



GUTS & GEARS

# GROLAAR

BY JOSH COLON

ART BY MIKE CAPPROTTI, SUSAN LUO, NÉSTOR OSSANDÓN, AND KIERAN YANNER

Like an avalanche of iron, the Grolar thunders forward with deceptive speed and unmitigated power, making short work of the enemies of the Motherland. Born out of a necessity to quickly engage targets in broken terrain and to maneuver into place to control mission-critical objectives, this heavily armored cousin of the Kodiak exhibits surprising mobility for a Khadoran warjack. The Grolar is a true triumph of Khadoran engineering, built from the work and ingenuity of some of the greatest military engineers in western Immoren.

## EXCELLENCE OF EXECUTION: KHADOR'S MECHANIKS ASSEMBLY

Warjack design is equal parts art and science. Industrious minds combine each of these disciplines to solve a particular battlefield problem or to implement a strategy. Each individual warjack chassis and its resulting variants are developed with a specific purpose in mind. A nation's resources, military doctrine, and overall mechanical philosophies also shape its warjacks. For Khador, this typically results in warjacks of unsurpassed strength and durability and designs that sacrifice speed for durability and close combat power.

In the past decade, there has been a small but growing minority within the Khadoran Mechaniks Assembly wishing to innovate the status quo and bring the entire Khadoran military complex to new and previously unexplored realms. This small group used the High Kommand's need for a new Kodiak variant as a platform to implement their new design theories. And while their theories have been slow to

gain traction within the project pipelines of the Mechaniks Assembly, their ideas did result in the creation of the Grolar. The young engineers saw the Grolar as a resounding achievement for their cause; it represented the success that was possible when integrating new ideas within the framework of Khadoran warjack design, and the Grolar has no doubt caught the attention of even the most conservative members in the senior council. Despite numerous setbacks and engineering hurdles, it is clear that each battlefield victory for the Grolar is an equal victory for the engineers and innovators in Khador's Mechaniks Assembly.

## FROM THE LEGACY OF THE KODIAK: A NEW VARIANT

As the renowned Kodiak chassis celebrated its fiftieth year of service to the motherland, Khadoran High Kommand wished to explore alternate armament and battlefield roles for the chasis, ones that might make new use of the machine's singular command over rugged terrain.

After many months of



ideation and deliberation, the Mechanics Assembly voted for the three best designs. The three winning groups then presented their schematics to members of High Kommand, who were visiting the Rigevnya Complex in Korsk. These high-ranking military officials then reviewed the designs and began their debate; whichever design they agreed was best would be fabricated, prototyped, field tested, and eventually mass-produced.

One of the final designs featured innovative weaponry for a Khadoran warjack: a powerful piston hammer capable of striking with sufficient concussive force to stagger even heavy warjacks and an auto cannon with the potential to fire at an exceedingly high rate. The majority of the Mechanics Assembly considered the design clever enough to present to the visiting kommandants but believed it was too complicated to ever be chosen; however, High Kommand, having long been begrudgingly impressed with Cygnar's Ironclad and Hammersmith warjacks, found the prospect of the piston hammer intriguing. Additionally, having seen the then-newly minted Cygnaran Cyclone 'jack in action, the kommandants saw this design as a boon—Khador could have its own version of rapid-fire support. The design was chosen for prototyping, much to the surprise and chagrin of the more traditionally minded majority of the Mechanics Assembly.

Setting any internal disagreements aside, a substantial number of the designers, engineers, and smiths at the Khadoran Mechanics Assembly set to the task of turning pen-and-paper schematics into steel and iron. For the original prototype, two teams were tasked with developing the piston hammer and auto cannon. A third team worked on theoretical improvements to the current-generation Kodiak boiler: redirecting the engine's excess steam to reinforced mechanical systems in its legs and torso for added bursts of increased speed.

This latter modification would add more than two years to the realization of the new warjack, as the team suffered many setbacks and occasional injuries from dealing with the incredible heat and pressure of the Kodiak's boiler. The additional time, however, allowed the Greylords Covenant to develop a suitably sophisticated cortex to handle the machine's new weaponry, which required top-of-the-line reflexes and hand-eye coordination imprinting. In mid-602 AR, after extended development, the first Grolar prototype strode from the foundries of the Mechanics Assembly and began its first round of battlefield testing.

## FIELD TESTING AND COMPLETION

The initial field tests of the Grolar proved generally successful; the warjack managed to exceed expectations when wielding its two state-of-the-art weapons. The work of the Greylords Covenant shined through, as

both warcasters and 'jack marshals found it easy for the Grolar to not only deliver rapid sustained attacks with the piston hammer while maintaining mobility but also to immediately fire its auto cannon in close range, even in the confines of close combat. The firing apparatus only achieved its full potential under the guidance of a warcaster, however. Without a direct mental link, the warjack couldn't be compelled to activate its swift feed. Once this fact was recognized, the auto cannon's impressive rate of fire went above and beyond the expectations of both the High Kommand and the warjack's designers.

