

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

Signs & Portents

WARGAMER

47

Answer A Call to Arms

Biggest ever in-depth preview of the Second Edition!

Invasion Point: Florida part 2

Another great series of linked Battlefield Evolution scenarios

Death In The Cursed Earth

More variety for Gangs of Mega-City One

Plus... Extinction Protocol, The Coming of the Forth part 3, Starship Troopers Evolution Update and much, much more!

SGP Wargamer 47

August 2007

MGP 5547W

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Well, it's been one hectic month. Not least because I spent half of it sunning myself in Crete, meaning that there was a whole lot piled up on my desk when I returned. Still, I missed just about all the rain (there was a small cloud one day over Crete but it didn't last more than 20 minutes) although I participated in the M5 flooding carnage on my return, just to get back in the spirit of things.

Sadly in the interim, I got the disappointing news that our Guest of Honour, Claudia Christian would not be making it to Mongoose Hall '07 on August 4th due to filming commitments in the United States. Nevertheless planning for the show was pushing on regardless, and for the first time at a Mongoose Open Day we have other traders in attendance. Just a toe in the water you understand, so we have invited several local companies to participate, including TSS, famous for their polystyrene gaming tiles. There's also local hobby shop and friend of Mongoose, Spot-On Models from Swindon, and to really give some variety Swindon's number one comic book retailer, the brilliantly named Swin City!

If all goes well this could be a taste of things to come, as Matthew and I plan on ever bigger and better gaming opportunities for the Swindon area. Still, that's for the future. Come and see us at the Croft Sports Centre, Marlborough Lane, Swindon from 10am-5pm on August 4th. There will be lots to play, staff to interrogate and some great new products for sale, along with some special offers only available when you come to the Mongoose trade stand.

The whole Studio team will be in attendance along with two of our writers, Gareth Hanrahan and Lawrence Whitaker, both of whom will be running RPGs during the day. There will also be some exciting news about future projects so if you want to be the first in the know with a chance of talking to the guys who will be creating and developing our games, here's your chance!

See you there.

Ian

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Invasion Point: Florida

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Part two of this set of linked scenarios for Battlefield Evolution.



Battle Fleet Boxed Sets

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Announcing our brand new cost-effective fleet boxes for A Call to Arms



Death in the Cursed Earth

59

Mutations galore in this instalment of rules for fighting *Gangs of Mega-City One* battles in the Cursed Earth.



Oi, Mongoose, Where's me Troopers Evo?

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Starship Troopers Evolution - you probably thought we'd forgotten it, but here's the latest information on what promises to be the game that triggers the preprinted miniatures revolution.

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EYE ON MONGOOSE

This Month's Releases and Gaming News

A Call to Arms - Second Edition

Rules \$24.95/£15.00 Fleet Lists \$34.95/£20.00

The eagerly-awaited second edition of the award-winning A Call to Arms Babylon 5 space combat miniatures game is finally arriving. Throughout the station's turbulent history, armed fleets have enacted the harsher policies of their governments. Whether you wish to command an intrepid EarthForce Expeditionary Fleet, a high-tech Minbari taskforce or a cunning Centauri raider group, this rulebook provides you with up-to-date rules to play out your favourite Babylon 5 space battles... or take to the stars and create new legends in the dark.

The new edition has been carefully honed, based on the comments of A Call to Arms players all around the world - it is faster to play, more comprehensive and finely balanced to portray the very best of space combat in the Babylon 5 universe.

Inside the covers, you will find new rules for combat, hyperspace, placing Admirals on your ships and a completely revised system for Fighters. As always, scenarios and full campaign rules have been included, making this the most comprehensive release yet for the game.

Accompanying the brand new second edition of the award-winning A Call to Arms Babylon 5 space combat miniatures game, the Babylon 5 A Call to Arms 2nd Edition Fleet Book contains the comprehensive data necessary to play any of the major and iconic racial fleets of the Babylon 5 universe. The Earth Alliance, Minbari Federation, Centauri Republic, Narn Regime and League of Non-Aligned Worlds have all their ship types and fleets described, along with their game statistics. Also included are fleet lists for the ancient Shadows and Vorlons, as well as expanded information on the fleets of specific League races, such as the Brakiri, the Vree, the Abbai, and other races like the Dilgar, Drakh and multi-racial Raiders.

Finally, there are brand new fleet lists added to the game with this book - the Gaim, pak'mar'ra and Psi Corps! There are even specific notes for older fleets (Dilgar), specialised fleets (Psi Corps) and generic Raider fleets.



Convention and Events Diary

9th-12th August

Britcon

University of Manchester,
Manchester, UK

[http://www.bhgs.co.uk/
Nationals/IntroPage.htm](http://www.bhgs.co.uk/Nationals/IntroPage.htm)

10th-12th August

Recombination

New Hall, Cambridge, UK

[http://www.recombination.org.
uk](http://www.recombination.org.uk)

12th August

Whiff of Grapeshot

Woolwich, UK

30th August-2nd September

Gen Con UK

University of Reading, Berkshire,
UK

<http://www.horsemenevents.com>

15th/16th September

Confess 2007

The Southern Hotel, Sligo,
Ireland

<http://www.flatearthsoc.com>

15th/16th September

Colours

Newbury Racecourse, Newbury

<http://www.colours.org.uk>

29th September

CONcrete Cow '07½

Old Bath House, Wolverton,
Milton Keynes, UK

<http://www.mk-rpg.org.uk>

6th/7th October

Old Glory World Wargames

Championships

University of Derby, Derby

[http://www.worldwargames.
co.uk](http://www.worldwargames.co.uk)

18th-21st October

Spiel 2007

Messe Essen, Essen, Germany

[http://www.merz-verlag.com/
spiel/e000.php4](http://www.merz-verlag.com/spiel/e000.php4)

20th-21st October

Firnace 2007

The Garrison Hotel, Sheffield,
UK

<http://www.rpgfurnace.com>

21st October

SELWG 07

Crystal Palace Sports Centre
London

[http://www.selwg.com/selwg05.
html](http://www.selwg.com/selwg05.html)

28st October

Fiasco

Royal Armouries Museum
Leeds

[http://www.leedswargamesclub.
org.uk/index_files/FIASCO.htm](http://www.leedswargamesclub.org.uk/index_files/FIASCO.htm)

3rd November

Crisis

Antwerp

Belgium

<http://www.tsoa.be/>

17th/18th November

Warfare

Rivermead Leisure Centre

Reading

[http://www.readingwargames.
co.uk/warfare.asp](http://www.readingwargames.co.uk/warfare.asp)

24th November

Parade Ground

Stockton Sports Centre, Talbot
Street

Stockton on Tees

24th November

Reveille II

The Downend Folk House,
Lincombe Barn

Overndale Road

Downend, Bristol

1st December

Recon

Pudsey Civic Hall

Pudsey

Leeds

Due to the fact that we now have our own printing facility, our web site now shows an indicated Shipping Date for each of our products. This is when new products are due to leave our warehouse - after that, it is up to the courier and shipping companies! They are normally good at what they do, but mistakes do happen from time to time, causing delays. And, of course, there is no accounting for Customs.

Mail order customers and those waiting for books to appear in UK stores should expect to see them around three days after the Shipping Date. European stores will start to see them seven days after the Shipping Date, while US stores will see them around eight days after.

Customers in other countries, such as Canada and Australia will usually see them a little after this, though it can vary. Please note that while we use fast track Customs services in many countries, packages can get pulled aside from time to time, putting perhaps a week on top of the delivery dates.

VICTORY AT SEA

Have you
read how
good it is
yet?

Victory at Sea is the dynamic game of World War Two naval combat from Mongoose Publishing. Combining the simple elegance of the award-winning A Call to Arms gaming engine with in-depth ship detail, it puts you right at the helm!



Victory at Sea

The war at sea during the Second World War, with a conflict that raged across all the world's oceans, has fired the imagination of many in the decades that followed. In the Atlantic the efforts by the German U-boats and surface raiders attempted to cut the trade and supply routes to the United Kingdom. The Mediterranean saw the Italian and British fleet face one another as the war in North Africa ebbed and flowed. In the Pacific the aircraft carrier became the dominant naval vessel with the attack on Pearl Harbour and the Battle of Midway being pivotal moments in the war.

Victory at Sea allows players to re-fight many of the famous battles of the war or to come up with their own 'what if?' scenarios. With six different major fleets featured there are over seventy classes of ships available to command and two dozen different models of aircraft. The rules allow great flexibility in what forces can be taken. Added to this the book includes rules for a full campaign to be played, rather than just a one-off fight.

The Victory at Sea rulebook is based upon the Origins award winning A Call to Arms rules system. With full rules for civilian ships, aircraft and submarines it is possible to play almost any aspect of the war. The game is designed to be fun, fast paced and quick to pick up, at the same time including the features that make naval warfare so unique. The Royal Navy, Kriegsmarine, US, French, Italian and Japanese Navies are all included with counters for the ship types included in the game, along with all the templates required. The fleet lists are lavishly illustrated with period photographs of the vast majority of the ships featured.

South Dakota-class Battleship

Ships of this class: South Dakota, Indiana, Massachusetts, Alabama

The South Dakota class was designed to mount 16-inch guns and be well protected against 16-inch shellfire and underwater attack, as well as be as fast as the preceding North Carolina class – and all on a hull not exceeding 35,000 tons. They ended up weighing slightly over at 38,000 tons but, despite some cramping in the design, emerged as excellent warships. All four examples survived the war.

Speed: 5 in. **Armour:** 6+ **Special Traits:** Aircraft 3, Armoured Deck, Radar, Torpedo Belt
Turning: 1 **Damage:** 40/13 **In Service:** 1942
Target: 4+ **Crew:** 90/30



Weapon	Range	AD	DD	Special
A Turret (3 x 16 in.)	37	3	3	Super AP
B Turret (3 x 16 in.)	37	3	3	Super AP
Y Turret (3 x 16 in.)	37	3	3	Super AP
Secondary Armament	12	6	1	Weak
AAA	8	11	—	—

Length: 666 ft. **Displacement:** 46,218 tons **Speed:** 27.5 kts. **Crew:** 2,257

The rulebook gives everything a player needs to create and play using a task force of their own design in the Second World War, as well as providing rules with enough depth to allow a battle to be accurately portrayed. Within the book the following can be found:

The Basic Rules: these explain the four phases in every turn, with the players alternating moving and firing their ships. They go into detail with effects of damage on a vessel, critical hits, special actions a ship can take and the various traits available to ships that make each class unique.

The Advanced Rules: Once the basic game has been mastered the advanced rules allow the players to include aircraft, submarines, bad weather and torpedoes in their games.

Scenarios: There are six generic scenarios for players to use; these can then be used to run a complete campaign. With another dozen historical scenarios included there is enough variety for many hours of play.

Campaigns: Full rules for experience, repairing and replacing ships, with the use of multiple strategic targets forming the basis of a campaign.

The Fleet Lists: Seventy ship classes with submarines, destroyers, cruisers, battleships, battlecruisers and aircraft carriers all represented. With the addition of aircraft there is a choice of almost one hundred different units that can be used in a game.

The Counters: The counters provided with the rules allow games to be run as soon as the rules have been read through.



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 MGP 910001 MOBILE INFANTRY CAP TROOPER SQUAD
 MGP 910002 ARACHNID WARRIOR BUGS
 MGP 910004 ARACHNID TANKER BUG
 MGP 910007 MARAUDER APE SUIT
 MGP 910008 MARAUDER CHICKENHAWK SUIT
 MGP 910009 ARACHNID HOPPER BUGS
 MGP 910014 SHINNIE RAIDERS BOXED SET
 MGP 910019 ARACHNID BLISTER/BLASTER BUGS
 MGP 910020 ARACHNID PLASMA BUGS
 MGP 910026 ARACHNID RIPPLER BUG SWARM
 MGP 910048 ARACHNID WARRIOR BUG MEGA SWARM



Answer A Call to Arms

The Long-Awaited Second Edition



Matthew Sprange

288 pages.
20 fleets.
45 fighters.
Over 200 ships.
More than a year in development.

