A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Vree vs. Dilgar In A Call To Arms

EXTINCTION PROTOCOL

Brand New Starship Troopers Comic Strip!

HEAVY METAL

Mongoose Bosses In Fight To The Finish Shocker!

Plus. . . ACTA Armageddon Preview, more Scenic Mayhem,
Centauri Tactical Manual and lots, lots more!

Signs & Portents

Avast, mateys!

Yar, this month, yer editor be talkin' like a pirate! Harr!

Splice yer mainbrace and lissen good, lad – Mongoose Publishin' be havin' a good few new games a'comin' on the horizon. Yarrrr, as well as th' new Babylon 5 ground combat game, thurs bin th' arrival o' Victory at Sea on th' release schedules, which everyone be waxing lyrical about despite th' lack o' pirates, matey, but it be havin' ships in it, even ifs they bain't as good as pirate ships! Harr!

Tother big news has bin the arrival of Conan the Barbarian into th' miniatures gamin' market – harr, this be good news! Not only is the Cimmerian be havin' plenty o' scope for mighty battles in th' lands o' ancient times, many of Howard's tales featured pirates, so thur be lookin' like a good scope fer the future o' piraty miniatures! Harr, life be good…

Matt

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Features

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EYE ON MONGOOSE

Coming This Month

Broo Raiders

Creatures of Chaos, Broo are twisted hybrids of men and deer, antelopes or goats. They are the beastmen of legend and engage in the foulest practices, rubbing dung into their fur and worshipping the gods of disease. There is no standard form for a Broo and all are mongrels roaming wastes, deserts, swamps and mountain ranges. Raiding any group of creatures weaker than themselves, they often take prisoners for sadistic torture or food.

This box set contains 8 Broo Raiders, ready to give your players a real hammering!

Duck Adventurers

A race cursed during the Great Darkness by the gods for not siding with them against the forces of Chaos, Ducks are a twisted and embittered people. Whether they were once human given a comedic form or birds cursed with flightlessness and intelligence is not known but they are rarely given high regard by other races and have suffered from the attentions of tyrants many times in their history. Ducks are often suspicious and mistrustful of others, rarely expecting an even break. Many turn to petty crime or other malicious behaviour but a small number manage to find a place in the world where their talents are valued by friends.

This box set contains 10 Duck Adventurers in a variety of roles, from bandit and warrior to ranger and priest.

An extremely rare variation of the tanker bug, the thorny tankers have so far only been sighted on worlds close to the borders of the Arachnid Quarantine Zone. Just as tough as the original breed, thorny tankers lose the renowned caustic spit and are instead focussed on brute force assaults. Their characteristic 'thorny' carapaces add a new level of protection but are also admirably suited to shredding large vehicles and structures, simply by the bug battering its way through them. Thorny tankers are therefore used in frontal assaults where fortifications are to be breached.

If you are looking for a heavy weight, well-armoured line-smasher that will destroy vehicles and structures alike, you cannot go wrong with the Thorny Tanker!

Themselves a variation on the hopper bug, there are several forms of the common rippler, each developed for slightly different uses. The rippler bug is built a little lighter than the hopper bug and is thus more agile in flight. However, it is also more susceptible to enemy fire and large numbers can be brought down in concentrated attacks.

When a colony begins breeding rippler bugs, it will do so in great numbers, aiming to literally fill the surrounding sky with these airborne attackers. With sufficient preparation, a colony can make effective air support almost impossible for any attacker and cause ground forces to suffer correspondingly. Ripplers mature at a frightening rate, far faster than the larger hopper bugs, allowing these huge swarms to be produced at great pace.

For greater tactical variety, Rippler Bugs can be upgraded to be armed with ranged poison spines, or to use a kamikaze attack mode that can knock down even TAC Fighters.

This box set contains nine plastic Rippler Bugs.

Skinnie Cabal

On worlds dominated by the primitive brute gene, Skinnies displaying psychic potential are often treated with mistrust and suspicion. Forced to gather together in small groups known as cabals for mutual protection, they are capable of dominating lesser brutes with the power of their collective minds, becoming leaders of their tribe. Newly born Skinnie brutes displaying similar talents are either taken into the cabal or cast out of the tribe altogether, often on the whim of the ruling psychics. Those who are thrown into the wilderness and survive to adulthood will often be drawn together, forming their own cabal, albeit one without a tribe to rule over. Occasionally, they return to their original homes, challenging the ruling cabal for leadership in a psychic duel to the death.

Skinnie Leader of Slaves

Many slaves who are captured by the Skinnies either buckle down to servitude or die at the hands of their masters. Few have the opportunity to rise above their station and the chances of rescue are slim once they have been taken deep into the Hegemony. A rare few are spared the back-breaking burdens of hard labour for the terrors of the gladiatorial arenas, where their lives are often brutally short. A skilful warrior, however, may survive hundreds of matches as he begins to learn the ways of Skinnie society. If he possesses the traits of a great leader, he may gather other slaves to his banner, finally rising up in rebellion against his Skinnie master. Successful rebellions are usually crushed by a fully mobilised army but, occasionally, a leader of slaves may gain the respect of a neighbouring tribe as he proves his strength and courage. Permitted to rise within the ranks of the Skinnie military, he is allowed to wield real power in exchange for serving the tribe and Hegemony. Now turned truly native, the leader of slaves often returns to his homeworlds at the head of a mixed slave and Skinnie army, looking for new blood to throw into the arenas, the spectacle of which he now enjoys himself.

Skinnie Slaves

Ranking below the militia in a Skinnie army are slaves, drawn from a pool of millions of alien races that have been raided throughout the years. Such is the population of slaves in some Skinnie settlements that many are bred for the sole purpose of entering the gladiatorial arena or battle. Though most tribal leaders have the option of using slaves, many do not, preferring instead to rely on troops that will not run at the first sign of danger or try to escape when sent on patrol. They are armed very poorly and most are not expected to survive the confrontation into which they are sent.

This box set contains 14 Skinnie Slaves.

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A Close Encounter

The Battles of the Dilgar War, Part IV   Greg Smith

Approximate Date: October 8th, 2231.

Throughout the later months of 2231, a delegation of Alacan, Abbai and Brakiri ambassadors travelled from world to world, from race to race, hoping to gather allies to fight the Dilgar. The Narn refused, afraid their involvement would give the Centauri an excuse to attack them. While the Pak'ma'ra agreed to provide logistical and medical support, they simply did not possess the warships to join the fight. The envoys could do little other than warn the Gaim and Descari that invasion was imminent. The Yolu, despite having fought in the last Shadow War, declined to help.

Surprisingly, it was the Vree that agreed to commit their ships to the fight. As a mercantile people, involvement in a war went against every tenet of Vree belief. Their motives were not entirely altruistic - they could see their customers disappearing, a species at a time. With a promise from the Brakiri that expenses would be repaid after the war, the Spacers' Guild despatched a fleet to Brakos.

The first flotilla of ships left Vreetan and headed for Brakos via Descari and Markab space. When the ships entered the jump gate at Sin'talith they emerged into hyperspace amongst a Dilgar fleet inbound from Gamma 7. The Dilgar immediately opened fire on the Vree saucers.

Historical Note

History does not record the outcome of this battle. Records dating from the war show that the two forces almost certainly met, but no survivors or wreckage were ever found. Given the perils faced in hyperspace, it is likely that the victor's ships were unable to maintain their navigational beacon locks and were lost in the unstable currents between worlds.

Dilgar Imperium Fleet

En route for N'chak'fah, the Dilgar were not expecting to face any resistance from the Gaim, who possessed no

spacecraft at the time. Their vessels were mostly assault ships and they were at a disadvantage against the manoeuvrable Vree. The Dilgar fleet comprises one Kahtrik assault ship, two Rohric assault ships, two Omelos light cruisers and two Jashakar scout ships.

Vree Conglomerate Fleet

The Vree were expecting battle and they sent warships. Their fleet consists of six Xorr war saucers, two Xixx torpedo saucers, two Vaarka escort scouts and six Tzymm heavy fighter flights.

Pre-Battle Preparation

The battle takes place in hyperspace and so no stellar debris is used. A jump gate is placed as shown on the map. The Dilgar player sets his fleet up first in the deployment zone in the centre of the table. All of the Dilgar ships must be positioned facing towards the jump gate. The Vree player then places his ships in the same deployment zone, facing away from the jump gate. The Vree ships are then moved 2d6 inches in a random direction while maintaining their facing. Initiative is rolled normally.

Scenario Rules

The rules for battles in hyperspace are used. As the jump gate generates the beacon for navigation in hyperspace, a ship within 10" of the gate does not need to roll to maintain its beacon lock. A ship within 20" of the jump gate may re-roll a failed Crew Quality check to restore its beacon lock (this is instead of re-rolling for a friendly ship that has a lock).

Ships may retreat from the battlefield using the Initiate Jump Point! special action at any time. They may also withdraw using the jump gate, however the jump gate will be recharging during the first three turns and so cannot be used until turn four. Any ship that has lost its lock-on to the beacon cannot withdraw.

Game Length

Ten turns or until one side has no ships left on the table (running adrift, surrendered and destroyed ships do not count as viable ships).

Victory and Defeat

This scenario uses Victory Points to determine who wins. It is a Priority Level: Raid battle. Remember that any ship that has lost its beacon lock-on counts as having been destroyed.

Signs & Portents

ASSEMBLING YOUR KING TANKER

ADRIAN WALTERS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Modelling clippers, Modelling file, Modelling knife, Pin Vice, Paper clip wire or similar, Cyano-Acrylate glue or SuperGlue, Modelling filler.

We have had a few requests from those amongst you who aren't experienced modellers for a guide to constructing the awesome new King Tanker, so we lashed Mongoose painting guru Adrian Walters to a table until he came up with this easy to follow walk through, so now you'll have no excuses!

2. Assemble the metal upper thorax, modified plastic lower thorax, head and upper legs. The head must be sandwiched between the upper and lower thorax parts as shown; it will NOT push in after. The legs should NOT be glued in place at this point, just assemble so they are free moving in their positions. Fill any small gaps with filler.

1. Assemble the two upper parts of the abdomen. Remove the ridges and pins from the lower part of the thorax as shown in the picture.

STAGE ONE

STAGE TWO

Signs & Portents

3. Add the thorax armour section as shown. Fill any gaps between it and the previous thorax sub-assembly.

STAGE THREE

4. Glue the armour plates to the pre-assembled upper abdomen as shown.

STAGE FOUR

5. Sandwich the Thorax assembly between the upper and lower abdomen. Do not glue the ball joint in place yet, just the join between the upper and lower Abdomen parts.

It is recommended that the leg joints are pinned together due to the weight of the model.

STAGE FIVE

6. Using a pin vice and paper clip wire, pin the feet to the legs. Also drill holes in the 'knee' joints, both on the metal legs and the plastic upper legs that are part of the thorax/abdomen assembly. Do not glue at this point.

STAGE SIX

8. Attach the small rear legs. These must be modified by removing the ball joints. Depending on how the thorax/abdomen was assembled and the height of the body/legs; some of the angles of the small legs may need to be changed. Simply adjust the leg/abdomen angle with a modelling knife. On our example this was NOT necessary.

STAGE EIGHT

7. Assemble the legs. This is most easily achieved by using a support for the thorax/abdomen assembly; I used 'BluTac'. Assemble the legs one at a time, ensuring the feet are flat on the ground, and then glue all the joints in place: feet, knee and thorax. Repeat for all the legs. Allow the glue to dry thoroughly before moving the model.

STAGE SEVEN

9. Attach the mandibles.

STAGE NINE

10. The finished beast...

STAGE TEN

11. Now get on and it!

Basic Tactical Manual

Strategy and Tactics for the basic game of A Call to Arms

Alan Oliver

Part IV: The Centauri Republic

Fleet Strengths

The Centauri are an advanced race. Technologically, they are older than the Narn Regime, EarthForce or most members of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, but not as advanced as the Minbari Federation or the First Ones, and this can be seen throughout their fleet.