Despite these impressive capabilities, the Grolar suffered from its newly developed mobility enhancements. While the Mechanics Assembly had managed to solve the problem of redirecting steam pressure from its boiler to its movement systems, they now had a new problem to solve: the resulting strain quickly ripped apart the warjack's joint supports, gears, and other critical machinery, crippling its ability to move. Even with subsequent efforts to reinforce these mechanisms and lower the output ratio of its engine, the prototype Grolar would literally tear itself apart when moving too quickly. After a handful of disastrous combat tests, the supervising mechanics contemplated removing the speed modifications altogether until one young engineer intervened with a solution.



Nikolas Larroskov was one of the young and outspoken voices for innovation within the Mechaniks Assembly, and he had been part of the original team that conceptualized and presented the Grolar schematics to the visiting kommandants. He dedicated himself fully to the 'jack's development, first helping design the auto cannon's reloading mechanisms and then with the issue of maintaining structural integrity while moving at full speed.

After weeks of dead ends and increasing desperation, Larroskov brought the problem to his brother-in-law, an accomplished engineer who worked on some of the newest trains for Strokhovsky Rail, a smaller but respected subsidiary of Blaustavya Shipping and Rail. In just three nights, the pair managed to solve the problem by integrating several prototype mechanisms from various Khadoran train designs, such as the traction motors and reinforced brake shoes from cargo haulers. These modifications, along with a mechanically activated pressure valve to regulate steam distribution, proved to be the final key to completing the new warjack. The final sets of field tests were so successful that Nikolas Larroskov's prison sentence—for divulging military secrets to a civilian—was reduced to only one year of hard labor and a demotion in rank and pay upon release.

With the chassis passing all final tests, it was time to begin producing an initial limited run for full battlefield commission. In late summer 605 AR, the first few completed models were shipped by train for deployment in the Llaelese theater, but the locomotive suffered catastrophic damage from an explosion believed to have been caused by members of the Llaelese Resistance. Though this sabotage once again delayed the battlefield debut of the Grolar, it would be the final time; in late winter 605 AR, after years of setbacks and sacrifices by hundreds of the Motherland's best and brightest, the Grolar entered the battlefields of western Immoren.

## INITIAL ENGAGEMENTS: RISE OF THE CRIMSON BEAR

During the first few weeks of their initial battlefield deployments, nearly all available Grolars were utilized in several operations against far-flung and remote Llaelese Resistance cells and storage facilities, perhaps in retaliation for the train bombing months earlier. Though the new warjack's mastery of rough terrain and unprecedented speed proved essential in catching the Llaelese terrorists unprepared, the High Kommand quickly wished to see the value of the nation's new weapons in supporting the wider war effort.

Soon, Grolars were fielded in battlegroups engaging in a wide variety of ambush and hit-and-run operations against Cygnaran supply and reinforcement convoys, mainly those en route to the fortress of Northguard.

Eventually, during the first and second battles to capture the fortress in 606 and 607 AR, Grolars used their auto cannons to thin out trenches before bursting through field fortifications, followed by kompanies of Winter Guard and Assault Kommandos. In some instances, Grolars were used by warcasters to ambush Cygnaran scouts, decimating teams of rangers and Hunter warjacks and minimizing the amount of reliable battlefield information available to the beleaguered defenders.

After the fall of Northguard in late 607 AR, few could doubt the effectiveness of this new Kodiak variant in reaching and eliminating targets quickly. This made the Grolar extremely useful for purposes of assault and ambush. Nevertheless, production on this warjack was slow for the first few years of its deployment; the time and resources needed to craft its weapons, and a suitably sophisticated cortex to wield them, added time to overall fabrication. While Grolars were a valued weapon, for the remainder of 607 AR and the beginning months of 608 AR they remained primarily assigned to missions that made use of their tried-and-true successes as an assault asset. Several of these missions saw Grolars fielded against some of the final supply lines of the Protectorate's Northern Crusade. Certain reports highlight the effectiveness the Grolar had against many of the Protectorate's warjacks with arc nodes, the piston hammer knocking down its enemy to make it very difficult to target enemies with channeled spells. There are even apocryphal reports that there was a standing order among the Menite choirs to retreat at the sight of a Grolar charging at a nearby warjack, as the Grolar's controlling warcaster would invariably use its auto cannon to make short work of the supporting warpriests.

By mid-607 AR, there were growing reports of Cryxian activity within the borders of Khadoran-occupied Llael. While the Khadoran military had regular patrols in place, they were spread thin mainly due to the occasional, yet unpredictable, occurrences of Resistance activity. Thus, smaller response units featuring Kodiaks and Grolars were deployed. These smaller response units could engage quickly and effectively through large expanses, and they proved to be essential to repelling Cryx forces. The Grolar in particular was valued in these occasional but brutal skirmishes, as the auto cannon's high rate of fire was effective in dealing with swarms of the undead.

## NOTABLE ENGAGEMENTS AND THORNWOOD OPERATIONS

While having only been on the field for a few short years, the impact the Grolar has had for the Khadoran military cannot be overstated. While general deployment and after-action reports serve to paint accurate pictures of the continuing effectiveness of any chassis, it's the stories

that go beyond military channels—the ones recounted by soldiers, officers, and even the enemies of a warjack—that change a machine’s reputation from a tool to a respected weapon. While it often takes years, even decades, for tales such as these to begin circulating about any given warjack, Grolars have managed to make their mark rather quickly, likely due to both the increased military hostilities between nations in the past few years as well as the inherent value of the chassis in question.