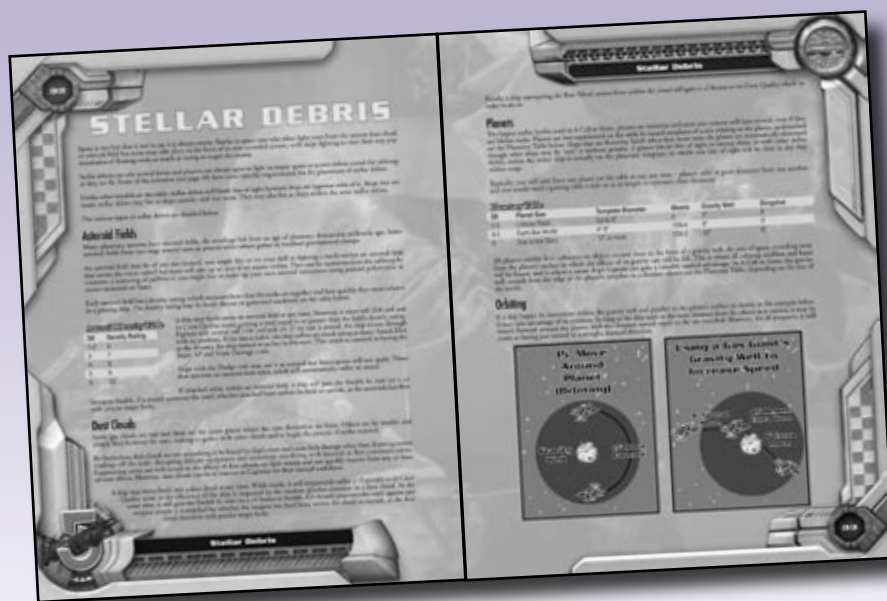
The second edition of A Call to Arms has certainly been an ambitious undertaking, and some have wondered whether it would hit its projected release date. However, we can now reveal it actually exists and, if you are attending Mongoose's Open Day in Swindon this month, you will be able to pick up a copy – everyone else will have to wait until later in the month, I am afraid!

As a games designer, you are often a little apprehensive as to how the public will take to your latest creation but, every now and again, you get a little 'twinge' when you realise that one rule or one mechanic is just 'right'. It is a bit like a sixth sense, an instinct that you have nailed something on the head. I have had many such twinges for this edition of A Call to Arms

and it is good to see how the game has grown from a sideline of the Babylon 5 RPG into the system it has now become.

This article takes you through the new game, shows some of the changes we have made, and explains *why* we thought them necessary.





A Game of Two Books

Regular readers of Signs & Portents (or those who have already pre-ordered the game from our web site!) will know that A Call to Arms no longer comes in as box set – instead, it takes the form of two hardbacks. There were several reasons for this, not least of which was that the two books in the box set (rulebook and fleet list) now had to contain so much information that hardbacks were inevitable.

However, it also gave us the option in years to come to completely re-jig the fleet lists (if we so wished), without having to do an entirely new edition of the game. We can simply bring out a new fleet lists

book. Makes things easier for us, cleaner for retailers, and cheaper for gamers. Everyone wins!

It is our intention to support A Call to Arms primarily with Signs & Portents (so remember to grab your free issue every month!), along with a single hardback book each year to serve as an update, likely released in the summer. This book will collate all the important articles that have been printed in Signs & Portents, as well as introduce new ships, fleets and ways of playing the game.

This means you will never have a huge number of books to carry around with you in order to make sure you have the details of every possible fleet, but the game can still grow and expand as it always has.

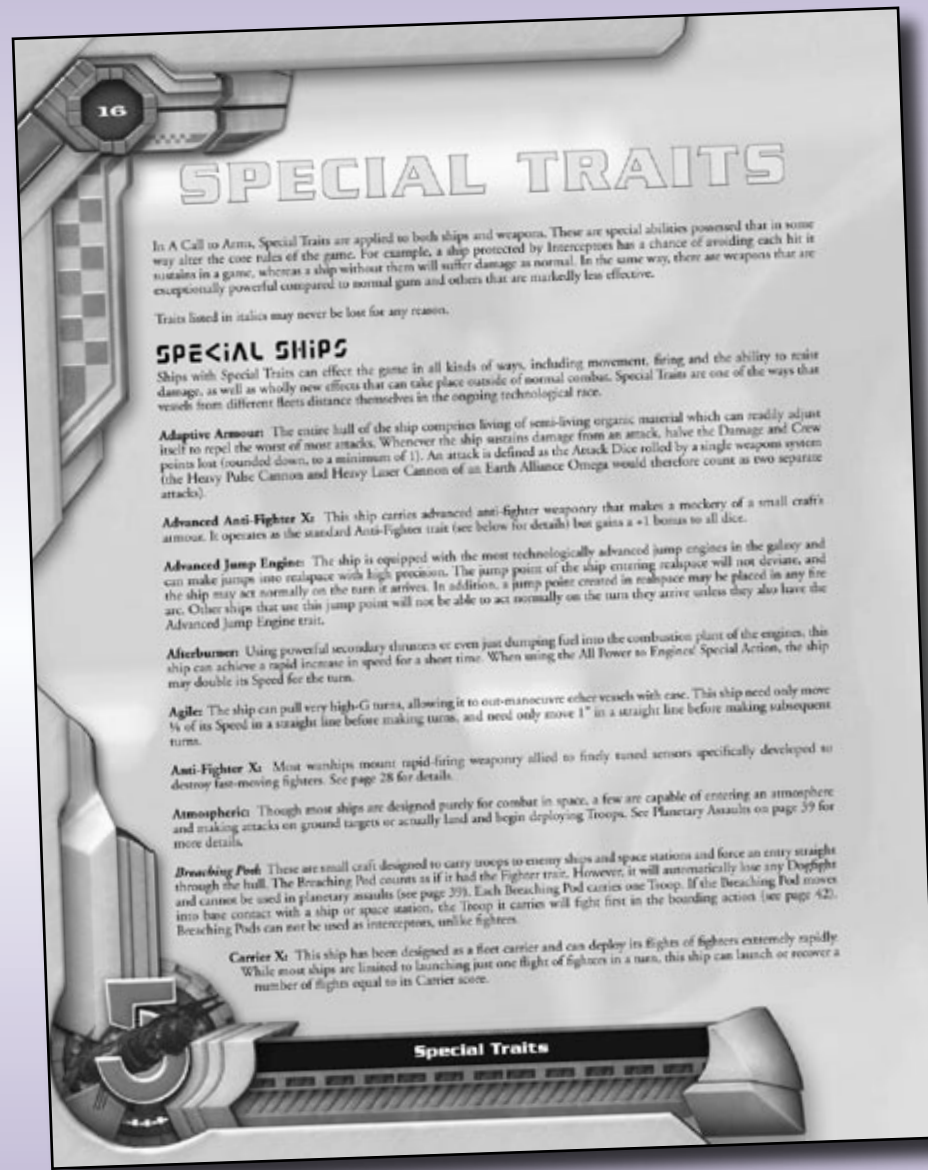
The Rules

A new edition of a favoured game is always approached with some trepidation, but the second edition of A Call to Arms is more a tweaking than a wholesale change. We have carefully listened to suggestions made on our forums, and taken a good long look at the sort of fleets people tended to use in tournaments.

Overall, you will find the rules far better defined than they ever have been. There are more examples and a great deal of effort has gone into making the text as clear as possible without overwhelming you with detail. Here is a brief look at the most major changes.

- Ships that are reduced to 0 Damage no longer explode immediately if they are subjected to heavy attacks, thus allowing fighters to get out of the way!
- The critical hit tables have been tweaked. You can now lose traits as part of the special damage.
- Compulsory movement, such as Running Adrift, now happens in the End Phase.
- Concentrate All Firepower! can now be used while turning – but it requires a Crew Quality check. Intensify Defensive Fire! is a new Special Action.

- Anti-Fighter is now a ship trait, rather than a weapon, and it now acts as a 'reaction' against any fighters that come too close.
- The Beam trait now always requires a 4 to hit (and keep hitting), no matter what Hull the target has. Beams are powerful enough to ignore any armour and, from a game balance perspective, this change makes Hull 4 ships far more viable than they used to be.
- Stealth still uses much the same system as before, but is now subject to many more modifiers. This greatly increases the importance of tactical play as, with judicious ploys, you can make even a Sharlin light up like a Christmas tree – or you can tilt the odds in favour of Stealth ships and make them virtually invisible.
- There are plenty of new traits to get your tactical teeth into, such as Escort, Lumbering, Shields, Unique, and (gulp!) Quad Damage.
- The use of hyperspace now has its own chapter, and includes plenty of guidance on how to make the transition to and from realspace. Jump point 'bombs', as they have come to be known (whereby you use the shock waves of an arriving ship as a weapon), are still possible but extremely difficult to pull off. You need an Advanced Jump Engine, a Scout already on the table, and a tough Crew Quality check – and you might *still* not be on target! It does more damage now though. . .



- Fighters have also earned their own chapter. As well as the new anti-fighter rules, you will find details on how fighters can replace/supplement Interceptors by engaging in defensive fire.
- Following the success of the 'special characters' we introduced in Sky Full of Stars, we have now expanded who is available – and, best of all, we have allowed players to create their own Admirals from a list of traits.

There are lots of tweaks throughout the rulebook, of course, mainly for clarity and play balance, but those are the major changes. Doesn't look so bad after all, eh? Veterans of A Call to Arms will still find much that is familiar in the rulebook, while newcomers will find the game far easier to get into than the hoary old veterans did!

The Fleets

In comparison to the core rules, you can expect to see some big changes in this tome. When revising the fleet lists, we had a number of key design elements we wanted to achieve.

First, we wanted to make each fleet exciting. We wanted to give players a real lift when they flicked to their favoured

fleet and saw just what it was now capable of – but at the same time, give them a sense of real fear when they saw what other fleets could do (how do I fight such a beast?).

We wanted to 'sex up' carriers, and make them truly awesome choices, as befitted their status in a fleet. The Poseidon especially is now born again hard. We also wanted to encourage players to move away from the 'beam teams', as they are called on our forums, fleet choices that relied on super weapons for victory rather than tactics. The new Beam trait took care of that in part, and the fleet lists do the rest.

There was a determined effort to ensure that every ship in every fleet was of use and had a valid reason to be there. If a ship was felt lacking, it was either changed or dropped altogether. Now, of course, every player is different, and everyone will still have their favourite ships. The important thing is that you should now see a great deal more variation in your enemy's fleets, especially at tournaments.

Finally, we wanted to define each fleet with a solid theme, for two reasons. On the one hand, we wanted to separate what each fleet could do, which was vital as we were adding new fleet lists to the game, and they needed to feel different from

the others. Also, we wanted to increase the importance of tactics in the game, forcing players to make choices as they play, rather than loading up with a dream combination of ships and rolling loads of dice.

Overall, I am very satisfied with what we have come up with, and the fleet list revisions have taken up the bulk of the development and playtesting time over the past year. Though some fleets have now changed a great deal, all these tweaks have made the game better, more solid, and more exciting to play.

So, what exactly have we done with your beloved fleet?

The Earth Alliance

In Armageddon, we split the Earth Alliance into three, reflecting the different eras of Babylon 5. This was done as Earth had so many ships that they were beginning to 'sprawl' in the fleet list, and also to better handle fleets as diverse as the Dilgar and the Drakh. We have been asked whether we will do the same to other fleets, and the Centauri are often cited as a candidate, considering the number of ships they have. No decision has yet been made to this, though *if* we did, the Centauri could also be split by House. . .