For a start over half of their ships mount interceptors, and although not possessing the massive banks of interceptors that some EarthForce ships have, they still mount enough to reduce enemy fire susceptible to interceptors by around 20%. Obviously these are also concentrated on the heavier and more important ships, although they even fit them to the Patrol priority scout, for added defence. As this ship has to go into harm's way to find the enemy, that is understandable.

Also just under 65% of the fleet are equipped with jump engines, allowing for greater flexibility in deployment and escape.

Their main heavy armament, the battle laser, is also a very effective weapon. Like the Minbari neutron laser it has the full forward arc of fire, which allows a greater flexibility of movement. In addition, the range of the battle lasers is good to excellent. The battleship has a very impressive 35" range, the Primus battlecruiser and the three Raid priority ships with

battle lasers all have a range of 25", and even the Skirmish priority Darkner fast attack frigate has a range of 20". When coupled with the wide arcs of these weapons, you should be able to deal significant damage to the enemy as you close, often before they can fire off a shot. In a recent battle of annihilation against EarthForce, a Centauri fleet destroyed four fifths of the EarthForce fleet, with the loss of only two flights of Sentri fighters through the judicious use of battle lasers. I would certainly recommend basing any fleet selection around heavy use of the battle laser, making the most of this advantage. In the

The short-range particle arrays are a useful weapon system as they are mounted in large numbers on most ships, and with the twin-linked Special Quality they can prove effective against even heavily armoured targets. Also, they are ideal for burning out interceptors on enemy targets, allowing the matter cannon rounds to hit solidly. Although not specifically an anti fighter weapon, they are typically mounted in sufficient numbers in enough arcs to make fighter assaults against your fleet troublesome. In fact you can lure the enemy fighters into attacking by having your Maximus anti fighter frigate drift from your other ships, making your enemy think there is an opening for a fighter assault on your ships, and have the particle arrays whittle them down with massed fire.

early stages of the battle, as you close, you should target enemy ships with weaker hulls as these can often be taken out of the fight completely before they can even fire upon your ships.

As mentioned, you have good freedom of movement while still keeping the enemy in your main weapon arcs. This enables you to take advantage of the speed and agility of most Centauri ships. Against most races you will be faster, and more agile, than their fleet, allowing you to control the range of the encounter to a greater degree. As your most effective weapons have wide arcs and comparably long range, you will often want to keep the range open during the early stages of the battle until your battle lasers have caused some respectable damage, maybe even destroyed a ship or two before they come into range.

The matter cannon is a respectable secondary weapon, and is normally mounted in sufficient numbers to have an effect; however, if you have a choice between matter cannon or battle laser equipped ships, you should go for the battle lasers.

Your fighters are among the better space superiority craft in the galaxy; of the younger races only the Minbari have better dogfighters and theirs are the best in the galaxy. They are capable of engaging and destroying enemy fighters with relative ease, and are agile enough to dodge hostile fire as they approach.

Fleet Weaknesses

You do not have everything your own way; there are certainly flaws in the Centauri fleet. However, these flaws are more specific weaknesses of certain classes rather than design flaws across the entire fleet.

While jump engines are widespread in your fleet, you do not have any ships with advanced jump engines as standard, so the more devastating jump point tactics are denied you. This also means that you will be vulnerable when you bring reinforcements into real space. This is not crippling, it simply

means that you will have to plan for how to deploy any reserves. You need to bring them in far enough away from the enemy that you will not take crippling fire while your ships recover, which is complicated by the random nature of the jump point's location.

One answer for this is to hope that you roll for advanced jump engines on the refit table with experienced ships, however there is no way to ensure that this happens in a campaign.

You are severely limited in the range of ships available to you above Raid priority, with only the Battle priority Primus battle cruiser and the War priority Octarion battleship available. Both are good ships and will be discussed later, but they are both all-round ships, you have no specialist high priority ships.

Your specialist ships also tend to be low priority ships; your scout is only Patrol priority, and your fleet carrier and command ship, the Balvarin carrier, is only a Raid priority vessel. Admittedly your battleship is equal to a command ship and much more survivable. This does mean that your valuable assets are more easily killed, but also means that they are cheaper to buy, and are not tying up large amounts of your force performing their special duties. The Corvan scout is cheap enough that you should be able to buy the scout advantage without overly weakening your combat forces.

Your Sentri fighters, while excellent at space superiority, are poor anti ship vessels. Although they have three attack dice, the weapons are weak making them less useful against ships. Although if the enemy are hull 6, the weak weapons will not make any difference.

Patrol Priority Options
You have three options at this priority, four flights of Sentri fighters, the Corvan scout and the Haven patrol boat.

The Sentri fighters are not a bad choice if your enemy will have plenty of fighters available. Your fighters are cheaper and are there to attack enemy fighters, so getting four flights per point compared to other fleets who get three, gives you a definite advantage.

The Corvan scout packs a lot of technology into a small hull. Its weaponry is minimal, and the hull is not strong; but this ship is not built to engage the enemy, it is designed to support bigger ships. It has jump engines to allow other small ships without jump engines to enter the war zone, or to slip ahead to scout the territory. It has duel layer defences, stealth and interceptors, making it more difficult to kill than you would expect for a Patrol priority ship. Have two or three of these cheap ships lurking on the edge of the battlefield providing their electronic warfare support is generally a good investment. They can even slice in during the later turns of a battle to finish off crippled enemy ships with what little firepower they have.

The Haven patrol boat is less useful, and should not appear in your fleet at any priority higher than Patrol. At Patrol it is your only option for actually engaging the enemy ships, and it does at least mount a pair of matter cannon which will do a little

damage to even large ships. If fighting a battle at Raid priority and you take an option at patrol to get a pair of Corvan scouts, a Haven to escort them might prove useful in keeping small ships away from your scouts, but that choice might be better used bringing some independent fighters to the battle.

Skirmish Priority Options

Now this is where you have plenty of options; Darkner fast attack frigate, Kutai gunship, Maximus frigate, Morgrath frigate and the Vorchan warship.

The Darkner fast attack frigate is a strong contender, as it mounts a pair of battle lasers. If you are going with a battle laser fleet, the Darkner will add some firepower as you close, and is the only skirmish ship to mount battle lasers so is the obvious choice. It also has the highest damage and crew of the skirmish fleet; however, it has a low Hull score and no interceptors, all of which make it vulnerable to enemy fire. You will have to use your high speed and agility to avoid enemy firepower.

The Kutai gunship is not a strong contender. Its main weapons are only matter cannon, and it has both a poor Hull and very low Damage and Crew ratings. The only things that it has going for it are speed, agility and a Dodge against enemy fire. However the dodge will only stop 33% of the enemy fire, and one solid hit will take it out. Unless you have a specific need for a ship with a Dodge, look elsewhere.

The Maximus frigate has several useful functions. For a start it is the only Centauri ship with dedicated anti fighter weapons, although with flights of Sentri around and massed particle array firepower this is not essential. In addition it has a Hull of 6, which is better than any other Centauri Skirmish ship, and interceptors which allows it to perform its main function. Its function is to escort the larger ships and provide anti fighter

cover. All in all it is a valuable addition to a fleet, right up there with the Darkner.

The Morgrath frigate is another weak contender, the weapons that it carries are short ranged and will not support a battle laser based fleet. Its Damage and Crew ratings are comparable to the Maximus frigate, but it has a weaker Hull rating. It does have interceptors, but no more than the Maximus frigate. This is a compromise choice at best, but generally not worth taking.

The Vorchan warship has one advantage over the other Skirmish ships: speed. Apart from this, there is not that much to recommend it. Weaponry is only average, the plasma accelerator is as effective as a matter cannon, which does not match up with the battle lasers of the Darkner fast attack frigate. If you are not using a battle laser fleet, for some strange reason, then its weaponry will fit with other matter cannon ships, and it does pack a good amount of particle arrays. It does of course have one other major advantage; it is a fine looking ship and deserves to be seen on the tabletop.

Overall the two best options are the Maximus for anti fighter escort work and the Darkner to operate as part of a battle laser fleet. The other ships are less useful and are best kept for special occasions.

Raid Priority Options

Again you have plenty of options at raid priority; the Altarian destroyer, Balvarin carrier, Centurion attack cruiser, Dargan strike cruiser and the Sulust escort destroyer. Four of these ships are line warships, selection between them based upon the needs of your fleet; the other is a carrier so is obviously a specialist ship.

The Altarian destroyer has strengths and weaknesses. In it is favour it is the only raid ship with a Hull rating of 6. However that is really all it has going for it, as there are a number of problems with it. It is the only warship that does not carry battle lasers. Its matter cannon are useful, but not as useful as the battle lasers of the other ships.

The Balvarin carrier, as the only carrier in the Centauri fleet, it is obviously the best carrier available. It is not brilliant; for a start it only carries six flights of Sentri fighters, but does do the

job. It is a command ship equal to the Octarion battleship, and has full fleet carrier capabilities which will make the Sentri nearly unstoppable in dogfights. Being only a Raid priority ship it is also quite cheap, allowing you to field a command ship, which has to avoid direct combat, without sacrificing too much of your fleet points. Worth taking to command any fleet at raid or higher priority, assuming you have a large enough fleet to afford to keep a Raid ship out of the action.

The Centurion attack cruiser is a good solid choice, it has battle lasers to support a battle laser fleet, is as fast as any of the other priority ships, has a jump drive and has a good array of backup weapons. It has a higher damage and crew ratings than the Dargon strike cruiser and is comparable to the Sulust escort destroyer. Now there is little to choose between these three ships, but the Centurion possibly has the edge, at least at lower priority levels where it makes a good core to a patrol or Skirmish priority ship.

The Dargan strike cruiser is possibly slightly weaker than the other two, with less Damage and Crew, but it does have several things going for it. For a start it carries two flights of Sentri fighters, and also has all round particle arrays, making it a good choice to protect the fleet from enemy fighters without having to go down to Skirmish priority for the Maximus frigate.

The Sulust escort destroyer was designed with a specific role in mind, supporting Primus battlecruisers and Octurion battleships, and this is a role that it excels at. Having twice the battle laser firepower of the other raid ships means that it contributes meaningful firepower to the fleet, either to destroy smaller targets or to add fire to the main target. It also has interceptors, which combined with its good Damage and Crew ratings means it will survive in the scale of battle it is intended for, especially as it will not be the first choice of target for the enemies beam big guns. The lack of a jump drive is not a handicap either, as it should always be used in support of larger ships. Not a ship to take as the centre of a low priority ship, but at Battle and War priorities this should be your first choice of Skirmish ship.

In conclusion, the Balvarin carrier is a specialist and should be selected based on that. For direct combat you will want either the Centurion attack cruiser at low priority or the Sulust escort destroyer at high priority. And if the Maximus frigate is too small for the scale of battle, then Dargon strike cruisers will provide good anti-fighter protection. The only ship I would not recommend is the Altarian destroyer, unless Hull 6 is your only consideration.

Battle Priority Options

You do not have any choice at this priority; you only have the Primus battlecruiser. The good thing about this is that the Primus battlecruiser is a good ship at Battle priority. It does not excel at any one particular thing, but is a very good all-round ship. It is among the faster Battle priority ships, allowing it to control the range of engagement to some extent. It has Hull 6, like any self-respecting Battle priority line warship. Its Damage and Crew ratings are good, although not up to Narn levels. Basically, it is a solid ship. They make an excellent core to the fleet; three of these have enough battle lasers between them to kill any other ship with some good dice rolls. The range is long enough to engage targets with little return fire; the ships are solid enough to take whatever damage most enemies are likely to kick out at you.

I would recommend this ship at priorities of Raid and above, as a squadron of these make a solid core of ships for any battle. Also, these ships look stunning on the tabletop, they have real presence.

War Priority Options

Again, you do not have any choice at this level, but the Octurion battleship is a War ship in every sense of the word, so that is not a real problem after all. It compares well against the War priority ships of other races. It operates like a larger version of the Primus battlecruiser. It carries no more battle lasers than the Primus, but they have a massive 35" range, which tops anything else out there. They make an excellent ship to put at the heart of a battle laser fleet, not only do they have the battle lasers as main firepower, they also have a massive battery of matter cannon and particle arrays, capable of shredding smaller ships that come close. Obviously the particle arrays should be fired first against any ships with interceptors, to overload them before the more dangerous matter cannon can do some serious damage.