Sometime in 608 AR, new Grolars were assigned to several patrols of the Second Border Legion that guard some of the most inhospitable mountain passes in Khador’s northeastern regions. Soon after receiving these prized assets, several

Second Legion outposts engaged in now-classified skirmishes with blighted elven warriors and dragonspawn near Skirov and as far west as Tverkutsk. While High Kommand kept the details of these engagements top secret, casualties are known to have been severe in at least half of these battles. The only unclassified set of documents pertaining to these incidents is an official request from the 88th Winter Guard Kompany, one of the oldest and most esteemed units of the Second Legion, to be permitted to adopt the Grolar as their official kompany symbol. It is not exactly known what prompted this request, but the 88th had been assigned a pair of Grolars and had somehow managed to retain fewer casualties while directly engaging the blighted enemy. The request has yet to be ratified by the proper military channels, and yet other units are already referring to the 88th as the Crimson Bears, no doubt a testament to the impact the Grolars had in keeping the far-flung men and women serving the Motherland safe.

In the fall of 608 AR, Khador and Cygnar entered an uneasy cease-fire that led to full-on military cooperation when the severity of the Cryxian threat in the Thornwood became too much to ignore. During early scouting operations by Khadoran and Cygnaran forces, Khador usually turned to the Grolar to observe enemy movements and fortifications. The Grolar also engaged in small ambushing assaults to test how deeply entrenched the undead and their cephalyx allies were in the area. At first, officials from Cygnar’s esteemed Reconnaissance Service volunteered to handle the bulk of these operations, making use of the lighter Hunter and Grenadier warjacks, but upon seeing the effectiveness with which the Grolar moved through the dense tree lines of the Thornwood and the viciousness its weaponry brought to bear against the opposing Helljacks, they relented.

Once the alliance was ready to commit to a full-on assault on the Cryxian necrofactorium, Supreme Kommandant Irusk requisitioned a Kodiak and Grolar for each warcaster who would be traversing the roughest terrain, hoping that the warjack’s fleet movement in hostile conditions would aid in the offensive assault to come. Unfortunately, despite the bravery of both Khador and Cygnar, this first engagement resulted in a harsh defeat. The Grolar’s ability to easily move through difficult terrain, as demonstrated in the Thornwood, allowed the few remaining Grolars to cover the coordinated retreat



of the allied forces. Just a few short months later, both nations consolidated their forces for one final assault against the Cryxian necrofactorium; their success would mean the eradication of the Cryxian heart in the region while another loss would mean certain annihilation for every soldier present. The Khadoran leaders set several battle plans in motion, but the Grolar was the central asset in what was perhaps the most unusual and daring of these operations.

One of the key elements to Cryx's previous victory was the unexpected release of their fiendish colossals. Wanting to divert some of the destructive power of these hellish weapons on the living, Supreme Kommandant Irusk placed a pair of young but experienced warcasters at each flank of the Khadoran column, each in control of a pair of Kodiaks and a single Grolar. At the sight of a Cryxian colossal, each battlegroup would feign a retreat to the nearby tree line, drawing the colossals out of position. Capitalizing on their speed and mobility, the battlegroups would then engage in alternating skirmish and retreat tactics. The strategy worked better than expected; all four battlegroups secured their army's flanks for the entirety of the engagement, and the entire operation ended with the successful destruction of the necrofactorium. While all four young warcasters perished during the battle, they died as heroes to the Motherland and were interred with the highest honors of the Empire. Of all four battlegroups, the only remaining warjack was a Grolar named Lucca. Currently, Lucca is in line to be awarded a service medal for its role in this great victory for Khador.

## FUTURE OF THE GROLAR

With such a growing reputation for success, it is no surprise that the versatile Grolar is a highly valued weapon by the High Kommand. While it will certainly take more time to produce these machines in greater numbers, High Kommand has stated that it believes the Grolars are well worth the extra time and resources to do so. Indeed, the growing regard for the Grolar and

its innovative design was one of the factors that helped persuade the old guard at the Mechanics Assembly to approach the Victor colossal with similar mold-breaking design elements. Regardless of design philosophies and internal politics, there is no doubt that the Grolar's legacy has begun to be forged in the field of battle.

Several highly respected and decorated Khadoran battlefield commanders and warcasters such as Vaska Zaytsev, Izak Harkevich, Oleg Strakhov, and Nina Onilova have gone on record with their admiration for the 'jack, some going so far as to call it their chassis of choice. Despite numerous design and deployment issues causing a delayed battlefield debut, the Grolar has proven the value of its innovations. After a particularly noteworthy victory against the Northern Crusade, Kommander Izak Harkevich said of the Grolar warjack, "I almost lost hope of ever seeing these machines on the battlefield, but after experiencing the power of these crimson bears firsthand, I truly believe what my beloved mother used to say is true, 'good things come to those who wait.'"