Anyway, on to the fleets themselves. Across the board, the Earth Alliance has changed from having its best guns loaded up front, to having them mounted on the broadsides. With medium and heavy lasers remaining as Boresight, this forces Earth players to manoeuvre carefully to get the best effect from their weaponry. On the other hand, it also makes their ships more powerful when mixing it up in a brawl, where both broadsides can be brought into play.

We have limited which ships appear in which lists more than before – the Tethys and Sagittarius appear only in the Early Years list, for example. In addition, we have also adjusted ships to better suit their era. So, for example, the Nova dreadnought in the Third Age is pretty much as you remember it from the first edition (though it is now armed purely with pulse cannon, rather than the pulse/laser hybrid before). In the Early Years, however, it is bedecked with plasma weaponry, losing Attack Dice and Twin-Linking on the way, but gaining the AP and Double Damage traits. These changes mean that an Early Years fleet is not a poor man's route or an 'ironic' choice, but a viable and interesting fleet with features found nowhere else. On the other hand, the largest ship is only a Battle level choice (though the Orestes is now a bona fide battleship, not the system monitor it was later relegated to).



You will have already seen the Myrmidon in an earlier Signs & Portents, which joins the new Crusade Era ships such as the Marathon and Apollo. We now introduce a new fighter, for those who like to play on the cutting edge of In Service dates – the Firebolt is a development of the Thunderbolt Starfury, sleeker, faster, and with wing-mounted torpedoes that can devastate enemy shipping from beyond anti-fighter range.

Oh, and the Poseidon? War level, 95 points of Damage coupled to Hull 5, a total of 52 Attack Dice of weaponry – and 24 flights of Starfuries, which it can discharge in just three turns. It is truly a centrepiece for an Earth Alliance fleet, one that can influence battles from the other side of the table. And it is still as good looking as before!

The Dilgar Imperium

As a fleet, the Dilgar have always been a little maligned, usually until someone actually tries them in play and finds out just what the Masters of Destruction special rule really means! Still, a great deal of work has gone into this fleet, based on comments made by players.

The Pentacon rule, for example, has been tightened so that it really means five ships. We have also added a Suicide Fighters special rule, allowing Thorun dartfighters to make the ultimate sacrifice in games taking place in the Earth Year 2232, when the war became very desperate for the Dilgar. No need to mention where inspiration for that idea came from!

A large amount of development time was spent on tweaking the Dilgar ships themselves, ensuring weaponry matched what was on the miniature, and introducing new variants to provide the Dilgar with more variation in their choices.

We also instituted a new theme for the fleet. While ships are still divided between fast attack and assault bruisers, and while bolters and pulsars are still the order of the day, there are now a great many ships sporting anti-ship missiles. These come in a 24", Double Damage, AP flavour and, while they are generally Slow-Loading, they get a lot of Attack Dice. If the Dilgar player so chooses, he can bombard an enemy fleet in the early stages of a game, hoping to get some vital hits in with wave upon wave of missiles. It is a glorious thing to see!

As I said, there are many more variants of ships. The Jashakar frigate, for example, now has the Jashakar Vi (scout) and Jashakar Tae (torpedo ship), while the Ochlavita gets the Ki, a command destroyer that grants a Pentacon bonuses if it leads.

Finally, there is a new fighter, the Thorun torpedofighter. Like the Earth Alliance Firebolt, it can pound a ship from beyond anti-fighter range, and you will see a number of other fleets with this ability,

though most require their slow super heavy fighters for the role. The Thorun torpedofighter can dart in at high speed, unleash a deadly attack, then skip away before serious resistance can be mounted. Even if it is caught, an escorting Thorun dartfighter will be able to see off most enemies, as the base hull now has an increased Dogfight score. . .

The Minbari Federation

Changes to Stealth were mentioned before – this has the most effect on the Minbari, for obvious reasons. While the actual mechanics for Stealth are unchanged, we have placed more emphasis on what players themselves can do to affect the outcome of the roll. We already had the modifiers to the roll for Scouts and range, for example. An additional penalty has also been added to a ship's Stealth score if an enemy has already seen it and is still present on the table.

A small tweak, but when added to the modifications made in Sky Full of Stars, it changes everything. If you close range with a Sharlin, paint it with a Scout, and ensure one ship has already seen it, then you reduce its Stealth to 2+. Even a blind Narn can have a serious crack at attacking it.

So, is it now doom and gloom for the Minbari? Oh, no! You will stay at range (where most of your weapons are quite happy to carve up the enemy), concentrate on any enemy that even looks like he has sniffed you out, and take a Leshath. Why a Leshath? Because it has a special rule that, when painting a Stealthed ship, it will automatically reduce that Stealth to 1+. Making the enemy's scouts extremely vulnerable.

What this all adds up to is a real game of cat and mouse when fighting the Minbari. They will want to take the control of the battle, carefully selecting enemy ships for destruction. The enemy, on the other hand, will want to use every tool at his disposal, from scouts to stellar debris, to keep certain ships in play while he grinds down the Stealth scores of the largest Minbari ships. Instead of making a Minbari battle a luck fest, it is now a highly tactical game.

So, what else can Minbari players look forward to? The Nial is still lethal in dogfights, though more vulnerable to anti-fighter attacks, and it has slightly better Stealth. The Sharlin is still a beast, especially when well supported by the rest of the fleet. Oh, and the oft-ignored Torotha will start winning a few fans with its Troops and additional weaponry.

The Centauri Republic

Ah, the Centauri, the home of the Beam Team. No longer!

It has always been something of a point of contention that the Centauri have so many laser weapons in their fleet list when they had none in the Babylon 5 TV series. This is a legacy from the B5 Wars miniatures game, which was itself based on some technical drawings of a Primus, where someone had marked the two prongs on the front of the ship as lasers.



In the interests of granting the Centauri a new theme, we decided to work on this. The number of Beam weapons was drastically reduced, as was their range and power. Centauri ships would instead be fitted with ranks upon ranks of lighter weapons, concentrated to the fore, and to a lesser extent the sides on larger ships, though there would be virtually nothing to the rear – this forces Centauri players to concentrate on manoeuvring for best effect, but it also mimics the armament of their smaller ships, such as the Vorchan.

The weapon of choice for Centauri is now the ion cannon. Typically 12” range,

it also has the Double Damage and Twin-Linked trait. As it is usually mounted in huge batteries on a ship, it gives the Centauri a terrible amount of Attack Dice every time they launch an attack – they just have to work a bit harder to get things into arc and range.

Aside from this change, there have been many little tweaks throughout the list. The Centurion is still worth taking, but it is no longer the automatic choice it once was. The Haven, on the other hand, is absolutely worth taking!

The Maximus retains its position as a defensive ship, though its role on the table has been changed somewhat. It now has a very light armament (just 6 Attack Dice, and only to the fore arc), but it can use its Escort trait not only to grant its own Anti-Fighter dice to nearby ships (as all Escorts can), but also its Interceptors. Stick a couple of these near a Primus or perhaps in a Vorchan squadron, and you will greatly increase their survivability.

Speaking of Vorchans, we have got rid of the existing variants, and made the Demos a variant rather than a ship in its own right. The Demos is much closer to the Vorchan now and is at Skirmish level, swapping the Vorchan’s plasma accelerator for light ballistic torpedoes and an Interceptor.

Centauri fleets will now have a strong element that can hit hard and fast, backed up by slower ships such as the Primus that can duke it out with almost any other vessel on an even level. Knock out blows will come not from single weapons, but combined attacks by several ships that will blast past any defence and annihilate the enemy (squadrons of Vorchans are a particularly choice way of doing this. . .).

The Narn Regime

For the Narn, we took their existing fleet and added toughness.

Of the 'core' fleets, the Narn always seem to be the most maligned, so a major factor in our design was to make them sexy again (if a Narn can ever be described as sexy. . .). Whereas the Centauri have their weapons focussed straight ahead, and Earth has them to the sides, the Narn place them on pretty much any flat surface they can find on their ships. This gives them a powerful attack whichever facing an enemy approaches them on.

They too have ion cannon as standard armament, but they tend to be lighter batteries than used by the Centauri, and so lose the Double Damage trait. Replicating alien technology is never easy...

The Narn do get other things in return, however. Their ships tend to have as much Damage and Crew as a ship of another race would have, were it one Priority Level higher, and they have retained their laser weaponry. The largest change is to their energy mines.

Energy mines (or E-Mines, if you are a veteran of A Call to Arms) used to be used primarily as fighter killers, being little more than an annoyance to other ships, even if they were packed close together. This was based primarily on 'screen evidence', as it is called, of their use against Shadow ships, which just shrugged the attack off.

Well, we started thinking about this. Suppose the attack was shrugged off, not because it was so weak, but because the Shadows were so hard? That opened up interesting possibilities. . .

Except for a few ships (such as the Dag'Kar and G'Quonth, which are both Slow-Loading), energy mines are now One-Shot weapons – so you have to make the best of them. That should not be too difficult, however, as they now have the AP and Triple Damage traits. Backed up with enough Attack Dice to make even a Primus sweat. Think of them as mini-nukes capable of sweeping small ships aside and doing real damage to larger ones.

Then think what several, all launched at once in the first turn can do.

Oh, and they can still clear fighters, if you so wish...

The Interstellar Alliance

The ISA fleet list was always pretty well defined as a theme, and there were just a few little tweaks to be made. The WSC-2, for example. Never really worked at Battle level, so we have renamed it the White Star II, put it at Raid level, and given it a Nial flight, whereas the base hull has no hangar and receives the Scout trait instead – this basically gives you a choice of White Stars with supporting fighters or acting as Scouts (hint: use both in a fleet).

The main changes have come in the form of all new ships. The Nolo'Tar and Blue Star you have already seen in Signs & Portents. We have also added some new variants of existing ships, based on work we did for the roleplaying game and the Ships of the Galaxy supplement. The Shial is a Nial variant with fewer guns but greater Stealth, making it perfect for the Rangers (Stealth 6+ will make it nigh impossible to target at range!). The Tara'Lin is a command war cruiser

based on the Sharlin, and acts as a base of operations for major Ranger actions. Bedecked with neutron lasers and fusion cannon, its Command +3 trait will ensure the ISA will always get the drop on their enemies, no matter how advanced.

Finally, we have enhanced the Victory's lightning cannon once again. The language in its special rules has been tweaked so you really can do *nothing* after firing it. In return, you get 8 Attack Dice of Precise, Beamed Quad Damage, enough to tear a huge hole in, well, pretty much anything. . .

The Abbai Matriarchy

League fleets have always been quite popular, with players often opting to take combined forces, picking and choosing the best from each race. You can still do this under the new edition, but we have looked at these lists in terms of not only making them viable and exciting on their own, but also in how players cherry pick the best ships. So, no more cheap Vaarls backing up your Bimiths and Aviokis, I am afraid!

The Abbai have always had quite a distinctive fleet. Fairly slow, fairly short-ranged, but hard to hurt and layered with

small weapons. We took this concept and pushed it much further with the second edition fleet list.

We created a new trait especially for the Abbai (though we also ended up using it for the Shadows too), allowing them to lose their Interceptors and gain Shields. Shields work pretty much as you expect, soaking up Damage from incoming attacks, and regenerating every turn. This forces enemy's to concentrate on one ship before moving on to the next – you can think of it as a poor man's Self-Repairing.

Taking the Bimith as an example, it has Shields 10/2. This means its Shields can soak up 10 points of Damage before the hull starts getting scraped, and it will regain 2 points of those Shields in every End Phase. This will force the Abbai to become a little more mobile, as it will benefit them to take advantage of stellar debris in order to allow Shields to recharge while another ship takes the brunt of enemy fire for a while. They can still act as large floating fortresses, however, and a few still have Interceptors as well, albeit far less than they used to.

