Arc 1 - Intermission 6 - A Major's Perspective V

- PoV: Ukuar Rurix -

"The recording is locked. I can't access it," Ukuar informed the Lieutenant, not wanting to leave his fellow Marine in the dark about his findings.

Before Zarael could follow up with any questions of his own, Ukuar raised one of his hands, motioning him to remain quiet, before elaborating, "It's a Black-level lock. It was placed on Recruit McKay's profile before she even arrived on the Sovereign, a result of one of our Majors being a bit too eager in classifying information about her Cube Trial. There's no way for us to access this, so don't ask questions that can't be answered. Captain Cross requested the Black-level lock be lifted weeks ago, but you know how the UHF can be in these situations…"

His words trailed off as he carefully observed Zarael's body language and reactions.

He hadn't intended to reveal something classified, but running into the lock while checking the recordings left him no choice. What was important was that the Lieutenant didn't show any undue interest in the topic.

As much as Ukuar liked the Lieutenant, there was no way he could cover for him if Zarael decided to investigate further—a career-ending move, to be certain.

Fortunately, realisation dawned quickly on Zarael's face at the explanation. He simply nodded repeatedly, clearly deep in thought but not planning to investigate further.

A silent sigh of relief left Ukuar as he flipped the recording back to the previous one that Zarael had handed him.

A more in-depth analysis of the discussion between Thea and the Psyker would have to wait until he was alone, with no Lieutenants to accidentally get caught in the crossfire.

If he stepped on somebody's toes, the wiggle room was a lot more forgiving for a Major than a Lieutenant.

"Let's take a look at your most recent recommendation then," Ukuar said, trying to bridge the awkward silence that had followed their unexpected discovery.

"Ah, yes. Right!" Zarael nodded profusely, clearly still shaken by the accidental revelation of higher-level politics. Gathering his thoughts for a brief moment, his demeanour shifted back to his previous, ever-present excitement, "So… This one's about the main assault on the Wall, following the destruction of the majority of control stations by the infiltration squads. As with any recording that covers such a large-scale engagement, there's not much individual heroism here, but I figured you might want to see how the UHF's main assault went anyway."

Ukuar gave him a terse nod of gratitude before starting the recording.

The viewpoint for this one started out high in the sky, like a drone observing the large-scale movements of troops below, much like the point of view a commander would have for this part of the battle.

The first thing that struck Ukuar almost immediately were the colours of the recording.

“By the Emperor…” he whispered as his eyes took in the battlefield’s state.

The entire area of the plains in front of the Wall, multiple dozen square kilometres in size, had been transformed from lush green grasslands into a uniform grey-brown sludge.

A sludge whose origin he was all too familiar with.

In the history of mankind, war had never been a glamorous, heroic thing.

It had always been dirty, brutal, and disgusting.

But with the advent of the Allbright System and the focus on larger and larger scale battles over the centuries that followed, fighting on large battlefields had turned into a logistical problem as much as a downright ecological disaster.

With more than a million people fighting for the future of Nova Tertius, the death tolls were, by necessity, mere statistics. Numbers on a spreadsheet that looked impressive, horrifying, or, more often than not, both at the same time.

But no amount of numbers on a spreadsheet could ever *truly* convey the sheer scale of destruction, death, and decay that inhabited these battlefields.

The brown-grey sludge that covered the entire plains, wherever Ukuar could see from the bird’s-eye perspective of the recording, was nothing but ground-up humans and their remains.

It was the blood, flesh and bones of UHF Marines and Stellar Republic Soldiers that had been killed here, before being ripped apart, torn asunder, and crushed further by the uncountable boots of their brethren and sisters or the treads of the armours advancing.

Every hundred or so metres across the entire battlefield, massive mountains of amalgamated corpses towered like watchtowers overlooking the endless carnage, beckoning the remaining fighters to join them like sirens calling out at sea.

This view was not unique, Ukuar knew all too well.

He didn’t need to ask the recording to pan around or fly to a different sector of the battlefield, for he knew this was just one of an uncountable number of sectors that looked exactly the same.