One of the few drawbacks of this ship is that it is not up to the same standards of speed and agility as the rest of the Centauri fleet, in fact it is one of the slowest ships out there. Fortunately the wide arcs on the battle lasers, not to mention a rear arc battery, and the massive flank and rear weaponry makes this less of a problem.

Enemies of the Centauri Republic

As one of the more aggressive of the younger races, you can expect a Centauri fleet to get into trouble. With hairstyles like that, it is almost as if they are trying to provoke insults that they can take offence to.

The Narn Regime

These are your classic enemies, and you should make sure that you can beat them whatever they throw at you.

You have the advantage when it comes to fighters; Narn fighters are anti ship craft and will be easily killed by your Sentri in dogfights. However he has a large equaliser in the form of the energy mines, which he will try and use to clear a path for his fighters. There is no easy counter to this, however you must try to limit the damage that he can do to you with the energy mines by keeping your fighters well spread out and away from your own ships.

In ship to ship combat both forces are balanced, each having some advantages. Your ships are faster and more agile in most cases, giving you some control over the range of the engagement. Your main beam weapons are your battle lasers compared to his heavy laser cannon, giving you many more firing opportunities with the wider arcs. You have better fleet initiative at a basic level. Further your command ship has better command facilities than the Narn Bin'Tak dreadnought, and with the cheapness of the Corvan scout you may have the advantage in scout numbers as well.

However things are not entirely in your favour. Narn ships have the firepower to overload the interceptors on your ships, so you want to try and avoid giving him a single target to concentrate upon. His ships have massive amounts of Damage and Crew, making taking them down through gradual firepower difficult, especially as many of his ships are also Hull 6.

One tactic to try when engaging the Narn at Battle or War priority is to use their poor agility against them. Give them a juicy target off to one side of their fleet early in the turn, so that a heavy cruiser or dreadnought turns to target it with its boresight heavy laser cannon. Then move the rest of your fleet to the other side of the Narn fleet, leaving him with the choice of allowing your fleet to get onto his rear, or splitting his forces.

The Earth Alliance

The Earth Alliance is fond of sabre rattling, and they may need to be taught that the Centauri Republic has not crumbled completely. For this reason alone you should know how to fight against them.

The EarthForce ships are quite similar to your own in some respects, relying upon heavy banks of interceptors for defence like your own fleet. The
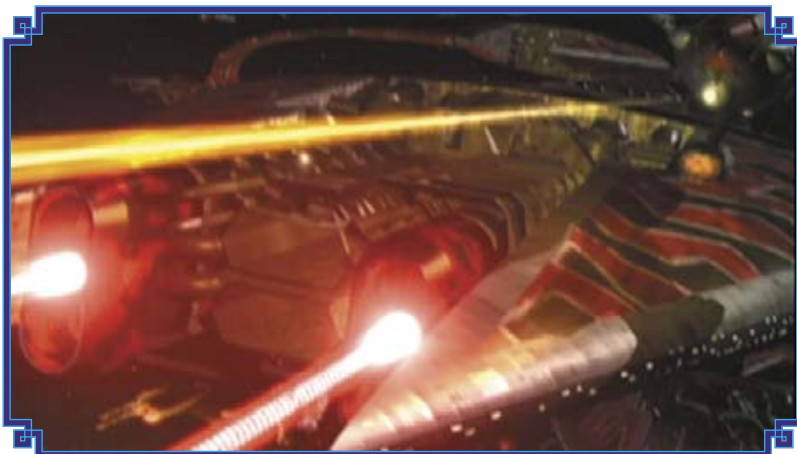
difference is that they rely upon boresight heavy laser cannon for their main beam weapons, which are avoidable at least some of the time. All this makes the use of a battle laser fleet highly advisable against them. Their secondary weapons are relatively short ranged, which means that as you approach you will be taking a lot less firepower than you are dishing out to them. You will have all your battle lasers available and you should be able to avoid some of his beam laser cannon. Choice targets to take out early are those with a Hull rating below 6, particularly those that have heavy firepower such as the Hyperion cruiser and Nova dreadnought. If your enemy has invested heavily in these, you should be able to thin out his fleet before much of it never gets a chance to fire. Also the Nova carries four flights of fighters, and if it can be destroyed early in the battle when they are still aboard the Nova, that clears a few extra fighters from your skies.

On the scout front, your scouts are two priority levels lower than his, so gaining the scout advantage should be easy. This couples nicely with your higher fleet initiative rating to give you control over the engagement. If you keep your scouts out on the fringes of the battle as well, you can move them early to force the EarthForce fleet to move first, denying him more opportunities to line up his boresight weaponry.

Your fighters are much better in close engagements than his Thunderbolts, enabling you to destroy them before they can unleash their anti ship firepower on your fleet. He will try and use his Starfury fighters to engage your Sentri flights, but even here you will have the advantage, although less of one. Given the numbers of fighters that his ships carry, you may want to consider using a Balvarin carrier. This will serve two purposes, firstly it brings six additional flights of Sentri fighters to your fleet but it also increases your dogfight rating for your fighters. The command facilities on board the Balvarin are just a nice bonus.

He may try to counter this with a Poseidon super carrier. This is a major ship, and carries masses of fighters, however it has one serious weakness, which is its low Hull rating of 4. This will make it battle laser bait and enable you to even the score. However till you do kill it, he will have the carrier advantage.

The League of Non-Aligned Worlds

With the history of war between the Centauri Republic and the member races of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, there will be a number of engagements with the League fleet ahead of you in your career in the Centauri Republic military.

With four different fleets to worry about here, you have a mixed bag of troubles to deal with. The Brakiri provide the heavy firepower of the League, and their beam weapons are forward arc same as yours. One advantage that you do have is that they are slow loading, so they will not be putting out as consistent damage as your battle lasers. However they pack a heavy eight attack dice so when they do hit they will do some serious damage. Also being slow loading he only needs to get into a firing position every other turn. He will either be using half his graviton beam weapons each turn, in which case his firepower will be weaker than yours, or firing 'the wad' every other turn, in which case use your speed to get in close and do serious damage

on the turns that he is reloading. Most of the Brakiri ships also mount interceptors, some in large numbers, so you will have to adjust your firing to overload them before using weapons like matter cannon. Lastly the Brakiri have good anti fighter defences, however that will not mater so much to you as you will be unlikely to be using your fighters against his ships anyway.

The Brakiri provide the only fighters for the Non-Aligned Worlds fleet and they are good anti ship fighters. They are the fastest fighters around, and they have reasonable anti ship firepower. You will however have more Sentri fighters available than he will have Falkosi fighters, so you should be able to handle them. If he is smart he will not bother with the Brakiri carrier, leaving your fighters with nothing to do other than suicidal runs against his ships.

Next problem is the Abbai fleet. Their ships range from Patrol to Raid priority ships so will be engaging your smaller ships, or assisting the heavier Brakiri fleet. Their fleet has two main strengths, firstly they have masses of Quad particle arrays which will burn out your interceptors and allow the fleets' other weapons to do you some serious damage. Secondly they

have massive arrays of interceptors themselves, which makes it difficult to inflict damage. Their ships are quite fast, but not as fast as your own. They are not a major threat to your ships in themselves, but are very useful in support of the other League members.

The Vree are also a problem for several reasons. Firstly they have some heavy hitting weaponry with their antimatter shredders and cannon. However these weapons are not beam weapons so will have to get past your interceptors. Which is where the strength of the different Non-Aligned worlds fleet comes in as the Abbai ships will be able to burn out your interceptors to allow the Vree ships to use their main weapons. Their second strength is their anti-fighter firepower which will be enough to shred your Sentri screen, perhaps allowing his Brakiri Falkosi fighters to attack your ships. The best counter to this is to destroy the flying saucers quickly; they are only Raid and Skirmish priority ships, so in a mixed fleet battle where they are supporting the heavier Brakiri fleet, they will be susceptible to long range battle lasers leading to a sudden death.

Lastly there are the Drazi ships. They are dangerous if they can get close to you and keep you in arc, the weaponry on these ships is impressive for their size, and the warbird cruiser has a hull rating of six, making it a difficult kill for its size. The smaller Sunhawk can be dealt with by your Skirmish and Raid level battle lasers, while the Warbird may require the firepower of a Primus battlecruiser to destroy them. Look to ignore them until the turn before they will get into range, and kill them at that point.

Overall the League of Non-Aligned Worlds fleet is a potent force if they can be used well together. You will have to look at the mix of ships that he has taken to see what sort of attack plan he has, and target ships accordingly. If he is using Abbai ships to overload your interceptors for a Vree

attack run, target the Vree. Likewise if he has taken a carrier to use fighters against you, take out the Vree before they clear your Sentri fighters from the skies. If he is relying upon the big guns of the Brakiri fleet, then they become the first choice of target. And of course, never ignore the Drazi Sunhawks and Warbirds, as they can do you some serious damage if you let them.

The Minbari

Now I am sure you already know what I am going to say about the Minbari, but I will say it anyway. They will be your toughest challenge, as they have the same advantages as you do so can fight in a similar way, and do it better.

Common wisdom says you should fight at low priorities against the Minbari, however that does not hold true for the Centauri. You will want the high Hull value ships that you have at Battle and War priorities against them. Also your low priority ships have short ranged matter cannon for the most part, which have a shorter range than his fusion cannon, which is only his secondary weapon system in most cases.

The stealth on all his ships will give you a bad time, but that is the way things are. You will have to use scouts and fighters to reduce his stealth where you can, and enjoy the fact that when your firepower does get through it will do some serious damage to his relatively fragile ships. Fortunately your Corvan scout ships are cheap at high priorities, enabling you to negate the stealth on many of his ships. Unfortunately, they are small and fragile and can easily be destroyed by Minbari firepower.

His fighters are lethal against ships, but will also have the advantage over your Sentri fighters in a dogfight. This advantage is not as great as for some other races, and the presence of a Balvarin carrier will help even the score. You will not want to be sending your Sentri in against his ships anyway because of the fusion cannon mini-beams, so you can afford to throw them in

against his fighters, as long as his fighters die, it will not matter if you loose your Sentri in the process. Be aware that the Minbari can counter the Balvarin carrier with their own carrier, which also provides him with a command ship and a rack of dangerous fighters.

He only has neutron lasers on his Battle and War priority ships, and you have more attack dice of battle lasers on a ship to ship basis, however his weapons are precise so will do twice as many critical hits to your ships, which will hurt. However his ships are only Hull 5, so your battle lasers will hit for more damage. Assuming you have got past the stealth, you should have a slight edge in firepower, make the most of it. You should even consider splitting battle laser fire from Primus and Octurion ships across several Minbari ships if they are close enough, to give you a better chance of something getting past the stealth.

