Signs & Portents

WARGAMER

41

The pak'ma'ra Fleet

Some People Really Do Stink

Welcome To The War

Battlefield Evolution Battle Report

Starship Troopers Adventure Game

Part Two Of This Massive Project

Plus. . . Victory At Sea Battle Report, Tantalus Assault Cruiser,
Z-Plan Kriegsmarine and much, much more!

It seems that no matter how you plan ahead people have a habit of trumping what you do. This morning, for example, one of our writers, Bryan Steele, emailed me details of a railgun in development with the US Navy. At about the same time Matthew found out the Russians are planning to improve their artillery firepower by creating double-barrelled artillery pieces! In short, second guessing the future can be tricky. I guess that's why I'm so proud of what we have done with Battlefield Evolution. In the space of the last year while we were in development things have moved on, but never far from where we estimated. Keeping up to speed with journals like Jane's Defence Weekly certainly helps, but I like to think we are good to go regardless.

It has certainly been an exciting ride watching a whole new production process come to fruition. We have literally been breaking new ground with this and it has taken quite a degree of control not to jump the gun and rush products out early. I'm sure though that the wait will be worth it. When you see the models on your gaming table ready to duke it out I'm certain you will be more than satisfied. And we've only just started!

Right now the Studio is humming to the sounds of me doing impressions of Messerschmitts as my Luftwaffe take on all and sundry in playtests for our 3D air war system. Those of you looking at coming to the Battlefield Evolution Open Day Matthew has been threatening may well get the chance to try out the prototype game, so brush up on your Spitfires and Focke Wulfs!

Ian

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Matthew Sprange's PLA clash with Richard Ford's USMC, with Ian Barstow as our on-the-spot War Correspondent.

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Complete rules for the new pak'ma'ra fleet - free right here in *Signs and Portents Wargamer*

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IS THERE *ENOUGH* OF YOU LEFT TO RESCUE?

OH, YEAH – ELVIS LEFT THIS BUILDING IN A *RUSH* NOW, DIDN'T HE?

SILVERBACKS, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE *CARRYING* THE OFFICER HOME TONIGHT.

HNG!

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Starship Troopers Adventure Game

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The second half of Carl Walmsley's rules for the SST Adventure Game, covering the arachnids, missions, and - well, pretty much everything that wasn't in the first half!

Z-Plan Kriegsmarine

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Agis Neugebauer continues his look at hypothetical (and not-so-hypothetical) German vessels for use in *Victory at Sea*.

Tantalus Assault Cruiser

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A whole new ACTA fleet list isn't enough free material for one issue? Hot on the heels of the pak'ma'ra are the full for this new addition to the Earth Alliance fleet. We've even thrown in a construction guide!

Carriers in the North Sea

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Unable to decide who is the better admiral, Nick Robinson and Ian Barstow duke it out at sea once more in this *Victory at Sea* battle report.

Plus...

EYE ON MONGOOSE

This Month's Releases and Stockist News

Vorlon Transports

It is a testament to the technology of the Vorlons that their most common craft, a humble transport for agents and diplomats, is comparable to many front line warships of the younger races. Though it lacks the raw firepower and durability of the Destroyer, the Transport is an extremely capable vessel benefitting from most Vorlon technologies such as adaptive armour and a self-repairing hull.

This blister pack contains two Vorlon Transports.

Vree Z'Takk Command Saucer

Only the combined trading guilds of the Vree could have countenanced building this warship. Though it compromises on what was ultimately possible, unlike the combined efforts of the Abbai and Brakiri with the Brivoki, the Z'Takk command saucer is still a formidable vessel. It had long been believed that Vree technology was beginning to stagnate with few significant developments taking place in recent years but the trade treaties of the ISA have been embraced whole-heartedly by the trading guilds and it has been the Vree who have benefited from the resulting influx of money as a result. This alone made the Z'Takk possible, a huge saucer with integrated hangers and multiple banks of weapon bays, all combined into a design that retains the Vree's noted agility.

Earth Alliance Tantalus Assault Cruiser Kit

The Tantalus is a military assault warship used by the Earth Alliance, though never in large numbers. Capable of carrying four full battalions into battle, the Tantalus has enough assault shuttles on board to transport all of its troops planetside in less than an hour, while maintaining its own fighter escort. In later years, the Starfuies were replaced by Thunderbolts, in order to provide fighter cover to the shuttles all the way through the atmosphere.

This is an advanced kit that requires more than the normal amount of assembly. The construction guide and full rules of the Tantalus can be found later in this issue of Signs & Portents Wargamer.

New - pak'ma'ra Fleet

The pak'ma'ra are carrion eaters and scavengers of the highest (or lowest, depending on your point of view) calibre, and little escapes their grasp as they drift through the galaxy. Few ever take notice of what the pak'ma'ra are doing, usually out of a deep sense of revulsion. This gives them an eerie stealth that often surprises their enemies. The pak'ma'ra are everywhere. They accomplish this not by high technology or telepathic influence but through the collective ignorance and prejudice set against them.

The fleets of the pak'ma'ra revolve around their ability to make lucrative trade contracts over the highly-prized Quantium-40 that is thick on many of their system's worlds and moons. In exchange for decent trade taxation and Q-40 pricing several League races donate older starship hulls to the pak'ma'ra. Gutting these vessels of foreign technologies, the pak'ma'ra refit the ships to better suit their needs. Those who have traded vessels to the pak'ma'ra are sometimes horrified to find their former ships filled with junk, organic leftovers and other materials. Once modified for the carrion eaters' lifestyle and dietary habits, they can ply the space lanes for as long as they wish.

Often carrying expensive loads of Quantium-40, the pak'ma'ra have had to heavily augment their vessels in order to protect themselves from raiders and other enemies. Masters of plasma technology, every weapon system on their ships is tied into a central plasma-battery engine. The use of plasma is considered by most as an old and defunct relic of the shipbuilding industry, yet the pak'ma'ra rely on it. They have managed to deploy powerful heavy plasma cannons on very small ships and fit the deadly and infamous plasma torpedo launcher in order to give them a longer-ranged punch. Not known for the ferocity of their marines or the agility of their pilots, every ship is fitted with plasma web interceptors to spin deadly strands of superheated gas around enemy fighters, literally slicing them to ribbons.

No need to spend money on a seperate fleet book - The pak'ma'ra fleet list and rules can be found later in this issue of Signs and Portents!

pak'ma'ra Fleet Boxed Set

This fleet box set contains everything you need to get your pak'ma'ra into space;

12 Porfatis System Boats
3 Urik'Hal Supermerchants
3 Psul'Shi Convoy Guardians
3 Ikorta Armed Merchants
2 Warbird Cruisers
1 Halik Frigate

pak'ma'ra Porfatis System Patrol Boats

Classified by other races as a super heavy fighter, the pak'ma'ra regard the Porfatis more as a small warship, with plenty of room inside for its crew. It is used to escort allied traders through friendly space and can sometimes be seen flying alongside short-ranged convoys.

pak'ma'ra P'shul'Shi Convoy Guardian

The largest vessel ever constructed by the pak'ma'ra, this ship is used primarily to ensure the safe arrival of large convoys through contested or dangerous space. With little room for cargo, the Pshul'shi has massive power reserves, allowing it to meet the demands of its weapon systems.

pak'ma'ra Uruk'Hal Supermerchant

One of the few examples of homegrown military vessels from the pak'ma'ra, the Urik'Hal is a large merchant ship designed to weather attacks from a heavy raiding force while retaining enough firepower to destroy smaller warships. Many trading fleets are based around one of more of these ships, making them a common sight outside of pak'ma'ra space.

BATTLEFIELD EVOLUTION

WAVE 2 UNIT RELEASES

MEA FEDAYEEN SQUAD

MEA TECHNICALS

PLA WZ-551

USMC RST-V SHADOWS

EFTF BRITISH INFANTRY COMMAND & WARRIOR

BRITISH ARMY INFANTRY SECTION — 160

Comprising some of the most disciplined and well-trained troops in the world, the British Army has a long and proud history.

Materiel

Team 1: *Corporal* w/L85A2, 2 x Riflemen w/ L85A2, Gunner w/Minimi Para

Team 2: Lance Corporal w/ L85A2, 2 x Riflemen w/ L85A2, Gunner w/Minimi Para

Options

Drop Team 2 for –75 points.

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	4"	2xD6	4+	5+	6+

Squad

Weapons

L85A2 Assault Rifle
Range: 24" Damage: D6

AG36 Underslung Grenade Launcher
Range: 16" Damage: D6+1

Minimi Para
Range: 30" Damage: 2xD6

Special Rules

FIST: Future Integrated Soldier Technology, through the use of computers and weapon-mounted cameras, allows a soldier to pinpoint shots and make a mockery of cover. Any model in cover targeted with the L85A2 will only receive a +1 bonus to its Target and Kill scores. In addition, all models in this unit have a command range of 12", rather than the usual 6". Models will also ignore the effects of smoke (see main rulebook).

AG36 Underslung Grenade Launcher: One Rifleman in each team has an underslung grenade launcher attached to his L85A2. This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6) against every model within 1" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction.

Fire Teams: Team 2 may be split off from the section to act as an independent unit, with the Lance Corporal acting as unit leader. This may be done before the start of the battle or at the beginning of any turn.

Minimi Para: If a Ready action is taken to set this weapon up properly (lie prone, extend bipod, etc), then all subsequent Shoot actions will gain two bonus Damage Dice though it may only shoot in its forward facing. These bonus dice are lost as soon as the model moves. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

BRITISH ARMY CHALLENGER II MBT — 425

Plated in second generation CHOBAM armour, the Challenger II is one of the best-protected tanks in ever designed.

Materiel

Challenger II w/L55, Chain Gun and GPMG

Options

None

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
4	7"	4xD10	8+	2+	13+

Armour

Weapons

Rheinmetall L55 Gun
Range: 72" Damage: D10+4

Chain Gun
Range: 30" Damage: 3xD6

GPMG
Range: 30" Damage: 3xD6

Special Rules

Rheinmetall L55: This weapon causes a –4 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6+1 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 2" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn. If a model of Size 3 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally.

Chain Gun: This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls. It may be fired with the L55 in the same Shoot action but must use the same Fire Zone. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

GPMG: This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls. The GPMG may be fired with another weapon system in the same Shoot action but may create its own separate Fire Zone. It may be used as an AA weapon. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

Armoured: The Challenger II will ignore all terrain 1" high or less for the purposes of movement. It is also immune to Suppression but only has an Armour score of 3+ to the Side or Rear facings. The Challenger II may never make any reactions except to Shoot with it its GPMG. It will also ignore the effects of smoke (see main rulebook).

Tough: The Challenger II will ignore the first four failed Armour rolls. An attack that rolls its Kill score will destroy it as normal.

MEA INFANTRY SQUAD — 75

Never giving an inch to an invader, the men and women of the MEA have vowed to defeat their oppressors.

Materiel

Leader w/AK-103, 4 x Riflemen w/AK-103, Gunner w/RPG-29

Options

Up to 6 extra squad members may be added. Riflemen w/AK-103 will cost +10 points, Gunners w/RPG-29 will cost +25 points. A maximum of two extra Gunners may be added.

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	5"	D6	4+	-	6+

Squad

Weapons

AK-103 Assault Rifle
Range: 20" Damage: D6

RPG-29
Range: 30" Damage: D10

Special Rules

RPG-29: This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6-1 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 2" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction.

PLA INFANTRY SQUAD — 190

Both versatile and numerous, the soldiers of the PLA appear as an irresistible wave of humanity, sweeping across the battlefield.

Materiel

Team 1: *Sergeant w/QBZ95, 2 x Riflemen w/ QBZ95, Gunner w/PF-89*

Team 2: *Corporal w/QBZ95, Rifleman w/QBZ95, Gunner w/QBB95*

Team 3: *Corporal w/QBZ95, Rifleman w/ QBZ95, Gunner w/PF-89*

Options

Drop Team 2 for –30 points. Drop Team 3 for –60 points.

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	5"	2xD6	4+	-	6+

Squad

Weapons

QBZ95 Assault Rifle
Range: 20" Damage: D6

QBB95 MG: Range
30" Damage: 2xD6

PF-89 80mm LAW
Range: 20" Damage: D10+2

Special Rules

Fire Teams: Team 2 may be split off from the section to act as an independent unit, with the Corporal acting as unit leader. Team 3 may be split off from the section to act as an independent unit, with the Corporal acting as unit leader. This may be done before the start of the battle or at the beginning of any turn.

QBB95: If a Ready action is taken to set this weapon up properly (lie prone, extend bipod, etc), then all subsequent Shoot actions will gain two bonus Damage Dice though it may only shoot in its forward facing. These bonus dice are lost as soon as the model moves. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

PF-89: This weapon causes a –2 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 1" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction. If a model of Size 2 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally.

TYPE 99 MBT — 350

A quantum leap forward for the PLA, the Type 99 has much in common with its Western counterparts.

Materiel

Type 99 MBT w/125mm Gun and 2 x MGs

Options

None

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
4	7"	4xD10	8+	2+	11+

Armour

Weapons

125mm Gun: Range
60" Damage: D10+3

MG
Range: 30" Damage: 3xD6

Special Rules

125mm Gun: This weapon causes a –3 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6+1 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 2" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn. If a model of Size 3 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally.

MG: The Type 99 carries two MGs. These weapons cause a –1 penalty to Armour rolls. They may always be fired in addition to another weapon system in a single Shoot action, and one may create it's own separate Fire Zone. One of the MGs may be used as an AA weapon. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

Armoured: The Type 99 will ignore all terrain 1" high or less for the purposes of movement. It is also immune to Suppression but only has an Armour score of 3+ to the Side or Rear facings. The Type 99 may never make any reactions except to Shoot with one of its MGs. It will also ignore the effects of smoke (see main rulebook).

Tough: The Type 99 will ignore the first three failed Armour rolls. An attack that rolls its Kill score will destroy it as normal.

USMC INFANTRY SQUAD — 185

Enjoying massive logistical support, the USMC has expanded its role to enable it to fight any enemy and expect victory.

Materiel

Sergeant w/M16A4

Team 1: *Corporal w/ M16A4, 2 x Riflemen w/ M16A4, Gunner w/M249 SAW*

Team 2: *Corporal w/ M16A4, 2 x Riflemen w/ M16A4, Gunner w/M249 SAW*

Options

Drop Team 2 for –80 points. Add one or two teams for +80 points each. These teams will be identical to Team 2 and may be split off from the unit as normal.

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	4"	2xD6	4+	5+	6+

Squad

Weapons

M16A4 Assault Rifle
Range: 24" Damage: D6

M203 Grenade Launcher
Range: 16" Damage: D6+1

M249 SAW
Range: 30" Damage: 2xD6

Special Rules

Land Warrior: This equipment, through the use of computers and weapon-mounted cameras, allows a soldier to pinpoint shots and make a mockery of cover. Any model in cover targeted with the M16A4 will only receive a +1 bonus to its Target and Kill scores. In addition, this unit has a command range of 12", rather than the normal 6". Models will also ignore the effects of smoke (see main rulebook).

Intelligence Feeds: Any army with at least one of these units may re-roll its dice for set up and deployment.

Fire Teams: Teams may be split off from the squad to act as independent units, with the Corporals acting as unit leaders. The Sergeant must join one of these teams and act as its unit leader. This may be done before the start of the battle or at the beginning of any turn.

M203 Grenade Launcher: One Rifleman in each team has an underslung grenade launcher attached to his M16A4. This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 1" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction.

M249 SAW: If a Ready action is taken to set this weapon up properly (lie prone, extend bipod, etc), then all subsequent Shoot actions will gain two bonus Damage Dice though it may only shoot in its forward facing. These bonus dice are lost as soon as the model moves. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

M1A2 ABRAMS MBT — 420

With successive upgrades and refits, the Abrams retains its position as one of the pre-eminent main battle tanks in the world.

Materiel

M1A2 Abrams w/M256, M2 and 2 x MGs

Options

None

Statistics

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
4	8"	4xD10	8+	2+	12+

Armour

Weapons

120mm M256 Gun
Range: 72" Damage: D10+4

M2 .50 MG
Range: 36" Damage: 2xD6+1

MG
Range: 30" Damage: 3xD6

Special Rules

M256 Gun: This weapon causes a –4 penalty to Armour rolls (but only D6+1 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 2" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn. If a model of Size 3 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally.

M2 .50 MG: This weapon causes a –1 penalty to Armour rolls. It may always be fired in addition to another weapon system in a single Shoot action, and may create it's own separate Fire Zone. In addition, it may be used as an AA weapon. Every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

MG: The Abrams carries two MGs, both of which cause a –1 penalty to Armour rolls. One MG may always be fired in addition to another weapon system in a single Shoot action, and may create its own separate Fire Zone. One of the MGs may be used as an AA weapon. Every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only. If every model in the target unit is assigned two or more Damage Dice when this weapon is used, the unit will lose two actions from Suppression, rather than just one.

Armoured: The Abrams will ignore all terrain 1" high or less for the purposes of movement. It is also immune to Suppression but only has an Armour score of 3+ to the Side or Rear facings. The Abrams may never make any reactions except to Shoot with one MG and the M2. It will also ignore the effects of smoke (see main rulebook).

Tough: The Abrams will ignore the first four failed Armour rolls. An attack that rolls its Kill score will destroy it as normal.

Intelligence Feeds: Any army with at least one of these units may re-roll its dice for set up and deployment.

WELCOME TO THE WAR

A Battlefield Evolution Battle Report

Matthew Sprange, Richard 'Jarhead' Ford and Ian Barstow

As the first box sets rolled into Mongoose Towers, we eagerly tore them apart, and started preparing armies. Naturally, debates quickly arose over who had the finest force and who could beat who with an armoured tank division tied behind their backs. Richard, in particular, was very noisy in his certitude that the USMC could take on all comers, especially Matthew's own PLA. After a quick wet haddock in the face (the traditional Mongoose challenge), the urban warfare table was quickly made ready for the inevitable contest. . .