Such was the nature of war—dirty, brutal, and disgusting.

The only distraction that finally got him to peel his eyes off the sheer devastation was the advent of the UHF’s main forces.

For this view was not the aftermath of the main assault; it was merely the result of the initial skirmishes in front of the main entrance.

Only now did the sheer scale of the recording truly hit Ukuar.

Like a giant sea of ants interspersed with slightly larger rectangles, an ocean of black dots made their way across the battlefield from the south, heading towards the Stellar Republic's Wall to the north.

The colours dominating the recording gradually shifted from the brown-grey sludge of death and decay to a uniformly black sea of tiny dots.

Tens of thousands of UHF Marines advanced across the remains of their fallen brethren and sisters towards the Wall in this sector alone. This same scene was undoubtedly playing out across more than a hundred different sectors to the east and west as well.

From this far-removed perspective, the enormity of the UHF's advance was almost surreal.

The Wall loomed in the distance, an imposing, seemingly insurmountable and indestructible barrier that had withstood countless assaults in the past.

Yet the sea of black dots moved with a relentless, continuous cadence, a seemingly endless flow of Marines surging forward with unwavering resolve.

Suddenly, as the sea of black dots reached an invisible line, all hell broke loose and the main assault officially began.

Hundreds upon thousands of artillery shells suddenly appeared from behind the Wall, their simultaneous firing sending visible shockwaves through the recording before the shells began raining down on the advancing UHF forces.

But the UHF came prepared.

Tens of thousands anti-artillery batteries sprang to life, their precise firepower targeting the incoming shells with remarkable accuracy.

The sky lit up with intercepting munitions, streams of golden, green, and red tracer rounds and lasers creating abstract paintings in the sky, blotting out the sea of black dots below with their colourful radiance.

Innumerable artillery shells exploded in mid-air, creating thousands of pyrotechnical roses of war hovering above the battlefield before they were replaced almost immediately with nearly identical copies, while sending shrapnel raining down like a torrential downpour on the Marines continuing their advance below.

Even as the anti-artillery defences worked tirelessly, some enemy shells inevitably found their mark. Large swathes of the advancing UHF forces were abruptly replaced by smoke clouds as artillery shells succeeded in their unlikely paths.

The devastation was swift and brutal, leaving countless craters and even more mangled bodies in their wake.

Yet, the sea of black dots simply continued their march forward.

The fallen were quickly replaced by more and more UHF Marines, surging forward like a never-ending, self-regenerating entity as the missing pieces in the black sea were simply filled once again by advancing Marines.

This barrage continued for what Ukuar knew were hours, yet for him, it felt like mere minutes as he fast-forwarded the recording. There was no need to watch every artillery shell and the sheer senseless death that came with this type of direct assault.

He knew there was no way around it, of course, having taken part in this type of battlefield more times than he could remember, but that didn't change the fact that he despised this kind of warfare.

As the recording sped up, the battlefield continued to evolve.

After reaching another invisible line, the UHF finally got their chance to retaliate.

Many of the larger black rectangles, that Ukuar recognised as specialised siege tanks, opened fire on the Wall's defences.

Giant beams of iridescent light streaked through the air, cutting through the rain of ordnance and disrupting the previous spectacle with their raw and violent power as they crashed into the Wall's defensive installations with a force that shook the entire battlefield.

Heavy ordnance fired by long-range heavy-weapons emplacements, tanks, and mobile artillery complemented the massive beams, plunging the once insurmountable-seeming Wall into darkness as smoke, explosions, and debris obscured it entirely.

Simultaneously, thousands upon thousands of explosions ripped through the UHF's lines as the Wall's defences opened fire as well.

Thousands of laser batteries ionised the air and ripped through the smoke created by the UHF's unrelenting fire on the Wall, their superheated wrath cutting through swathes of black dots, hundreds upon thousands at a time.

The slug-match had officially begun; the scene one of utter chaos and raw firepower going in both directions with no regard for collateral, consequences or sustainability.

Yet, the black sea continued to advance.