Conclusions

The Centauri are rightly known as the lion of the galaxy, and have the ships and weapons to defeat any opponent if used correctly. Go for high priority, use battle laser based fleets and use your Sentri to keep hostile fighters at bay, and you should dominate the skies for centuries to come. Now if only there was something you could do about the old ones…

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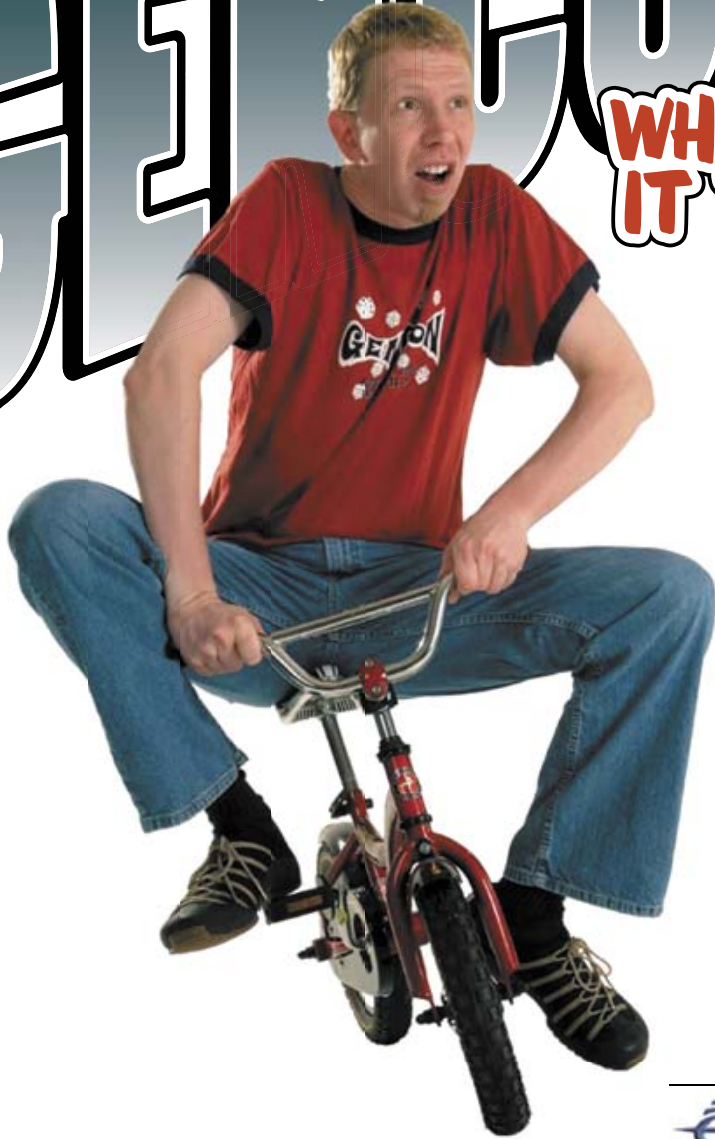
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Preview

BABYLON 5: A CALL TO ARMS

by Nick Robinson

A Call to Arms: Armageddon

ARMAGEDDON IS THE latest supplement for A Call to Arms and has been eagerly awaited by fans of the game ever since it was announced many months ago. Packed full of new rules, fleet lists and a whole new range of ships for the Crusade era it represented the next big thing for the game.

So what will the new supplement provide? The first clue is in the title, for the game will have a new priority level for the really powerful ships of the various races, that of Armageddon. Many of the new ship types are these immensely powerful dreadnoughts and several other old favourites have been upgraded.

Then there are the new fleet lists, three different ones for the Earth Alliance to reflect the changes in the fleet composition that occurred during the show and its aftermath, allowing an Earth player to field a completely different force to face the Dilgar threat to one facing off against the Drakh.

Not only do the humans get an improved list but the Shadows and Vorlons see their respective lists modified, with their vessels upgraded and far more intimidating to their foes.

For players of the other races from Babylon 5 there is a selection of completely new ships with which to fight against one another, along with pictures of the stunning new models. These new ships allow for much stronger fleets to be assembled for battle in the Crusade era, as many of them are of the new Armageddon priority level.

Not only do the established races get new toys but the supplement also introduces the awesome power of the Ancients, beings as old as the Vorlons and Shadows who have invested all their technology and military might within a single ship. Safe to say that these ships are capable of destroying large fleets of smaller craft, being the most powerful vessels in the game!

The rules have been updated to take note of how the game has evolved since its conception, rewarding good leadership with modified rules for Stealth. Energy Mines and Auxiliary Craft taking into account the input of players who have made suggestions over the past year as to how the game might be improved.

We have also squeezed in new scenarios and an extensive FAQ section to answer the questions fans of the game have in relation to the rules.

In this Sign & Portents preview of the new book there should be something for every devoted fan of the game to get their teeth into.

New Rules

Scenarios

The advent of a new Priority Level (see later in this chapter) means the current Victory Point table has to be updated.

Victory Point Calculation

Difference in Priority Level of Ship and Scenario	Victory Points
Ship is same Priority Level as Scenario	10
Ship is one Priority Level higher than Scenario	20
Ship is two Priority Levels higher than Scenario	30
Ship is three Priority Levels higher than Scenario	40
Ship is four Priority Levels higher than Scenario	50
Ship is five Priority Levels higher than Scenario	60
Ship is one Priority Level lower than Scenario	5
Ship is two Priority Levels lower than Scenario	3
Ship is three Priority Levels lower than Scenario	2
Ship is four Priority Levels lower than Scenario	1
Ship is five Priority Levels lower than Scenario	½

Campaigns

The following rules are intended to be integrated into the campaign rules found in both Book One and Sky Full of Stars.

Repairs and Reinforcements

Ships with the Carrier trait may automatically replenish two lost flights of Auxiliary Craft in the Repairs and Reinforcements phase each turn. This is done freely and does not cost RR points. A ship may never have more flights than it started with, nor may it pass 'spare' flights onto another ship. You are still permitted to move flights between ships *after* each has received these free flights.

RR points spent to replace Crew points can also be used to replace lost Troops.

Fleet Lists

The major new addition that Armageddon brings is a whole new Priority Level, allowing for some truly terrifying ships to enter battle! New rules are also provided for splitting Fleet Allocation points across two or more Priority Levels, which are much clearer and easier to use than those in Sky Full of Stars.

Priority Level: Armageddon

Some of the new ships of the Crusade era are so powerful, they rank even above the Priority Level: War level ships of the Sky Full of Stars fleet lists. Priority Level: Armageddon has therefore been added to the game, ranking above War.

In campaigns, it costs 40 RR points to buy an Armageddon level ship.

Using Fleet Allocation Points

Once the Priority Level of a scenario has been chosen, you can start choosing the ships in your fleet as normal. The table below shows you how many ships you can buy for each Fleet Allocation Point.

Fleet Allocation

Difference in Priority Level	Fleet Allocation Points Cost
Ship is same Priority Level as Scenario	1 per ship/wing
Ship is one Priority Level higher	2 per ship/wing
Ship is two Priority Levels higher	4 per ship/wing
Ship is three Priority Levels higher	8 per ship/wing
Ship is four Priority Levels higher	16 per ship/wing
Ship is five Priority Levels higher	32 per ship/wing
Ship is one Priority Level lower	1 point buys 2 ships/wings
Ship is two Priority Levels lower	1 point buys 3 ships/wings
Ship is three Priority Levels lower	1 point buys 6 ships/wings
Ship is four Priority Levels lower	1 point buys 12 ships/wings
Ship is five Priority Levels lower	1 point buys 24 ships/wings

Note that we have allowed for the possibility for some very strange combinations, out of completeness. For example, you *can* use an Armageddon level ship in a Patrol level scenario, but it would cost 32 Fleet Allocation points (an unusually high figure for scenarios in A Call to Arms). If you wanted to use Armageddon level ships in your games, for simplicity you would be better off selecting a higher Priority Level for the scenario and thus require less points to field the big ships.

The Crusade Era

Earth Years 2267 and Beyond

EARTH HAD SEEN its share of tragedy in the past, but the virus bombing by the Drakh in 2266 was possibly the most devastating blow ever felt on the human homeworld. Given a short five years to either find a cure or relocate the centre of the Earth Alliance, the galaxy collectively looked upon Earth with mixed emotions. Some, like the Abbai, felt sadness for the loss and anger at the Drakh. Others, like the Drazi and Gaim, turned away in an effort to ensure they were not infected by the doomed race. Even with the assistance of several other species, it seemed the best hope for a cure rested on the shoulders of the newly assigned EarthForce crew of the ISA *Excalibur* – the surviving prototype Victory-class destroyer being sent into the void in search of a cure before time would run out.

While riots and chaos ruled over much of Earth's quarantined surface, a sight that the Drakh knew would have made their Shadow masters proud, the rest of the Earth Alliance did their best to continue stronger than ever. Even though EarthDome, most of the senate, and the President were infected and likely doomed – they had to move on. If they did not, they might show weakness to the rest of the galaxy and invite possible attacks from old enemies or new ones yet to be discovered.

To dissuade all onlookers, the Earth Alliance governmental body focussed much of their resources on their fleet. Not only to keep a strong arm in the matters of space around them, but

also to enforce the strict quarantine over Earth. More than a few infected vessels were vaporised by advanced cruisers and a fully rebuilt and strengthened defence grid trying to escape Earth's orbit. Billions of humans were still thriving on dozens of colonies, outposts and installations throughout Alliance space – they had to be protected from any kind of spread of the bio-engineered plague.

Vengeance against the Drakh and anyone who would shelter them after what they did was the driving goal for most humans during this time. The initial sadness that filled an entire species in 2266 turned rapidly into rage – and as it has been seen countless times in their history, humans are capable of nearly anything when blinded by their fury.

The Earth Alliance Fleet List

The following forms the entire fleet list for the Earth Alliance for the Earth Years 2267 and beyond.

Priority Level: Patrol
Breaching Pod Wing (4 flights)
Hermes-class transport
Starfury Wing (3 flights)
Thunderbolt Wing (3 flights)

Priority Level: Skirmish
Hyperion-class assault cruiser

Earth Alliance Initiative: +2

Priority Level: Raid
Chronos-class attack frigate
Delphi-class advanced scout
Explorer-class survey ship
Hyperion-class heavy cruiser

Priority Level: Battle
Apollo-class bombardment cruiser
Marathon-class advanced cruiser
Omega-class destroyer

Priority Level: War
Omega-class command destroyer
Poseidon-class super carrier

Priority Level: Armageddon
Nemesis-class advanced destroyer
Warlock-class advanced destroyer

Space Stations
Babylon 5	War
Orion Starbase	Battle

Auxiliary Craft
Flights of smaller craft may be purchased separately and used as units in their own right. Some ships are noted as carrying one or more flights on board. These flights may be deployed at any time before or during the battle and do not cost anything extra – the cost of these flights is included in that of their parent ships.

Any ship carrying one or more Starfury flights may replace any number of them for Thunderbolts or Breaching Pods. Breaching Pods swapped in this way will carry a Troop from the ship – they do not include Troops of their own in the way Breaching Pod Wings do.

Nemesis-class Advanced Destroyer

Armageddon

Using the remnants of the non-deployed Omega-X destroyers to add even more Shadowtech to the Warlock hull, the Nemesis is a devoted technological masterpiece. Where the Shadow Omegas that were destroyed in 2261 had many root problems from the hastily integrated Shadow components, the Nemesis is utterly at home with its bio-mechanical systems and uses them to extreme efficiency. The ship is a nightmare of pseudo-living segments working with advanced human technology, and is more than a match for nearly any other vessel flying in the galaxy. Using an experimental 'hyperspace echo-location' tracking system – or HEL-track for short – to locate their targets, there is not a ship that can hide from the Nemesis' hull-splitting firepower. Even the jamming suites of the Minbari are useless against HEL-track, and should it come to it, the Nemesis would likely decimate the advanced Minbari fleets, much as they did to Earth's ships thirty-five years earlier. The Earth Alliance denies having ignored the ISA's request to avoid Shadowtech.

Speed: 9   **Damage:** 95/18   **Craft:** 4 Thunderbolt Flights
Turns: 1/45   **Crew:** 85/16   **Special Rules:** Advanced Jump Point, Flight Computer, Interceptors 6, Self-Repairing 1d6
Hull: 6   **Troops:** 3   **In Service:** 2268+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Molecular Slicer Beam	40	B	6	Beam, Super AP, Triple Damage
Heavy Phasing Pulse	12	F	10	AP, Double Damage
Light Multi-Phased Cutter	10	A	8	AP, Mini-Beam, Twin-Linked
Light Multi-Phased Cutter	10	P	8	AP, Mini-Beam, Twin-Linked
Light Multi-Phased Cutter	10	S	8	AP, Mini-Beam, Twin-Linked
Missile Rack	30	F	6	Precise, Slow-Loading **, Super AP

** This weapon ignores the Slow-Loading trait unless the Nemesis is Crippled.

Omega-class Destroyer

Battle

Still seen as the icon of the EarthForce fleet, the Omega remains one of the most deployed vessels in the navy as a whole. Although more expensive than the Hyperions and nowhere near as powerful as the Marathons and Warlocks that are growing in number around them, the Omega is a solid cornerstone of EarthForce fleet tactics and is unlikely to fall into disfavour or disuse anytime soon. Their signature revolving sections, the last of the Earth Alliance ships to need them to generate artificial gravity, will still be seen in fleet engagements for many years to come, in one role or another.