This would be a 900 point battle, using all the standard rules of the Battlefield Evolution rules sheet, complete with Shatter Point victory conditions.

THE USMC – RICHARD

I can't stress enough the importance of taking an Abrams in the USMC army. With a Kill score of twelve it's one of the toughest armoured units in the game and its firepower is pretty much unmatched. If I could take two of them and forgo an infantry squad I would do, but if I only have two Abrams my Shatter Point would be 1, and the first tank blown up would hand Matthew the match.

As it is, my only realistic choice is to take two USMC Infantry squads and bolster them as much as I can. I have enough spare points to add an extra fire team to one of my units, giving me not only superior firepower with the Abrams, but also a high number of mobile and deadly units. Splitting each squad into individual fire teams means I have five separate units of between four and five marines.

If this goes to plan I should be all over the PLA like a rash!

THE PLA – MATTHEW

I just knew that Richard would take an Abrams – one of the finest tanks in the game, how could he not? So, would I, in return, go tank heavy or troops heavy?

After a great deal of thought, I finally settled on two Type 99's and a full infantry squad. The infantry of the PLA are extremely flexible, being able to carry both machine guns and anti-tank weaponry into battle but, as good as the PF-89 is at defeating armour, it is also extremely close-ranged. Now, closing range with armour is a little easier in urban terrain, but I still did not fancy my chances.

So, tank heavy it was. I was still taking a risk here, however, as an Abrams is fully capable of tearing a Type 99 apart even if it is hull down in cover, while the Type 99 cannot do the same in return. However, having two of them would give me a chance to flank Richard, and I always had my infantry carried PF-89's as a back up plan.

If I could just avoid getting my infantry entangled in a protracted firefight with the US Marines, who can easily root my chaps out of cover and give them a good smacking, I might just stand a chance. . .

BATTLEFIELD EVOLUTION

TOTAL: 870 POINTS

TOTAL: 890 POINTS

FORDY'S 1ST MARINE DIVISION

USMC 1ST INFANTRY SQUAD
265 POINTS

USMC 2ND INFANTRY SQUAD
185 POINTS

USMC M1A2 ABRAMS MBT
420 POINTS

MATTHEW'S 9TH ARMOURED DIVISION

PLA INFANTRY SQUAD
190 POINTS

PLA TYPE 99 MBT
350 POINTS

PLA TYPE 99 MBT
350 POINTS

DEPLOYMENT

Sergeant Yun Hou approached the low-slung and threatening shape of the Type 99 tank as the fresh morning Kerakhistani breeze cleared away the vehicle's exhaust fumes. The badge of the 9th Armoured Division had recently been repainted and looked strangely gaudy against the muddied green paint of the tank. Clambering up onto the hull he waited patiently for the turret hatch to open. Scanning the terrain ahead, he looked for signs of the Americans. The US Marine Corps had recon elements in the vicinity and PLA high command wanted to know why.

The sound of the tank hatch opening brought the sergeant back to the business at hand and he watched as Lieutenant Fang Cheh appeared. Yun Hou saluted smartly. Without response the lieutenant nodded towards the town and curtly said: "We go in 15 minutes. Make sure your men are fully prepared. Sweep the town for enemy presence and secure the perimeter." With that he disappeared from sight and the turret closed up.

Wonderful, thought Yun Hou. He dismounted athletically and jogged over to where his squad was eating breakfast. How was he to 'secure a perimeter' with 10 men? If this had been a significant target Division would have sent more than two Type 99 tanks with a squad of supporting infantry.

* * *

At about the same time a very similar conversation was taking place on the other side of Jalafad. Sergeant Moss of the 1st Marine Division leafed through a silhouette sheet, making sure he could pick any given angle of a Type 99 main battle tank, even if it was parked behind a hedge on a moonless night. An instinctively cautious man, he was known as Old Baldy by his men. Alongside the slightly rotund figure of the veteran sergeant squatted a lieutenant in tank commander fatigues, his whole demeanour bristling with confident aggression.

"Your boys ready to roll?" the lieutenant queried.

Moss looked up from his leaflet and squinted into the morning sun. "locked and loaded, sir," he confirmed.

A veteran campaigner, Moss knew what street fighting in the Middle East could be like, but he was pretty certain that Claiborne didn't want to hear it. He considered offering a few cautionary words of advice but was halted in his tracks by a whoop of joy from inside the adjacent M1A2 Abrams tank.

"Green light! We got the green light, sir!" announced the voice.

Moss had just short of two full squads under his command and the Blackhawks that had inserted them were long gone. Looking down at Jalafad he watched as buildings disappeared in rubble and people scattered, barricading themselves inside what was left of their homes. *Welcome to the war*, he thought.
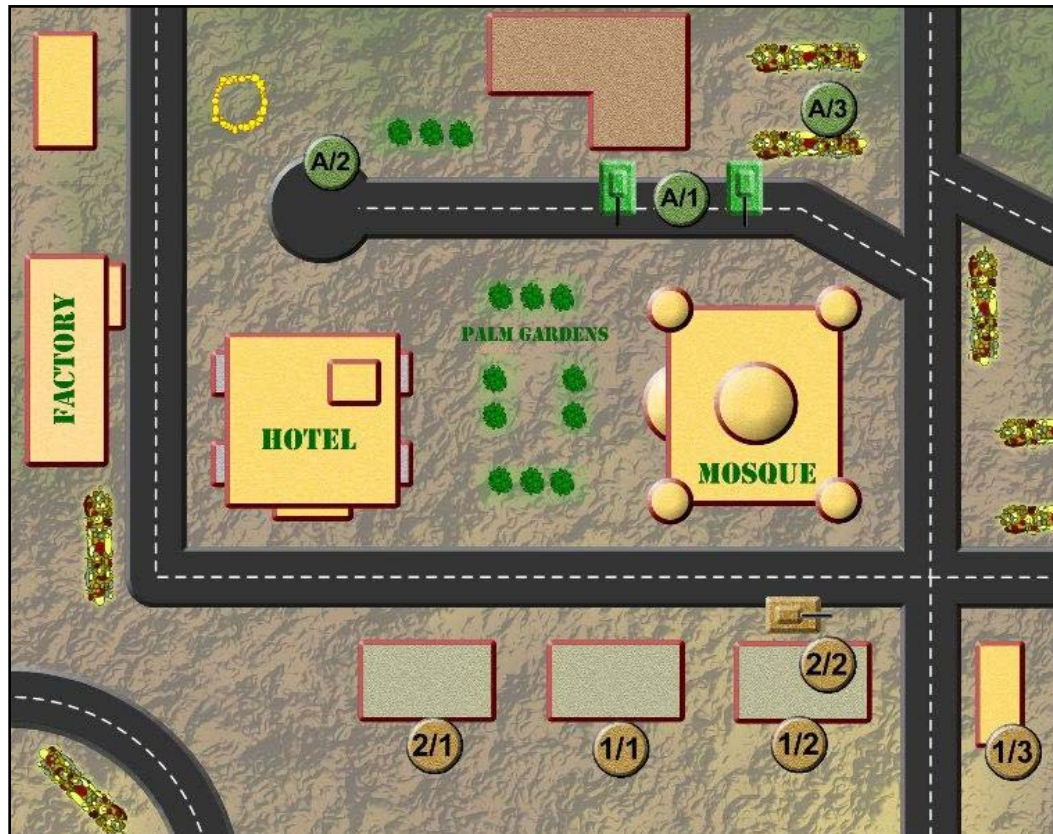
Deployment

TURN 1

As the marines approached the outskirts of the town, the smoke kicked up by the initial Chinese bombardment had all but cleared. It had given time for the USMC fire teams to infiltrate the southern outskirts which were only partially damaged. This was good news but Moss wondered just what the PLA infantry were doing on the other side of the ruined town. He scanned the vicinity using the Integrated Helmet Assembly Subsystem of his Land Warrior array, but whether the electronics were being affected by atmospherics or the residue of the fire, his display was on the fritz. That wasn't good either. The USMC had come to rely as much on the Land Warrior system as they had their guns, and when it went down it handed the initiative over to their more basically equipped opponents.

> **Game Note:** *Yes, Richard failed when trying to re-roll the set up dice for his Intelligence Feeds. . .*

The sound of squeaking metal announced the arrival of Lt. Claiborne's Abrams, which to Moss's surprise rolled right past the concealed marines and pulled up in the main street.

"What the hell is he doing?" Moss heard Sgt. Riley, the commander of 2nd Squad mutter on the internal radio frequency.

"Move your men up and support me, Moss. I'm taking her in," was the answer, although Moss knew that Claiborne had not been privy to Riley's question. He just had a gift for bad timing.

Moss grunted once more before activating his throat mike: "Listen up, marines. We're moving into the town. Saddle up and be ready for trouble."

* * *

On the other side of Jalafad, Sgt. Yun Hou squatted behind the turret of Lt. Fang Cheh's Type 99, scouring the terrain through his binoculars. The improved range-finding and vision-enhancing aspects still left him feeling a touch of awe, despite his familiarity with the equipment. With technology like this he was sure they stood a chance against the Americans.

Then he blinked. Hard. Focussing his vision intently he saw the distinctive shape of a US Abrams tank brazenly crossing his line of sight as it rumbled down the main road of Jalafad, apparently without a care in the world.

Sure enough, Fang Cheh had seen it as well and a curt order from the PLA commander had Yun Hou leaping from the tank and passing rapid orders out to his squad. A second Type 99, commanded by Sgt. He Kuang, rumbled into view alongside the infantry and began heading for the north east corner of the mosque, intending to take up a defensive position or ambush the Abrams should the American tank be reckless enough to continue following the road.

The sound of gunfire suddenly broke the dusty silence, reminding Yun Hou that he was again about to enter battle. A shell exploded in the vicinity of where his third fire team was dug in amongst the rubble of a ruined house, killing one of the riflemen. It was enough to get the remaining PLA troops moving with a purpose, and He Kuang's tank roared forwards, the importance of reaching the mosque now all-to-clear.

> **Game Note:** *First blood to Richard, but what is that Abrams doing?*

* * *

Lt. Claiborne whooped with delight as he saw the round hit home, driving out the entrenched PLA infantry, or at least those that had survived the impact. "Direct hit, boys! Good firing!" he shouted into the Abrams'

Turn 1

intercom. Having advanced just north of the crossroads, Claiborne knew that with his powerful tank he now dominated both main roads through Jalafad. He waited for the infantry to come up alongside and complete the mission.

Sgt. Moss was less impressed. He had watched the tank driving around in the open like it was a parade, and he knew it spelt trouble. With its excellent armour, the USMC tank should have taken up a hull down position to make itself practically invulnerable to enemy fire, while the marines swept the town. As his men looked expectantly at him he shook is head and gestured for them to remain in position. "Pass that on to all teams, Hindman. Nobody goes until I give the word."

No way were they going to break cover while their support was racing off looking to win medals.

Claiborne could tell that the road ahead was empty. Possibly the hit had killed the PLA commander and his men were already hightailing it out of town. He opened his command hatch and stood up, eager to get a better view of proceedings. Sure enough, the infantry were gone. He smiled, but the smile turned to shock as the shape of a PLA Type 99 tank appeared at the corner of the mosque, its gun barrel pointed right at him.

"Holy cra..." he began, and was gone.

> **Game Note:** First shot from the PLA's Type 99 beats the Kill score of the Abrams, rendering it into a pile of junk. Never presume your heavily armoured tanks are invulnerable!

Claiborne's Abrams finds itself exposed at the crossroads

TURN 2

"Enemy tank destroyed," reported He Kuang, in his matter-of-fact style. "Nothing ahead. Will take up position and await orders."

Fang Cheh confirmed reception as his own tank entered the palm gardens between the hotel and the mosque. The central area of the town had suffered little damage but he had no time to admire the scenery. With Yun Chou's fire team following behind and the other undamaged team reporting no sign of activity on the right flank, he felt quietly confident. It was possible that another Abrams was nearby, and he didn't want to make the same mistake as the American tank commander had.

Suddenly ahead he saw movement. Infantry were exiting the row of houses on the far side of the main highway, threatening to outflank his position on its weak right side. He barked a warning to Yun Chou to make sure he kept his infantry sharp. His other Type 99 was also reporting further activity, and it was clear that US marines were in place along the whole street.

> **Game Note:** With his tank gone, Richard now had to concentrate on the PLA infantry in order to win. Because Matthew had taken two tanks, the PLA had very few models on the table, meaning their Shatter Point would not be difficult to reach. . .

Turn 2

The dangers of open ground graphically illustrated

TURN 3

Taking a knee, Moss rapidly triggered his throat mike. "Incoming armour! All teams move to alternate fire positions bravo!" The responses were brief, efficient and controlled, and Moss had time, even in the maelstrom of battle, to feel a swelling of pride at their coolness. Whatever else happened, his marines weren't about to bug out with their tails between their legs.

Ahead of him the ominous shape of a Type 99 slowly drove past the front of the town mosque, carefully looking for targets. *That's how you drive a tank*, he thought, looking across at the burning M1A2. The advancing monster threatened to split his outfit in two and he knew it needed distracting. Taking the responsibility personally, he led his team forward between two houses, hoping to catch the eye of the enemy tanker. "Be ready to hit the dirt," he barked. His men didn't need telling what the circumstances for that order would be. All eyes were on the turret of the Type 99, except Corporal Benson, who turned to shout something to Moss, and caught a chest full of machinegun bullets for his trouble.

> **Game Note:** The USMC fire team just strayed into the Type 99's reaction range, and were greeted by a hail of machine gun fire. However, as you will soon see, Matthew's luck at rolling dice for machine guns was directly inverse to that of his Type 99's main gun. . .

Knowing that without armoured support the marines had little anti-tank capability, the PLA commander decided that the best way to clear the town was by controlled aggression. "Move forward and engage. They only have infantry," he ordered.

* * *

Sgt. Moss did not have time to stare at the burning ruin of Claiborne's tank. That the lieutenant was dead was not in doubt, which put Moss in command. That meant he didn't have time to sit around. Taking Fire Team Bravo with him, Moss began an outflanking move in an attempt to get away from the Chinese Type 99 tank advancing through the gardens. Fire Team Charlie was also on the move in the face of the other Type 99, trying to keep the burning wreck of the Abrams between them.

He barked an order to Riley to keep his short squad hidden in place. He was hoping that the Chinese would be distracted by the movement and buy him some breathing room. Again the bad atmospherics conspired to hinder him, as the static reply suggested that Riley had not received the order. Whatever had gone wrong, both Chinese tanks advanced, turning their guns on Riley's advancing fire team, the converging shells killing a rifleman and the gunner. The loss of the valuable M249 was a catalyst for the battered fire team and they rushed out of the building, making for the cover of the burning tank.

To Moss's left Riley's fire team fire team broke cover and headed for the security of the Zafir hotel foyer, skirting the corner to see a PLA machinegun set up at the north west corner of the hotel, dominating the street they needed to cross. Firing on the move, the sight of the PLA gunner sprawled in the street told them they had hit their target.

> **Game Note:** The power of the Land Warrior suite is demonstrated admirably here, as the USMC were able to easily root the PLA soldier out of cover.

Riley's second fire team was not so lucky. Already down two men, a burst of machinegun fire from the second Type 99 displayed the swift reactions of the gunner, and another marine was fell dead in the road, leaving only the corporal sheltering behind the burning Abrams.

Moss's second fire team moved into the alleyway by the house recently evacuated by Riley's second team while Moss's third fire team on the

Turn 3

Sgt. Riley's fire team attempt to outflank the PLA position

right put their heads down and ran full tilt for the cover of the ruined houses ahead of them, hoping the smoke of the burning tank would shield them from the two PLA Type 99s. It really was a case of hoping the Chinese couldn't shoot straight.

* * *

Sgt. Yun Hou followed the advancing Type 99 towards the burning American tank, looking for targets. Suddenly there was movement everywhere. The marines seemed to be attacking when common sense said dig in or withdraw. It was a bold move, and Yun Hou intended to make them pay for it. Ignoring the lone soldier crossing from his right, Yun Hou gestured at the USMC fire team rushing towards the ruined buildings ahead of them. The view was limited because of the sheer amount of rubble obscuring his view, but it was good enough for a shot and he ordered his men to open fire. A PF-89 anti-tank missile hissed past his head and the vapour trail expired in amongst the marines, leaving two bodies in the street. The remaining Americans had the tenacity to fire back and Hun You looked around to see the PF-89 gunner propped up against the Type 99's hull, a blossom of crimson spreading out over his uniform before he pitched over, dead. War had a habit of evening things up.

Game Note: Here is a good example of the PF-89 and its use. A lot of power in a small weapon, but it lacks the range of its counterparts in other armies. Make sure your gunners are protected or at least in cover!

Next to Yun Hou, Sgt. He Kuang's Type 99 tracked its 125mm gun onto the burning Abrams and fired off a round, further devastating the wreck and killing the USMC corporal who was the last survivor of Riley's second fire team. The hull machinegun sprayed a swathe of bullets towards the fire team already targeted by Yun Hou, dropping another rifleman.

Over by the hotel the PLA fire team were not so efficient, and fired inaccurately at Riley's fire team, lacking punch without their QBB95 LMG, although the hurried return fire also missed the mark.

Watching all this from his advanced central position, Lt. Fang Cheh allowed himself a brief smile. This was going to look very good on his service file. With the increasing casualties being suffered on the front, the opportunities for promotion were high, and he intended to be one of the lucky ones. Seeing movement south east of him in the alleyway he gave a curt order to fire, and within seconds all four of the marine fire team were dead or out of action. Yes, things were going very well.

TURN 4

Suddenly coming under fire, Sgt Riley's team returned fire on the run as they headed for the cover of the ruined factory, dodging bullets as they went for the most part, although the M249 gunner, slowed by the added weight of his equipment, was killed.