Despite tens of thousands of Marines already dead and hundreds of thousands soon to follow, the UHF's assault did not falter nor slow down.

Pausing the recording, Ukuar made a few notes on his data-pad, this time focusing not on individuals, but on the overall progression of the assessment.

It was obvious that the destruction of the control stations and the unlikely coincidence of Sovereign Alpha finding the backup outpost had allowed the UHF's main assault to be more reckless and faster with their advance than he had ever thought possible.

He remembered the visuals of the Wall's automated defences all too vividly from the countless recordings he and the rest of the committee had watched when deciding on this particular Sub-Battlefield for the assessment.

The firepower levelled against the UHF troops in the current recording was downright laughable when compared to the full might of the Stellar Republic's Wall if the control stations were still active.

"It's not even a tenth as bad as it could be…" he muttered to himself as he made some further notes.

In the original battle for Nova Tertius, the main assault had wrought more than 480,000 deaths on the UHF side. For the assessment, that number was shaping up to be vastly less, despite the commanders seemingly being even more reckless with their orders than in the original battle.

'*Not that I can blame them, really. They're missing quite a number of Marines because of the Monarch's disappearance… Not exactly a walk in the park,*' he quietly mused to himself, not envying the position that Legate Kuan and the command staff were in as a result of the Void Daemon incident.

'*At the end of the day, the additional control stations that got destroyed, and Sovereign Alpha's interference with the backup, somehow managed to make the assessment slightly more doable than the original battle, huh? Now it's all up to the command staff…*'

Continuing the recording, the assault escalated further.

As the sea of Marines crossed another invisible boundary, hundreds of ships abruptly started appearing above the battlefield.

Agile fighters zipped through the air, weaving intricate patterns to avoid incoming fire, while slow but heavily armoured and weaponized bombers lumbered behind them, firing their payloads with deadly precision.

Gunships and a myriad of other types of ships darted in and out of the SADD's bubble, manoeuvring skillfully before inevitably getting hit by anti-air fire from either side or the countless enemy ships sent to counter their presence.

Giant flaming balls of wreckage crashed down onto the sea of Marines below, claiming hundreds of lives each second but the advance never stopped.

The sky was filled with the sounds of battle, a deafening level of sheer noise made up of explosions, gunfire, and the screams of the dying and wounded.

Massive eruptions from the ship's payloads hitting the Wall ruptured through the recording's audio levels, the sheer volume and intensity overwhelming anything else.

The recording had captured the unknowable chaos in stunning detail—the AI having created a viewable spectacle far more adeptly than could be done by a drone operator or any human; for that matter.

Fighters continued to burst into flames, spiralling out of control before smashing into the ground. Bombers released their deadly cargo, the bombs, rockets and payloads exploding in blinding flashes of light, sending shockwaves rippling across the battlefield.

Unwieldy gunships hovered momentarily, unleashing torrents of unfathomable firepower before being blown apart by enemy anti-aircraft batteries.

Yet despite the carnage, the UHF forces continued to press on.

Their resolve was unshaken, even as flaming debris rained down upon them. Thousands of medics moved swiftly, desperately dragging the wounded to safety and administering first aid amidst the chaos. Newly minted officers barked orders, maintaining the momentum of the assault and keeping the troops focused on their objective.

The battlefield was a scene of unimaginable destruction and carnage, yet Ukuar knew that the worst was yet to come. After all, the main bulk of both armies had not even managed to get into engagement range yet.

The battle continued like this, with the Wall continuously being bombarded, Marines dying in uncountable numbers, and ordnance blotting out the sun above them as they inched closer towards their goal.

Then, finally, the last invisible line was crossed, and true hell descended upon the battlefield.

As one, hundreds of thousands of Marines and Soldiers opened fire at their counterparts, having finally managed to get into range of their handheld weapons, rather than having to simply be casualties in a battle they couldn't interact with.

The noise was deafening, the crescendoing roar of gunfire and explosions having gotten to a point where the recording's audio simply failed to playback anything but static.