With the coming of the Drakh, the Abbai have forced themselves to at least appear a little more militant, and this has brought about the Juyaca, their first dreadnought,

a War level ship with Shields 20/D6, and smothered with combat lasers, comms disruptors and quad bolters.

The Abbai still remain the proverbial pain in the rear end in campaigns where they can win through sheer pacifism, but they now also have the option to win in a stand up fight too.

The Brakiri Syndicracy

Of all the existing League races, the Brakiri have probably received the most attention – they have certainly had the most new ships recently. There is the Cidikar heavy carrier, the Pikatos heavy fighter, the Corumi dreadnought, Kabrokta assault carrier, and Riva super heavy fighter, to name just a few of the new hulls.

The Brakiri fleet is now, perhaps, the choice for 'serious' players who want to explore the League. The best equivalent is probably the Earth Alliance, with a wide range of ships to choose from, supporting fighters, and a reliance on ranked batteries combined with the occasional super weapon. This likeness is no accident, as we have always viewed the Brakiri as the most Earthlike in its ships – we have often said that if humans were aliens, their ships would be like those of the Brakiri.

The Cidikar is a good example of parallel thinking between the two races. The humans have the Poseidon, the Brakiri get this beast. Carrying 10 flights of Falkosi, backed up with another 10 flights of Pikatos, the Cidikar has the Fleet Carrier and Command +2 traits, making a natural centrepiece of the Brakiri fleet. Its graviton pulsars match the weaponry of the Poseidon, but the Cidikar also carries a combat laser in its arsenal, allowing it to stand alongside other warships in the fleet, if not actually leading the charge.

A personal favourite of mine is the Riva, and we have begun adding more of these 'super heavy' fighters (that is, fighters mounted just one to a base, like the White Star Fighter) to the game. They form a midpoint between fighters and ships, and while they tend to be horribly vulnerable

to marauding fighters, they carry a great deal of firepower, often rivalling Patrol level ships, and yet remain cheap. Put them in the wrong place at the wrong time, and you will lose vast swathes of them in a single turn. However, play tactically, and clear the area of enemy fighters and anti-fighter ships, and just a small number of them will give the enemy a bloody nose.

The Riva is fairly typical of this kind of thinking – Dogfight –1, Dodge 5+, but with both a mini graviton pulsar and a 4” grav cannon. Why is that 4” important? Because the Anti-Fighter trait only protects a ship up to 2” . . .

The Drazi Freehold

This is often viewed as the nutball fleet - I don't think I have seen a tournament

including Drazi where someone has not said 'green or purple?'

The Drazi are very serious fighters, and take war very seriously. But they are not an entirely serious race when viewed from the outside. Their fleets have been characterised by fast and agile vessels that concentrate everything up front, as what is not in front of a Drazi is an irrelevance. We decided to keep and enhance this theme for the new fleet list.

We have only added two new hulls to the fleet – the Firehawk advanced cruiser and. . . another one we will come to in a minute. However, we have made a little addition to every Firehawk, Sunhawk and Warbird hull that will get Drazi players cheering.

They now all have Dodge 5+.

Yes, you can now jink and avoid incoming fire alongside the best White Star (well, almost. . .). It greatly improves the survivability of the weaker hulls and adds a lot of character to the fleet. You will also find that many of your weapons have been improved, though the most powerful remain Boresighted, and the Guardhawk can now act as a decent fighter-killer, due to its Escort trait. These ships are also all Atmospheric, allowing you to scream



down to a planet and take the war to your enemy's fortresses and cities. The Drazi have had to lose the Hull 6 on their Warbirds to get all of this but you should find that a small price to pay.

I mentioned another new hull at their disposal. The Claweagle is great evidence of Drazi thinking applied to advanced spacecraft design. Based loosely on the Sunhawk, it loses most of its guns in favour of two magnetic clamps and a boarding drill. Yes, I think you can see what is coming next. . . The Claweagle rushes forward to latch on to enemy ships. Once attached, the drill goes into action, burrowing through the opposing hull before opening up to unleash the Drazi soldiers inside. Boarding actions have never been fought so decisively. . .

Playing with a Drazi fleet is all about having fun. The changes now give you at least an even chance of winning battles too.

The Gaim Intelligence

We will be covering the Gaim in detail in the next issue. However, we can give you a glimpse of their strategies and ships here.

As one of the new fleets to be added to the game, we wanted to make the Gaim

a little bit special. Although there have been some things written for this race in the past that suggest they use knock-off hulls from other fleets, there is nothing on screen in the Babylon 5 TV series. So, we took that as a blank canvas. As the pak'ma'ra had already stolen the cast off hulls idea (much better suiting them as traders and scavengers), we could then do something really weird for the Gaim.

We knew the Gaim had Queens, and we knew they had drones. That was pretty much our baseline. The final inspiration of where the Gaim fleet itself would head finally came from the second episode of *The Blue Planet* – a superb production from the BBC, which you should run out and buy/rent if you have not already seen it.

The second episode deals with the creatures from the deep, way down in the darkest depths of the oceans. There was a little beastie they showed (I forget its name – so much for inform, *educate*, and entertain. . .) that when disturbed, fired off a little pellet of phosphors which travelled away from the creature, then exploded in a bright flash, scaring away predators or at least diverting them.

Hmm, pellet, fired, bright flash. I don't know about you, but I immediately thought about energy mines when I saw

that (the thoughts of a games designer are truly weird – I really was watching the programme for pleasure, not as a source on Gaim. Result? I end up thinking about *A Call to Arms*. . .).

A draft fleet list was quickly drawn up. The main weapon of the fleet would be the photon bomb, an AP energy mine that would always be turret mounted, allowing it to be fired anywhere. Individually, they would have few Attack Dice, but they could be fired every turn, so there would be plenty of fireworks going on.

The largest ships of the fleet would be the Queen ships, of varying sizes to give a decent spread of Priority Levels. These would form the centre of the fleet, granting all sorts of bonuses in terms of initiative and co-operation, and cause great catastrophe if they were destroyed. They were well-armoured and had plenty of Damage, but were only armed with a couple of photon bombs. Therefore, they needed protecting.

There are a number of gunships and assaults ships in the fleet list, but they all tend to be fairly modest affairs. They also have photon bombs, but can back them up with gatling lasers (Double Damage Beams), giving the fleet a bit of a punch. However, the Gaim's main strength is not in their ships – it is in their fighters.

The Klikkita light fighter is a modest enough craft. Six to a wing, Dogfight +1, a single Attack Dice on its plasma bolt weaponry. However, it excels in two areas.

Being crewed by drones, which are basically a renewable resource as far as the Queens are concerned, they have a lot of them. An awful lot of them. A basic Raid level Queen ship (the Shakaak) has 12 flights on board, whereas the Stuteeka war carrier (another Raid level ship), carries 24, which it can unload in just three turns – and, acting as a Fleet Carrier, it will keep them in the field too.

Okay, so the Gaim have a lot of fighters, so what? Sure, they can overwhelm many other fighter heavy forces, but then they will be just so much dust against anti-fighter defences. Even if they get through those, 1 Attack Dice is not going to make you start shaking in your shoes, right?

Drones, being programmed to consider themselves worthless, have the ability to overload the reactors in their Klikkita fighters, turning them into Klikkitak crewed missiles. The Dilgar suicide pilots have nothing on these guys. The Klikkitak loses its weapon and becomes easier to dogfight but, if it makes contact with an enemy ship, it unleashes a Precise, Double Damage, Super AP attack amidst

a huge fireball – before the Attack Phase even starts. Needless to say this costs the Gaim little in a campaign, as they can grow new drones and manufacture new fighters at record speeds.

The Gaim are by no means one trick ponies, however, and players will find they have plenty of options for their fleets. You can go fighter heavy, arm up with solid gunships, or take advantage of assault drones, who excel in boarding actions.

The pak'ma'ra

If you have already experimented with the pak'ma'ra from the fleet list in Signs & Portents, you know pretty much what to look forward to here. Lots of short-ranged but surprisingly powerful plasma weaponry, the occasional long-ranged plasma torpedo, a few heavy home grown hulls and some borrowed ones with refitted weapon loads.

The Hurr Gunship is a permanent feature in the fleet now, but we have added one new feature to the fleet since its inception in Signs & Portents. Borrowing from another popular science fiction TV series, we have introduced the Plasma Web special rule. In a nutshell, this allows several pak'ma'ra ships to combine their fire into one empty spot in space. Their

combined Attack Dice are halved, but their weapons gain the Energy Mine trait instead.

This means, of course, that when several pak'ma'ra ships get together, they can unleash a truly horrendous energy mine. Enemies are advised to never, ever travel in squadrons when fighting the pak'ma'ra!

The Vree Conglomerate

The flying saucer brigade, 50's style (though we brought them right up to the 80's with the Z'Takk base star – sorry – command saucer.

One criticism levelled at the Vree was that in a combined League fleet, it was always the Vaarls that got pilfered as cheap Scouts, so, first step – nerf the Vaarl! Actually, we did the Vree themselves something of a favour here, as we boosted the ship's Hull and weaponry, raising them to Skirmish level. They are now very effective scouts, they just have to be paid for.

The Vree's guns came under inspection as well. They are still a terrible fleet for fighters to face, having the largest Anti-Fighter scores of any race, but their turreted weapons have a bit more poke to them too. Antimatter cannon have

a longer range and the Double Damage trait as standard, while antimatter shredders are all Twin-Linked and tend to have more Attack Dice. Antimatter torpedoes have less range, but get Triple Damage in return. Overall, the Vree have few weapons on each ship, but they hit hard. You will know it when you have had a duel with a Vree saucer.

Some new hulls have been added as well, rounding the Vree out and making them attractive as a fleet in their own right. The Xonn dreadnought is nicely placed just below the Z'Takk, providing a tough brawler ship in lower Priority Level games. The Zorth light fighter is made of glass but will prove to be extremely agile in a dogfight. Finally, the cries for a Vree carrier have been answered in the shape of the Xeel, a Skirmish level carrier with four flights of Tzymm heavy fighters.

The Raiders

There have been some calls to give the Raiders something of a makeover to bring them in line with the fleets of other races. While we do have plans for the Raiders (don't worry, they will always be the underdog fleet – we will just be making them more interesting to use), with this fleet list we decided to refine what they already had, and make them more competitive at lower Priority Levels.

The Strike Carrier came under the microscope first, being granted the Fleet Carrier trait. By staying at Skirmish level, you will now find just a few of these will be able to effectively support the hordes of fighters Raiders fleets tend to acquire.

The Modified Freighter is now a more reasonable proposition, being faster, armed with AP plasma cannon (and more of them), and carrying a flight of Delta-Vs. The Delta-Vs themselves (and, in fact, all Raiders fighters) now have more flights to a wing, making them a decent purchase for a Patrol point.