Moss, meanwhile, had his team holed up in the left-hand of the three houses facing the invulnerable Type 99 straddling the road. He knew they couldn't even scratch the PLA tank's paintwork, but behind in the palm gardens he caught sight of movement and opened up on a pair of Chinese infantrymen moving up to support the tank, killing both with a well placed burst. His fire unfortunately attracted the attention of the tank machine gunner, and only the body armour of one of the marines stopped him becoming yet another casualty.

Moss found seconds he didn't have to order a sit-rep from his fire teams, but only Riley and Corporal Jablonski from the team on the far right flank reported in, and Jablonski's news was that he was on his own with no other survivors. Things were perilous, but a marine didn't quit easy. Aggression was the name of the game and he knew a firefight's result could change as quickly as the desert wind.

*   *   *

"Come across to me and pour fire into the buildings. The Americans are holed up inside," ordered Lt. Fang Cheh, ruthlessly preparing to extinguish all sign of enemy opposition. It was clear the marines were slowly pulling back, but Division would ask for a body count, and he wanted to give them the best news possible. This was no time for niceties. The war in Kerakhistan would be a brutal killing ground with little chivalry or mercy being shown.

A burst of fire from the marines ahead of him killed the two soldiers protecting the vulnerable rear of the tank – you could never be sure when one of those MEA insurgents would pop out of nowhere and fire a missile up your backside – and he was pleased to see one of the enemy fall as a shell from the other Type 99 struck home. Good! He Kuang was obeying orders. He liked a subordinate who did what he was told, no questions asked.

Turn 4

Sgt. Moss's fire team draw fire from Lt. Fang Che's Type 99

His own tank was tracking the USMC infantry down by the hotel, but they were moving too quickly for an accurate shot and his own shell sailed past them into the ruins beyond. He made a mental note to speak to his gunner about that. It didn't look good, not being able to shoot straight.

The PLA soldiers dug in by the hotel fared no better, seeing marines shrug off the shots as their struck hard armour, and keep moving. They had no time to curse the technological advantages of their opponents as a returning burst of fire came there way, although it was poorly aimed and allowed the Chinese to get off more shots, this time killing one of the marines.

TURN 5

Moss took one look at the pair of Type 99s bearing down on him and knew that he had to strike quickly. A number of PLA infantry were down, he knew that, and without infantry protection the tanks would fall back – that was standard doctrine.

He nodded to nobody in particular and made the call: "Riley, Jablonski, go hard for their infantry. If you drop them quickly we can still pull this off."

The loss of the USMC tank meant the PLA Type 99s could dominate the battlefield

Turn 5

Riley's marines executed the order perfectly, a vicious arc of fire hammering the corner of the hotel, shattering windows and propelling a PLA soldier half-a-dozen feet into the street. "Suck on that, feller!" yelled Riley, his frustration needing to vent in some way.

Jablonski, alone on the right flank, was not in a position to succeed so easily. Pulling back to a better firing position, he snapped off a couple of round but to his disappointment they went well wide. He looked around for another alternate firing position and prepared to move.

*   *   *

Sgt. Yun Hou finally allowed himself to relax. The firing had died down and now the only enemy in sight were bloodied and still. Some were undoubtedly still alive and he was sure the lieutenant would delight in handing them over to the tender mercies of Division's Intel officers. American prisoners, regardless of their condition, were highly prized political trophies. He spat in disgust. He was a soldier. A warrior. He would rather let them go or give them a warrior's death, as he himself would want. That was why he would never be an officer, he reasoned.

Movement ahead in amongst the ruins showed a single marine scurrying through the cover. A couple of his men made to fire at the American but

Yun Hou waved them down with a brisk shake of his head. There had been enough killing. Next to him the Type 99 belched flame, and after the debris had cleared the marine was no longer moving. Yun Hou shook his head once more, this time in resignation. This would be a brutal war.

* * *

"Jablonski, Jablonski! Status report!" growled Moss into his throat mike. The lack of response told him that either Jablonski was down or communications were failing again. He cursed the so-called high-tech electronics suite that had singularly failed to live up to its billing in this engagement. Either way, losses were now too high to carry on.

"Delta 6 to all Deltas. Withdraw to extraction point Charlie. Marines, we are leaving." Moss took one last look at Jalafad, and was gone.

DRINKING FROM THE KEG OF GLORY!

Games of Battlefield Evolution have a habit of flip-flopping in terms of advantage, and this one was no different. I really thought I had the upper hand when Richard's Abrams was destroyed by my first shot of the game, but he came back fighting! At first, I ignored the casualties my infantry were taking, but it soon became apparent that I was removing models nearly every turn and with a low Shatter Point, that was something I could not afford to do!

In return, Richard kept many of his troops in cover, where they were easy to suppress but tough to actually root out, even with machine gun fire. It took the Type 99's main guns to get decent hits on infantry buried within buildings. Even so, he could afford to take the casualties in the early part of the game, as his force greatly outnumbered mine.

The end of the game was a classic – Richard was literally two dice rolls away from winning. He managed to deftly launch a grenade in the middle of one fire team and was preparing to charge another in close combat. If it had worked out, he would have passed my Shatter Point and taken the game!

So, what lessons learned? Well, just because you have an advantage in tanks, it does not mean you are going to win. Infantry are incredibly adept at weathering incoming fire when they are in cover and the more tanks you have, the less soldiers are present to raise your Shatter Point. It does not

matter how much armour you have, if you can lose the game by having just a handful of soldiers die on you.

I dread to think how the game might have turned out if the Abrams had survived that first shot. In the end, it was Richard's supreme arrogance in its capabilities that did it in though. If only he had kept it in cover, I would never have been able to destroy it in a single hit, and the advantage would have been all his, forcing me to deploy my infantry in direct support of the tanks, while leaving his (very numerous!) marines to close in unhindered to set up kill zones with their machine guns. Ouch!

SUCKING ON THE TEAT OF DEFEAT

There was very little chance I'd win after Matt took out my Abrams in the very first turn. Getting a 9 on his first dice roll of the game! Who'd have thought it? Must admit though, it was a move of abject stupidity on my part to move my Abrams out of cover, I completely overestimated its defensive capabilities. If you look at it logically, Matt only needed to roll a 9 or 10 with his 125mm gun, which is only a 1 in 5 chance. Breaking cover was an extremely dumb move.

Well, despite my initial blunder it still came in relatively close and I learned some important lessons, most importantly: don't break cover and take more anti-tank capable units!!

The last few marines withdraw in the face of PLA pressure

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The Pak'ma'ra

The Carrion Eaters Take To Space In A Call to Arms

Matthew Sprange
with Bryan Steele

The pak'ma'ra are carrion eaters and scavengers of the highest (or lowest, depending on your point of view) calibre, and little escapes their grasp as they drift through the galaxy. Few ever take notice of what the pak'ma'ra are doing, usually out of a deep sense of revulsion. This gives them an eerie stealth that often surprises their enemies. The pak'ma'ra are everywhere. They accomplish this not by high technology or telepathic influence but through the collective ignorance and prejudice set against them.

The fleets of the pak'ma'ra revolve around their ability to make lucrative trade contracts over the highly-prized Quantium-40 that is thick on many of their system's worlds and moons. In exchange for decent trade taxation and Q-40 pricing several League races donate older starship hulls to the pak'ma'ra. Gutting these vessels of foreign technologies, the pak'ma'ra refit the ships to better suit their needs. Those who have traded vessels to the pak'ma'ra are sometimes horrified to find their former ships filled with junk, organic leftovers and other materials. Once modified for the carrion eaters' lifestyle and dietary habits, they can ply the space lanes for as long as they wish. Rumours abound of the Hurr selling gunships to the pak'ma'ra, though there have yet to be any confirmed sightings.

Often carrying expensive loads of Quantium-40, the pak'ma'ra have had to heavily augment their vessels in order to protect themselves from raiders and other enemies. Masters of plasma technology, every weapon system on their ships is tied into a central plasma-battery engine. The use of plasma is considered by most as an old and defunct relic of the shipbuilding industry, yet the pak'ma'ra rely on it. They have managed to deploy powerful heavy plasma cannons on very small ships and fit the deadly and infamous plasma torpedo launcher in order to give them a longer-ranged punch. Not known for the ferocity of their marines or the agility of their pilots, every ship is fitted with plasma web interceptors to spin deadly strands of superheated gas around enemy fighters, literally slicing them to ribbons.

Only having a single system that contains their homeworld of Melat allows the pak'ma'ra to mass a significant and numerous defence fleet around their only true assets. They blockade the only jump gate into their system with a formidable fleet and a hulking space station nicknamed the Abattoir by spacers everywhere.

The pak'ma'ra exist mainly as traders and wanderers of the galaxy, enjoying their ability to move among the worlds of others without hassle. Some believe the carrion eaters have an ulterior motive for placing so many of their kind in the communities of the other races, considering how disliked their presence tends to be.

This article introduces the pak'ma'ra as a new fleet for A Call to Arms. This is an official addition to the rules.
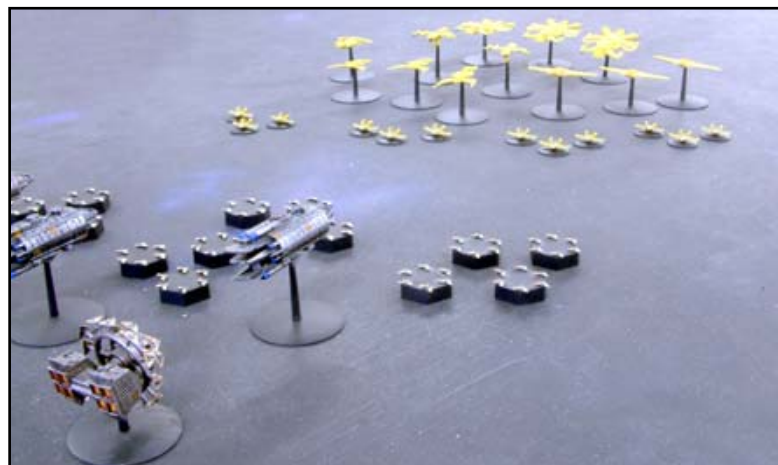
Raiders and pak'ma'ra engage

The pak'ma'ra Fleet List

The following forms the entire fleet list for the pak'ma'ra.

Priority Level: Patrol
Porfatis Wing (4 flights)
Sunhawk-class battlecruiser

Priority Level: Skirmish
Ikorta-class armed merchant
Warbird-class cruiser

Priority Level: Raid
Halik-class frigate
Urik-Hal-class Supermerchant

Priority Level: War
Pshul'shi-class convoy guardian

Pak'ma'ra Fleet Special Rules

The following special rules apply to all pak'ma'ra fleets.

Redundant Systems: Pak'ma'ra ships are a bewildering mess to the eyes of aliens, filled with refuse, junk and multiple, competing systems. While a nightmare for the uninitiated to fly, pak'ma'ra ships are exceptionally durable. Whenever a pak'ma'ra ship loses either Crew or Damage, roll one dice for every point lost. On a 6 or more, the damage is ignored. This does not nullify the special effects of critical hits, though Damage and Crew lost because of them are rolled for as normal.

If a pak'ma'ra ship takes the Close Blast Doors and Activate Defence Grid! Special Action, then this roll will be increased to a 5 or more as usual – it does not get two rolls for every point of Crew or Damage!

Gentle Beings: The pak'ma'ra have never really been distinguished as warriors, whether it is due to their psychology or the complicated design of their ships. All pak'ma'ra ships suffer a –1 penalty to their Crew Quality scores.

Scavengers: Pak'ma'ra are the original scavengers, and where other races see junk, they see profit.

In campaign games, if a pak'ma'ra fleet wins a scenario and has at least one ship on the table at the end of the game, he may opt to scavenge any enemy ships that are running adrift or left as burned out hulks and are still on the table. The pak'ma'ra fleet will immediately receive a number of RR points for each running adrift enemy ship left on the table, according to their Priority Level, as shown on the table below.

Ship's Priority Level	RR Points Gained
Patrol	3
Skirmish	6
Raid	10
Battle	18
War	30
Armageddon	50

Destroyed enemy ships (not those that have exploded) will yield half the number of RR points listed on the table above, rounding down.

Simple Traders: No one really takes notice of the pak'ma'ra and their movements throughout the galaxy, until it is too late. In a campaign game, no one may attack a Strategic Target that has been claimed by a pak'ma'ra fleet in the same or previous turn, unless the pak'ma'ra defeated them in the previous turn. In addition, a pak'ma'ra fleet may pick one ship in their fleet to receive a free roll on the pak'ma'ra Refits table.

pak'ma'ra Initiative: -3

Halik-class Frigate

Speed: 7
Turn: 2/45°
Hull: 5
Damage: 36/4
Crew: 42/4

Troops: 1
Craft: None
Special Rules: None
In Service: 2252+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	F	8	AP, Double Damage
Plasma Cannon	10	P	8	AP
Plasma Cannon	10	S	8	AP
Plasma Beams	4	T	6	Anti-Fighter

Used for a while with its standard Brakiri weaponry, the Halik was soon converted to what the pak'ma'ra knew and used themselves. As a frigate, it is a good purchase for any pak'ma'ra fleet looking to protect its trade interests from raiders and light attack fleets.

Halik-Class Frigate

Ikorta-Class Armed Merchant

Speed: 7
Turn: 1/45°
Hull: 5
Damage: 22/3
Crew: 24/4

Troops: 0
Craft: None
Special Rules: Interceptors 2
In Service: 2256+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Plasma Torpedoes	25	F	2	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	F	4	AP, Double Damage
Plasma Cannon	10	P	2	AP
Plasma Cannon	10	S	2	AP
Plasma Beams	4	T	4	Anti-Fighter

Though, per ton, an expensive purchase for the pak'ma'ra, the Ikorta is a valued addition to their fleets. Their conversion is quite extensive, as they make use of the huge hanger and troop mustering areas for cargo, making this one of the few war-grade merchant ships flying.

Ikorta Armed Merchant

Porfatis System Patrol Boat

Speed: 8
Turn: SM
Hull: 6
Damage: –
Crew: –

Troops: -
Dogfight: -1
Craft: –
Special Rules: Dodge 6+, Fighter
In Service: 2231+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Light Plasma Array	2	T	4	AP
Micro Plasma Torpedo	8	T	1	AP, Double Damage, Slow-Loading
Plasma Beam	4	T	1	Anti-Fighter

Classified by other races as a super heavy fighter, the pak'ma'ra regard it more as a small warship, with plenty of room inside for its crew. It is used to escort allied traders through friendly space and can sometimes be seen flying alongside short-ranged convoys.

Porfatis System Patrol Boat

Pshul'shi-class Convoy Guardian

Speed: 6
Turn: 1/45°
Hull: 6
Damage: 63/6
Crew: 78/7

Troops: 1
Craft: None
Special Rules: Jump Point
In Service: 2257+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Plasma Torpedo	25	F	4	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Plasma Torpedo	25	F	4	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	F	16	AP, Double Damage
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	P	16	AP, Double Damage
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	S	16	AP, Double Damage
Plasma Beams	4	T	6	Anti-Fighter

The largest vessel ever constructed by the pak'ma'ra, this ship is used primarily to ensure the safe arrival of large convoys through contested or dangerous space. With little room for cargo, the Pshul'shi has massive power reserves, allowing it to meet the demands of its weapon systems.

Pshul'shi Convoy Guardian

Sunhawk-class Battlecruiser

Speed: 10
Turn: 2/45°
Hull: 4
Damage: 14/2
Crew: 16/3

Troops: 0
Craft: None
Special Rules: None
In Service: 2212+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Plasma Cannon	10	B	4	AP
Plasma Torpedo	25	F	2	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Plasma Beams	4	T	3	Anti-Fighter

One of the most numerous ships bought by the pak'ma'ra from other governments, many hulls are quickly refitted to suit their new owners. Plasma weapons, known intimately by the pak'ma'ra, are fitted, along with long-ranged torpedoes. The latter lack accuracy but deliver a massive punch.

Sunhawk-class Battlecruiser

Urik'Hal-class Supermerchant

Speed: 6
Turn: 1/45°
Hull: 6
Damage: 27/4
Crew: 32/4

Troops: 1
Craft: None
Special Rules: Jump Point
In Service: 2233+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Plasma Torpedo	25	F	4	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Heavy Plasma Cannon	15	F	4	AP, Double Damage
Plasma Cannon	10	P	8	AP
Plasma Cannon	10	S	8	AP
Plasma Beams	4	T	4	Anti-Fighter

One of the few examples of homegrown military vessels from the pak'ma'ra, the Urik'Hal is a large merchant ship designed to weather attacks from a heavy raiding force while retaining enough firepower to destroy smaller warships. Many trading fleets are based around one of more of these ships, making them a common sight outside of pak'ma'ra space.

Urik'Hal Supermerchant

Warbird-class Cruiser

Speed: 10
Turn: 2/45°
Hull: 6
Damage: 18/2
Crew: 20/3

Troops: 0
Craft: None
Special Rules: None
In Service: 2241+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Plasma Cannon	10	B	8	AP
Plasma Torpedo	25	F	2	AP, Slow-Loading, Triple Damage
Plasma Beams	4	T	4	Anti-Fighter

Once the Warbird became available on the galactic market, the pak'ma'ra were quick to sign contracts with the Drazi Freehold, pleased to get their hands on a ship that was still very familiar to them, but so much more capable. It features the standard pak'ma'ra modifications, made all the more effective by its enhanced hardpoints.