Speed: 7   **Damage:** 48/10   **Craft:** 4 Starfury Flights
Turn: 1/45°   **Crew:** 62/14   **Special Rules:** Interceptors 3, Jump Point
Hull: 6   **Troops:** 4   **In Service:** 2250+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Heavy Laser Cannon	30	B	4	Beam, Double Damage, Super AP
Heavy Laser Cannon	30	B (a)	2	Beam, Double Damage, Super AP
Heavy Pulse Cannon	12	F	10	Twin-Linked
Medium Pulse Cannon	10	A	4	Twin-Linked
Medium Pulse Cannon	10	P	6	Twin-Linked
Medium Pulse Cannon	10	S	6	Twin-Linked
Particle Beams	5	P	4	Anti-Fighter
Particle Beams	5	S	4	Anti-Fighter

A combined League fleet with a Vree Z'Takk coordinating the assortment of other ships.

The Ancients race towards the final confrontation with the Shadows and Vorlons, being led by a White Star crewed by Commander Ivanova and Lorien.

Neroon-class Heavy War Cruiser

Armageddon

After their failed bid to assume control of the entire Federation, the Warrior Caste endured the political wilderness for several years. The changing galaxy forced the dominant Worker Caste to reconsider their own prejudices, and they soon bowed to subtle pressure to give the Warriors what they had always wanted – a dedicated warship, designed to their own parameters, much as the White Star had been designed to fulfil the wishes of the Religious Caste. The Neroon, however, was to be much, much larger. Despite its size and obvious capabilities, it is felt that some within the Warrior Caste became to greedy in the specifications of this ship so that while it is well-rounded and capable of defending itself against the best other races have to offer, it performs no single role well. This means the Neroon is rarely allowed to venture into space unescorted and, if separated from its fleet, the potential remains for an enemy to find a weakness and exploit it.

Speed: 5   **Damage:** 72/24   **Craft:** 8 Nial Flights, 2 Flyer Flights
Turns: 1/45   **Crew:** 50/25   **Special Rules:** Advanced Jump Point, Carrier 4, Command +1, Fleet Carrier, Flight Computer, Stealth 5+
Hull: 5   **Troops:** 8   **In Service:** 2271+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Improved Neutron Laser	36	F	4	Beam, Precise, Super AP, Triple Damage
Improved Neutron Laser	36	A	2	Beam, Precise, Super AP, Triple Damage
Improved Neutron Laser	36	P	2	Beam, Precise, Super AP, Triple Damage
Improved Neutron Laser	36	S	2	Beam, Precise, Super AP, Triple Damage
Fusion Cannon	18	F	12	AP, Mini-Beam
Fusion Cannon	18	A	12	AP, Mini-Beam
Fusion Cannon	18	P	12	AP, Mini-Beam
Fusion Cannon	18	S	12	AP, Mini-Beam

Scenic Mayhem

BUG HOLES AND BELLYBUTTONS

Constructing tunnel assets for Starship Troopers

Darell C. Phillips

With a title combining the unlikely words above, can I assume that I have your undivided attention? What can these possibly have in common, you ask? The path to the answer is in two additional words: 'Innies' and 'Outies'. First, I'll ignore my computer spell-checker that is telling me these two terms are indeed not words at all. As an aside, this gratifies me more than you can possibly imagine. It means that computers as yet don't know as much as their creators and this gives me great satisfaction in that knowledge. For when they can comprehend 'Outie', 'Innie' and 'Meh', that is the day we need to be very worried; very worried indeed. But I digress. *(Hmmm, all three terms are recognised by my computer's spell checker – we're doomed! – ye Editor)*

As an avid lover of tabletop gaming and also a tiny bit of an artist, I've followed several discussions on the Mongoose Starship Troopers forums over the past year or so regarding tunnel assets and how they are to be represented on the gaming table. While this might at first be considered for easy dismissal as worthless nick picking, I took it as a challenge and a problem to be solved. I realise that some of you are thinking 'Does this guy have a life?', but in our hobby there are many times that rules under which we play our games can be interpreted in various and contradictory ways. I am happy to report in this case that it is not the rules in Starship Troopers Miniatures that are to blame, but our own eyes and preconceived notions when reading and comprehending them. Stay with me for a short time, and I'll show you where I'm going with this. The first thing that I'll review here is the terrain rules regarding sizing. It is stated in the soft cover main rulebook on page 30 that 'A piece of terrain has a nominal Size equal to its height (or depth in the case of crevasses or liquid sources) in inches, rounding to the nearest whole number.' This is a simply stated and unambiguous rule. A very similar 'nugget of knowledge' is found on page 33, under Line of Sight: 'Remember that, as a guideline, terrain is considered equal in Size to its height in inches (rounding to the nearest inch). Models in the firing unit never block each other's line of sight but friendly models in other units will do so. If a model is on top of a piece of terrain, add the Size of the terrain to that of the model for calculating line of sight.'

Let's break from our research and digest these last few titbits. Terrain can have *depth* as well as height, and its Size is based upon a rounded-inch measurement of that height or depth. Again, the rules are stated simply and to the point. I like that. Next, scuttling over to page 129 of the soft cover rules, we find a detailed definition of Tunnel Entrances. Before we refer to that though, I just wanted to briefly consider the meaning of the word

'scuttle' as applied differently by Mongoose Publishing's customers. As an Arachnid player it would mean a simple movement of skirmish forces on a planet surface or underground, but from the perspective of the Babylon 5 task force Admirals in *A Call to Arms*, the word will have a very different meaning and not any of it good. Alright, let's scuttle over to the page 129 definition of Tunnel Entrances: 'These are 4-inch diameter terrain pieces which represent exits for an interconnecting web of tunnels deeper below the surface, enabling the Arachnids to move around quickly and efficiently below the battlefield, protected under tons of dirt and rocks. *Tunnel Entrances can be gigantic mounds of displaced stone and dirt or innocuous sink holes, depending on local geology*.' The italics are mine, and give us the best answer to a question that many players have asked about the Tunnel Entrance cardstock templates which are included in the game.

The fact that the diameter of the templates, both 4-inch and 6-inch, are the same as their Size, should not confuse players that the primary definition of Size is vertical height (or depth) of the terrain unit. I can understand where defining a Size for a structure needs to look at all three dimensions, and keeping the game simple enough to play effectively has to be of primary importance. As is stated on page 29 (and I do say so very eloquently stated): 'In *Starship Troopers*, terrain is used to break up a battlefield and to make combat more challenging than simply standing on either side of a featureless area and shooting at the enemy before charging straight at them. Terrain can

be as simple as pieces of paper labelled with the Size and shape of what it is supposed to represent (trees, hills, walls and so on) or as complex as three dimensional pieces that look like miniature forests and buildings in their own right. From scraps of blue cloth for water hazards to buildings made of foam and wooden slats, the rules for how terrain affects the play of *Starship Troopers* are identical.'

So with a clear understanding now that our Tunnel Access Points can be both positive and negative terrain features- ah, that sounds too 'starchy' so let me rephrase. So with the knowledge that any player can have his (or her) 'bug hole' templates used as an 'Innie' or as an 'Outie', we need to *communicate* this to all players so a misunderstanding doesn't happen later in the game when line of sight (and perhaps falling?) comes into play. This is where the (here it comes…) '*Bellybutton*' rule comes into use (Hey, part of the reason for the name is so that it isn't forgotten at the start of the game, OK?). The purpose of this suggestion is to declare which templates are negative 'Innies' and which are positive 'Outies' as they are placed on the table. As with many things in life, there are various ways of showing this. One interesting method for use with the included templates might be to use chocolate 'kisses' and place one on the cardstock to represent a mound. If you will be particularly hungry after the game (yes, that's *after*), you might even place a bar with the word 'mounds' on those that are above ground (yeah, snickers are meant here- oops that's another bar!). Ah, so I have your interest picking

up, eh? It's a funny thing how food helps gamers concentrate. So, you're even taking notes, now? Interesting thing, that. For the more diet-conscious of us however, reversing the template to show 'Innie' status might work. I'd use a black marker and write 'SINKHOLE' on the blank side. If you have extra templates, you could glue several back-to-back with an 'S' on one side. I'd make it clear that this clarification is only for 4-inch templates, either as Tunnel Entrances, Camouflaged Tunnel Entrances, or as Nest Entrances. The size 6 Bug Central should always be considered an 'outie' construct.

As a further note to the above Tunnel Entrance clarification, if it's not mentioned by the Bug player in a game when it's placed, I suggest and consider the default 'mode' of the 4-inch template to be that of an 'outie'. This is for consistency in Tournament play, as I believe most players play these as above-ground structures.

Since this is the *Scenic Mayhem* column, however, let's be about making some 'scenic mayhem', shall we? The intent of this is to inspire you to look at various ways of making and using models of Tunnel Entry Points. I believe we have taken for granted that bug holes are well, just 'bug holes'. In the past, we have seen ideas presented in publications and online as to how to make a 'Tunnel Entrance'. I do not need to go over old ground as it were (or even old holes in the ground?) to cover the many various methods including empty pie tins, plaster, paper Mache', and foam ingredients. I will try to

offer more detail in the ways in which various entry points can be modelled. One very nice side effect of gamers having detailed models of the different kinds of entry points is that there would be no confusion as to above-ground constructs versus below-ground ones.

First, I'm going to offer a refresher course on the various kinds of Tunnel Entry Points, as you need to know how they each work in the game and how their differences can determine the look of the models on the table. Page 124 defines Tunnel Entry Points: 'There are four kinds of Tunnel Entry Points: Tunnel Entrances, Camouflaged Tunnel Entrances, Nest Entrances, and Bug Central. Of these, the latter two *must* be placed at the beginning of the game. Should a Nest Entrance or Bug Central be destroyed, (it) is *not* returned to the Tunnel Entrance pool. When a unit creates a Tunnel Entrance, they *cannot* create a Camouflaged Tunnel Entrance, Nest Entrance or Bug Central – they can only create a Tunnel Entrance.'

Let's start our project with the best 'bug hole' the Arachnids can have- *Bug Central*. The rulebook states it very well: 'Bug Central is a main entrance, 6-inch in diameter, to a nearby massing point or brood chamber, obvious even from the surface and a primary target. These places crawl big time!'

Well, that pretty much says it all. What I started with first was three 6-inch foam disks that were 2-inch thick each. The Bug Central that I made was