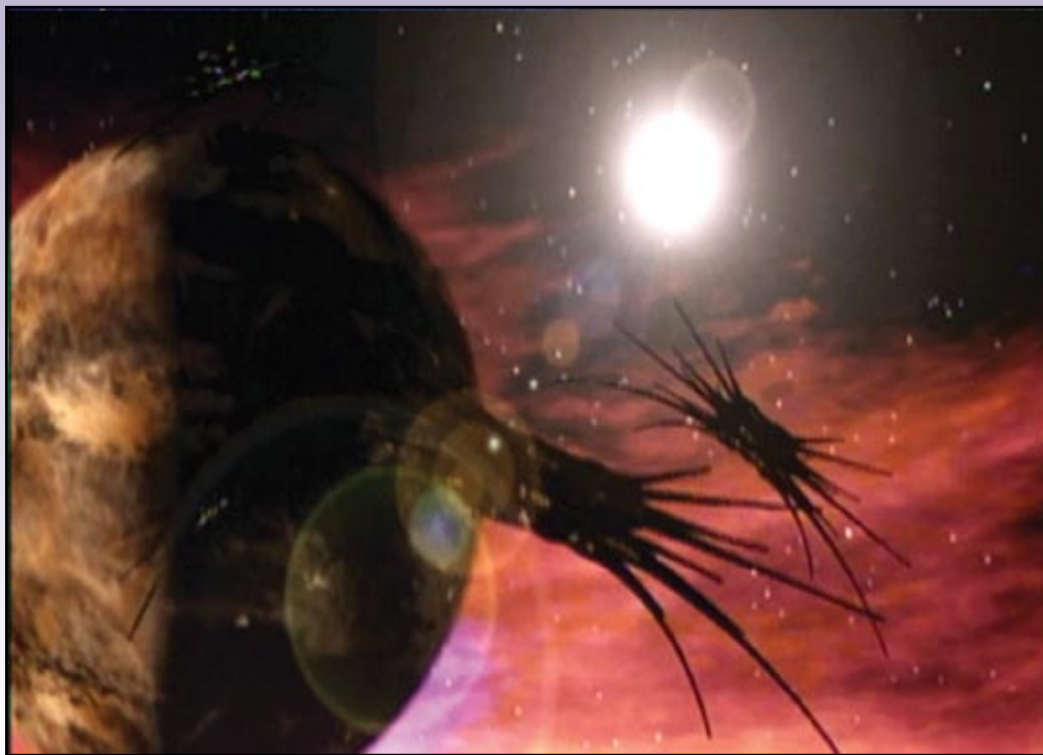
This will all serve to give the Raiders a decent baseline from which we can start building. A project for the coming year...

The Vorlon Empire

Another fleet with a lot of changes. It was always felt the Vorlons lacked legs, especially at lower Priority Levels, and especially against the Shadows. We set to work. . .

The Charged Energy Pulse special rule introduced in Armageddon has now





The Shadows

The iconic Shadows have had the same changes to taking damage as the Vorlons. However, they have had some other tweaks too.

They are now subject to both Physical and Telepathic Disruption, either of which can stun a Shadow vessel, rendering it helpless for a turn. If you do not have telepaths on board your ship, a Beam weapon can be used to stun a Shadow vessel simply by dealing it at least 25% of its starting Damage. Do this for several turns, and you can make even the mightiest Shadow Ship worthless! Of course, if the Shadow player destroys the ship pinning his own, it will be automatically released and free to act – so make sure you pick a tough ship!

devolved to the Advanced Anti-Fighter trait, keeping them in line with rules used by the other fleets. This has also been extended to the way they take damage. Both Vorlons and the Shadows now use the same rules the Ancients did (and still do!) in Armageddon. Basically, they take damage in the same way as other ships, except that critical hits, even those to Vital Systems, are automatically repaired in the next End Phase, making it very difficult to interrupt their attacks for long.

Now using the smaller model, Vorlon Transports have been reduced to Skirmish

level ships, though everything else has remained pretty much the same. What has changed is the Vorlon's ability to hurt other races. All their weapons have greatly increased in range, letting them really reach out and touch someone (boiling them in the process).

The power of some of their weapons has been bumped up to. The Heavy Cruiser is now a true Armageddon ship worthy of the name, with its 30", Precise, QUAD Damage Beam...

Whereas the Vorlons have Adaptive Armour, the Shadows are able to refract damage away from their hulls. This is represented by the Shields trait – however, they are much more efficient than those carried by the Abbai, with the largest Shadow vessel having Shields 20/10, making it a very tough customer to hurt (let alone pin!).

Some variant ships have been added this time around, and the Shadow Hunter from Sky Full of Stars has been removed

(you will see where it has disappeared off to in a minute). The Scout gets a destroyer-type variant in the shape of the Shadow Stalker, a Battle level ship of Self-Repairing, Dodging, Shielding, Molecular Slicer Beam nastiness. The Shadow Ship was placed at Armageddon level in the last revision of the list, and that is where it should stay. However, this provided a problem at tournaments in that Shadow fleets would be unlikely to use their most iconic ship. So, this Shadow Ship was designated as an Ancient, while a Young War level variant was included. Both now have Shadow Fighter flights included for free.

Once again, we have focussed on tactical play between fleets, as the Shadow player will want to keep mobile, protecting some ships while they Self-Repair and recharge their Shields, while the enemy will be wanting to pin them down and finish the Shadow Ships off, one by one...

The Drakh

Another fleet some seemed to think we had forgotten – not a bit of it!

As well as the remakes of the Carrier and Mothership, we have also added a new hull, the Kama're Sas Patrol Cruiser. This little Skirmish level bruiser of a ship is bedecked with weaponry, has an

Advanced Jump Engine, making it ideal to support Raiders, and has enough Damage to weather an enemy storm.

Aside from getting used to the new names we have given the Drakh ships (again, based on Ships of the Galaxy), most of the rest of the work on the Drakh has been tweaking existing designs. The Dra'Vash Cruiser is now a War level ship, for example, with more Damage, a stronger Gravitic Energy Grid, and twice the firepower in its heavy neutron cannon. A Battle level Strike Carrier variant of the ship has also been added, its Huge Hangars bringing Raiders directly into the heart of a fight.

The overall effect is to give the Drakh a lot more flexibility in their engagements without tipping them over the edge of the power curve. The Huge Hangars rule, for example, has been modified to become a little more strict on how ships can be deployed – but it also offers a lot more freedom in which ships can be carried within which.

The Drakh fleet is characterised by high technology, with light and agile attack ships supported by heavy line vessels that can literally swallow their smaller cousins. Big ships, big guns – what more could you ask for?

The Psi Corps

The last fleet in the book is also a brand new one, and I have a feeling it will be popular – the Psi Corps.

There was some talk about making this another variant of the Earth Alliance, but in the end we felt there were enough differences and new ships to allow it to stand alone in the book. The term Psi Corps is something of a misnomer though, as we have used the In Service dates to reflect not only the Psi Corps as shown in the Babylon 5 TV series, but also the covert EarthForce fleets hinted at in Crusade.

Yup, this is where the Shadow Hunter has gone, though it is now the Hunter-class experimental warships, and is even nastier than before!

The Psi Corps fleet is based around the Psi Corps Mothership, Shadowcloak Escort and Fighter Carrier at one end (all ships seen on the screen), and the most advanced warships to grace EarthForce at the other. Psi Corps fleets also get the chance to spend up to two Fleet Allocation Points on any Earth Alliance fleet, an option I think many players will tend to take (it also makes it easier to start collecting a Psi Corps fleet if you already have an Earth Alliance one).

The Mothership is exceptionally well-protected and both it and the Fighter Carrier take Black Omega Starfuries with them into battle. Yup, Black Omega is in the game! These fighters are superb at dogfighting and possess a danger sense that allows them to avoid tragedy and carry on fighting, when other flights would normally be destroyed. The Shadowcloak is an advanced Scout, a stealthy ship the Psi Corps uses to slip past the defences of enemies.

All these ships have Psychic Crew, a new special rule that allows the Psi Corps to disrupt the enemy, making it very difficult to achieve Special Actions. Combined with the Psi Corps own superb training, this alone can give the fleet a valuable edge in battle.

The Shadow Omegas have been taken out of the main Earth Alliance fleet lists, as has the Nemesis, and have been rooted within this one. As the Babylon 5 timeline advances, many of the elements behind (or gaining from the progress of) the Psi Corps begin to form their own power base in EarthForce, leading to all sorts of questionable policies and black projects. This fleet list fills in for those as well, and while the Shadow Omegas were extremely crude, the Nemesis demonstrates what humanity is capable of with Shadowtech in its hands.

If you think those two ships are good, wait for the Hunter and its supporting act the Shadowfury. The Hunter is about as close as you can get to a Shadow Vessel without being immortal yourself, and it is a tough Battle level ship with a molecular slicer beam, Self-Repairing and Stealth. The Shadowfury is something else again. An advanced fighter, it is an awesome

dogfighter, capable of manoeuvres no human pilot would think possible, and yet armed with a polarity cannon that can devastate a warship when they begin swarming around it. The Shadowfury is an extremely unstable design – but I don't think Psi Corps players will worry about that!





The New Game

So, there we are. New rules to get your head round, new ships and variants for every fleet in the game, and plenty of new battles to fight. This version of A Call to Arms is, without a doubt, the most stable, balanced and solid to date. Perhaps the best thing I can say is that it is now truly the game I would want to play, be it a quick one-off match or an extended campaign to decide the fate of the galaxy.

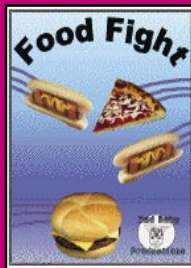
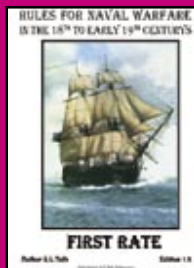
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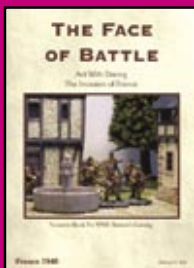
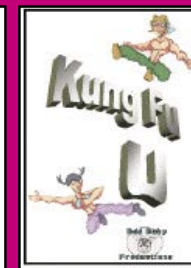
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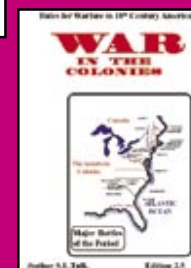
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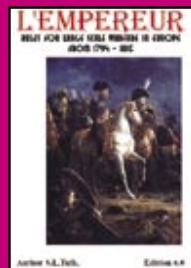


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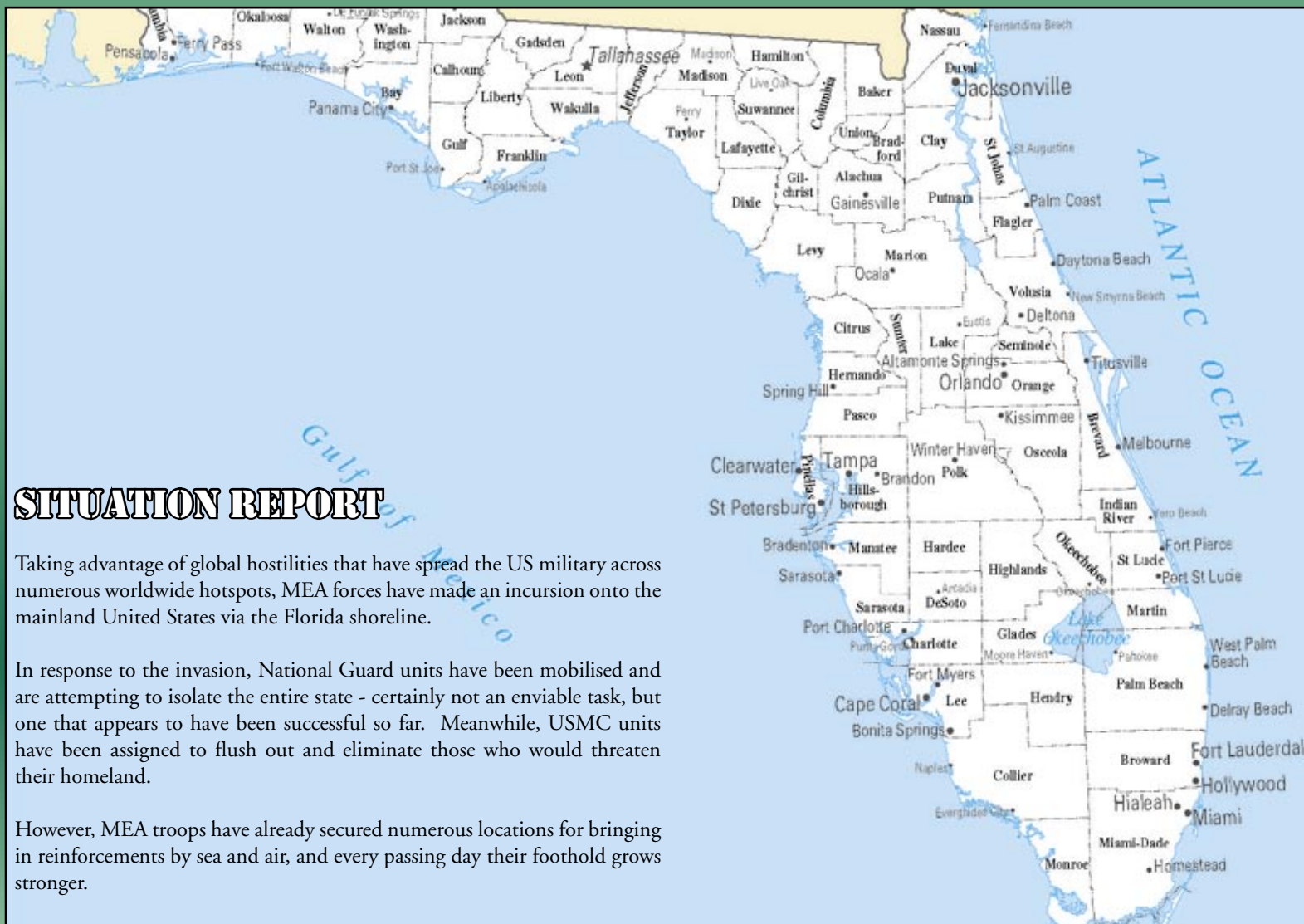
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USMC vs MEA Linked Scenarios: Part Two

Matt Thomason



SITUATION REPORT

Taking advantage of global hostilities that have spread the US military across numerous worldwide hotspots, MEA forces have made an incursion onto the mainland United States via the Florida shoreline.