From the bird's eye view of the recording, Ukuar couldn't help but feel utterly detached from the experience.

There was not a single face, not a single Marine, nor a single group of Marines that he could make out, for they were all simply minuscule black dots, firing the smallest beams of light at other tiny dots atop the massive construct that was the Wall.

'*War like this is simply insane…*' he thought to himself as he put aside his data-pad. There were no more notes to make, no more plans to evaluate. The main assault had now fully begun, and there was nothing either side could do but play it out exactly as they had planned ahead of time.

In a massive battlefield like this, there was no way either side could make any significant changes to their battle plans. Not at this stage. The sheer scale and intensity of the conflict rendered any last-minute adjustments impossible. The strategies set in motion would have to

unfold as intended, with each side hoping their preparations and tactics would prove superior.

Ukuar leaned back, his eyes fixed on the screen. '*Let's see how Legate Kuan decided to play this.*'

The next few hours of the recording continued in much the same way, with both sides simply grinding down each other's reserves, neither side bringing any big plays to bear.

For the UHF, depleting a good portion of the Stellar Republic's ships and long-range artillery was crucial, while the Stellar Republic tried their best to eliminate as many Marines as possible and keep their defences intact to delay larger deployments for as long as possible.

Ukuar shared a few of his thoughts with Zarael over that time, pointing out troop movements, such as specific flanking manoeuvres on the west and east sides to get better angels of egress, as well as further troop reinforcements from the eastern and western fronts about halfway into the battle.

Zarael took notes and tried his best to understand what the Major was elaborating on.

Despite the constant action, Ukuar found the main assault one of the least interesting aspects of the assessment, as strange as that might sound in a vacuum.

The reason was quite simple: The assessment was meant to test individuals and squads.

In a battlefield spanning hundreds of thousands of combatants, there was very little a single individual or squad could do to turn the tide. Not at this Tier, at the very least.

In some of the high-Tier Battlefields, a T6 or T7 Ace might be able to change the course of the battle by deploying one of their Class Capstone-Abilities or using a legendary-rarity weapon to disrupt both sides' plans.

But in a T1 Battlefield, the impact any individual could have was severely limited.

Most of the significant actions had already occurred days before when the infiltration squads had destroyed or disabled the control stations. The only individuals worth analysing during this main assault were the few commanders responsible for each sector of the battle.

As such, this part of the battle held the least interest for Ukuar, despite him being very much aware of the need to check out how the main assault played out—the recording was still valuable for him to watch, if only to understand the context of events that were preceded by it later on.

The main assault reached its crescendo after a gruesome 10-hour standoff of continuous fighting when the UHF's four major siege engines were finally brought to bear—more than half a week ahead of schedule compared to the original Battlefield.

"Wow… That's early," Ukuar commented absent-mindedly as he watched the colossal machines push their way over the brown-grey sludge towards the Wall's main gate.

Everything up until this point in the assault had been solely to pave the way for these massive engines of destruction, ensuring that at least a pair of them would be capable of getting in range of the gate and destroying it.

The UHF AD's siege engines were titanic constructs of metal and engineering sorcery, each played upon twelve similarly massive legs that moved forward with deliberate precision over the crater-ridden ground. Some versions of them existed that were tread-based, but they had long fallen out of favour due to their inflexibility in uneven terrains.

These colossal machines were built from heaps of T1 materials, primarily those known for their unparalleled strength and durability in their respective Tier.

The outer hulls were composed of layered composites and reinforced alloys, designed to withstand even the most intense bombardments if necessary. Each leg, as thick as several main battle tanks stacked together, was engineered to distribute the enormous weight evenly, allowing the siege engines to traverse the battlefield's uneven terrain with ease.

Yet despite the size of the legs, without the myriad of anti-grav engines hidden inside and built into the entirety of the siege engine itself, even those would falter under the sheer weight.

The true power of these siege engines, however, lay in their paired operation.

Each machine was equipped with a massive main cannon, but the cannons fired two different payloads that needed to hit nearly simultaneously to achieve their full destructive potential.

