist (the equivalent of imperial warrant officers)* and are assigned to their first commando troop. Officers are selected usually from the Nobility are trained beside there troopers in order to create an *esprit de corps* and install a healthy confidence between the leaders and the troops. Officers also undergo a further year of training in operations planning and staff work in order to be able to function independently with their commands with out the need for extensive staff support and guidance. When not conducting operations commando units undertake intensive training cycles to maintain unit tactical and individual skill proficiency. It is also important to note that the commandos contain personnel who are not teleportation adepts. And while they go through just as rigorous training syllabus and a jump capsule qualified, they are for the most part are vehicle drives and gunners in the commando squadrons. Specialist staff officers (intelligence, medical, communications, and etc...) and support technicians attached to the headquarters or support squadrons..

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<sup>8</sup> *Adventure 7:Broadsword*

<sup>9</sup> *GRUPS Traveller: Alien Races 1 p.41*

<sup>10</sup> *JTAS#9 'Contact: Zhodani' p.9 -11*



### Organization-

The Commandos are organization and structure reflects that of a light highly mobile self-contained unit. The following formations are provided of examination.

**Commando Force-** The Commando Force is the largest tactical formation of teleportation capability deployed in the field by the Zhodani. It is the similar to the scope and size of a regiment. They are part of the organizational tables of the as one of the three jump troop regiments assigned to the elite Consular Guard jump

divisions. A commando force is also attached as corps troops to Consular Guard Lift Infantry and or Lift Mechanized Infantry Corps level formations In the consular army it is a attached as army troops to regular Zhodani Field Army level formations. It is commanded by General and consists of a Force Headquarters and Signal Squadron, three Commando Groupments, and a Force Support Squadron.

### Force Headquarters and Signal Squadron-

- **The Command Troop** contains the *commanding general* his *deputy* and the *force battle staff* (personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics staff officers and deputies and a the master warrant officer) they are protected by an eight-man *security detachment* on the battlefield. The command and staff is divided into two large command grav sleds, which are fully integrated C7I command centres, each with a driver and gunner.

-**The Combat Electronic Warfare and Intelligence Troop** supplements the already existing capabilities at the groupement level as well as the platoon's function to ensure the force's survival in the combat electronic warfare and intelligence dimension of the modern battlefield. It comprises of an Intelligence section that has a production team of *two officers* (assimilation and analysis), a *counter intelligence officer* and technician ensuring tactical operational security, two *interrogator specialists*, two tactical intelligence support specialists (droid operators) and the drivers in 2 intelligence support sleds. The electronic warfare section contains a jamming and deception sled, manned by a warrant officer and four technicians with a driver, and an Intercept /direction finding sled that has also a warrant officer and four technicians with a driver. It is important to know that the CEWI troop has a significant number of Droids attached to the unit to enhance capabilities. The intelligence section fields 4 reconnaissance druids and they are carried on the intelligence support sleds. The electronic warfare section has two remote jamming droids and four remote direction finding / intercept droids they are all carried by their respective sleds and greatly enhance the CEWI capability of the troop.

-**The Communications Troop** for the Force is supported by the signals troop. They are capable of laser, maser, radio, microwave and meson communications. The unit communication network is interfaced digital and encrypted for security. A junior officer commands the troop and two warrant officers assist him. The troop is divided into a meson comm. sled with an NCO and four tech with a driver, three Laser, maser, radio, microwave comm. sleds each with an NCO, driver and three techs. A communications utility support sled has a driver and it carries the four repair technicians who assist in maintenance and repairs of the troop's communications equipment.

**-The Nuclear Damper Troop** is dedicated to force protection duties from incoming nuclear weapons attacks. It is commanded by a lieutenant and contains six damper projector vehicles each with a crew of a driver, a NCO and two technicians, and a damper support vehicle with a driver and two repair technicians.

**-The Point Defence Troop** provides a defensive umbrella fro the Force to operate under. It contains four vehicles: 3 point defense sleds and a Fire Direction Control/Sensor sled. Commanded by a lieutenant the troop's PD sleds consist of a driver an NCO and a gunner. The FDC/S sled has a driver, the lieutenant and three FDC/S technicians. It can also deploy three PD Sensor droids who enable the continuity of coverage.