using circles cut from 2-inch Styrofoam building construction insulation sheeting that I bought at a home supply store. Using a foam cutter and a 6-inch circle template, I cut three thick disks. I used official Styrofoam spray adhesive (by 3M) and assembled the disks like a three-layer cake. I said *like* a three layer cake. I'm no longer talking about food (that was earlier). This construct has the outside dimensions of what the rules define, but now we need it to be able to carve some 'personality' on it and give it an appearance that it 'crawls' (indeed). The next tool I used was a bit expensive, but it has served me well. It is a professional foam-cutting tool, and its main feature is separate wire shapes that are bendable. The commonly found very affordable hobby cutters use straight wire and are less able to do 'special effects', which means they are not formable. While I used the better cutter, I have several options that may give good results too. First, use a hobby knife and carefully cut 'worm holes' into the Styrofoam material, trying to give a random appearance. When I used the formable cutter, I thought it was a bit like carving a pumpkin. Maybe this is more of a 'Yankee' custom than elsewhere on the planet however, but I'm sure you know about it even if you haven't done it outright. We call it Halloween (All Hallow's Eve on some calendars still). It's interesting that the next day (November the first) is called 'All Saints Day' by some and for our Mexican friends, 'Dia de los Muertos'. I'll decode that for you Brits that happen to love Babylon 5: just think of the Brakiri Day of the Dead. The only problem with the 'B5'ers' carving their evil 'Bug Centrals' is that if they don't get it right, they have to wait 200 years to try
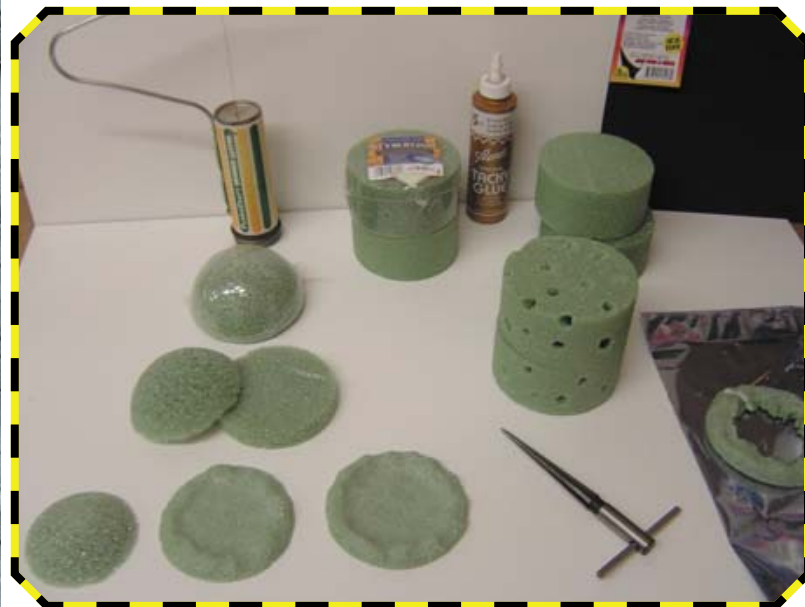
again… (Don't worry; it's only supposed to be funny if you like Babylon 5). *(Note to any Americans – yes, the British have Hallowe'en; it's an ancient pagan festival that we've had for about 3,000 years or so… - ye Editor)* By the way, if you haven't seen Babylon 5 episodes, do it. That way when you get hooked, Matthew, Alex and the rest of Mongoose will get even more customers than they already have for miniatures rules, RPG and novel sales. Just 'carve your pumpkin' quickly. The goal is to give the appearance somewhat of a giant termite mound, with small tunnels winding like holes in worm-ravaged fruit, down into the inside. Believe me, it's more fun than carving a pumpkin, and less wet. For those that have followed my previous finishing methods in previous articles regarding Styrofoam, yes I haven't changed. I still like to use Krylon H2o™ water-based latex spray paint. What I do to get a colour variance is use a wet coat followed fairly soon by a second colour, applied in various areas. As the paint dries, the paint merges and gives a blended, airbrushed look.

My new discovery that I'll share in this article is my use of a clear coat sealer over the last few months. All prior clear acrylic spray sealers on the market have been solvent-based, and would just dissolve Styrofoam into worthless slag. The newer versions, which are out alongside the older solvent versions, are water-based (!). I've found 3-4 brands that are all neutral to painted Styro products. The 'water based' clear sealers all have a light blue label and are marked (if you know where to look for the small print!) I happen to think

that all gloss sealers cover better and are thicker than matte or satin finished sealers, so I typically base-coat two to three times with gloss, and then spray the last coat on with satin to dull the gloss (of course). I'm fairly happy with the added protection that this new sealer gives my Styro creations, and can give them assistance in surviving game table use.

Here is yet another way to construct a *Bug Central* with 'worm holes.' Go to a craft store that sells dry flowers (and what craft store doesn't sell dry flowers?). Look in the flower arrangement aisle and spot the Styrofoam shapes that are sold in green. There is a very delicate (and messy) soft, fine grain green version. Don't buy that (but hey, it might work though). There is another green version with the Styrofoam® brand that should work nicely for raw material. After gluing the layers up to make a 6-inch diameter cylinder that is 6-inch high, work it with your fingers (or a wood doweling or pen) to construct those nasty bug access mini-tunnels. I also used wood skewers to help bond the foam layers together. As a caution, test any glue that you plan to use for the foam. While my 3M glue works well for open-cell white foam, it actually dissolves the green 'flower' foam. Then, finish it to give it the colours you wish it to have to match your board. You can't go too wrong with desert tan, you know.

Let's hit the book again, so to speak, regarding the next Tunnel Entry Point: Nest Entrances. 'These look identical to Tunnel Entrances on the surface.

In fact, they are exits from a nearby nest complex that can bring additional forces into the fight and are marked by powerful pheromone traces to assist easy navigation.' I prefer to think of the Nest Entrance as a smaller version of Bug Central, but at the size of a 4-inch Tunnel Entrance. But that's just me. My take on this is that like the Bug Central piece, it *must* be placed at the beginning of the game and this allows more time for its previous construction. This would allow it to resemble the Bug Central in appearance. It is basically a satellite 'subway' (US) or 'underground' (British) for the central larger hub. If I keep describing this, I'm going to imagine scampering Warrior Bugs and such griping about transit delays in poorly lit tunnels, wondering why Babylon 5 seemed so bigoted against the Shadows. Why, they seemed like such a great bunch of chaps, and all. And that horribly bad joke the Mobile Infantry is passing about just isn't funny at all: 'How do you cast a 'shadow on a Shadow'?' Go to their capital and place them in between a hand link and 1000MT of light.' Not funny at all.

With the dedicated 'Outies' finished up, let's focus on the 'Innies' that are possible to model, next. I've already constructed what could be used for sub-ground level Tunnel Entry Points in the past as have many of the players on the forums, as well as in the Arachnid Army Book. I like to call them 'sliced bagels', as that is what they remind me of. I do believe that here is where some players see a contradiction between what the rules say and what most of the model Entrances appear like on the game table. If the 'Bug Hole' model

is less than an inch high, how can it be considered 4-inch high for line of sight (LOS)? Well, the answer is simple. If all players vocally agree to treat them that way, then they are. Without this understanding, it would be easy to treat a 'shallow' Bug Hole model as just like what is viewed throughout the first motion picture release. What are seen throughout the movie are subterranean tunnel entrances, and an easy connection can be incorrectly drawn to those models. Most players treat them as being 4-inch high, and that's the proper definition for a Size 4 terrain piece. Thus, making up a few Bug Holes that are actually 4-inch in height can be used as a contrast to using the 'bagel halves' as 'Innies'.

While not really needing dedicated models of the fourth kind of Tunnel Entry Point, you can indeed have some fun making up Camouflaged Tunnel Entrances that can be used on the table. Strictly by the rules, remember that Camouflaged Tunnel Entrances are, well, *camouflaged* and are not visible until placed. When they are placed, they are once again as stated by the rules treated as a normal Tunnel Entrance. Fair enough. But I want to *see* my Camouflaged Tunnels Entrances, darn it. So here's a violation of the rules that does not violate any rules (heh). What you do is have a great time building your 'trap door spider hole' with sticks and brush and 'weakened strata and detritus' all over it, then after placing the model ignore all the extra bits and tell everyone to ignore the extra detail. After all, you tell them, since they can all obviously see it now; it's just a normal bug hole, right? That's the correct answer, and you can read them the section that says that it is to be treated as a normal Tunnel Entrance. Of course, the real payoff for making the special models is when some players who are naturally sceptical won't believe anything you have said and will still use extra caution when approaching your model. Cha-ching; fun and profit, all in one package! Also, when buying tunnelling assets, you can pick these models for purchasing purposes, as you count up your expenditures before deployment begins. Small sticks and moss are perfect for 'CTEs', and I would consider that 'local geology' rules would indicate that to be properly hidden, I would use these as 'Innies' for play. Remember that I do not make rules, but I would trade the loss of LOS for play logic (read as nit-picking). There is somewhat of an offset in that unfortunate Troopers would fall 4 inches flinching into a properly-timed Camouflaged Tunnel Entrance, and thus incur a 1xD10 damage die on the Falling Table when 'finding' it. Regardless, proper communication between players of what is expected from tunnel assets, even if using flat templates (maybe *especially* using flat templates) is needed for fair play and game decorum.

I have built a number of 'traditional' bug-hole models using foam-carving tools, but there are some very quick methods of constructing models that I'll

show here last. When picking out my 4-inch green circles for my elevated entrances, I also noticed 4-inch half-spheres that I thought could be used without cutting or carving to make 'normal' old bug-holes. Along with making some Styrofoam units, I decided to try forming 'craters' with my hands by simply cutting and compressing these half-spheres with my hands on a flat surface. They should look different from my previous carved foam work, but should take considerably less time to form.

Just to get you to squint at the photos out of pure mischievousness, some might notice 'battlefield bits' and gallows humour that is indeed fun. I took advantage of the spare parts service to source these. If you like the idea, from the Mongoose main website pick the Miniatures tab and choose Starship Troopers (of course). Next, pick the Mobile Infantry and then find 'The Roughneck's' box. Click on the **Roughnecks - Rico Gun & helmet** link (Ref: 1491003207). When I first went looking for it, it wasn't available as a spare part, but after a certain customer request (ahem), Mongoose came through. Lastly, let your imagination fly with these spare parts (I certainly did!). I've already made a pile of helmets with broken visors to place near my Brain Bug (those that have seen the Roughnecks series will know what I mean!), as well as a gun rack and helmet storage in an APC mod for a future Monty's Modification Module submission. Oh, did I tell you this *game* is fun as well?
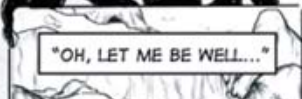
"OH, LET ME BE WELL..."

"LET ME NOT BE SICK..."

"LET ME FIND MY ENEMY AND FEAR HIM NOT..."

"LET ME FIND HIM ASLEEP AND KILL A GREAT MANY OF HIM."
TRADITIONAL IROQUOIS BATTLE PRAYER

STOP...
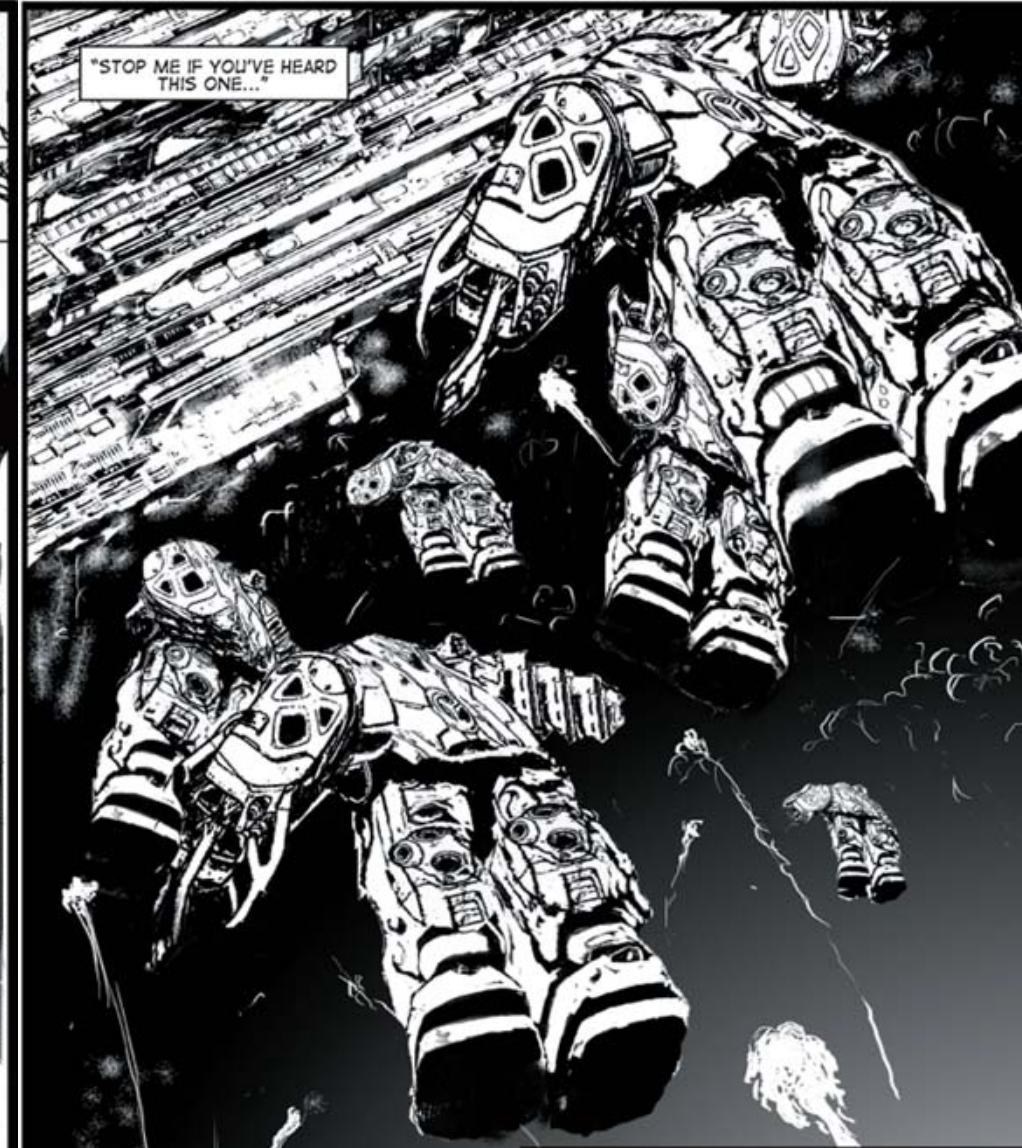
"STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE..."