In response to the invasion, National Guard units have been mobilised and are attempting to isolate the entire state - certainly not an enviable task, but one that appears to have been successful so far. Meanwhile, USMC units have been assigned to flush out and eliminate those who would threaten their homeland.

However, MEA troops have already secured numerous locations for bringing in reinforcements by sea and air, and every passing day their foothold grows stronger.

SCENARIO SIX – OPERATION HAND OF GOD SETUP

Force Recon attempts to disrupt MEA resupply and reinforcement operations.

USMC BRIEFING

Jacksonville International Airport is under MEA control, and is currently being used as a forward base for MEA supply aircraft. Force Recon are entering the airport covertly, with an aim of destroying the fuel dump currently being used to refuel the MEA aircraft - not only will the loss of this fuel cause a delay in resupply operations, but it is hoped the resulting explosion will also take out a number of the supply aircraft currently based there.

Units

One USMC Force Recon Team

MEA BRIEFING

Your squads have been assigned to patrol Forward Base Beta.

Units

Two MEA Infantry Squads
One MEA Technical



The MEA player may set up the table as they see fit, avoiding the use of trees and foliage and concentrating on buildings and industrial scenery to create an area that resembles a part of the airport. Once they have finished, the USMC player may choose any area up to 8"x8" and remove any scenery items they wish within that area before placing the fuel dump within that space - the fuel dump must be placed least 16" from the table edge.

The table for this battle should be at least 3' x 3' and no more than 6' x 6'.

SPECIAL RULES

The MEA player may deploy anywhere at least 10" from the table edge and at least 12" from the fuel dump. The USMC player does not deploy as usual, but instead enters the table from any edge during the first turn. MEA infantry are deployed as sentries - they may ignore unit cohesion rules.

Until Force Recon have been detected, the MEA player may only move their squad units 1" per turn, and may not move any other units.

Force Recon are detected once any USMC unit is within 12" of an MEA unit during the MEA turn (note that this means the USMC may move and then shoot at MEA units within range during their turn in order to avoid detection)

Force Recon may plant their explosives by taking a ready action while in contact with the fuel dump - only one model needs to be in contact.

Shattering rules do not apply for this scenario.

SCENARIO LENGTH

The scenario plays until one side is dead, or Force Recon have planted their explosives.

POINTS MATCH

If playing with points, the USMC player may spend up to 175 points on squad units, while the MEA player may spend up to 200 points on any units they wish.

SCENARIO SEVEN – OPERATION BISHOP

With USMC forces closing in on their location, an MEA unit attempts a cross-country dash.

USMC BRIEFING

A recent attack on an MEA base was successful, and has caused infantry units to scatter during retreat. One retreating unit has been tracked into this area.

Units

One USMC Infantry Squad (both teams)

MEA BRIEFING

On the run from USMC forces, you have vital intelligence information that must reach your leaders. As much as your squad would like to die for the cause, today simply is not a good day to die.

Units

Two MEA Infantry Squads, each with one extra Gunner

SETUP

The USMC player may set up the table as they see fit, then deploys on any two table edges (long or short), no more than 10" from the table edge.

SPECIAL RULES

The MEA player enters the table from any table edge of their choice on the first turn (they may even enter from a table edge the USMC deployed on if they wish!). Their aim is to cross the table and leave from the opposite edge. At least two MEA models must leave the table in order to achieve victory.

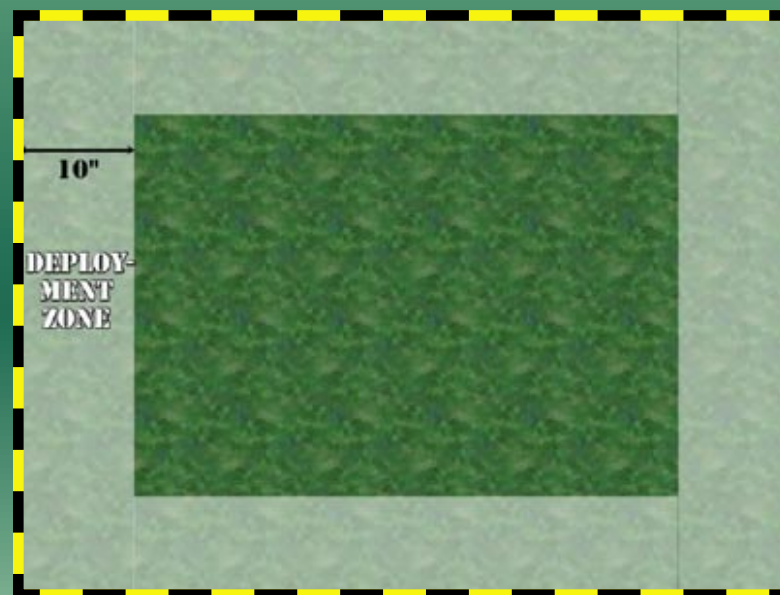
Shattering rules do not apply for this scenario.

SCENARIO LENGTH

The scenario plays until one side is defeated or the MEA have left via the opposite table edge.

POINTS MATCH

If playing with points, each player may spend up to 200 points on squad units.



SCENARIO EIGHT – OPERATION HAMMERFALL

A direct attack on an MEA base by USMC armour.

USMC BRIEFING

MEA forces have consolidated in this position, establishing a permanent base. This violation of US soil simply cannot be tolerated, and direct action will be taken to resecure the area.

Units

One USMC Infantry Squad (both teams)
Three USMC M1A2 Abrams



MEA BRIEFING

This location must be held - the approaching forces are nothing compared to your superior firepower, and will be swatted away like flies.

Units

Three MEA Fedayeen Squads (each with 2 additional gunners)
Three MEA Infantry Squads
Three MEA Technicals

SETUP

The MEA player is free to set up the table as they wish and deploy anywhere, but at least 12" from any table edge.

The USMC player may choose any one table edge to deploy on.

SPECIAL RULES

The MEA have heavily mined this area - every time a USMC vehicle moves, it must roll one six-sided dice - on the score of a 6 it has run over a mine and takes a hit causing 2D10 damage (note this is slightly different to the mine rules in the BF Evo rulebook)

SCENARIO LENGTH

The scenario plays until one side is defeated.

POINTS MATCH

The USMC player may spend up to 1500 points on any units they wish, while the MEA player may spend up to 1150 points - the MEA player still receives the use of mines.

SCENARIO NINE – OPERATION NEEDLE

MEA forces attempt to covertly take out a USMC commander.

USMC BRIEFING

Your units have been assigned to protect this command post. Far away from the battle lines, no trouble is really expected.

Units

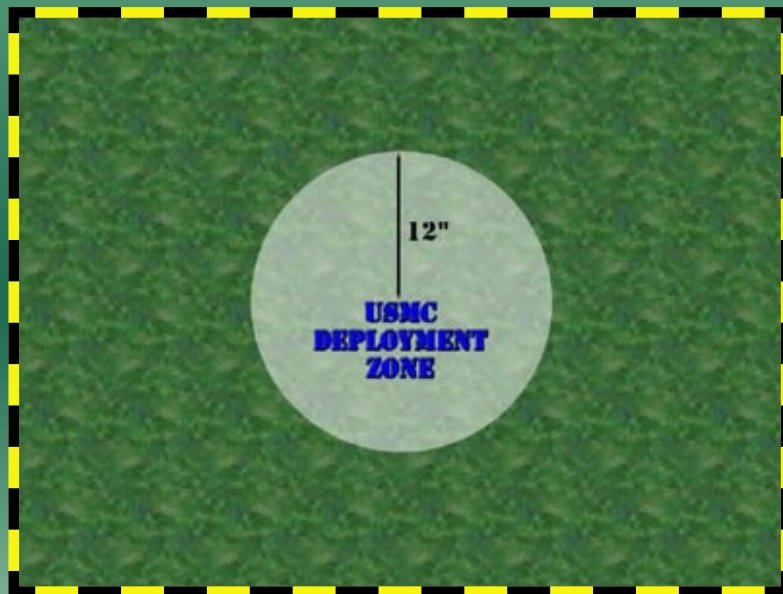
One USMC Infantry Squad (both teams)
One USMC General (use a spare sergeant figure and stats)

MEA BRIEFING

Communications are down, and you have vital information for your commanders.

Units

Four snipers (use stats from MEA Fedayeen Squad)



SETUP

The table is set up by the USMC player as they see fit. Only manmade constructions should be placed within the USMC deployment zone.

SPECIAL RULES

The USMC player may deploy anywhere within 12" of the centre of the table. The MEA player does not deploy as usual, but instead enters the table from any edge during the first turn.

Shattering rules do not apply for this scenario.

Due to their superior training in stealth attacks, the snipers may not be targetted by units more than 12" away, or by units that have already moved in the same turn (in other words, USMC units may not move and then fire at the snipers during the same turn).

The snipers count as four separate units.

SCENARIO LENGTH

The scenario plays until all snipers are dead, or the USMC general has been killed.

POINTS MATCH

The USMC player may spend up to 190 points on squad units instead of the USMC Infantry Squad. The USMC General and MEA snipers are not replaceable.

SCENARIO TEN – OPERATION NINEPIN

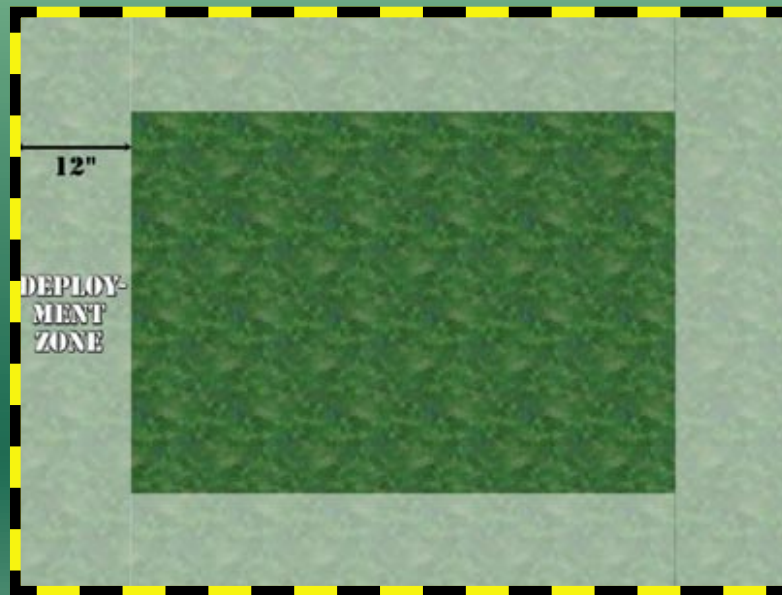
A small MEA force attempt to hold out against superior USMC forces, while awaiting an artillery strike.