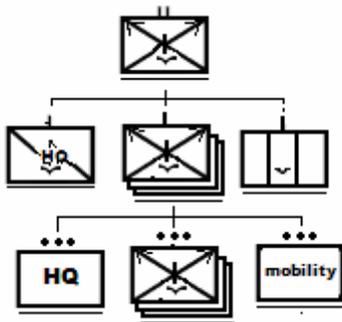
#### **Force Support Squadron-**

**- Command section-** The command section oversees the disposition and efficiency of the force support section. It consists of the Squadron Commander (captain), a deputy (senior warrant officer), and ha two grav sleds for admin and support of the command and allocation of support resources.

**- Medical Troop-** Lead by the Force surgeon (Maj) it consists of a treatment section containing the Physician his deputy a admin specialist officer, two physician assistants and seven medics and six medical droids, all of which are contained in three grav-vehicles that make the mobile treatment station. The Evacuation section commanded by a NCO contains four field grav-ambulances, each capable of supporting four patients, containing driver, gunner, 2 medics and two medial litter droids. Support Section is a grav-sled with a driver to Tech specialists and four repair droids who service and repaiar the medical equipment.

**- Maintenance troop-** Commanded by a senior warrant officer this Troop's role is to service and repair all of the Force equipment and to provide expanded service to the groupments assigned. It contains six maintenance vehicles for service and repair each consisting of a driver, gunner, NCO and four techs and four repair droids.

**- Support Troop-** The Support Troop provides logistical support as well as culinary support to the force. The Logistics section contains six logistics vehicles with two personnel assigned and four robots apiece the logistics vehicle are stocked with required sundries and parts needed to support battlefield conditions. There are three culinary an hygiene support vehicles that each support a groupment with food and hygiene facilities. The support Troop is commanded by a senior warrant officer.



**Commando Groupment-** The commando groupment is a battalion-sized tactical element and is attached to regular army jump divisions (albeit they contain supplemental firepower in the jump divisions), Consular Guard Lift Infantry and Lift Mechanized Infantry Divisions, A groupment is further attached to regular army corps as corps troops and to Zhodani fleet formations. A colonel who is assisted by a lieutenant colonel commands the groupment and it is composed of a Headquarters and Signals Squadron, three Commando Squadrons, and a Support Squadron.

**-Groupment Headquarters and Signals Squadron-** The Groupment Headquarters and Signal Squadron comprises of a command troop, combat electronic warfare and intelligence (CEWI) troop, signals section, a nuclear damper section and a point defense section. The command troop contains the *Colonel* his *deputy* and the force *battle staff* (personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics staff officers and deputies and the groupment chief master warrant officer) they are protected by an eight-man *security detachment* on the battlefield. The command and staff is divided into two large command grav sleds, which are fully integrated C7I command centers, each with a driver and gunner.

- **The Combat Electronic Warfare and Intelligence Troop** supplements the already existing capabilities at the level as well as the platoon's function to ensure the force's survival in the combat electronic warfare and intelligence dimension of the modern battlefield. It comprises of an Intelligence section that has a production team of *two officers* (assimilation and analysis), a *counter intelligence officer* and technician ensuring tactical operational security, two *interrogator specialists*, two tactical intelligence support specialists (droid operators) and the drivers in 2 intelligence support sleds. The electronic warfare section contains a jamming and deception sled, manned by a warrant officer and four technicians with a driver, and an Intercept /direction finding sled that has also a warrant officer and four technicians with a driver. It is important to know that the CEWI troop has a significant number of Droids attached to the unit to enhance capabilities. The intelligence section fields 4 reconnaissance droids and they are carried on the intelligence support sleds. The electronic warfare section has two remote jamming droids and four remote direction finding / intercept droids they are all carried by their respective sleds and greatly enhance the CEWI capability of the troop.

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- **The Nuclear Damper Section** is dedicated to force protection duties from incoming nuclear weapons attacks. It is commanded by a Staff Sergeant and contains two damper projector vehicles each with a crew of a driver, a NCO and two technicians, and a damper support vehicle with a driver and two repair technicians.