STARSHIP TROOPERS

EXTINCTION PROTOCOL 1: BAD DAY ON BLACK GLASS

WRITTEN BY: CY DETHAN
ART BY: NIC WILKINSON

BLACKWELL, YOU'RE RUNNING HOT. WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

CAN'T LOCK IT DOWN, LT. MUST HAVE LOST A HEAT SHIELD ON THE DROP. I'M AT 72% CONTAINMENT WITH NO BRAKES.

JETTISON YOUR CAPSULE, BLACKWELL. I'M NOT STARTING THIS THING A TROOPER SHORT.

NO GO ON THAT, SIR. I'VE GOT NO RESPONSE ON EITHER CONSOLE. CONTAINMENT'S BELOW THE RED LINE ON BOTH PANELS.

I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT...

SUCK IT UP, CORPORAL.

YATES, TOZIER – GO PICK HIM UP. THE REST OF YOU, WITH ME.

ON IT, BOSS.

COPY THAT.

OH GOD...

OH GOD...

OH GOD...

PUSSY.

HEAVY METAL

A STARSHIP TROOPERS BATTLE REPORT

MATTHEW SPRANGE AND ALEXANDER FENNELL

It has been a while since we had a large, no holds barred Starship Troopers battle and, since then, we have had all sorts of juicy models out – the King Tanker, Mantis Assassins, Exosuits and many others. Clearly it was time for another battle report. Having dealt Ian a crushing blow last month, I walked up to Alex with the wet Turbot this time, and slapped him with the traditional Mongoose challenge. Mayhem was to follow…

MOBILE INFANTRY – THE 72ND

A while ago, you might have seen my growing Mobile Infantry company (The Big Red One, issue 27). Since then, the plan has grown and multiplied. A single company has indeed been completed but after deciding I really needed more than one company, and that the Light Armour troopers should form a company unto themselves anyway, the mission now is to complete an entire Mobile Infantry Battalion (four companies), called the 72nd!

Progress on that project will follow in a future article (including one truly massive battle report!!!) but, for now, I thought it time that I brought in two platoons from the 2nd company. I was dying to use the Exosuits in this battle report but had so far only built a single small platoon of them (people keep buying them, you see, before I can snatch them off our shelves!) Keeping with the 'heavy metal' theme though, it seemed to make sense to include a small platoon of Marauders.

The first choices were, therefore, easy – all my Exosuit models, which boiled down to two squads of four Cougars, with a Lieutenant in a Grizzly suit. Knowing I would not have many points to throw around, I gave the Lieutenant the Fire King trait (having him lead one of the squads, it was too sexier an option not to take!), while one of the Sergeants had Jumpball Player – nice with the re-rolls.

I also added a CHAS to this platoon, as I have painted up three of the robots so far and never seem to get round to putting them in an army, a crazy situation as they are an extremely good unit.

MOBILE INFANTRY – THE 72ND

1ST PLATOON

EXOSUIT LIEUTENANT   260 points
Grizzly Exosuit, Fire King

EXOSUIT SQUAD   480 points
4 Troopers, Corporal, Firestorm, Jumpball Player!

EXOSUIT SQUAD   460 points
4 Troopers, Corporal, Firestorm

CHAS   175 points

2ND PLATOON

MARAUDER NCO   225 points
M8, Dirty Fighter

MARAUDER SQUAD   400 points
2 M8's, Corporal

Next up was the Marauder platoon, and I knew some juggling would have to go on here, as I had already spent nearly 1,400 points, and that does not leave enough for some of these walking tanks! In the end, I managed to squeeze in one squad of two M8's and an M8 NCO with the Dirty Fighter trait. I had a feeling that I would have been better off with the odd M9 in there but I needed to be thrifty with points.

Still, no time for second guessing. This would be a Priority Level 2 force, and I chose Probe tactics.

ARACHNIDS

Hmm, Arachnids. I have not played with these for a while so I figured I'd pick a load of cool things first and round the army out with Warriors. The first choice was the King Tanker. A huge points sink at 450 points and slow as a slug, but it would certainly get Matthew's attention. Backing up the King was a trusty Brain Bug with 3 Guard Bugs in attendance. I'd never used a Burrower Bug before so I attached one of those to a unit of 6 Blister Bugs. Blisters usually die horribly as they try to close the gap with the enemy, and I reckoned they would be safe underground.

THE KING'S MEN (I MEAN BUGS)

|			
KING TANKER	450 points	WARRIOR BUGS 3 (5 BUGS)	75 points
BRAIN BUG	450 points	WARRIOR BUGS 4 (5 BUGS)	75 points
Enhanced Shield, ID sending, Ego War 3 Guard Bugs		WARRIOR BUGS 5 (5 BUGS)	75 points
INFILTRATOR BUG	75 points	WARRIOR BUGS 6 (6 BUGS)	90 points
BURROWER BUG	125 points	6 HOPPER BUGS	180 points
6 BLISTER BUGS	180 points	TUNNEL ENTRANCE X 2	100 points
WARRIOR BUGS 1 (5 BUGS)	75 points	TUNNEL MARKER X 2	100 points
WARRIOR BUGS 2 (5 BUGS)	75 points	CAVE-INS X2	50 points

Picking an Infiltrator as I think they're pretty funky and a unit of 6 hoppers for some serious winged action, I suddenly realised I had picked lots of cool things but no warriors! 6 units of these later (five of 5 and one of 6) I had my army. Two tunnel entrances and two tunnel markers and two cave-ins rounded out the force.

This was a Priority Level 3 force, and I chose Probe tactics to make sure the Brain would not die in the first turn!

MI DEPLOYMENT ZONE

ARACHNIDS DEPLOYMENT ZONE
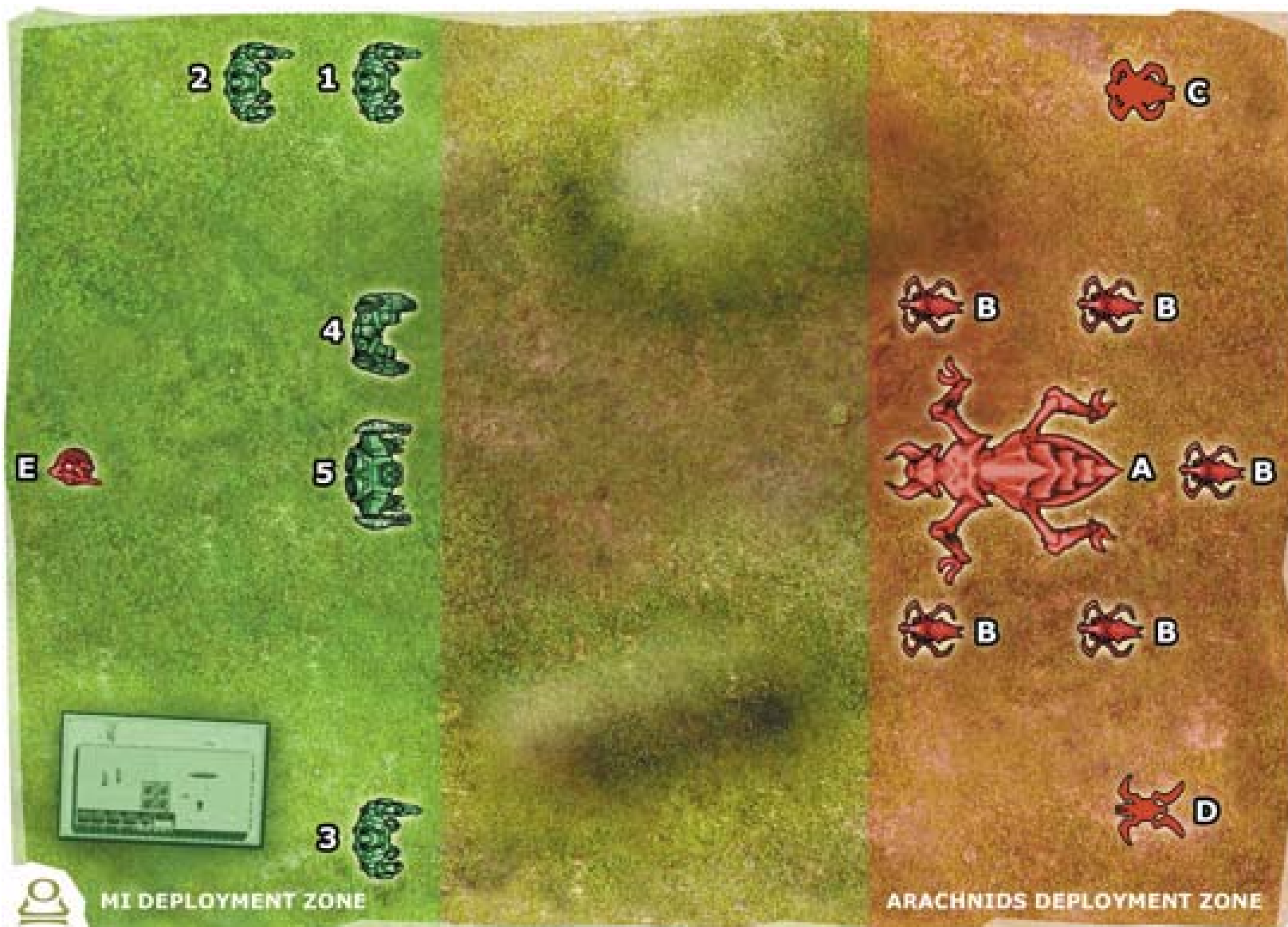
1: EXOSUIT LIEUTENANT
2: COUGAR EXOSUIT 1
3: COUGAR EXOSUIT 2
4: CHAS
5: MARAUDER SQUAD

A: KING TANKER
B: WARRIOR BUG UNIT
C: WARRIOR BUG UNIT (TUNNELLING)
D: BLISTER BUGS (TUNNELLING)
E: INFILTRATOR BUG

DEPLOYMENT

My mission here was Overrun vs. Matthew's Delay, which made it straightforward for me. Get into the deployment zone and kill anything that gets in the way. Rather unsurprisingly Matthew chose to both set up first and go first; he promptly set up covering my deployment zone with firepower. Resisting the temptation to put the King Tanker underground I placed it as close to the enemy as possible, flanked by five of the warrior bug squads. The First Warrior Bug unit and the Blister/Burrower unit set up as tunnel markers, and the infiltrator set up right at the back of Matthew's line behind his Marauders. With the Brain and Hoppers off the table for the first turn, I was all set to receive some firepower.

TURN ONE

Matthew: Okay, time to set the tone for the entire battle. Keeping the Marauders on my baseline, I split my force in two, hoping to pull Alex's bugs apart and force them into chasing me – good luck to them with a 15" jump on the Exosuits! Warrior bugs got mowed down by Sixgun fire but the King Tanker proves worryingly resilient, surviving a double hit from a Firestorm. However, the CHAS manages to knock a couple of Hits off – yay to cybernetics!

Overall, an acceptable first turn. The warriors had been whittled to more manageable numbers and my forces were deployed well. A start had even been made with the King Tanker.