USMC BRIEFING

MEA forces within this area have been almost completely eliminated. This one looks like a simple mop-up operation.

Units

Two USMC Infantry Squads
One USMC M1A1 Abrams



MEA BRIEFING

USMC forces pursuing you are in for a big surprise - an MEA destroyer has recently arrived offshore and is targeting this location. Artillery strikes are imminent - you just need to hold out long enough.

Units

Two MEA Infantry Squads
One MEA Fedayeen Squad
Three MEA Technicals

SETUP

The MEA player places scenery, while the USMC player chooses which table edge (long or short) to deploy from - the MEA player deploys on the opposite edge. Deployment zones are up to 12" from the table edge.

SPECIAL RULES

Each turn after turn three, the MEA player receives a single artillery strike. If you have the BF Evo rulebook, treat this as a light artillery strike. Otherwise, simply place a fire zone and scatter it by 2D6" in a random direction - all units within this zone receive a D6 damage dice hit.

SCENARIO LENGTH

The scenario plays until one side is defeated.

POINTS MATCH

If playing with points, the USMC player may spend up to 800 points on any units they wish, while the MEA player may spend up to 420 (and still receives the artillery strikes)

TO BE CONCLUDED

Next month, the third and final part of this series decides the fate of Florida.

New Blood and Old Rivalries



A Call to Arms Second Edition Battle Report

Nick Robinson and Russell Veal



Centauri Fleet



Narn Fleet

Nick

With the second edition rules for a Call to Arms out this month it was entirely appropriate that we run a classic Babylon 5 conflict for this month's battle report. My opponent would be Mongoose new boy Russell, a long time gamer (and ex-employee of Games workshop) who had previously played A Call to Arms in its earlier incarnation. This should prove an interesting little fight, as I had no idea what tactics Russell would bring to the table.

With Russell choosing his fleet (the Narn) it was easy for me to just go with the Centauri. The Narn-Centauri conflict, for me, was the most interesting aspect of the whole show and it is always great fun to play out these two, with outrageously bad accents going back and forth across the gaming table (although, to be honest, that is mostly me).

Fleet selection was very easy, we were told to make it a big battle and so it was we both grabbed the relevant new fleet boxes for complete five point

battle fleets. We were to fight a straight toe-to-toe battle to the death, the classic A Call to Arms scenario.

The glorious Centauri fleet comprised of a pair of Primus battlecruisers, two Centurions and six Vorchans, with plenty of fighters for support. The Narn had a far more mixed fleet, with the iconic G'Quan acting as the flagship, a T'Loth as heavy duty support, a trio of G'Kariths, a pair each of T'Rakks and Rongoths, a Ka'Toc and a Sho'Kar.



Russell

When Nick asked me to play in an ACTA battle report I leapt at the chance. I really like the look

of the Narn ships and they are one of my favourite races from the show and a classic Centauri / Narn conflict was exactly the kind of iconic battle to launch 2nd edition with. I am relatively new to

this game system and with so many different ships it was hard going to see the strengths and weaknesses with my fleet, mind you half the fun is learning this and what better way to do this than on the tabletop.

New Special Traits

The second edition rules include a number of new special traits, one of which is the Lumbering trait that limits the turning abilities of some ships, normally the larger types. Both the Primus and G'Quan class ships suffer from this particular trait, one that can cause a real problem in a fight against more nimble vessels.

Set Up

Nick

After losing the initial dice roll I had to set up my fleet first. With the two Primus ships suffering from the new Lumbering trait this made them very vulnerable if they were not able to keep their targets in their front arcs. With their maneuverability severely hampered I decided that they would be placed on one flank of my force. Depending on the flank they would have plenty of room in which to turn and keep their guns on target if Russell set up on the opposite flank and if Russell went toe to toe then they would quickly charge forward blasting all and sundry in close support of one another.

The two Centurions were on the opposite flank; these would operate in tandem just like the Primus, concentrating their firepower against

a single target to hopefully blow away the opposition. I placed a single Vorchan right on both the far flanks of my fleet with the remaining Vorchans taking up position in the centre. I did not expect many of these smaller ships to survive. None of my fighters were deployed this early on, with the inevitable flurry of E-mines that always accompany any Narn offensive I was keeping these in reserve until they could get in close and deal with the Narn Frazis.

Russell

I could quickly see my G'Quan was vital to my fleet, so with this having the new Lumbering special trait I wanted to place it in a central position within my fleet. This was so I could swing it either way to bring its firepower against either the Primuses or the Centurions, whichever

were giving me the biggest headache. Opposite Nick's Primus I placed my Rongoths, with decent all round firepower these were to deal with the two Vorchans on this flank if they tried to move around my fleet. The T'Loth was placed centrally in my force to support my G'Quan.

The basic battle plan was to use my main ships (G'Kariths and T'Rakks) with the support of the G'Quan and T'Loth to obliterate Nick's Centurions and Vorchans on the right flank. Meanwhile I planned to hold my left flank back and kept his Primus ships busy. Once I had dealt with the right flank, with my fighters and rear guns finishing any survivors, I would turn my entire fleet's firepower on Nick's Primus battlecruisers. A risky plan but I could not afford a frontal assault on the Primuses with Vorchans roaming freely down my flanks and rear.



Turn 1

Nick

Russell won initiative, meaning that I would have to move first and fire second, never a good thing but at least in the first turn the number of weapons the Narn would be able to bring to bear would be less than in later turns, so it was as good a time as any to lose initiative.

Most of my fleet would move forward with all power to Engines, the exceptions being the two leftmost Vorchans of my formation and the one on the far right. The former would hang back a little to react to Russell's moves, whilst the one on the right had to turn to face the enemy. By going at full speed I am able to guarantee an extra round of fire into his ships before most of the Narn Fleet can use their mass volleys of short ranged guns, however the Narn still have a good number of ships that can fire into my fleet.

The firing phase was deadly, with so many ships involved in the game it was almost inevitable (barring awful dice rolls) that there would be plenty of casualties early on, and I was not disappointed. Russell managed to scrape a few hits here and there, with his G'Quan causing the most damage (no surprises there) using its super powered Energy Mines to inflict some damage on my Primus group and their accompanying Vorchan (crippling it), and destroying a second, previously damaged, Vorchan with a concentrated burst from its beam weapon. However it was my Vorchans that stole the show, inflicted masses of damage to the Narn formation. One Rongoth was destroyed by pair of Vorchans firing together whilst another caused 17 damage to one of the G'Kariths, without any criticals! This ship was then finished off by the first of my Centurions, leaving it a burnt out hulk.

Although Russell had managed to inflict a fair bit of damage throughout my fleet I was in a strong position at the end of turn 1. The Vorchans are now much more valuable in a fight, being able to regularly dish out a good amount of damage with their weaponry, making them far more likely to

see battle in any Centauri admiral's fleet, as befits one of the show's iconic ships. He had lost two ships to my one, and we had both inflicted plenty of damage to each others fleets, but at the end of this first turn I felt I was in a good position, despite the Frazi flights now that Russell launched at the end of his turn.



Russell

I won the initiative a good step. However it became quickly apparent that Narn ships needed to get up close and personal to mix it up, so bearing this in mind I powered forward with my ships. I made a bit of an error here as I moved my Rongoths a bit too far forward so his Primuses could take advantage of their beam weapons (I am not used to being able to pre-measure so forgot about this small detail). My Sho' Kar started to move away from my left flank and brought its weaponry to bear against one of the Vorchans. I was being cautious with this and my Ka'Toc because although able to unleash some of the better firepower in my fleet they are also the most fragile ships I have.

My shooting phase was particularly poor and with some bad rolls on my part and Nick's shooting causing masses of damage. I came out of the first turn worse off than I expected. However seeing a cluster of both Nick's Primuses and a Vorchan this was a golden opportunity to unleash my one shot, triple damage E-mines, doing a respectable amount of damage to all three of the ships.

Not a bad start but my plan of using the Rongoths to soak up firepower was not going well and my flank was not going to hold for long with the amount of damage that had been thrown their way. I really needed the initiative next turn so I could fire first with my close range weapons and deal with some of Nick's Vorchans.



The Centurions power forwards



The G'Quan prepares to deploy E-mines

Turn 2

Nick

This turn I won initiative, meaning I would get to move last and shoot first, still a vital part of the game.

The two Primuses began to turn inwards, with two Vorchans supporting them. Although their considerable firepower would not be used fully I was saving them up for later in the game, when the Narn fleet would have been thoroughly weakened (I hoped) by the Centurions and other Vorchans. As we tried to maneuver into superior positions I managed to fail my Crew Quality checks whilst attempting to Concentrate All Firepower! With more than one Vorchan. However I did manage to get one of my Centurions in a perfect position from which it could unleash its full firepower, slipping between a G'Karith and T'Rakk, whilst lining up its front guns upon the G'Quan. For his part Russell lined up his ships, trying to boresight what he could with those ships with boresighted weapons.

The fighters proved little more than a nuisance on this turn, inflicting minimal damage on two of the Vorchans. The Centurion that I had piloted straight into the Narns then opened up, inflicting grievous amounts of damage on the Ka'Toc, G'Quan and one of the T'Rakks, with all of these suffering from critical hits Russell was none too happy. His T'Loth hammered away at a pair of Vorchans, badly damaging one of them before they fired back, whittling down its damage and crew scores (the T'Loth still needs a lot of pounding as it is still as tough as nails!)

The G'Quan managed to score a combined fifteen hits upon the two Centurions, but without a critical in sight Russell was disappointed to say the least, although this was matched by my other Centurion managing to score sixteen criticals on its three targets without a single critical.

Russell's Ka'Toc then made up for this, first of all crippling one Vorchan and then scoring a catastrophic explosion on the Centurion that

left both nearby Frazi fighter flights destroyed and the Vorchan itself reduced to a crippled state and a skeleton crew as a result of the explosion. The first time I had ever managed to cripple one of my own ships and it had to be in a battle report!

The surviving Centurion and T'Loth were then subjected to multiple critical hits, with the Centurion suffering from the dreaded power fluctuations on its weapons and the T'Loth



snuck in amongst his ships. Not nice, as the ship suddenly went from looking almost untouched to being in a very shaky position and it was later finished off by his other, nearby ships. The Ka'Toc did not live long to celebrate its success, being blasted into the vacuum by another Vorchan. The Rongoth then killed the Vorchan already crippled from the first turn before a second one destroyed it with massive overkill. The resulting explosion

suffering from lost speed and an engineering hit that made all criticals unrepairable.

All in all not a great turn, Russell had managed to pretty much nullify one side of my fleet and although he had suffered a lot of damage there were an awful lot of ships sweeping towards my two mainstays - the Primuses. I had to hope that

Ship Explosions

The chance of a ship just exploding with excess damage has been reduced in the second edition of the game, with a new category added. A ship can receive enough damage that it will explode, although not immediately – running adrift for a turn before exploding, meaning that in the normal course of events a confused, crowded fight can suddenly be dispersed in all directions when a ship is about to go up in a big bang.

the surviving Centurion would be able to do something to slow down the Narn charge; else the battle was in danger of getting really nasty for anyone with a fan on their head.