One engine fired a massive shell of a T1 accelerant known as Rikum. The other cannon unleashed a payload containing a highly volatile and destructive T1 Material known as Ignium, familiar to the Marines of the eastern front.

The synergy between the two was crucial; the accelerant was designed to allow the Ignium to not only burn hotter and faster, but also to chew through materials *far* beyond its usual capacity. Where a basic shell of the IgT compound could be countered by mere T1 materials, Ignium, when properly coupled with Rikum, was capable of eating through T2 materials and could even severely damage T3 materials if left to its own devices.

To achieve this synergy, a coordinated assault with very precise timing and positioning was required, which was why the siege engines always operated in pairs.

Simply mixing the two materials together would not work, as they would instantly react and eat through any potential casings that made sense to manufacture for them. Similarly, having both in the same shell, simply separated by a wall, would also not lead to success, as the Ignium needed to be applied to an already resting form of the Rikum.

As such, pairs of siege engines had been devised that would fire near simultaneously, with the Rikum shell going first, followed closely by the Ignium to maximise its destructive capability. This combination was designed to eat through the solid T1 main gate of the Wall, creating a breach large enough for the UHF forces to exploit.

The UHF AD's siege engines were now stomping their way across the battlefield, slowly but surely getting closer and closer to their destination. The ground visibly shook with each step they took, the rhythmic booming and pounding sending shockwaves through the battlefield.

As they advanced, the battlefield seemed to hold its breath, the sheer size and power of these machines a sight to behold.

But the Stellar Republic didn't simply sit idly by, waiting for their formidable defences to inevitably be destroyed by these behemoths. They launched a series of desperate countermeasures to halt the advance of the siege engines.

First, multiple swarms of agile fighters and heavily armed bombers descended from the sky, likely representing the last major air-forces of the Stellar Republic in this area, targeting the siege engines with precision strikes. The air was filled with the roar of engines and the flash of explosions as these ships unloaded their deadly payloads.

The UHFs own air forces had long dwindled to single-digit squadrons, but they did their best to intercept as many of the incoming ships as they could. Simultaneously, anti-aircraft fire from the UHF ground forces filled the sky with literal walls of tracer rounds and flak bursts, creating a deadly aerial ballet, in many cases so thick that even the heavily armoured bombers got simply ripped to shreds.

Despite their best efforts, the fighters and bombers of the Stellar Republic struggled to penetrate the thick armour of the siege engines with their sporadic hits. Too many of them were shot down before they could deliver their payloads, their flaming wrecks crashing to the ground in fiery explosions.

But the air-assault wasn't the only play in the Stellar Republic's books, as they turned to their massive array of ground-based artillery, located safely behind the Wall, outside of reach from the UHFs forces.

Where previously, those thousands of artillery cannons had fired shrapnel and explosive shells, they had now switched to Titan Killer munitions; specifically designed T1 ammunition to breach heavily armoured vehicles.

As the initial attempts of the ships ebbed away, the bombardment started seamlessly, clearly meticulously orchestrated by the command units on the enemy side.

Blankets of thick artillery shells started descending through the dark smoke that had blotted out the sun many hours ago, their aim more precise than before, not simply aiming for quantity but also quality in destruction.

The four siege engines were inundated by the torrent of Titan Killer ammunition raining down on them, despite each engine's anti-artillery laser batteries doing their best to intercept and melt as many shells as possible before they could reach their target.

While Titan Killer ammunition was designed to be armour-piercing, the siege engines were specifically designed to outlast those.

Each impact sent shrapnel flying in all directions as the shells got ripped apart by the forces of the impact, the siege engines' reinforced, reactive hulls absorbing and redirecting the brunt of the damage.

Still, the sheer volume of fire began to take its toll, with visible dents and scorch marks appearing on the massive machines; with rare lucky hits penetrating deep into the behemoths before wreaking havoc in their internal systems.

Each of the siege engines lost functionality in at least two legs as a result of the continued Titan Killer bombardment on their way towards the Wall, but none of them were stopped dead in their tracks.