Warbird-class Cruiser

Campaigns: Refits and Other Duties

Pak'ma'ra Fleets use the following tables for Refits and Other Duties when playing campaign games.

pak'ma'ra Refits

2d6	Refit
2	Jump Engines: The ship gains the Jump Point trait if it did not have it before and has at least 18 Damage points. If the ship already possesses the Jump Point trait, it gains the Advanced Jump Point trait instead.
3	Turbo Weapons: Choose one weapon system. It immediately gains the Double Damage trait but has its Attack Dice reduced by half (rounding up) +1.
4	Miniature Plasma Torpedo: A small plasma torpedo launcher has been fitted to the ship. The ship gains a new Miniature Plasma Torpedo with a Range of 15, Fore arc, 1 AD, and the AP, Slow-Loading and Double Damage traits. This may only be applied once to the ship.
5	Enhanced Interceptors: If the ship has Interceptors as a trait, it gains a +1 bonus to its Interceptor score. If Interceptors are not present, the ship gains Interceptors 1. This may only be applied once.
6	Long Range Targeting Systems: Choose one weapon system. It has its range extended by 50%. However, when using this extra range, halve the number of AD used (rounding down).
7	Additional Weapons Fitted: Choose one weapon system that has at least 6 AD. It gains an additional 2 AD. This may only be applied once per weapon system.
8	Advanced Sensor Arrays: The ship gains a +1 bonus to any attempt it makes to target an enemy with the Stealth trait. This may only be applied once.
9	Reinforced Hull: Add +20% to the ship's Damage score but reduce Speed by –1.
10	Supercharged Thrusters: The ship gains a +1 bonus to its Speed score.
11	Auxiliary Hangar: The ship immediately gains a Porfatis system patrol boat.
12	Flight Computer: The ship gains the Flight Computer trait if it did not have it before.

pak'ma'ra Duties

| 2d6	Other Duty
2	Contact Made: A diplomatic mission to a local government has paid off well. You may immediately add one League ship (or wing) of your choice of Skirmish or lower Priority level to your fleet roster.
3	Expert Engineers: The engineers of this ship know their vessel inside out and have built multiple redundant systems. Once during every battle, this ship may ignore the effects of one critical hit, even if it is to Vital Systems.
4	Just a Simple Merchant: This ship is a known trader and, as such, has a tendency to be ignored. Whenever this ship makes a Tactical Withdrawal, it will not yield any Victory Points for doing so.
5	Hard Workers: Efforts are redoubled to patch up this ship. It immediately repairs 2D6 Damage points.
6	Rich Q-40 Vein: The ship is entrusted to carry a large and valuable shipment of Q-40. Roll a dice. On a 1, the ship is intercepted by Raiders and is heavily damaged – it must be sent back to High Command for repair, missing two full Campaign Turns as usual. On a 2 or more, you immediately gain 2D6 RR Points.
7	Watching While Unseen: The ship has been put on scouting missions, unnoticed by the other fleets, as it travels on trade routes. You gain a +2 bonus to your Initiative for the next Campaign Turn.
8	Veteran Engineers: The elite engineering crew of another ship have volunteered to serve aboard this vessel. Add a +1 bonus to any Crew Quality checks made during Damage Control. This may only be applied once.
9	Devout Believers: The crew of this ship believe they are unusually blessed – and they may be right! The ship gains a free re-roll at the start of every battle it takes part in.
10	Are They Attacking?: Few give pak'ma'ra war fleets serious consideration, particularly if they have traded with them in the past. Whenever this ship is present in a battle, the pak'ma'ra will automatically win the Initiative on the first turn.
11	Superior Strategic Position: A routine patrol uncovers a Strategic Target previously thought to be worthless. Immediately generate a new Strategic Target on the campaign map and mark it down as being under your control.
12	Assistance Rendered: A timely rescue mission to an allied ship in distress is well rewarded. You may immediately add any one ship of your choice of Skirmish or lower Priority Level to your fleet roster. This ship may be chosen from Earth Alliance, Narn, any League, ISA or Centauri fleet lists but it may not come from a fleet that your are currently fighting against in the campaign.

STARSHIP TROOPERS ADVENTURE GAME

Join The Fight! Service Guarantees Citizenship!
Part Two of Two

Carl Walmsley

Movement

On the bounce!

Each model in the game has a Move characteristic that determines the maximum number of spaces it can move in a single action. Models may move to any adjacent space, though they may not cut across corners if blocked by a wall or other Obstacle. The diagram below shows how this works.
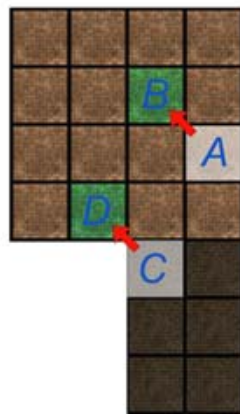
The model on square A may move diagonally to square B. However, a model on square C may not move to D, as this would involve cutting across a corner.

Models may not move through one another.

Special Movement Traits

Certain models are able to move in unusual ways, such as clambering over awkward terrain or taking to the air using a jetpack.

The Special Movement Traits are **Climb**, **Hover** and **Jump.**

A model that is using Climb can move over and/or finish its move on the same square as an Obstacle.

A Model using Jump may move over Obstacles and water freely but may not end its turn on the same square as water or an Obstacle.

A model using Hover may move freely over Obstacles and water and may end its move on such a square – it is considered to be air born.

When using Jump or Hover, the maximum distance that the model may move will be listed. For example, Jump 7 means that the model may move up to 7 squares with a single Jump special move. This replaces the model's usual Move characteristic.

In order to use a Special Movement trait, a model must first take a Ready action. This then enables the model to take a single Special Movement action. The exception to this is Hover – once a model takes to the air, it may continue to fly for as long as it wishes.
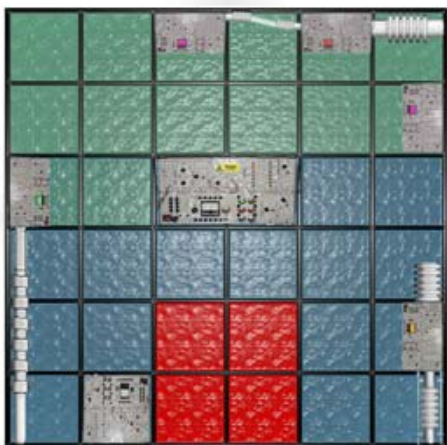
Footprints

Every model in the game has a Footprint – this is the number of squares the model takes up when placed on the board. All human characters have the same Footprint – 1x1. This means that they take up a single square.

Other models may take up more space. An Arachnid Warrior's Footprint is 2x2, meaning that it takes up an area two squares wide and two squares deep, as shown below.

A model's Footprint determines both the areas of the board it is able to pass through and the number of spaces it will take up when it ends its movement. A model may not pass *through* an area where the whole of its Footprint will not fit.

For example, this 2x2 Footprint (red) will not pass between the items of machinery in the centre of the room which count as Obstacles. It may not therefore reach the area towards the far side of the room highlighted in green.

The key is to remember that it must be possible to trace a path for the entire Footprint from where the model starts its movement to where it finishes it.

Note that certain creatures have Special Movement Traits allowing them to move over obstacles that would otherwise block their progress.

When determining movement for models with larger Footprints, the measurement of movement may be taken from any square within the Footprint.

Obstacles

An Obstacle is the term used to describe the pieces of machinery, barrels or other obstructions that may be placed on a board section. Obstacles affect the game in a number of ways.

Models may not pass through obstacles or end their turn occupying the same square as one.

Obstacles do not block Line of Sight. However, for every obstacle in the path of a Ranged attack, the Target Number for the attack increases by 1.

An illustration or token on the board is considered an Obstacle if it takes up more than half a square.

Characters and models with the Sentient Trait may attack Obstacles directly. These attacks hit automatically. Obstacles have 4 Armour and 1 Hit. If reduced to 0 Hits, an Obstacle is removed from the game.

Note that when an Explosive or Biohazard Barrel is destroyed, it explodes (see Equipment Section for details).

Moving Barrels and Sentinel Guns

A character may spend one action to move himself and an adjacent barrel or Sentinel gun one space in any direction. At the end of this move, the character and object must still be adjacent.

(Optional Rule – Taking Cover)

Characters (or models with the Sentient Trait) may try to Take Cover behind an Obstacle. To do so, the model must be adjacent to, and have a Footprint no larger than, the obstacle. The model must also expend an action. A model that takes cover in this way cannot be targeted by any Ranged Attacks that passes through *any part* of the Obstacle.
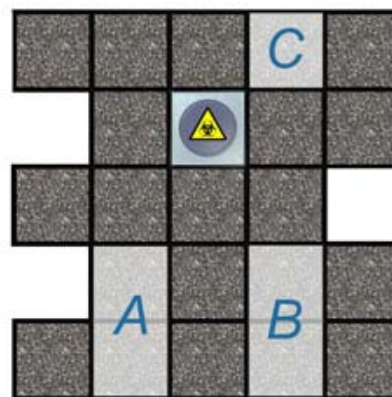
For instance, in the example above two firefries (A and B) are targeting an MI trooper (C). The Line of Sight for Firefry A passes through the obstacle – in this case, a barrel. If the trooper spends an action to Take Cover, Firefry A will not be able to hit him. Firefry B will still have an uninterrupted Line of Sight and will be able to fire as normal.

Laying Out Board Sections

As the characters explore the setting of their current mission, the Overseer will reveal new board sections for them to enter. The rules for laying out new board sections are as follows:

- When a character enters a new board section, all adjoining board sections should be laid out, unless they are behind a door. *The exception to this rule is ventilation shafts, which are not revealed until someone explores them. Instead, a Ventilation Shaft Marker is placed to indicate the location of the shaft.*
- All doors should be revealed at the same time as the board section they are on.
- Whenever a door is opened, the board section it leads to is revealed. As soon as a character enters that new board section, adjoining board sections are revealed as outlined above.

Placing Enemy Models

The overseer should set out any enemy models at the same time he places the board sections that they occupy. From this moment on, they are considered revealed and may act during the next Overseer's Phase.

Scan tokens are replaced by the models they represent, when the board sections they occupy would have been set out due to the characters' explorations.

Ventilation Shafts

One of the most cunning ways a character can move around the map is by using ventilation shafts. In MI bunkers, research labs and even Skinnie strongholds, they present characters with unique opportunities for getting from one board section to another whilst avoiding some of the obstacles in their their path. They are not without risk, however.

When the Overseer lays out a new board section that has a ventilation shaft attached to it, he should place a single Ventilation Shaft Marker to indicate where the shaft is located.

Ventilation Shaft Marker

A character that is adjacent to the shaft may spend an action to examine it. At this time, the Overseer places any ventilation shaft board sections in the character's Line of Sight, plus a single tile indicating each visible turning off the shaft.

The character is free to enter and travel along the shaft, which will be revealed as it comes into view. Any enemy models in the shaft are only revealed when they come into a character's Line Of Sight (see Combat).

This is different to the way normal board sections and enemy models are set out, and represents the uncertainty of exploring cramped ventilation shafts, offering a limited view of the way ahead.

Doors

Doors present the Overseer and players alike with a variety of opportunities and problems. All doors start the game Unlocked, Locked or Sealed, as determined by the specifics of that particular mission. Only Overseer models with the Sentient trait may try to open a door – though others can attempt to break them down.

An Unlocked doors may be opened or closed by any character that is adjacent to it. Doing so requires one action.

A Locked door will not open without a Door Code or use of the Security Skill. Characters may discover Door Codes as they work their way through a mission. It takes one action for a character who is adjacent to a door to enter the code and unlock it. Alternatively, a character with the Security skill may use this to unlock a Locked door (see Skills Section). Note that unlocking a door does not open it – this requires another action.

Sealed doors may only be unlocked by a character with the Repair skill, requiring a successful Skill Roll.

Any model may attack a door directly in an attempt to break it down. Attacks against doors hit automatically. Doors have 6 Armour and 1 Hit.

A door that is opened should be slid to the side of the board out of the way, so that it is still clear where it is on the map. A door that is destroyed should be removed from the game.

Note that a door cannot be opened and closed in the same turn. Characters must wait until the following turn to close a door they have just opened – or vice versa.

Combat

Everybody fights! Nobody Quits!

Combat makes up a significant portion of this game. Let's face it, splattering bugs (and MI for that matter) is fun.

Models may engage in two distinct types of combat: Ranged and Close Combat. Making an attack of either kind uses up one action.

Close Combat

A Close Combat attack is the use of a weapon – including a natural one – to strike an opponent in an adjacent space. Whenever a model makes a Close Combat attack, the controlling player should roll a D6. If the result is equal to or higher than the modified Target Number, then the attack hits. The base Target Number is equal to the attacking model's Close Combat characteristic.

Note that models firing ranged weapons against an adjacent target are considered to be making a Close Combat attack. The Close Combat characteristic is therefore used to determine the Target Number.

Ranged Combat

A Ranged attack is the use of a weapon to strike a target at a distance. The controlling player should roll a D6 for each attack and if the result is equal to or higher than the modified Target Number, then the attack hits. The base Target Number is equal to the attacking model's Accuracy characteristic.

Weapons capable of making a Ranged attack have their Range listed. This is the maximum number of spaces away from the attacker at which a target can be struck. Note that any part of a model's Footprint may be targeted by a Ranged attack. However, if any part of an enemy model's Footprint's is adjacent to the attacker, then such an attack is considered close combat.

Line Of Sight

In order to make a Ranged attack, a model must have Line of Sight to the target. That is, it must be able to see some part of the target, even if the view is somewhat obscured.

To determine Line of Sight (LOS), draw a line from the centre of the attacker's space to the centre of any space within the target's Footprint. The attacker is free to choose which space he targets. If the line does not pass through a door, wall or similar impassable object, there is LOS.

It is still possible for the attacker's view to be obstructed by other objects, however. For every Obstacle or friendly model that the line passes through, the Target Number for the attack increases by one. It is not possible to fire through enemy models.

Damage and Armour

Each weapon in the game has an accompanying damage die. Whenever an attack with that weapon hits its target, the controlling player should roll the damage die to see how many Hits the Target loses.

A model's Armour characteristic determines how many points of damage it may ignore from each attack that hits it.

A model's Hits characteristic determines how much damage it can take before being killed. If a model is reduced to 0 Hits it is dead and should be removed from the game.

An exception to this rule occurs when a character has the Resuscitation skill. This enables him to revive a character that died in the previous turn.

Here is an example of calculating damage:

Private Cooley hits a warrior bug with a shot from his sniper rifle. He rolls D6 for damage, coming up with a 5. The weapon has the Accurate Trait, which halves (rounding up) the warrior's Armour. This reduces its effectiveness from 3 to 2. 2 points of damage are therefore ignored, but the other 3 get through – just the amount needed to kill the bug! The warrior is stopped in its tracks by the well-aimed shot.

Knockback

Sometimes an attack will strike its target but fail to inflict any damage because the target's Armour absorbs the impact. In such instances, the target suffers knockback. The model is moved as directly as possible 1 square away from the source of the attack.

Here is an example of combat:

Corporal McCartan, an MI Medic, is six squares away from a particularly ugly looking Guard Bug. He uses his first action to fire off a shot with his Morita Rifle. His Accuracy is 3+. As his view is unobstructed, there are no modifiers to this Target Number. The player controlling McCartan rolls a 2 and the shot misses. The player decides to fire again with McCartan's second action; this time he rolls a 5 – a hit! A Morita rifle inflicts D6 damage. The die is rolled, coming up a 3. Unfortunately for McCartan, the Guard Bug has 3 Armour and so shrugs off the attack. At least the knockback forces it back 1 square.

For its first action, the Guard Bug rushes directly at McCartan, as he is the nearest unengaged model. This does not bring him into contact with the MI, so for its second action the Guard Bug closes the rest of the distance.

In his next turn, McCartan decides to attack again with his Morita. This time, however, he is in close combat with the Guard Bug and must use his CC to determine his target number. As McCartan's CC is 5+, his chances of surviving are not looking good.

(Optional Rule: Called Shots)

Players may wish to allow characters and Sentient bugs to make called shots. These attacks – which may be Ranged or Close Combat – add one to the Target Number but lower the target's Armour by 1. Such attacks represent carefully aimed attacks at weak spots and vital organs.

Beautifully painted MI from the collection of the super-talented Agis Neugebauer

Flamer Template

Flamethrowers are fairly unique weapons in that they require very little skill from the wielder; it really is just a case of point and incinerate!

Whenever a character uses a flamer he does not make an attack roll. Instead he uses the flamer template to determine what he hits. One end of the template is placed over the attacker's space, with the centre line directly over the middle of the space. The template is then lined up however the attacker chooses, indicating the path of the flame. The attack hits every model that has any part of its Footprint overlapped by the template. However, if the centre line on the flamer template crosses directly over an Obstacle, door or wall, then models beyond this point are not damaged by the attack.

This makes the flamer a very powerful, but highly indiscriminate, weapon.

Explosives

There are a number of static explosive devices in the game such as Booby Traps and Explosive Barrels. When such devices detonate, no attack roll is made but rather all models with any part of their Footprint within the blast radius suffer damage. This should be rolled separately for each model.

The Overseer

It is the Overseer's task to referee the game, laying out the board sections as characters explore and controlling the various creatures they encounter. As the Overseer, you can design further missions for the characters to undertake after using the ones presented here. At its heart, your role falls somewhere between a Games Master and a player. This may seem a difficult balance to maintain, but the key is to challenge the players, without abusing your position. If the people you are playing with feel challenged, but not cheated – and you are enjoying what you do – then you are probably getting it right.

Designing and Running Missions

The first two missions for the characters to undertake are included with these rules. Mission One is a straightforward search and rescue that sees the team answering a distress call from a remote facility, overrun by bugs. The second has them clearing out a series of recently discovered Arachnid tunnels. The players will have a chance to learn the rules, see how the board sections are laid out and to squash some bugs. Later missions may be as diverse as you wish.

Objectives

Every mission should have one or more **Objectives**. The more Objectives the team manages to accomplish, the more Experience they will earn from a mission. Most missions will have between one and three Objectives, with two being the norm.

As a general guide when designing missions, there should be roughly four board sections to explore for every Objective.

