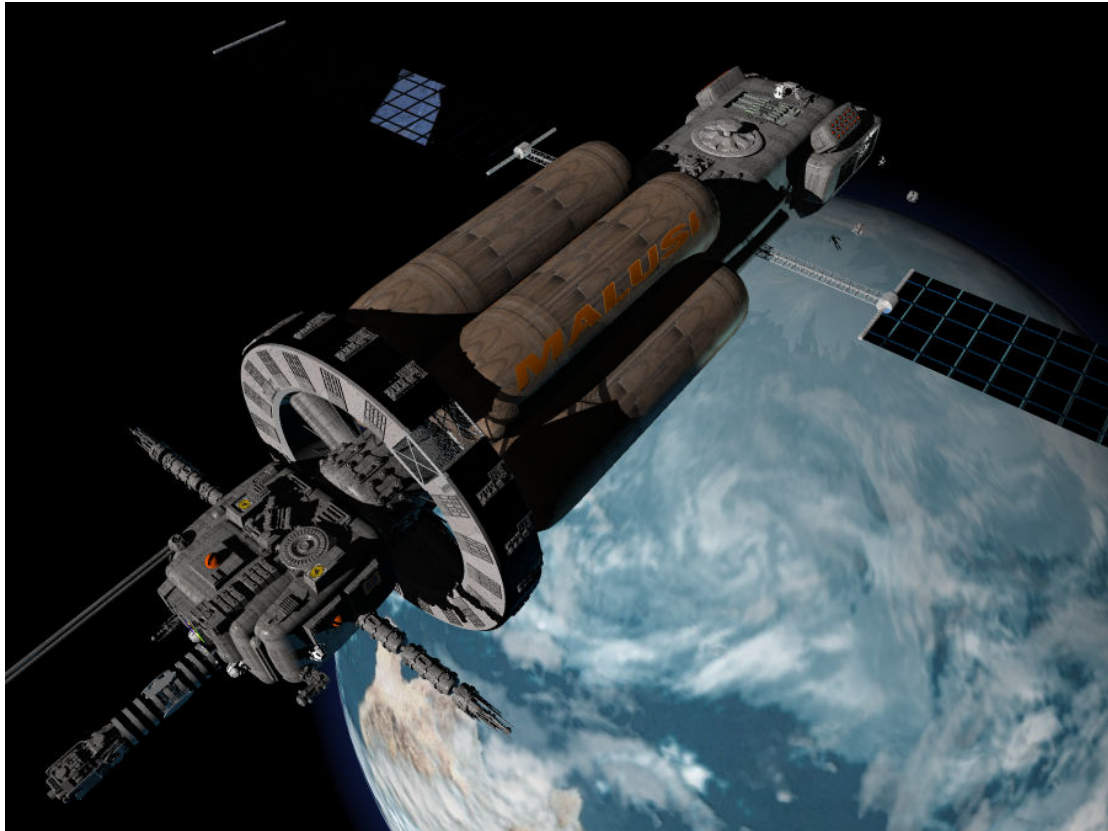


Malusi-class Multifunction Frigate



The Malusi represents a new wave of Azanian experimentation, both in strategy and in financing. Although an Azanian ship, it was designed by Lawson-Ridcott Llc at Wellon together with Johannesburg Aerospace, built at the Tirane shipyards and partially sponsored by the Wellon government. The idea is to use actual Azanian experience with the ship to design the next generation of Wellonese ships. Wellon naval employees often accompany it on its missions.

The design was partially inspired by the missile delivery ships that saved mankind in the Battle of Nibelungen: while their mortality rate was enormous, the power of being able to field vast amounts of missiles against enemy capital ships was obvious. The Azanian and Wellon designers tried to construct a system control ship: rather than participate directly in the battle, the ship would direct numerous submunitions, missiles, sensor packages and space mines. It is essentially a mobile command centre, with elements of minelayer and scout. In peacetime it would be used to police the outer parts of a solar system, maintaining sensors and automated defences. In the case of war, it would be able to unload large numbers of drones and direct them against the enemy.

Much of the volume is taken up by cylindrical storage bays for missiles, mines and potentially even fighters. These cylinders can in principle be replaced with standard cargo canisters: the Malusi can double as a cargo or even troop transport ship in a pinch. This fits the overall “konke gobhoza” adaptationist philosophy that has recently become popular among Azanians; on the frontier everything should be potentially multifunctional.

The bridge module is equipped with extensive sensor and communications arrays on three telescoping "horns". When fully unfolded they can maintain control and communications with hundreds of objects, making the Malusi the first "high bandwidth frigate". The two cooling surfaces can also double as synthetic aperture antenna array, enabling both very powerful active sensing and high-resolution passive sensing. It is well suited for keeping track of outsystem activity, whether by smugglers or Kafers. It has been remarked that besides being able to play at being a cargo ship it can also work as a survey ship, something Wellon might well want. Equipped with cartographic sensors or connected to a satellite constellation it could also direct orbit-ground bombardment with high precision.

The ship has four missile batteries with 18 missiles each and a few point defences, but little armour and no screens. The idea is that it will be surrounded by a multilayered "gauntlet" of ordnance and sensor drones, making anybody approaching likely to be wiped out. It has relatively good manoeuvrability, especially when the crew compartment rotation is stopped. The designers did not work too hard on making it stealthy, although they used low profile synthetics for the hull and have added features intended to help it hide in gas giant magnetospheres.

Opinions about the crew quarters are divided. They are relatively cramped, but with pseudogravity and with some Tiranese ergonomic design features that impress many Azanian spacers.

Critics have said that the Malusi is neither fish nor fowl; too lightly armoured to survive a serious engagement, too expensive to be truly multifunctional, too much high-tech and yet carrying a too old-fashioned and weak Azanian drive/reactor pair. The storage tanks are inferior to real bays, making unloading cumbersome and slow. While potentially the ship could act as a missile frigate the tanks would limit its operations unless it could plan ahead and launch beforehand. Some think it should be stealthed, others that it needs less tanks and more armour.

The designers are not worried. They have stated that the criticism is simply due to the radical new approach, and that they are confident that this ultra-versatile ship will prove itself. So far it has been sent for sentry duty at Kimanjano, intended to look for smugglers and Kafer infiltrators.

Ship Data

Length: 66 m, diameter 15 m. Power plant: 25 MW fission, drive 25 MW new military. Bridge stations: Captain, Navigator, 3xComms, Engineering, 2xComputer. Tactical stations: 2xSensors, 3xFire control, 10xRemote Pilot. 2 Medical. Accommodations 25m³, spin gravity. Duration 4 months. Sensors: navigation radar, deep system scanner, grav scanner, 5 MW active sensors. 5 laser external mounts with Hyde Dynamics EA122 and UTES. 4 missile packs Ritage II. 3000 m³ storage space. Hull LP synthetics. Radiators 625 m². Mass: 2357 tons unloaded, 5357 tons loaded. Drive efficiency: 3.85/2.92. Expense: 62.53 MLv.

(Active range 13, Passive range 10, Target computer +2, Comfort 0. Radial and lateral signature: 7. Radiated signature 5. Hull hits: 14. Power plant hits 30. Target profile 0/+1)