Finally, as the siege engines threatened to reach their destinations, the Stellar Republic's last line of defence came into play.

A massive blue beam abruptly split the battlefield, crashing against the formidable armour of the siege engine closest to the main gate. The horrific screeching sound, as if the giant behemoth of metal was screaming in pain, overshadowed all other noise from the battlefield.

Combatants on both sides stopped firing in a vain attempt to cover their ears, as the siege engine's armour began to peel away.

Massive anti-tank rounds from the anti-armor cannons atop the Wall focused their fire on the stunned behemoth. Each shot visibly rocked the siege engine, slowly pushing the gigantic vehicle backward as the crew aboard struggled to maintain balance.

Then, a second blue beam appeared, boring into the left flank of the behemoth. The renewed screeching sound of metal being torn asunder overlapped with the first, creating a cacophony so loud that combatants within a few hundred metres of the siege engine simply collapsed.

The UHF's counterfire at the anti-armor cannons and the beam emitters was fierce, but it became apparent quickly that it was too late.

First, the front two legs of the siege engine buckled as the beams managed to cut through critical parts holding the front of the behemoth together.

As the front of the siege engine ducked down due to the missing legs, the combined raw kinetic forces of the anti-armor cannons, coupled with the rain of Titan Killers, caused the remaining legs to falter one after another. The siege engine crumpled onto the ground, sending a massive shockwave of debris and sludge spewing in every direction.

Even grounded, the siege engine was not destroyed, however.

Its main cannon moved painfully slowly, the crew aboard now realising they were not going to get in range for their critical shot, and instead aimed towards the beam emitter in front of them.

Before the siege engine could fire, however, the two blue beams rapidly cut across the surface of its armour towards the cannon itself, recognizing the danger the wounded beast still represented.

With the continuous screeching of metal being torn asunder, the beams reached the cannon at the exact moment the siege engine fired.

A colossal shockwave rocked the grounded siege engine backward a few metres.

Its massive payload dislodged from the front of the barrel, only to be immediately struck by the blue beams, exploding in a gigantic ball of fire that threatened to consume everything in the recording's field of view, before rapidly shrinking down again.

The huge shell filled with concentrated Ignium had exploded right above the behemoth.

Parts of the Ignium were carried by the consistent gunfire all across the battlefield, leaving burning debris and screams of melting combatants in their wake.

The vast majority of the Ignium, however, started eating its way through the exposed inner workings of the siege engine. The outer layer of its armour had long been stripped, broken, or ripped apart by the Stellar Republic's focused fire.

Moments later, the Ignium found what it had been looking for.

A cascading series of failures ruptured through the internal structure of the siege engine as the core's fail-safes were rapidly eaten away by the Ignium.

Large swathes of Marines nearby had recognized the danger the moment the siege engine had fallen, sprinting away from it with everything they could muster.

Yet, from Ukuar's bird's-eye perspective, it looked like they had barely even moved at all. The scale of the behemoths was simply too massive for a single Marine to truly understand or outrun the consequences of its failure.

Abruptly, the battlefield turned aggressively silent.

A warning flashed on the recording as it darkened itself, cautioning the viewers of potential, momentary vision impairment.

Then, the core, powered by the most volatile of the lower-Tier materials, after the final fail-safe had been eaten away, exploded. A miniature sun was born, disintegrating the siege engine and anything around it in an instant, before simply disappearing, leaving behind a crater almost a kilometre in radius and a vacuum that was rapidly filled by a massive gush of air rushing in.

"It's odd," Ukuar commented with a stern look on his face. "How we got two major Solarium explosions in a single assessment, don't you think?"

Simply nodding, Lieutenant Zarael agreed, "Considering how rare they usually are, it is indeed quite odd. But with a main assault requiring the siege engines, I couldn't imagine how

else it would go. Losing only one is a massive victory in itself, even if it did end up going critical."

The Major couldn't help but agree.

In the original Battlefield, three of the four siege engines had been grounded, two of which were completely destroyed before they could even get in range to consider firing. Only through sheer luck and the sacrifice of the third grounded siege engine's crew firing off their critical shot at the gate before also exploding, had the UHF managed to get into the city itself.