Objectives can take a variety of forms, from rescuing someone to reactivating power so that a new section of a facility can be accessed. Here are some suggestions:

- Locate and destroy a particular bug
- Recover fuel supplies so that a damaged landing boat can take off
- Find the over-heating reactor and shut it down
- Locate the security code for a restricted area of the base
- Find out how the bugs got into the base
- Map a bug tunnel network by visiting every board section
- Recover valuable files from a computer
- Rescue survivors

Characters should never be set an Objective that it is impossible for them to achieve.

For example, telling a team that they need to deactivate a security system when none of the characters have the Security skill is pointless. Furthermore, you should try to ensure that an Objective may be met in a number of ways. If the characters are told that they must retrieve some experimental tech from a sealed room, they might use Demolitions to blow open the door, recover an access code from elsewhere in the base – or they might simply blast their way in with weapons fire. Also, you might design the mission with a secret way into the room, perhaps via a ventilation shaft. Try to make the players feel that they are free to find their own solutions to whatever problems you throw at them.

It is also a good idea to have some Objectives that can be achieved in any order, whilst others are sequential. The secret is to mix it up – no two missions should be exactly alike or follow the same pattern.

It is possible that one or more of the characters may choose to abandon a mission before all the Objectives have been completed and the mission finished. They may leave the game via the same board section where they entered. They keep any Experience earned up to the time when they leave the board, but cannot receive any more – even if the rest of the team manage to complete all of the Objectives.

Designing Maps

Each mission that you run will require a map. This will outline the positions of the different board sections you plan to use, along with the location of enemy models, doors, barrels and other Obstacles.

When deciding upon the layout of a map, try to avoid designs that force the players to follow a single path; you will find games are more fun when they have a non-linear feel. You may also want to include a brief description of each area to help the players visualize the setting. This is not a roleplaying game, but you will find many players will enjoy the missions more if they have some sense of the environment their characters are exploring.

Map designs should always be drawn on a grid. This will enable you to see the exact number of spaces between board sections – something that you will need for when characters use the Scan PSI Skill, which can detect enemy models through walls and doors. It will also help to ensure that board sections meet up in the way that you intend.

The other key aspect when designing a map is deciding where to place enemy models. Try to space these out so that the characters are not too overwhelmed to begin with. You should feel free to present them with a difficult fight when they reach the climax of their mission – fighting a brain bug and his protectors, for example, would make a memorable battle for even experienced characters. When placing models on the map, the Enemy Model symbol (see Map Symbols and Tokens) should always be situated in the centre of the model's Footprint to show where they will start the game.

When characters start a mission, the point where they enter the map should be indicated. If they begin off the map, characters should enter in order, one at a time. Sometimes, characters may start on pre-determined squares that, again, should be marked on the Overseer's map. When describing the layout of a map, it is assumed that the 'top' of the map is always pointing northwards.

Map Symbols and Tokens

The various map symbols and tokens used during the game are as follows:

→ Entrance Point

⚠ Biohazard Barrel

⚠ Explosive Barrel

● Booby Trap

▦ Computer Terminal

▮ Unlocked Door

▮ Locked Door

▮ Sealed Door

▥ Equipment Locker

⊗ Enemy Model

⤬ Sentinel Gun

SCAN Scan Token

Two of the tokens – the Scan Token and the Booby Trap – will rarely, if ever, be included on the mission map but will rather be placed on the game board as the characters explore the map and use their abilities. They are included here simply for reference.

Sentinel Guns

These automated defence systems can prove invaluable to beleaguered MI, and offer a wealth of tactics for luring arachnids into an ambush.

Sentinel Guns always start the game either deactivated or damaged (50% chance of each). They may be activated by a character with the Security skill (if deactivated) or repaired by a character with the Repair skill (if damaged).

Sentinel Guns possess the Special Trait Interrupt that allows them to attack as and when arachnids appear and advance (see Equipment section).

A functioning Sentinel Gun is considered a viable target for attack in exactly the same way as a character. A Sentinel Gun has 4 Armour and 1 Hit. If destroyed during the game, they may not be repaired.

Once a Sentinel gun is out of Ammo, it is of no further use in the mission and will no longer be attacked by enemy models.

Equipment Lockers

One particularly useful find for characters exploring a facility is some new equipment. Equipment Lockers may contain any single item of equipment that you wish to give the characters to help with their current mission. You should decide what is contained within the locker whilst designing the map.

Any character who is adjacent to a locker may spend an action to claim the item within.

Computer Terminals

These present a character with the Security Skill with a way to call up the schematics of the facility he is exploring – or at least plans of the current level, if there are several in the structure.

If a character is successful in his efforts to call up blue-prints (see Skills section), you should lay out all of the board sections for the players to see.

Noticing Things

As the characters explore, there will be times when they may or may not notice something that would be of use to them – a discarded weapon, an access card, and so forth. Whenever, you need to determine whether a character notices something, have the player make an **Initiative Check** for his character. He should roll a D6 and add the character's Initiative characteristic. If the result is 7 or higher, the character has perceived something of use.

In certain instances, the Overseer might choose to raise or lower this Target Number to represent something that is harder or easier to detect.

Experience

As characters overcome the various obstacles presented in each mission, they will hone their abilities and get better at what they do. Such progression is measured numerically through the acquisition of **Experience**.

There are a number of ways that characters can gain the Experience, which may be 'spent' at the end of a mission to learn new skills, improve characteristics and advance in Rank. Once Experience is spent in this way, it is 'used up'. Players may, however, wish to keep a running

total of their overall Experience, just to see how their character is doing.

Objective Based Awards

Every Objective achieved is worth 100 Experience for each character in the team – regardless of who was responsible or how it was accomplished. In addition, if the team manage to achieve all of their Objectives, their total Experience for the mission is doubled.

Combat Awards

Characters also receive Experience for killing bugs – or any other enemies they might come up against. The Experience value for destroying enemy models is listed in the Arachnids Section. Experience for each individual model is divided equally between all of the characters that inflicted damage on it.

Special Awards

Whilst MI Troopers will often do the lion's share of the fighting and earn most of their Experience that way, Medics, Techs and Sicon Intelligence Agents can have other priorities. Consequently, each of the classes has a unique way to earn extra Experience.

Every time an MI Trooper kills an enemy without any help from another character, he receives a 10% Experience bonus for that model.

Every successful use of the Repair Skill earns an MI Tech 50 Experience.

Every time an MI Medic heals another character (regardless of the skill or item of equipment used to do this), he earns 25 Experience per Hit restored.

Arachnids

Every time a Sicon Agent places a Scan Token, he gains 25 Experience.

Here is as an example of a character's Experience award for a mission:

Private Clarke, an MI Medic, has just completed his latest mission. This involved a thorough search of a crashed civilian space transport (Objective 1, 100 Experience) and the recovery of the black box recorder (Objective 2, 100 Experience). The transport was infested with bugs and Clarke helped kill a warrior (50 Experience) and destroyed a Blister Bug on his own (130 Experience). During the course of the mission, he healed a total of 5 Hits on his squad mates (125 Experience).

All together, this earns him (100+100+50+130+125) 505 Experience. As all of the mission Objectives were completed, this is doubled, meaning that Private Clarke earns a total of 1010 Experience. That Corporal's stripe is beckoning.

The abilities of each species of bug are represented using the same characteristics as the MI characters, with a few alterations.

Arachnids have no Rank; they lack the ego or desire for self-advancement that typifies humans. Instead they have a well-defined role in bug society. In game terms, all arachnids are either drones – following the rules explained in The Game Turn – or they are Sentient. Sentient bugs are free to act as the Overseer chooses.

All bugs have their Footprint (**FP**) listed, as this varies between species.

Bugs do not have an Initiative characteristic – they may act in whatever order the Overseer chooses, representing the hive mind to which they are all connected.

Each bug has an Experience (**Exp**) characteristic. This amount is shared between any characters that play a part in its demise.

The bugs have access to a range of **Arachnid Abilities**, explained below. They are also able to use some of Special Traits possessed by human weapons, and to duplicate the effects of certain Skills, such as Dodge. Other arachnids possess **Unique Abilities**, which are explained in their entry.

Arachnid Abilities

Ambush n – this model is not revealed in the normal way. Instead, it only appears when an enemy model moves within n squares of its starting location. At which point, the model with Ambush halts the normal sequence of play and may immediately perform 2 actions. Play then resumes as normal.

Retaliate – When this bug is destroyed, every adjacent model takes 1D6 damage.

Species Characteristics

Blaster Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	5+	5+	2/D6	2	3	Heat Blast Retaliate	2x2	120

Unique Ability:

Heat Blast	Range	Damage	Ammo	Special
	9	D6	-	-

Blister Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	5+	5+	2/D6	2	3	Acid Spit	2x2	120

Unique Ability:

Acid Spit	Range	Damage	Ammo	Special
	6	D6	-	Piercing/1

Cliff Mite

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
4	-	5+	1/D6-1	1	2	Climb	1x1	40

Control Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
4	-	6+	Special	1	1	Brain Control	1x1	100

Unique Ability:

Brain Control
If a Control Bug hits in combat, roll to determine damage as normal. If the target would lose any Hits, the Control Bug instead burrow's into the creature's brain. From this moment on, the Control Bug model is removed from play and the target model is now controlled by the Overseer. It's time to make up a new character!

Brain Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	-	5+	1/D6+1	2	10	Sentient Big Fat Smart Bug Colony Mind Command Entourage Rupture* Shield*	3x2	500

Unique Ability:

Big Fat Smart Bug
The brain bug has an extra action each turn, that may only be used to activate one of its PSI abilities.

Colony Mind
If a Brain Bug is killed every other Arachnid model on the game board is thrown into confusion. The following turn, each model has only a single action.

Command
Each turn, a brain may allow one model within its Line of Sight to perform an extra action.

Entourage – As the Brain bug loses hits, the chariot bugs which ferry it around begin to die. To represent this, the brain bug suffers –1 Move when its hits fall to 8, and –2 Move when its hits drop to 4.

*Works as PSI skill of the same name, learned the maximum number of times.

Firefries

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	5+	5+	1/D6+1	2	2	Firefry Flame Jump 7	2x1	100

Unique Ability:

Firefry Flame	Range	Damage	Ammo	Special
	5	D6+1	-	-

Guard Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	-	3+	2/D6+2 1/D10	4	4	Piercing 1	2x2	200

Hopper Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	-	4+	1/D6+2	1	3	Dodge Hover 7	2x2	150

Infiltrator Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	-	4+	2/D10	3	4	Ambush 3 Climb Piercing 1	1x1	250

Unique Ability:

When laying out a board section with an infiltrator bug on, the Overseer should place an MI figure in its place. When a character moves to within 3 squares, the bug's true form is revealed and its Ambush ability activates.

Mantis Assassin Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
6	-	3+	2/D6+2	3	5	Jump 7 Piercing 1	2x2	300

Mantis Hunter Bug

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
6	-	3+	2/D6+2	3	5	Ambush 4 Piercing 1	2x2	300

Warrior Bugs

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
5	-	4+	2/D6 1/D6+2	3	3	Climb Piercing 1	2x2	100

Tiger Warrior Bugs

Move	Acc	CC	Att	Arm	Hits	Abilities	FP	Exp
6	-	4+	2/D6 1/D6+2	3	3	Climb Piercing 2	2x2	130

Missions

A Cry for Help

The characters first mission sees them journeying to a remote civilian outpost on planet Cassandra. A brief distress call was received and a small squad of MI dispatched to investigate. The facility has been attacked and occupied by arachnids, leaving only a single survivor hidden somewhere in the base.

Mission Objectives

1) Rescue any survivors
2) Destroy all arachnids in the facility

Room Descriptions

1 – Sealed inside this room is the facility's only survivor, a Dr. Leonard Stafler. He must be kept safe till the end of the mission to complete Objective 1. Stafler has an Insti-heal Patch that he gives to any character who stands next to him. Contained inside the Equipment Locker is a Hel Infantry Flamer.

2 – A Firefry is positioned at the southern end of this corridor.

3 – A warrior bug stands in front of the door to Room 3. Claw marks are gouged into the metal where it has tried to get inside.

4 –Engineering Section. A number of dead civilians litter the room. It is clear that all were attacked and killed by arachnids. A character who succeeds at an Initiative Check notices a 12-gauge Shotgun amongst the bodies. He may spend one action to retrieve it. For this mission, the weapon is considered to have Finite Ammo; if kept for later missions, the Ammo changes to Standard.

5 – There are two warrior bugs in this corridor.

6 – Ventillation shaft

7 – A firefry is positioned along the eastern edge of this ventilation shaft.

8 – this security checkpoint is filled with bug corpses. A damaged Sentinel Gun is located in the north eastern corner.

9 – A blaster bug is positioned at the western end of this corridor.

10 – This is the facility control room. A warrior is located just inside the door. Four firefries are dotted around the room.
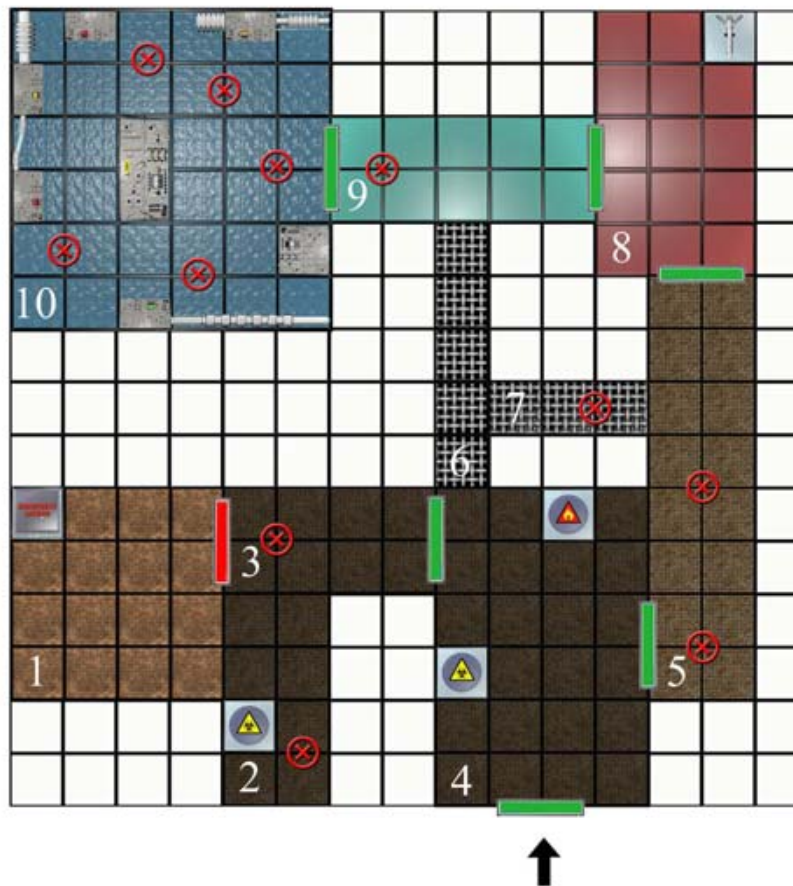
Search and Destroy

MI scouts have discovered the entrance to an Arachnid tunnel network that is believed to house a number of hoppers that have been attacking aircraft in the area. The orders from Sicon are clear – hunt them down, leaving no stone unturned.

Mission Objectives

1) Visit every board section in the tunnel complex
2) Destroy all hopper bugs encountered

Room Descriptions

1 – Entering this dark, twisting tunnel the characters will encounter a pair of cliff mites, located on the eastern edge of this board section.

2 – There is a warrior bug to the south and another cliff mite in the northeastern corner.

3 – A pair of warrior bugs guard the southern edge of this board section.

4 – This narrow tunnel contains a lone firefry.

5 – empty tunnel.

6 – This huge chamber contains a large pool of water, and the walls and floor are slick with moisture. All models reduce their Move characteristic by 1 within this room. Special Movement Traits are unaffected. There are two hopper bugs to the north, one to the east. A blaster bug guards the western entrance to the chamber and a lone cliff mite waits by the southern edge of the pool.

7 – A blister bug lurks within this corridor.

8 – Empty tunnel.