- **The Point Defence Section** provides a defensive umbrella fro the Force to operate under. Commanded by a warrant officer it contains four vehicles: 3 point defense sleds., PD sleds consist of a driver an NCO and a gunner. The FDC/S sled has a driver, the warrant officer and three FDC/S technicians. It can also deploy three PD Sensor droids who enable the continuity

#### **Groupment Support Squadron-**

- **Command Section** – The Coordination of support elements for the squadron rests with the command section of the support squadron. Commanded by an captain the squadron support section contains two command and control vehicle, both have a driver, gunner and vehicle commander. The section also includes the Senior squadron NCO and the squadron XO all who assist in the coordination of support efforts

- **Medical Section-** Commanded by the squadron Physician Associate, the section is composed of a surgical/treatment vehicle (with a driver, commander, gunner and three medical assistants and four medical support droids) that performs minor surgery and tailgate medicine. The three other vehicles are the medical evacuation grav –carriers that have a driver, gunner-commander, and two combat medics for casualty treatment the vehicles have also the support of two casualty litter droids.

- **Maintenance Troop** – This troop attempts ot maintain the groupment's equipment and weapons at a local level, the more serious repairs and overhauls are completed at a higher echelon depot. It is commanded by a senior warrant officer and has three repair sleds containing a driver, gunner and four repair specialists lead by a experienced NCO. Each vehicle has two heavy repair droids.

- **Support Troop** - The support troop manages the supply chain and provision of stores for the commando groupment. Led by a senior warrant officer it contains a warehouse section and three transport squads. The warehouse section is composed of three heavy logistics vehicles and lead by an NCO with 12 enlisted men that are assisted by four heavy logistics robots. The Transport squads are each two light logistics vehicles

commanded by an NCO. The squad is made up of two drivers two gunners and two logistics specialists. Each vehicle has two logistics droids to aid them.

**Commando Squadron-** The commando squadron is a company-sized unit it is independently attached to Independent Consular Guard Lift-Infantry and Lift-Mechanized Infantry Regiments. Commanded by a major the squadron's composition is: Command & Direction Troop containing a command party: the major and his deputy, the squadron chief warrant officer, a security element of four commandos, a small staff of two senior warrant officers who act as an intelligence and an operations staff technicians, and a senior medical specialist. All members of the command party are teleport adepts. The direction section (where the eleven *detachment directors*, clairvoyant / telepaths, are located), three Commando Troops and Commando Mobility Troop.

- **Commando Troop-** The platoon sized commando formation (figure 4) is commanded by a captain and assisted by a lieutenant and a troop chief warrant officer (he acts in the role of a Platoon Sergeant and is normally a well-seasoned combat veteran) and has three detachments (squads) led by sub-lieutenants, and he is assisted by two subalterns, and has eight *commissioned specialists*. It is important to note that the command party also includes two additional teleport adepts who functions as a medical specialist for the troop..

- **Commando Mobility Troop-** The Mobility Troop provides a greater combat range, protection and firepower for the commandos. Often used to transport the commandos to and from the battlefield at times they are often used in conjunction with operations in a retrieval or insertion capacity. It contains twelve *Dravar* family Grav AFV sleds each with a driver/mechanic.

**Equipment-** The Zhodani Consular Guard Commandos are equipped at highest quality arms and armaments within the Consulate (tech level 14). Due to the restrictions placed by jump and psionic operations emphasis is placed on portability and lethality. Guards Battledress is standard issue for teleport and psionic personnel. The units' support personnel are issued Guards Combat Armor and gauss weapons. Powered troops enjoy a plethora of integrated weapon systems. Their primary weapon is ever-present PGMP-13 personal weapon or FGMP-14 detachment support weapon. The Y-rack is a destructive infantry enhancing system that launches hands-free a variety of grenade-sized munitions. A ranged weapon at the commandos fingertips is integrated Tactical Rocket Launcher (with fire and forget HE, HEAP, SAM and small yield (.2 Kt) thermonuclear rockets for engaging targets at range. The Thiazhashal corporation designed the droppable Dravar Family of light armoured grav-fighting vehicles for the jump and commando forces. They provide a mobility platform and improve the firepower of these light forces, and they include: a standard infantry carrier, a armed reconnaissance/direct fire support version, command and control versions (to include electronic warfare and communications), combat support (point defense, screens, combat engineering, and etc.), service and support version (logistics, surgical, ambulance, and repair versions). Unlike many interstellar organizations the Zhodani military makes extensive use of warbots in conjunction with military operations in combatant and non-combatant roles. The commandos due to the nature of psionic operations have little use for the warbots commonly seen in other Zhodani formations<sup>11</sup>. Yet, they do have many 'expert' droids within the TO&E in order to assist support personnel with support tasks. They include medical droids, repair droids, recon probes, remotesensor droids made by either IAD, or Tliazhashal.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Book 8: Robots p.11*

<sup>12</sup> *P.17*