The cost for victory on that day had been exorbitantly high.

With the first siege engine destroyed, the Stellar Republic's main defences focused on the next closest one, but it quickly became apparent that it was too little, too late.

Just half an hour after deployment, the siege engines had managed to get into position.

A pair of them fired their payloads at the main gate, again and again.

The once solid, impenetrable gate started rapidly melting under the continuous bombardment. Each shell of Rikium caused the Ignium already eating away at the massive gates to flare up further and further, rapidly accelerating the destructive process with each shot.

The final, remaining siege engine opened fire with its own Ignium shells, dousing the top of the Wall, the beam emitters, and the anti-armor cannons in liquid flame that ate away at anything and everything.

Ukuar paused the recording and picked up his data-pad again. "Is there anything else that happens in this one, or am I right in assuming that this basically ended the main assault?" he asked Zarael.

"That's pretty much it, yeah," the Lieutenant confirmed after a moment of thought.

"It's quite impressive just how different this assessment has played out so far… The fact that the Stellar Republic used up a large stockpile of their IgT-shells on the eastern front early on made the main assault a downright breeze," Ukuar commented, as he wrote down his thoughts on the main assault and evaluated the work of the command staff.

"Not to mention the destruction of the control stations going surprisingly smoothly and the lack of backup really hurting them when it came to the siege engine response. Only having enough processing power to use two of their Cutters made a massive difference, no doubt."

He noted down how he agreed with the decisions of Legate Kuan to go for a decisive push right off the bat, including the fact that he had pulled in reinforcements from both sides as well, to further spread the Stellar Republic's limited Wall defences thin.

Surprisingly enough, the loss of the Monarch's Marines had not dealt as massive a blow to the UHF forces in the assessment so far as Ukuar had expected.

While losing almost 80,000 Marines was a big hit, the type of main assaults that decided victory and defeat in these circumstances were often won without the infantry becoming important at all.

Their missing bodies would be felt a lot more once the final push into the city itself became the objective, however, something that Ukuar was looking forward to a lot more.

Without the massive scale, the massive vehicles, and the myriad of large-scale destruction stratagems, individuals and squads played a bigger role once again when it came to securing the strategic objectives within the city proper.

“Alright, let’s move on to the next recording. I think I’m done with this one,” Ukuar noted as he made a few final adjustments to his notes.

“That’s it. You’re all caught up, Major,” Lieutenant Zarael smiled. “The main assault happened around five days ago. The UHF has been slowly but surely making their way through the city towards the final staging ground. It should only be… about one or two days now, until the advance squads are sent to clear it out.”

Ukuar was surprised at first, but after a few moments of thought, it started making sense.

A large portion of the assessment had taken place long before any major objectives could even be achieved—mainly the landing, the trek up to the city, and the initial assault on the Wall to allow the infiltration squads to pass through.

While the first main objective had only been tackled a little over a week ago, the Marines had been fighting to get to that point for quite a lot longer.

“Very well. Thank you for your expertise on this matter, Lieutenant. I won’t forget your kindness in providing these selected recordings to me,” Ukuar thanked Zarael, appreciating the over-eager Lieutenant's assistance. Without him, Ukuar was certain he would have spent a lot more time trying to pick and choose which sections of the assessment to review.

He now had a more in-depth understanding of the overall progress of the assessment and a rather detailed rundown of how Sovereign Alpha had performed so far.

With only a single major objective remaining, the Recruits' part in the assessment was soon to be over.

Unfortunately for him, that meant a whole host more paperwork to fill out in the very near future.

With a resigned sigh, Ukuar got up from his seat, thanked Zarael once again, and left the viewing room.

He had a few things to check, such as the open market for the Marines in the assessment and the overall ratings on the members of Sovereign Alpha, before he could write a full report for Major Quinn.

One thing he was already certain of, however, was that writing the report about their Alpha Squad, and Recruit Thea McKay in particular, was going to be a *massive* pain in his ass…