9 – A lone hopper bug resides in this chamber.
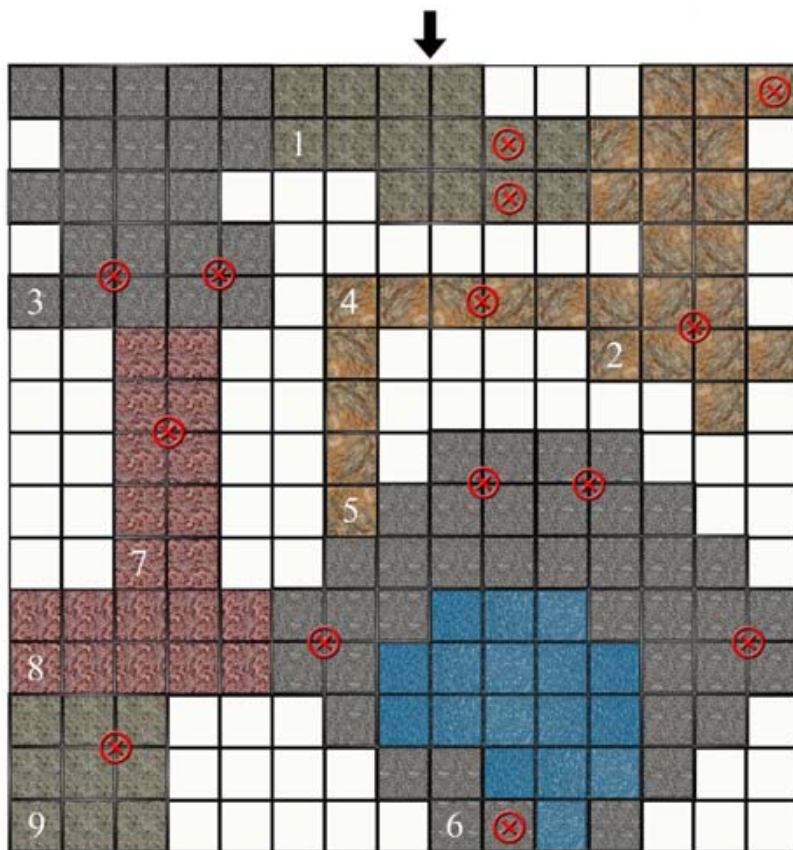
Biohazard

Booby Trap

Computer Terminal

Equipment Locker

Explosive Barrel

Flamer Template

Door

Scan

Sentinel Gun
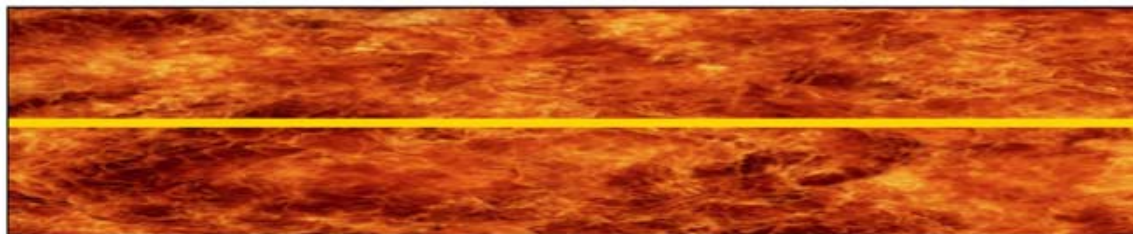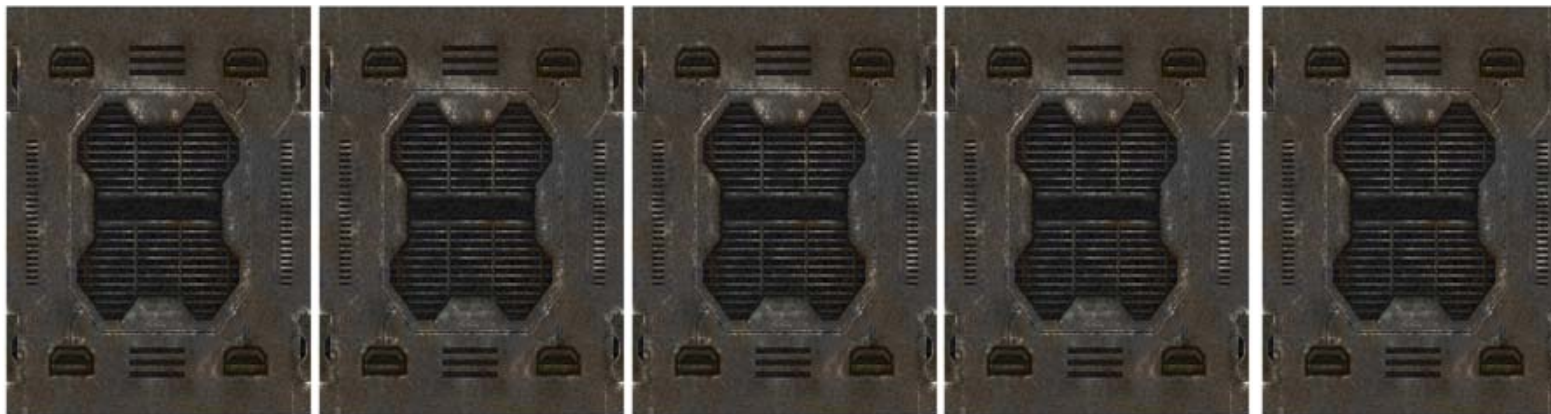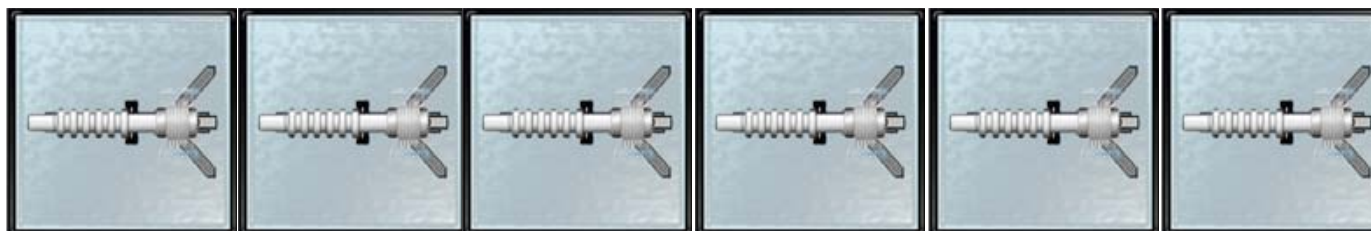
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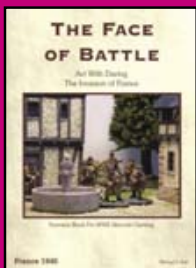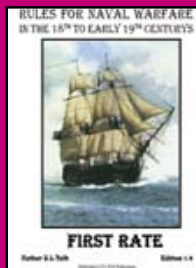|	
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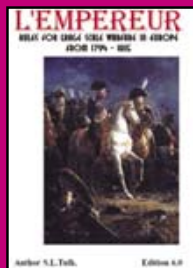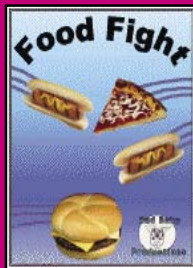
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Z-Plan Kriegsmarine

Part Two – Leviathans of the 3rd Reich

Agis Neugebauer (with serious help from Rich L. Bax and the rest of the "Salty Seadogs" VaS playtest group)

As mentioned in the original Z-Plan Kriegsmarine list, the Z-Plan was Germany's fleet building program started shortly before World War 2. In the mid 1930s a major discussion about a new fleet program started in Germany. The list from last month's article was focussed on the core plans of the German Kriegsmarine and on the ships that were the most likely to be build or that had even been laid down.

This month, we look at German Naval battleship projects that never went beyond the drawing board. As with many ideas of the German military leadership of that time serious delusions of grandeur influenced these projects.

Battleships
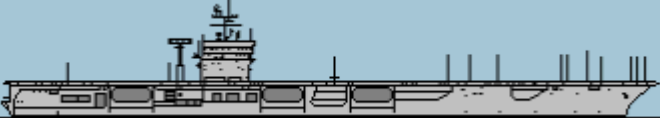
The six battleships of the H-class were the projected successors of the battleships Bismarck and Tirpitz.

These ships were mainly enlarged and improved versions of their predecessors. Designed with a commerce war in mind; diesel engines were selected instead of the usual high pressure steam turbines typically used for ships of this size.

Although it was obvious that Germany would not be able to build a complete new battleship during wartime, the plans for the H-class battleships were
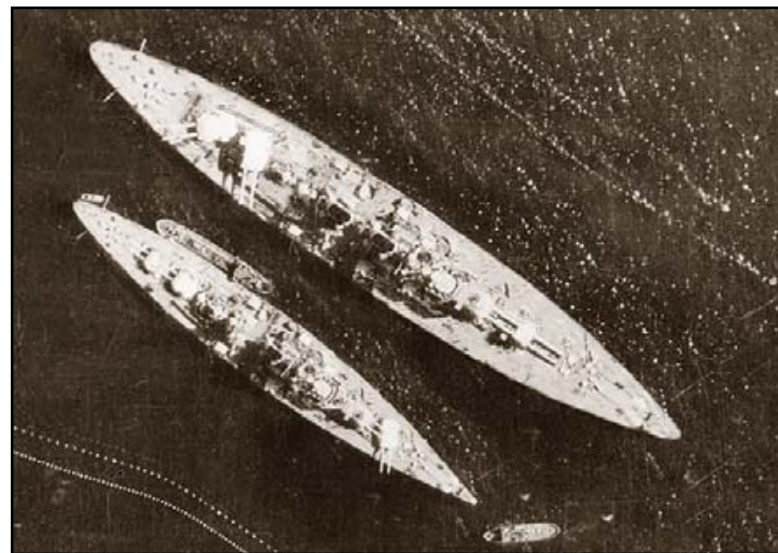
further developed and improved, to study the design of a competitive battleship and increase sheer ship scale to counteract increasing bomb weights. Lessons learned in naval conflicts involving German warships, like Norway, the sinking of the Bismarck and the loss of the Scharnhorst were used to upgrade the plans, resulting in later H-class designs increasing in size in a very spectacular way. Comparing the basic data of the different H-class designs clearly indicates this jump in size, as shown in the following table:

Design	Size / Length	Artillery	Performance / Speed
Tirpitz			
	52,600 tons 251 m	8 x 38 cm	163,000 shp 30.8 kn
H39			
	62,496 tons 277.8 m	8 x 40.6 cm	165,000 shp 30.0 kn
H40A			
	64,575 tons 282.9 m	6 x 40.6 cm	230,000 shp 32.2 kn
H40B			
	68,779 tons 299.8 m	8 x 40.6 cm	240,000 shp 32.3 kn
H41			
	74,779 tons 300.4 m	8 x 42 cm	165,000 shp 28.8 kn
H42			
	96,451 tons 305.2 m	8 x 42 cm	270,000 shp 32.2 kn
H43			
	118,104 tons 330.2 m	8 x 50.8 cm	270,000 shp 31.0 kn
H44			
	139.264 tons 345.1 m	8 x 50.8 cm	165,000 shp 30.1 kn
CVN John C. Stennis, completed 1995			
	102,000 tons 332.9 m	none	280,000 shp 30.0+ kn

H-40A

It is obvious that everything after the H40 fell into the realm of fantasy. The H44 would have been bigger than the latest U.S. Nuclear Aircraft Carrier, the *John C. Stennis*, and would have been unable to use any of Germany's wartime ports.

The Z-Plan Kriegsmarine List

The following list supplements the official Kriegsmarine fleet list of the main Victory at Sea rulebook and the Z-Plan list from last month.

Priority Level: War
H-40a-Class Battleship
H-40b-Class Battleship
H-41-Class Battleship
H-42-Class Battleship

Priority Level: War (require two War slots per ship)
H-43-Class Battleship
H-44-Class Battleship
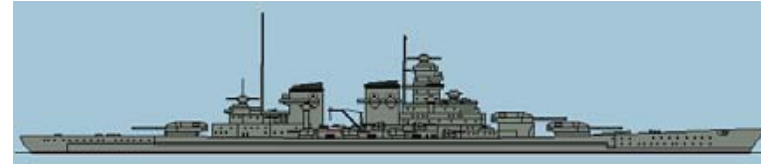
Ships of this class: unknown

After construction of the Schlachtschiff H was halted in 1939, the Kriegsmarine continued to develop plans for new battleships. Although most of these plans were only design studies and never intended to be built, some of these plans did reach a level that could be used for the construction of ships.

The H-40A design was an attempt to maintain the speed and displacement of H-39 but with increased armour protection. The Krupp Works was hard-pressed to manufacture the 16-inch guns along with the other ordnance currently on order, so reducing the number of guns made deliveries a bit easier. The main problem lay in propulsion. More power was needed to maintain speed over H-39 even though the sizes and displacements were similar. To do this required four propeller shafts, rather than the three used in the H-39 design. Four diesel power plants were impossible to mount in the required beam; doing so would have reduced the torpedo protection. Switching to steam turbine propulsion would allow the use of three shafts, but would also have required lengthening the armoured citadel to protect the longer engine rooms and this would have increased the displacement even more, so four shafts using a compromise of diesel/steam turbine machinery was introduced.

Speed: 6"   **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 4, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1   **Damage**: 52/17   **In Service:** 1945 (Planned)
Target: 4+   **Crew:** 108/36

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
B Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
X Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	6	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 885 ft.   **Displacement:** 64.575 t
Speed: 32 kts.   **Crew:** 2.693

H-40B

Ships of this class: unknown

The H-40B design was essentially an enlarged H-39 design which was would make use of advances in diesel technology by using a more powerful engine that required less space. Armament would be unaltered from the H-39 design but like the H-40A design there would be marked improvement vertical protection and, in particular, torpedo protection. The primary attempt was to detonate any torpedo as far away from the vitals of the ship as possible. Simply put; the greater this distance, the better the protection, but the wider the beam. This was accomplished on the drawing board, by providing as much as a 20 foot wide void, or voids, between the outer skin plate and the final armoured bulkhead protecting a vital area.

Speed: 6" **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 4, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1 **Damage:** 53/17 **In Service:** 1945 (Planned)
Target: 4+ **Crew:** 115/38

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
B Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
X Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
Y Turret (2 x 16 in)	41"	2	3	AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	6	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 941 ft. **Displacement:** 68.906 t
Speed: 30 kts. **Crew:** 2.874

H-41

Ships of this class: unknown

After the loss of the battleship Bismarck, the requirements for a new battleship were redefined by the Kriegsmarine construction office. Based on the original H39 design, the result was a battleship design based on four main requirements:

1. Strong horizontal armour protection
2. a top speed of at least 30 knots
3. a main artillery best fitting to the ship size
4. a good protection against mine hits

There was no given limit on displacement and the resulting design was roughly the same size as the Japanese Yamato class. Compared to previous designs the ship had a thicker horizontal armour protection. To achieve the required speed, a mixed diesel/steam turbine engine system was chosen, similar to that specified in the H40A and H40B design studies.

In terms of main armament, the original 16 inch gun of the H-39 though H-40B designs had itself been designed with a very heavy barrel. For the H-41 design it was proposed that the gun to be "bored out" to a larger diameter of 16.54 inches (420mm). Krupp indicated that the change was slight and studies conducted with H-39 ammunition handling equipment showed the machinery could handle the new rounds.

Compared with future design studies, the planning for the H41 reached a point where construction could have begun after the war.

Speed: 6" **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 6, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1 **Damage:** 55/18 **In Service:** 1945 (Planned)
Target: 4+ **Crew:** 125/41

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
B Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
X Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
Y Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	6	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 901 ft. **Displacement:** 74.799 t
Speed: 28 kts. **Crew:** 3.120

H-42

Ships of this class: unknown

Given the progress of the war, further development of the German battleship design studies was influenced by the experience learned by the lessons of the ongoing sea war. In particular, the loss of the battleship Bismarck had a huge impact on the construction office of the Kriegsmarine.

The plans for the battleship H42 were focused on a better protection of the ship. Based on the design H41, the armament was kept identical, but the armour protection was again increased, leading to a projected ship size of 80.000 t. The increased protection was achieved by enlarging the complete armour scheme, but also in improving the underwater protection against torpedo and mine hits.

Because of the lethal torpedo hit on the Bismarck, the stern of these ships would be equipped with two fins, which would protect the props and rudders from the side, but its questionable if this system would have provided the required manoeuvrability. Since the performance requirements still called for a top speed of 32 kn, the traditional three prop arrangement would not be sufficient. Therefore a 4 prop system was chosen, two of them powered by diesel engines, the other two powered by steam turbines.

Speed: 6"   **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 6, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1   **Damage:** 62/20   **In Service:** 1945 (Planned)
Target: 3+   **Crew:** 131/43

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
B Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
X Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
Y Turret (2 x 16.54 in)	42"	2	3	Super AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	6	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 1.001 ft.   **Displacement:** 96.451 t
Speed: 32 kts.   **Crew:** 3.284

H-43
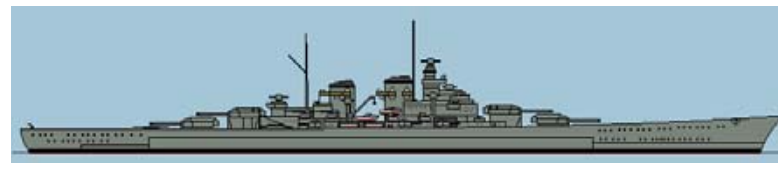
Ships of this class: unknown

With the H43 design, the naval construction office finally left the path of battleship construction reality. Being an enlarged version of the H42, the new design had no counterpart in other countries. Having a size of over 111000 tons and a length of 330 meters, the ship was more than twice the size of any existing battleship of that time. The main artillery was also enlarged to 50,8 cm guns, while the secondary and flak armament was unchanged.

The projected top speed of 31 knots required the same mixed propulsion system as previous designs. The main armour was not increased, but it covered a larger area of the ship.

Speed: 6"   **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 6, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1   **Damage:** 67/22   **In Service:** 1946 (Planned)
Target: 3+   **Crew:** 197/65

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
B Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
X Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
Y Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	7	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 1.083 ft.   **Displacement:** 118.104 t
Speed: 31 kts.   **Crew:** 4.927

H-44
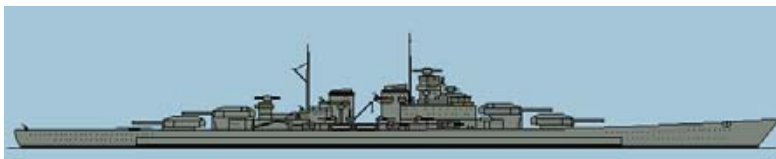
Ships of this class: Friedrich der Grosse, Grossdeutschland

The H44 design was the final result of the designs for a battleship which started with the H39. Again enlarged in size and armour protection, the armament and engines did not change compared with the previous design, the H43, though the maximum speed was reduced to 30 kn. It was never intended to build a ship like the H-44; it was a design study to see how a battleship had to be designed to be protected against all known threats.

Speed: 6"   **Armour:** 6+
Special Traits: Aircraft 9, Torpedo Belt, Armoured Deck, Radar
Turning: 1   **Damage:** 71/23   **In Service:** 1946 (Planned)
Target: 3+   **Crew:** 232/77

Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
B Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
X Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
Y Turret (2 x 20 in)	44"	2	5	Super AP
Secondary Armament	17"	5	1	Weak
AAA	8"	8	-	
Port Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading
Starboard Torpedoes	10"	2	3	AP, Slow-Loading

Length: 1.131 ft.   **Displacement: 139.264 t**
Speed: 30 kts.   **Crew: 5.809**

A big "thank you" goes out once more to Michael Emmerich whose website (http://www.german-navy.de/kriegsmarine/zplan) was a great primary sources for all the ship data and ship pictures.