Alex: Well, as expected lots of warriors got gunned down. The Cougar squad with the Lieutenant is downright deadly with their Fire King ability, and looking at how nicely they were bunched together I was regretting not taking a plasma bug. The King Tanker suffering two wounds was better than I expected, given the amount of firestorms and the Javelin arrayed against it. My turn was predictable. The warriors angled right and piled forward, rapidly leaving the King Tanker behind (4" move
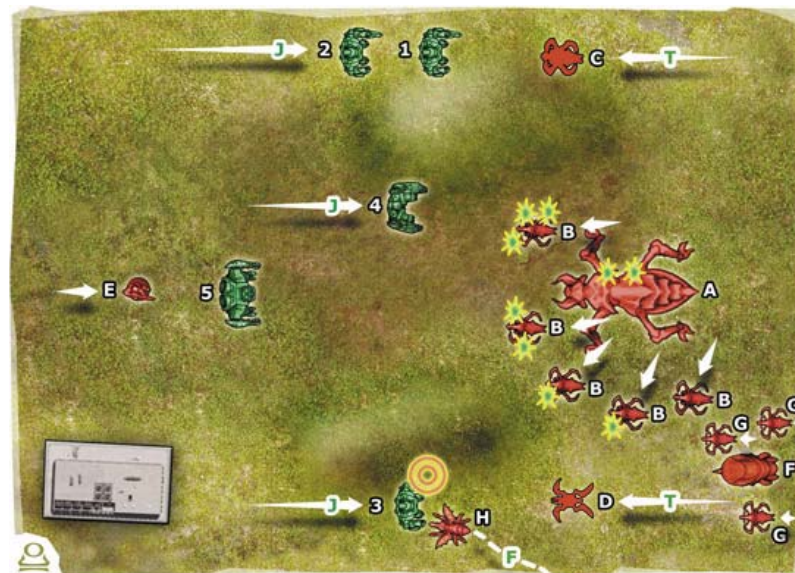
F: BRAIN BUG
G : GUARD BUG
H: HOPPER BUGS

doesn't seem too bad on paper but on a battlefield it's really awful for the fast moving bugs!) The Brain and entourage walked on and managed to ego war the Cougar squad on my right, setting them up nicely for my first trick.

The Hoppers flew on towards these Cougars, and because of the lack of reaction fire readied again and with the bonus action from the Brain dived into the Cougars and then dived out behind some cover. They managed to kill one of the suits and reduced another to a single hit.

The infiltrator mooched around behind the marauders, staying just over 10" away and waiting for the right time to pounce. I discovered at this point that my cave ins were wasted points, as everything in Matthew's army was size 2 or above. Ho hum. My underground units moved towards Matthew's deployment area.

TURN TWO

Matthew: And I was already under pressure! The Exosuits on the left flank were already in trouble, with one of their number down, one wounded and the Hoppers still close by. I elected to hold ground with them (acknowledging that this was probably a mistake), and concentrated on mowing down more warriors. The CHAS was detailed to deal with the Hoppers but, jumping in, it failed spectacularly to deal with a single one with its flamer. Nuts. Still, at least he survived their reaction attacks completely unscathed. This meant the Marauders had to plough in as well, and their withering fire at least managed to knock out three of them.

The other Exosuit squad, led by the Lieutenant, continued its flank march, hurting more warriors and scoring another hit on the King Tanker. Slowly but surely…

Alex: My Hoppers surviving the CHAS's flame attack was a stroke of luck but then failing to wound it with their reaction just made things even, I suppose. Now down to three bugs, the Hoppers were relying on some help from the Brain. It duly responded and a good ego war strike prevented the CHAS from
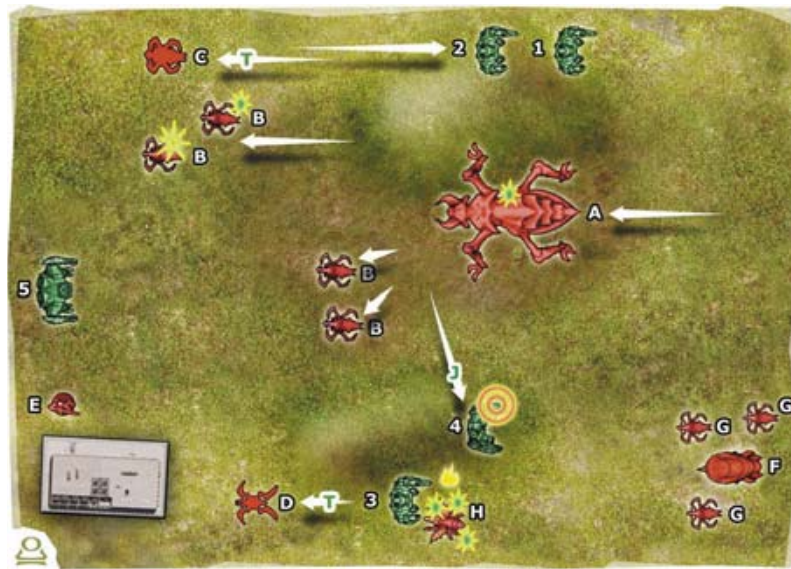
reacting. The Hoppers piled in, first with their standard actions and then with the bonus action from the Brain and all they managed was a lousy two hits. On the plus side they did survive the reaction fire from the Ape Marauder in range.

The rest of the army moved forward, the King Tanker - now at half hits - still very slowly, and the remnants of the warriors moving away from the left hand Cougar squad. The underground units moved onwards towards the deployment zone, as rather irritatingly I had forgotten to buy an extra tunnel entrance to keep in my hand so I couldn't get out without reaching the two in Matthew's deployment zone.

TURN THREE

Matthew: The Lieutenant and his Exosuits began to swing round the rear of the battlefield, having covered an amazing amount of distance already. Now, they started

to attack the Brain Bug, a valued target. Two Guard Bugs die instantly and the Brain takes two hits, though I had already started to wonder why Alex had not given it a Shield…

The CHAS, once again, fails to kill any Hoppers with its flamer, and is destroyed by reactions for its trouble. The Marauders, however, prove their worth and finally knock the last flyer out of the sky. Meanwhile, the pinned down Exosuit squad in the centre fails to hurt the King Tanker and, by splitting its firepower, I also reduce its effectiveness against softer targets.

Alex: Hooray! The Hoppers finally killed the CHAS with reactions but then got gunned down by Marauders. The Brain Bug, having lost two of the attendant Guard and taken two hits, decided it was long past time to put up his Shield, and with its second action took a wound off the Lieutenant with ID Sending. Making full use of the bonus action, the Infiltrator Bug unmasked and leapt on one of the Marauders, taking two hits from it. The tunnelling Warriors made it to a tunnel entrance and emerged to attack a marauder, failing utterly to do anything to it despite four attacks.

The King and the underground blisters continue their slow plod towards the enemy, getting closer all the time…

TURN FOUR

Matthew: Okay, now I had serious problems – bugs on the back line, a wrecked CHAS and an Exosuit squad who was utterly pinned down by approaching bugs. The one highlight

were the flanking Exosuits led by the Lieutenant. They managed to hurt the Brain Bug further, ripping its Shield to shreds; but the blasted thing was still sitting there, leering at me.

That, really, was the highlight of the turn. The Marauders achieved very little, wounding the Infiltrator Bug but provoking a host of reactions, which resulted in them all suffering damage. Why, oh why, had I not given at least one of them the optional flamers? I could have blasted the warriors out of their tunnel entrance with a single attack!

Memo to self: Always put at least one flamer in an M8 squad. Morita Claws are not *that* good.

TURN FOUR

Alex: I sort of expected the Shield on the Brain to get stripped, but at least the thing was still alive. The King Tanker made it into combat with an Exosuit and squashed him flat. The Infiltrator killed one of the Cougars on the right but got gunned down by reaction fire. Five of the Blisters managed to emerge from the second entrance and fried the closest Marauder, narrowly failing to wound the lone Warrior in combat with it. The rest of warriors in the deployment zone, having survived a hail of fire thanks to being in the cover of a tunnel entrance, jumped out onto the Apes and killed the last two.

After the carnage, there was now only one Exosuit near Matthew's deployment zone.

Things were not looking good for the Brain as there was no way it could escape the range of the Exosuits bearing down on it. It tried an ID Sending attack on the Lieutenant but failed.

TURN FIVE

Matthew: It was about this point that I realised things were close to being irretrievable. It would take some serious Mobile Infantry heroics to make a difference here (as well as completely ignoring the fact that the King Tanker would earn Alex massive bonuses for being in my deployment zone, but let's focus on the wider view here…)

At least I had the Brain Bug on the run but I could not help feeling that if only I had managed to destroy it last turn, the game would still be up for grabs. The Lieutenant and Exosuit squad attack the Brain once more but only cripple it – I could not believe the blasted thing was still alive! Still, confident of the power of Exosuits, I jumped in close, ensuring that when the thing moved, I could react.

Alex: Ha! The Brain still lives! Okay so it and the Guard Bug are on one hit each, but that was enough to not throw my army into disarray. Matthew had moved his Cougars right up close so I took advantage to attack them in close combat as well. It

might have worked, had the Sergeant not made his dodge save. To make matters worse the reaction fire from the Cougars killed the Guard Bug.

Close to the MI deployment zone, the King Tanker moved forward and fried the last Cougar on the left with its flame attack and then used the bonus action to lumber towards Matthew's deployment zone. All there was to do now was to get as many of my units as possible into the deployment zone.

TURN SIX

Matthew: The Brain was *still* alive. Just what would it take?

As it turned out, I finished it off here but, cocksure of the Exosuits, I took a Ready action to jump out and start hitting the bugs nearing my deployment zone, splitting fire as I went. Of course, this was the time the Brain Bug decided to become hard and attack me in close combat, killing one of the Exosuits. The Lieutenant finally kills it but my other Exosuits, firing into various bug units, manage to roll a spectacular number of 1's.

It was about what I expected by this point in the game.

Alex: With the Brain dead, my last turn was very simple. Every model took one Move action into Matthew's deployment zone and, in the case of the King Tanker, only just making it.

Final Score: Arachnids 2185, Mobile Infantry 1025

NUTS!

I *could* complain about my army selection. I could say swapping one unit of Cougars for a unit of Grizzlies would have given me a better balance of firepower. I could say that the total lack of M9 Marauders gave me

a complete inability to deal with the King Tanker. But it would all be useless.

The main reason for the MI getting smacked around in this battle was that I fell into the classic trap of reacting to the enemy instead of forcing him on the back foot. For example, I was intending to get my Marauder squad to close combat a tunnel entrance, which would have funnelled Alex's units in one direction (making him easier to predict) and earned a few extra mission points. They were then going to close combat the King Tanker. Instead, I chose to start messing around with Hoppers and Warriors, which eventually overcame them. Much the same for the first Exosuit squad.

What *did* work out was the one unit that was proactive. The Lieutenant-led Exosuit squad that completely flanked the bugs did so with impunity, hailing fire down onto the swarms and finally giving the Brain Bug what for. If only I had managed to do that with the other squad, and perhaps kept the Marauders on my baseline as an anchor, it might have gone very differently.

Still, just you wait until my Exosuit platoon is completely finished. Then the day will be mine. Oh, yes, it will be mine…

MUNCHIES!

Mmm, I love the taste of MI in the morning. Preferably with a little milk and sugar.

I'm still trying to work out how I won. It all looked pretty desperate for a long time but I guess that it goes to show that all an Arachnid player needs to do is get a few models into combat and it can really disrupt an enemy battle plan.

The sheer firepower of the Cougars is very worrying, but after the first turn of being shot at I decided not to worry about it and just close wherever possible. As the old adage goes, the enemy can't shoot when he's got no face!

By concentrating on the mission of getting units into Matthew's deployment zone I forced him to hang around and try and deal with them, which ultimately meant I was able to overrun him. Giving the Brain Bug an attendant unit of Guard is certainly something I'll do again, as these guys kept it alive for an extra two turns, and that extra co-ordinate action is invaluable. Ego War is also a powerful weapon, as the two times I used it I was able to prevent reaction fire from killing my units.

I think next time I'll take a Plasma Bug. That will whittle down those pesky Exosuits nicely.

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