Extinction Protocol

The Tantalus Assault Cruiser

A New Ship for Modellers of the Earth Alliance

Matthew Sprange, Roman Alexander Perner and Adrian Walters

After presenting the Omega Command Destroyer, we started looking at other areas of the Call to Arms model range to see what else was possible. Given their generally blocky natures, the ships of the Earth Alliance are ripe for conversion possibilities and it was not long until the Tantalus was proposed.

While we have not released an official model for this ship, due to the modelling skill required to fit the core components, a kit is available, and you can consider this ship an official addition to the Earth Alliance Third Age and Crusade Era fleets.

Tantalus Assault Cruiser   Raid

Speed: 6
Turn: 1/45°
Hull: 5
Damage: 45/10
Crew: 52/12

Troops: 12
Craft: 2 Starfury flights and 2 Breaching Pod flights
Special Rules: Interceptors 2, Jump Engine, Shuttles 4
In Service: 2248+

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Heavy Pulse Cannon	12	F	8	Twin-Linked
Medium Pulse Cannon	10	A	4	Twin-Linked
Heavy Pulse Cannon	12	P	4	Twin-Linked
Heavy Pulse Cannon	12	S	4	Twin-Linked
Particle Beams	5	F	4	Anti-Fighter, Weak
Particle Beams	5	A	4	Anti-Fighter, Weak
Particle Beams	5	P	4	Anti-Fighter, Weak
Particle Beams	5	S	4	Anti-Fighter, Weak

The Tantalus is a military assault warship used by the Earth Alliance, though never in large numbers. Capable of carrying four full battalions into battle, the Tantalus has enough assault shuttles on board to transport all of its troops planetside in less than an hour, while maintaining its own fighter escort. In later years, the Starfuies were replaced by Thunderbolts, in order to provide fighter cover to the shuttles all the way through the atmosphere.

Tantalus Assault Cruiser

Signs & Portents Wargamer

Assembly Guide

Step 1: Parts needed cleaned up and ready for assembly.

Step 2: Assemble the bridge section. Cut away the four corners as shown to allow the rotating section to fit the bridge.

Step 3: Assemble the rotating section. Remove the cross shaped positioning lugs from each end.
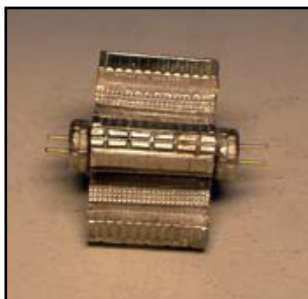
Step 4: Drill holes with a pin vice in both the bridge, rotating section and the rear hull section. ENSURE the holes line up and that the bridge and rear section are level to each other.

Step 5: Assemble the three parts with pins.
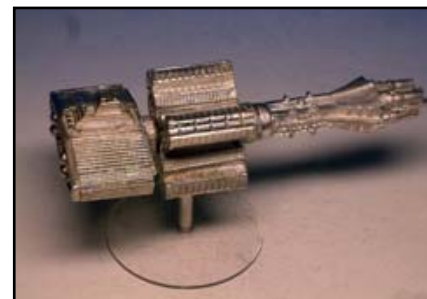
Step 6: Now the ship is assembled, using the stand upright, balance the ship to find the approximate balance point. Drill a 2mm hole at this point for the base.

Step 7: Ship now undercoated with black spray. Base coated with a mid grey and a wash of thinned black paint applied all over. Allow to dry thoroughly.
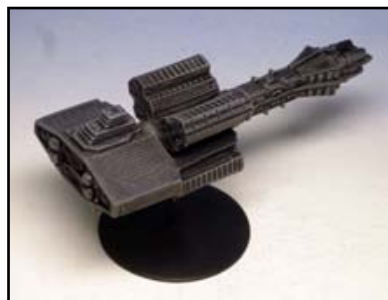
Step 8: Drybrush the whole ship in mid grey. Add detailing, as desired.

You can buy the Tantalus Assault Cruiser direct from us online at http://www.mongoosepublishing.com for $16.95/£9.50

Alternatively, you can order through the mail using the form at the back of this issue of *Signs and Portents Wargamer*.

Carriers in the North Sea

Nick Robinson and Ian Barstow
Continue The Feud

As all of you regular readers know I have now taken two beatings in a row from Nick Robinson which was just too much. There had to be a reckoning. A dead reckoning. Preferably with me winning, of course. Look, I'm the Studio Manager. Where's the respect? Where's the love? I'm getting thrashed month-by-month and frankly enough is enough. Clearly ordering the Greek to let me win hasn't worked. I'm going to have to try a fresh approach. Tactics.

Matthew suggested that we up the ante, putting out some serious contenders. No holds barred, he said. A fictional clash between my *Kriegsmarine* and Nick's Royal Navy, using anything on the fleet lists.

Setting

This was easy – a return to the North Sea with our two old protagonists, Admiral von Bastau (clearly forgiven after the Narvik debacle) and Lord Greke-Robinson, at the proverbial helms. The scenario would be Carrier Clash, just to make it totally fictional. That meant a 10 turn game with at least one carrier each and plenty of planes in the air. This would automatically be a daylight game and we rolled good weather, meaning my long range guns would be at their strongest – I hoped! We settled on a 4 point War level game with Military Grade (4) crews as usual, one point less than the rulebook states but it's not set in stone, now is it?

The Fleets

Kriegsmarine High Seas Fleet – Admiral von Bastau

KMS Tirpitz – Bismarck Class Battleship – War Level
KMS Scharnhorst – Scharnhorst Class Battlecruiser – Battle Level
KMS Graf Zeppelin – Graf Zeppelin Class Aircraft Carrier – Raid Level

KMS Admiral Scheer – Deutschland Class Pocket Battleship – Raid Level
KMS Lutzow – Deutschland Class Pocket Battleship – Raid Level
KMS Z-35 – Z36 Class Destroyer – Patrol Level
KMS Z-36 – Z36 Class Destroyer – Patrol Level
KMS Z-37 – Z36 Destroyer – Patrol Level
U-31 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level
U-32 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level
U-33 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level
U-34 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level
U-35 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level
U-36 – Type IX Submarine – Patrol Level

IAN: I've gone for a strong force this time. No messing about. *Tirpitz* is a must, and the combination of big guns and long range means she will be getting off the first salvoes unless I'm much mistaken. Backing up *Tirpitz* is the *Scharnhorst*, well armoured and with an enormous 45" range, plus torpedoes if things get nasty. A carrier is compulsory, but I'm only taking the one, *Graf Zeppelin* herself. In truth I have little faith my Stukas after Narvik, but the presence of the ME-109s should keep enemy planes off my back. Three Z-36 class destroyers are there to protect the heavy mob from the expected British submarines, while my own wolf pack has been beefed up to 6 Type IX U-boats. These are going to be my secret weapon. Nick will know from my deployment that I have subs, but that will, I hope, only cause him more concern and perhaps affect his deployment in turn.

At any rate, the plan is thus: I have effectively a battle line of four ships with a range of at least 40", although if I'm honest it was a close call between taking the pocket battleships or a pair of *Hipper*-class heavy cruisers. In the end I plumped for the slightly more powerful pocket battleships, foregoing the radar on the cruisers. Now, if they had been manufactured with Torpedo belts that would have made all the difference! Behind these four will be the

Graf Zeppelin, protected by the three destroyers, who will also cover the battle line. Deployment of the U-boats is easy, three in each of the 24" squares in Nick's deployment zone. Not knowing where he will deploy, I want to be in action as soon as possible to get maximum value out of my wolf pack. I've got a lot of my hopes pinned on one massive torpedo attack disrupting Nick's fleet and hopefully slowing it down while I'm still out of range of their guns.

Force P – Lord Greke-Robinson

HMS Hood – Hood class Battlecruiser and Flagship
HMS Warspite – Queen Elizabeth class Battleship
HMS Valiant – Queen Elizabeth class Battleship
HMS Queen Elizabeth – Queen Elizabeth class Battleship
HMS Renown – Renown class Battlecruiser
HMS Illustrious – Illustrious class Aircraft Carrier
HMS Kandshar – J,K,N class Destroyer
HMS Kashmir – J,K,N class Destroyer
HMS Kelly – J,K,N class Destroyer
HMS Tarpon – T-class Submarine

NICK: With Ian once again wishing to challenge for naval supremacy I went off to look at the available models in order to pick up my four point war fleet. Although set later in the War after she was sunk historically Ian's inability to sink any of my capital ships in previous battles meant that *HMS Hood*, pride of the Royal Navy, was still available to choose and what better ship to pick as my flagship in order to sweep the seas of the Germanic threat?

As we were to play a carrier clash battle one thing that is required is a carrier. I went for *HMS Illustrious*, believing her Martlets to have a longer life expectancy in dogfights than the Fulmars the *Ark Royal* uses. Now my choice was to either flood Ian with a vast array of aircraft by having a large number of carriers or go for big guns. Being as subtle as a brick I plumped for the big gun approach. I like big guns.

British guns have a disadvantage when confronting German vessels in that their range is not as great. Rather than risk losing a key ship to a Critical hit or two before I could begin to shoot back at the enemy I decided that *Queen Elizabeth* class battleships would form the bulk of my task force. Out came the *Valiant, Warspite* and *Queen Elizabeth*, all older ships but each having a powerful array of guns. I then decided to add the battlecruiser *HMS Renown*, faster but less heavily armed and armoured than the *Queen Elizabeths*, but still packing a powerful punch.

Having spent most of my points I now filled in the task force with other available models. Some destroyers (*HMS Kandshar, Kashmir* and *Kelly*) and a nice T-Class submarine (*HMS Tarpon*) would round off the fleet nicely. Now, on to battle!

Deployment

IAN: In this scenario the players roll pre-game Initiative to determine deployment. Needless to say I lost and had to set up first. I decided to keep my force concentrated in one of the potential 24" submarine areas, meaning that unless Nick was lucky or had invested in a lot of subs (who would do such a thing?) then I had a fair chance of avoiding them, at least to start with. My whole fleet was pointing towards the enemy, with my intention being to swing broadside to get in range and then let him have it. Meanwhile, at long range *Tirpitz* and *Scharnhorst* could use their radars (German radar only works in the front facing) to improve our already impressive long-range gunnery.

One spotter plane plus my full complement of 3 flights of Stukas (calm down) and four of ME-109s were already in the air. Now, what would the Royal Navy have brought to the game?

NICK: The key for this battle would be to close the distance between the fleets as quickly as possible as the German guns not only have a greater range but they are also more accurate at distance. As such all five of the battleships and battlecruisers would start at the edge of my deployment zone in a line abreast. Although they would lose the firepower of their rear turrets they need to reduce the range quickly.

The single submarine was deployed to intercept the German force as they sailed across the table. Hopefully Ian would use his normal tactic of sending his destroyers conveniently out of the way early on to try and launch torpedoes at my capital ships, allowing my submarine to get in a free shot or two. My destroyers would be on the flanks of my main force, ready to engage the inevitable U-boat threat.

My fighter aircraft would screen my swordfish, to engage the ME-109s early on allowing the biplanes to get past the German combat air patrol (CAP) and engage the main surface units. A lone spotter aircraft was set up as far from the action as possible, to avoid it becoming a target of any nearby fighters.

KEY:

1 KANDSHAR	1 LUTZOW
2 WARSPITE	2 SCHEER
3 QUEEN ELIZABETH	3 TIRPITZ
4 HOOD	4 SCHARNHORST
5 VALIANT	5 Z-37
6 RENOWN	6 Z-36
7 KASHMIR	7 Z-35
8 KELLY	8 GRAF ZEPPELIN
9 ILLUSTRIOUS	
+ FIGHTERS	+ ME-109S
+ SWORDFISH	+ STUKAS

GERMAN DEPLOYMENT AREA

48"

BRITISH DEPLOYMENT AREA
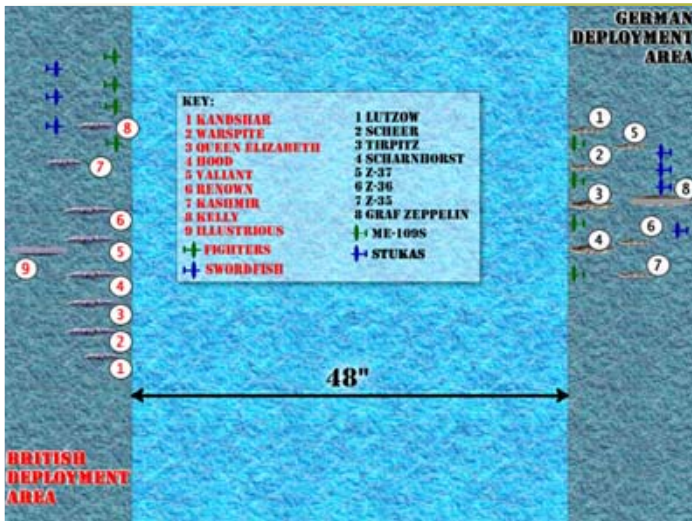
Turn 1

I seized the Initiative, forcing the Royal Navy to move a ship first. Not that it was much of a surprise at this stage as the British vessels all steamed forwards at Flank Speed to shorten the range. This was the moment that it suddenly struck me that my deployment was flawed. The British were closing more quickly than I had anticipated! Urgent instructions went out to turn to port although all but the *Scharnhorst* failed their Come About order, meaning that not all our guns would come to bear straight away. My submarines remained hidden, as did Nick's, so it was on to firing.

Only my four big ships were in range so the firing was uniquely German, with *Tirpitz* unleashing her front turrets at *Hood*, which she picked up on radar, meaning that along with the +1 Attack Dice bonus for long and extreme range firing which the *Kriegsmarine* get as a special rule she had very accurate fire, causing a total of 7 points of damage plus an engine critical taking two off her speed. What is it with *Hood* and Bismarck-class ships? All three other ships fired at *Renown*, but damage was minimal thanks to Renown's armour and my dice…only 3 total points of damage. Not bad, but I was hoping for more from the opening salvoes.

Turn 2

No messing about for me here, as I deployed all six of my U-boats; three right in amongst the advancing British fleet and the others at the extreme edge of their deployment square, as close to the Royal Navy's starboard flank as possible. Unfortunately I then lost the Initiative roll. With both of us having spotter planes in the air it became apparent this would be an even roll throughout the game. Other than the three British destroyers turning to engage the U-boats as best they could, Nick steamed his fleet onwards to close the range, while for my part the German battle line continued turning, now bringing all guns to bear. With no sign of any British submarines I felt quietly confident. During aerial movement Nick retreated and I pushed my ME-109s forward to threaten his planes which had been hanging back, although a lot rested on who would get the Initiative next turn, as my aggression had left me close enough to get intercepted by his slower fighters, possibly allowing his slow Swordfish torpedo bombers to get into range of my precious warships. This may have been a bad move by me…

During the Attack phase the first British guns opened up, but luckily for me the firing was hopeless. First *Renown* completely missed *Tirpitz*, as in turn did *Hood* and *Queen Elizabeth*! I couldn't believe my luck. In amongst all this ineptitude *U-34* torpedoed *Valiant*, *U-32* did the same to *Warspite* and *Tirpitz* unloaded again into *Hood*, with nearly every gun hitting. This was a crucial moment of the battle. Rolling 18 dice I only managed ONE 6. Sure enough it confirmed as a Critical, damaging *Hood's* engines for -2" speed and causing one fire, but other than that only 16 points of damage were caused. I say 'only' 16, because although this is a significant salvo that could sink a cruiser outright, in the circumstances it should have at least been enough to cripple *Hood*, which was my hope. I needed results before the powerful British guns got into range.
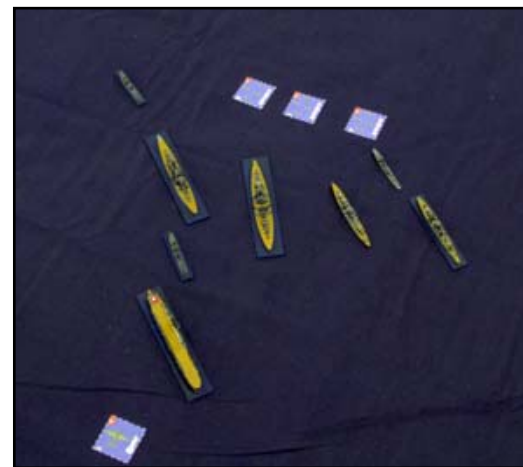
The German fleet begins its hurried turn to port

The British destroyer *Kashmir* then managed to detect and depth charge *U-34*, crippling the U-boat, although I wasn't too upset as her front torpedoes were already in the water. I moved on to *Scharnhorst*, but managed only a pitiful 3 points of damage on *Renown*. *Kelly* then depth charged the ailing *U-34*, finishing her off. A shame but not unexpected being as *U-34* was the only U-boat the surprised British could detect! Nick had a disastrous run of detection rolls during this time, coupled with forgetting that a couple of his battleships had the ability to detect even if they couldn't do much about the U-boats themselves. Still, chances were this wouldn't be the only mistake we made in the heat of battle. The final firing activity of the round involved my remaining U-boats firing off torpedoes at various ships and my two pocket battleships, *Scheer* and *Lutzow* engaging *Renown*. *Scheer* managed to add 2 points more damage, while *Lutzow* rolled really well, inflicting a Critical on *Renown's* engines and slowing her down by two inches as well as adding another 4 points of damage. Not a great total though considering three ships had poured fire into her. Long range, yes – powerful, no.

At the end of the Attack phase the torpedoes all struck, or rather most of them either missed or rolled awful dice to hit. Only *Valiant* (5 damage) and *Warspite* (7 damage) were struck, and you will notice the absolute lack of Criticals. This wasn't for the want of trying. A total of five threats were rolled against these two, but their torpedo belts came to the rescue. In the rules, torpedo belts allow the defending player to force re-rolls on any Damage Dice of his choosing, which in practice generally amounts to re-rolling Critical threats. Needless to say Nick did this, causing me to mostly miss. Suddenly the much-hyped U-boat threat was looking a bit weedy.

The U-boats threaten the British formation

That just left the End phase, which as is our want resulted in *Hood* not repairing her damaged engines!

Turn 3

Nick began what looked like being a busy turn by deploying his only submarine (as it turned out), *Tarpon*, ahead of my fleet. Clearly he had chosen the wrong square out of the two in my deployment zone and had decided that it was time to get into the battle. Annoyingly he then won the Initiative again – a crucial moment as far as the aerial engagement went, as it meant the Royal Navy fighters would move first, committing my ME-109s to a drawn out dogfight with the Martlets, complete with their 2 Damage points, meaning that I couldn't shoot them down in a single round. Knowing I could do little about this now I got on with the Movement phase, hurriedly surrounding the lone British submarine with all three destroyers. No way was this getting through to my warships, especially as the pocket battleships don't have torpedo belts!

Nick's warships began turning to starboard, confident now that they were all within range. This meant the luxury of a one-sided fight was about to end without any British ships even crippled, although both *Hood* and *Renown* were somewhat off station thanks to their engine damage. The British destroyers hovered around the U-boats, clearly hoping for better success than last turn. For my part my battle line practically ground to a halt, crawling along at the minimum one inch and turning slightly more to keep all guns bearing. Now it was going to be a shoot out.

The firing was started by *Hood*, Nick clearly thinking that the battered flagship might not survive the turn. Only 3 damage was inflicted on *Tirpitz* though, along with minor engine damage from a Critical causing a one-inch loss of speed. I then failed to detect the *Tarpon* with one of my destroyers and then watched Nick activate the aircraft combat and proceed to shoot down one of my precious Messerschmitts with a Martlet. In return I damaged two Martlets and shot down the only Fulmar flight. Then my Stukas dive bombed *Hood* – and missed. Yes, my on-running contempt for Stuka pilots went up another notch. This meant I would have to use up valuable firepower on a ship which should by rights already be at the bottom of the North Sea. Even as I was thinking this Nick announced *Warspite* was engaging *Tirpitz*. All too well as it turned out, with 12 damage points and an engine Critical reducing my battleship's speed by two inches and starting a fire. Worse was to follow, as another destroyer failed to detect the wily British submarine and the *Renown* also opened up on *Tirpitz* – I was seeing a definite tactic from Nick

The burning Hood is beset by Stukas

here, concentrating on my most powerful ship and relying on his armour to protect him from the others. *Tirpitz* took another 7 damage points along with 2 crew losses, another fire and another -2" on speed from the inevitable Critical hit.

It was time for vengeance, and I decided not to trust to chance and use *Tirpitz* to finish *Hood*. I rolled the dice, and every gun hit. The damage was enormous, with no les than four confirmed Criticals. *Hood* basically disintegrated, but I was left thinking that this single shot would have pretty much sunk any ship Nick had. If only the Stukas had done their job! *Queen Elizabeth*, following the trend, opened up on *Tirpitz*, but inflicted only 1 point of damage, much to Nick's annoyance, although she did also shoot down two of the Stukas, not that this made much difference as I was tempted to shoot them down myself. Finally, *Z-35* managed to detect, depth charge and sink *Tarpon* in one fell swoop, at least meaning the British submarine threat had been short-lived.

Any feeling of success I had was equally short-lived, though, as yet another battleship in the shape of *Valiant* engaged *Tirpitz*, finally crippling my flagship, knocking out all but her A turret and effectively taking her out of the game. *Scharnhorst* then inflicted another 3 points of damage on *Warspite* while *Illustrious* shot down the last of the woeful Stukas. That just left my trailing ships. *Scheer* and *Lutzow,* which combined for an unimpressive 4 points of damage on *Renown* while *U-36* torpedoed and sank *Kashmir* with its rear tubes.

That just left the end phase where yet again we both failed to repair anything, so no change there then.

Turn 4

I won the Initiative this time around but with *Tirpitz* in a right mess and the rest of my fleet performing pretty poorly, I wasn't feeling very optimistic. The British torpedo bombers were slowly making their way towards me and my fighters were tied up by the annoying Martlets and their never-ending damage. I decided to try and make use of *Tirpitz's* front-arc radar (and the fact that only the A turret as serviceable) by turning into the enemy, while the rest of the fleet scattered, *Graf Zeppelin* already making for the exit just in case.

Showing contempt for my warships, *Illustrious* went to flank

speed and forged straight ahead to keep away from the U-boats, who were looking hungrily at her lack of a torpedo belt. I had wanted to ignore the carrier as the main threat was clearly from the battleships, but after the first round of failed shots I was thinking that any kills would be better than none. The British battleships continued their turns to starboard and Nick had the look of a confident man. My submerged U-boats were already getting left behind although at least all their forward tubes were reloaded as they crawled their way towards the enemy. With the first shot of the turn I looked at the crippled *Tirpitz* and hoped for a miracle salvo from her remaining turret.

Unfortunately for me, *Tirpitz's* radar failed to detect *Queen Elizabeth* and she completely missed her target. Well, three 1's will pretty much miss a barn door parked in your lap, but that didn't stop the Greek from running around the room laughing. *Queen Elizabeth* then fired into *Scharnhorst*, doing much better and dealing 8 damage along with yet another -2" speed engine Critical. *Scharnhorst* in turn exchanged fired with

Ships scatter as the action becomes general

Warspite, causing 4 points of damage and getting 6 points back. It was getting to the stage where all hands were manning the pumps so *Z-37* had steamed in amongst the British ships, and managed to inflict 1 damage point to the fast moving *Kelly* as well as torpedoing *Queen Elizabeth* for 3 points, again losing two more Criticals to her infernal torpedo belt. *Kelly* then got her revenge by torpedoing and sinking *Z-37*, much to my increasing annoyance.

More torpedoes hit the water as *Z-35* got within range of *Illustrious*, inflicting a good spread of 8 points of damage, but failing to confirm both threatened Criticals! Next, *Renown* engaged *Scharnhorst* for a disappointingly low (for Nick) 3 points of damage. *Scheer* and *Lutzow* combined again, targeting *Queen Elizabeth* this time, and succeeding on a serious crew Critical, starting 5 fires, inflicting 8 damage and 10 crew losses. Given enough time this is the sort of critical hit that can finish a crew of. The question was: did I have the time? This question was at last partially addressed by *Valiant*, which hit *Scharnhorst's* engines for -1" of speed and a total of 5 damage, driving my battlecruiser nearer to becoming crippled.

Towards the British rear *Kandshar* found and sank *U-36* with depth charges, while the remaining U-boats all put torpedoes in the water. *U-32* scratched *Warspite* with 3 damage and another cancelled Critical, while *U-35* did similar damage to *Renown* (and yet another cancelled Critical!) and *U-31* belatedly sank *Kandshar.* In the continuing dogfighting, one Martlet and one ME-109 hit the waves as the Swordfish ambled quietly on towards the two pocket battleships. Would they finally reach their goal in turn 5?

Turn 5

Despite losing the Initiative I decided to get even more aggressive. This was based on a simple assessment of the chances *Scheer* and *Lutzow* had in a straight fight with the British warships. Heavily outweighed in terms of armour, despite the torpedo belts I reasoned my best hope was to get in close and risk an all-or-nothing torpedo barrage with them. Surely sooner or later those damned torpedo belts would fail? *Tirpitz* was hanging on by her teeth and *Scharnhorst* looked incapable of inflicting the sort of damage needed to cripple any of the British battleships. This was certainly a lot rougher than commerce raiding!

My U-boats were lagging well behind now, as is the problem with having only one inch of submerged speed. Nick continued on with his plan, as is his want. Once he is set on course he is particularly good at sticking to his guns. I did manage to tie up one of the Swordfish in a dogfight with an ME-109 although an uninvited Martlet decided to rather unsportingly join the party. The other two Swordfish weren't quite close enough to my ships to drop torpedoes this turn but with no anti-air in range it looked like I was in for some trouble.

The U-boats are left in the distance as the Swordfish approach their targets

At the start of firing, *Valiant* fired on *Scharnhorst*, inflicting yet another engine critical for -2" speed, one fire, 3 crew losses and 7 more points of damage. This left her perilously close to being crippled but with British attention turned to finishing off the Tirpitz it looked like she would survive into turn 6. *Valiant* then rubbed salt into the wound by training a lucky shot with her secondary armament and rolling the required '6' to hit *Z-37*. It was only 1 point of damage but it summed up how the dice luck had drifted over to the British side.

Scharnhorst's massive 1 point of damage on *Renown* wasn't worth talking about although the mighty battlecruiser managed to cripple the destroyer, *Kelly*. *Renown* then struck back at *Tirpitz*, scoring a huge crew Critical, starting 5 fires and causing 6 damage and crew loses respectively. Being as *Tirpitz* looked in seriously bad shape, I decided to fire while I could, but for a second turn her firing was next to useless, a mere 1 point of damage scratching the paintwork on *Renown* whose armour certainly seemed to be better than I remembered! The equally engulfed *Queen Elizabeth* then added to *Tirpitz's* woes, with another minor engine critical, only a -1" but cumulatively that slowed the giant down to one inch of movement per turn. The 5 additional points of damage didn't do me any favours either.

Z-36, steaming at speed in-between *Queen Elizabeth* and *Warspite*, launched torpedoes at both, causing 2 damage on *Warspite* and finally getting a Critical through *Queen Elizabeth's* torpedo belt. It was a long time coming, but 6 damage and 5 crew was something at least. The battered *Kelly* then torpedoed and crippled *Z-36* before being sunk by *Z-37* which then managed to miss the *Illustrious* with a spread of torpedoes, which takes some doing! Nick had been holding back *Warspite* and she now turned her guns on *Tirpitz*, putting in a devastating salvo that finally sank my flagship. Well, at least I stayed afloat longer than Nick…

Scheer and *Lutzow* once more ganged up on *Renown*, at long last doing enough damage to cripple her, while the last Martlet succumbed to ME-109 fire. They had done their job though and it looked like at least two Swordfish would unexpectedly get through to their targets.

Turn 6

The engagement was by now rather chaotic, and clear to both sides that unless something dramatic was to happen the British were pulling ahead. I decided that a final burst of aggression was my only hope of salvaging victory, so both *Scheer* and *Lutzow* broke into the enemy line, unleashing torpedoes at *Illustrious*. It was also clear that unless my U-boats got moving they were as good as out of the game so reluctantly I surfaced them all and tried to get within torpedo range. Sadly for me in the heat of battle I mistook *Lutzow* for *Renown* and ended up facing the wrong way. I was within a couple of seconds of actually firing torpedoes, which really would have rounded things off nicely. It does go to show that in the heat of battle it's ever so easy to make simple mistakes. During this game both Nick and I had our fair share, including forgetting to fire at passing aircraft and in Nick's case upgrading the armour on *Renown* for a couple of turns!

Mostly now though it was about finishing things off. I ignored *Queen Elizabeth* as she was so badly ablaze there was

The chaos of close action nearly sees U-boats engage their own side!

little chance of her putting the fires out before she ran out of crew, so with the Initiative I decided these if *Scharnhorst* could at least cripple *Renown*, which had been taking punishment for a considerable time and was still annoyingly afloat. Only 3 damage points were caused though – not enough to cripple her. *Valiant* then turned all her guns on the undamaged *Lutzow*, causing a savage 10 points of damage on the weakly armoured pocket battleship along with a light weapons Critical killing 1 crew point and slightly damaging the AA guns – a not insignificant thing with the Swordfish setting up for attack runs. *Lutzow* then returned fire on *Valiant*, smashing a round into her engines and completely disabling her, along with 4 damage points caused. It was a good hit but would have been of so much more value a few turns previously.

The badly burning *Queen Elizabeth* engaged the other pocket battleship, *Scheer*, instantly disabling her with a whopping 11 points of damage. *Scheer* missed her return fire (only one turret was left) which put the ball back in Nick's court. He looked to his favourite finisher, *Warspite*, and put a devastating broadside into *Scharnhorst*, sinking the battlecruiser. To add insult to injury the immortal *Renown* then sank one of the surfaced U-boats, *U-35*, and the surviving Martlet downed another ME-109. My last surviving ME-109 polished of one of the attacking Swordfish but that left another to attack *Scheer*, and 3 more points of damage were inflicted by the airborne torpedoes. The torpedoes fired by *Scheer* and *Lutzow* struck *Illustrious* but even without torpedo belts the British luck held and only a total of 7 points of damage and an engine Critical ensued, with -2" the result. Not very serious at this stage.

That just left the End phase. Nick put out two fires on *Queen Elizabeth* but it was too late as she dropped down to a Skeleton Crew, meaning only one turret could fire. Again though, it was too little, too late.

Turn 7

Clearly the game is up now, but I don't regret driving *Lutzow* and *Scheer* into the enemy, even though it has cost them enormous damage. They were never going to survive to the end of the game and at least they had a chance of causing an upset. It just didn't pan out. I kept my U-boats on the surface for this turn as well, trying to get at least one into range, and it looked like *U-32* was in range of *Renown* after movement finished. Needless to say I was very particular about my targets after last turn's fiasco.

Nick held the Initiative this turn and opened the firing with *Valiant*, putting out excellent fire once more, sinking *Scheer* and the plucky destroyer, *Z-37*, who had been making a nuisance of herself amongst the British battleships.

Lutzow made one last bid for success by turning on *Illustrious*, hoping to get a measure of luck against the weaker carrier which had sailed brazenly through my fleet in a most rude manner, as well as torpedoing *Renown*. Needless to say 2 points of damage wasn't the return I was looking for, but I was past the point of no return at any rate. I waited uncomfortably as Nick announced *Warspite* was taking a crack at the fleeing *Graf Zeppelin*, and sure enough a nasty engine Critical took 3" off her movement and inflicted 5 damage and 2 crew hits.

I decided to see if *U-32* really was in range of *Renown* and was just inside the 10-inch range, causing another 3 points of damage, but leaving her still afloat. Another Swordfish then torpedoed and crippled *Lutzow*, who was then finished off by *Renown*, which sank *U-33* for good measure! The dead *Lutzow's* torpedoes struck *Renown* for another 3 points, and there we drew a veil over the battle. A kindly North Sea fog allowed *Graf Zeppelin* to escape and the surviving U-boats to submerge, but it was clearly going to be another British victory.

Result

Lord Greke-Robinson: 37 points
Vizeadmiral von Bastau: 28 points

Conclusion

NICK: A hero of the nation, Lord Greke-Robinson would be fondly remembered for his famous victories over the German fleet, securing the Atlantic from the threat of surface raiders. Going down with the *Hood* his posthumous honours would have pleased him mightily.

I managed to get my tactics right on the day, and the choice of multiple battleships proved very effective. Early on I was very worried as my fire was inaccurate and the *Tirpitz* caused some serious pain, but the way the dice fell later on went in my favour. My decision to concentrate on the *Tirpitz* with all my firepower early on certainly paid off, as the German battleship was by far and away the most dangerous foe I faced. The heroes of the day had to be the *Warspite* (she inflicted a lot of damage on the German fleet) and the plucky pilots of the Fleet Air Arm. Outclassed by the ME-109s, I would have been happy for the Martlets to hold off the fighters to allow the Swordfish an attempt at glory – shooting down multiple flights of the enemy went way beyond my hopes.

The importance of the set-up of fleets was clearly shown in this battle. Ian lost out by my ability to close on his fleet, reducing the considerable advantages he had with his long range gunnery, a better deployment could have seen him inflict more damage before I could have shot back. The limited value of submarines in large fleet actions was also exposed in this fight, their lack of speed severely hampering them. In a smaller battle, where they would not face torpedo belts, they can pack quite a punch, but their set up needs to be well thought out. My worst error was revealing the *Tarpon* a turn or two too early. I should have allowed Ian to get his destroyers away from her position before revealing the boat. Not having used submarines before, it is not an error I plan on repeating!

If he did not suffer the most inconvenient bouts of bad dice rolls Ian would be a far more difficult opponent to overcome, and he is certainly becoming more sneaky in the way he uses his ships. In this battle I think Ian learnt two really important lessons. First – big guns are fun and really effective. And second – big guns are fun and really effective. Did I mention I like big guns?

IAN: Three on the trot. I can hear you all laughing now. I'd like to say something in my defence but I can't, other than bemoan a couple of rounds of dreary dice luck. Analysing my own performance, it's safe to say my deployment was poor. I should have set up broadside close to the table edge and recognised that it wasn't me that needed to close the range, it was Nick. Essentially I misjudged how quickly he would steam forwards, and I didn't need to assist with that. Had I been able to take advantage of more guns bearing for probably one extra turn that might have made a significant difference. My expectations of the U-boat wolf pack failed to reach fruition as well. The torpedo belts on the main British warships frustrated me time and again. In retrospect I would have been better off replacing all six with the *Bismarck*, boosting my firing line instead.

There's a place for submarines but big battles isn't it. Nick rightly assessed that and took just the one for annoyance value, and even that failed. I was seriously outmanoeuvred in the air as well. This was a direct result of over-confidence based on the resounding success of my ME-109s in the Narvik game. I still could have won the air battle if I had not rashly chased the British down the table and allowing my fighters to get intercepted by the doughty Martlets. As for the Stukas, don't get me started on that. As mentioned above, if they had succeeded in sinking *Hood*, which they had every chance of doing, *Tirpitz's* devastating salvo would have hit one of the other ships, undoubtedly sinking it. I would take *Graf Zeppelin* again but frankly I would not include the Stukas in any plan of victory.

Kudos to Nick, though, and proof that our editors really know what they are doing. As the guy who edited the rules, he is very sharp on the best tactics to use and coupled with a dogged determination to see it through makes him a formidable admiral. Back to the Pacific for us, I think…

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