Now both sides launched fighters, although neither the Sentries nor Frazis seemed likely to alter the outcome one way or another (there were just not enough of them in this fight) they still were a nuisance.

Russell

Losing the initiative was a blow here but not the end of the world. Seeing Nick's Centurion come straight in between my ships was a little disconcerting, especially as he would fire first! But at least I would make it pay for its bold action (or so I thought!). I decided that my Ka'Toc would be smoked this turn anyway so I saw a golden opportunity to unleash the fury of its



Signal close action!

considerable firepower. Playing the psychological angle, in response to Nick's Centurion being bold I wanted to show the Centauri the resolve of the Narn Regime. I decided to bring my G'Quan to bear on the Centurion, turning my flank to Nick's Primuses (not too risky as they were out of range but would mean I would be out of position for next turn). I wanted my fighters to soften up the Vorchans so sent them in whilst I swept my Sho'Kar across my battle line to bring its firepower to bear against one of them.

The shooting phase was eventful. My fighters were little more than an annoyance to Nick's Vorchans whilst my Sho'Kar and Ka'Toc got some lucky criticals and really made Nick's Centurions pay for getting so close to the Narn fleet, a salvo from the T'Rakks finishing one of them. Losing

the Ka'Toc was inevitable but it sold itself dearly. Nick's first Primus beamed my T'Loth and hardly scratched the paintwork but the other Primus made up for it, scoring a massive four criticals and making the T'Loth slower and less maneuverable than even my G'Quan!

A great turn overall, I managed to take out one of the Centurions and severely cripple the other with its weapons only working on a 4+. The Vorchans were crippled or damaged with the exception of one (and another two were now space debris). I had survived the onslaught of the Primuses' beams with light damage (even the T'Loth could have been a lot worse off) but I still had to get the initiative next turn as Nick's fleet still packed a powerful punch that could easily turn the game around.

Turn Three

Nick

Again I won initiative, so the best of starts.

A couple of the Vorchans looked out of position and vulnerable so I moved both of these right to the edge of the battle, to hopefully save them for the following turn. Another, crippled, one flew in between the G'Quan and T'Loth. It was doomed anyway and if Russell caused enough damage it might explode and do some damage to his two toughest ships. The badly damaged Centurion performed an All Stop! Special Action whilst the remaining ships lined themselves up for the best shots they could manage. One of the two Sentries engaged a Frazi flight in a dogfight, the other went for a T'Rakk that had moved close enough to be engaged.

Russell lined up his ships well, the Primuses would be facing a barrage, but his Frazis drew first blood. The Vorchan hoping to catch the T'Loth and G'Quan out in its death throes almost managed to do this, a catastrophic explosion on the critical hits table brought it to within one point of damage from exploding. Instead it would run adrift for a turn before going out with a bang, by which time neither the T'Loth nor the G'Quan would be close enough to suffer any damage. Curses!

It was at this point I mentioned to Russell that while I was causing more critical hits he was getting by far the juicier results (all I had really done was kill a few crew (on Narn ships hardly the biggest deal) and dinked his speed a bit, in return I had lost two ships as a result of catastrophic explosions and the fluctuating power had severely hampered my remaining Centurion. There was something of a look of horror on Russell's face as I pointed this out, as he was certain I had now, in his eyes, doomed him to a whole series of nasty criticals.

I picked up the dice for the Centurion which was targeting the G'Quan and Sho'Kar, although a failed check against stealth meant only the G'Quan faced any kind of threat. I then checked against the power fluctuations and found all my guns could fire. Scoring six hits I managed a pair of criticals. First of all a few lost crew in multiple fires. The second was... a catastrophic explosion. Right on cue the G'Quan flagship disintegrated as I rolled a hideous amount of (doubled) damage. Russell was not impressed.

Recovering some of his shock at the loss of his most important vessel one of my Vorchans took a bit of a battering before my first Primus let loose. Targeting an undamaged G'Karith (until this point the only intact ship in the game) it scored an impressive nine hits upon it. Two criticals and another catastrophic explosion later Russell was not a happy bunny. The G'Karith was so much space debris. The fun did not stop there, as the Primus manage to inflict some nasty damage on one of the T'Rakks, knocking out its main front gun.

In the space of two ships I had gone from a weak position to a dominant one. I refrained from stating that I couldn't score a third catastrophic explosion in one turn as I feared for Russell's sanity at this point.

Russell's next ship managed to do next to nothing, merely removing one of my fighter flights before the second Primus opened up and another ship, the previously damaged T'Rakk, disappeared in a hail of cannon fire. The turn continued with the Sho'Kar being blasted by a Vorchan, Russell's one crumb of comfort was the T'Loth managing to reduce the Centurion down to crippled status, but it was not much of a result.

In a single turn the battle had been turned entirely on its head. I had taken out four of Russell's ships in return for the loss of a single Vorchan, and three of those lost ships had not managed to get it a final turn of firing either, compounding Russell's difficulties. I did not mention my lack of criticals again.



The Narn fleet move towards the Primus

Russell

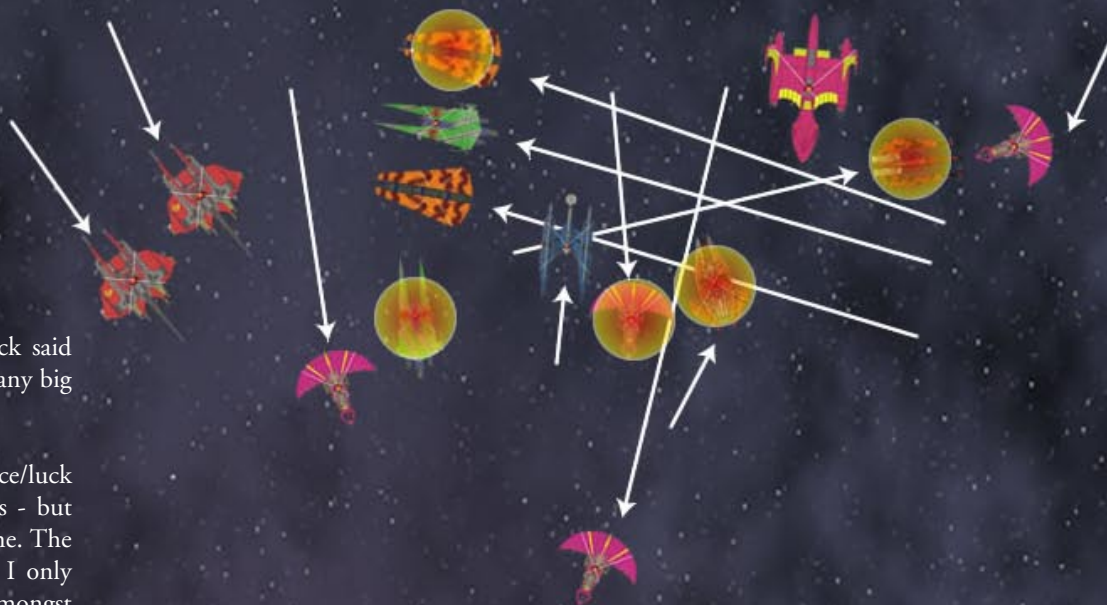
Well this was when the battle turned. It started off really well with the G'Quan successfully coming about and bringing its main guns bearing down on the Primuses. The G'Karith performed an All Stop and the rest of my ships went with All Power to Engines! charging to support the G'Quan in its attack on Nick's right flank. The firepower of the untouched G'Karith would hopefully finish the two crippled Vorchans and energy mine the Primus battlecruisers that were still sitting next to each other. The G'Quann and two T'rakks would bombard the most severely damaged Primus and this would, most probably, destroy it. The Vorchan which meandered in between my G'Quan and T'Loth (Nick hoping for it to take so much damage it would explode in the middle of my ships) would be intercepted with fighters hoping to just tip it over the edge. The Sho'Kar would bear down on the untouched Vorchan coming into the rear of my fleet. Hopefully the Centurion's damaged guns would do little against my almost untouched G'Quan. If all went well I would be in a dominant position at the end of the turn.

Well that was the plan anyway, then Nick said the dreaded phrase "I have not really had any big impressive critical hits this game!"

I am not a big believer in blaming dice/luck in wargaming - we all have our bad days - but this turn could not have been worse for me. The fighters scored a critical on the Vorchan I only wanted to scratch and almost blew up amongst my two best hopes of taking down his Primuses. A lucky escape but that was all the luck I was going to have this turn.

Nick's badly damaged Centurion then managed to fire with all its weapons, thanks to a series of fortunate dice rolls! My G'Quan was battered by this furious bombardment and then suffered a catastrophic explosion critical, destroying it (if I had fired first this would have been a different story, losing the initiative cost me) I then, whilst still in shock at the sudden and unexpected loss of my flagship, made an error. The Vorchan which was going to fire at my G'Quan was now facing a very vulnerable Sho'Kar (luckily its stealth saved it from the Centurion's guns) and although the G'Karith should have claimed two ships and

hurt both Primus battleships I thought it would weather the storm being untouched. However how wrong I was, so I fired the Sho'Kar at the Vorchan and did a lot of damage but not enough. This was to later destroy my Sho'Kar in return, but first Nick fired his Primus as the Vorchan was untargeted by any of my other ships. A critical systems explosion on the G'Karith I needed to survive turned it into a burning hulk. My other shooting was so uneventful it is not even worth mentioning. The Narn fleet had its fight severely knocked out of it and I could not see any way I could recover from this disastrous turn. Damn.



Turn Four

Nick

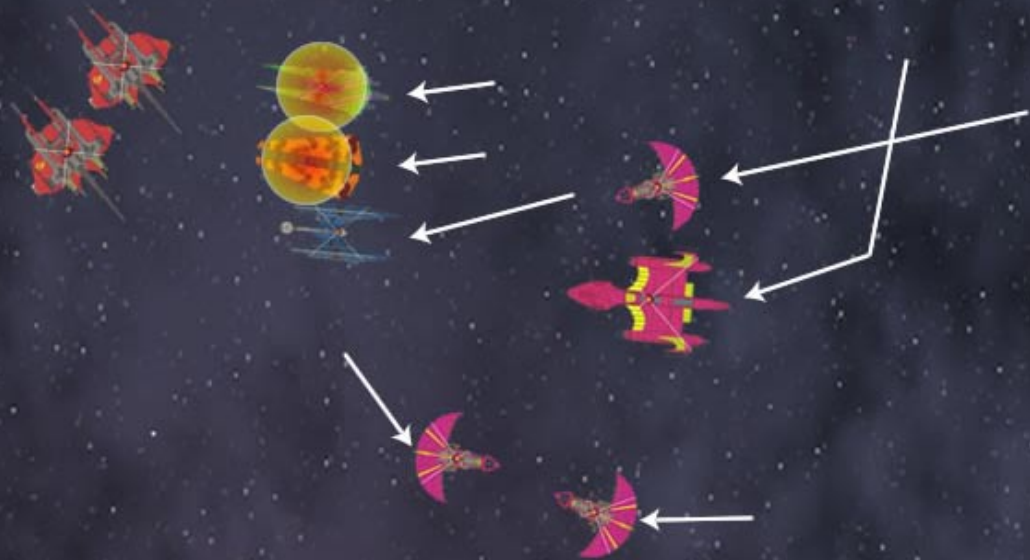
Winning initiative again I was able to get most of my ships into good firing positions. My one error was to let my Centurion meander into the range of my soon-to-be-exploding Vorchan, causing it some light damage. A stupid error, but too little too late.

The Frazis managed to cause some damage to one of the Vorchans before the big ships came into play.

One of the Primus ships opened up, obliterating the last T'Rakk and causing significant damage to both the T'Loth and G'Karith. In return the Narn managed some minor damage to the Primus and another Senti flight was gone. The second Primus then decrewed the G'Karith, leaving it as useless space junk, and inflicting further hurt upon the T'Loth. In return it managed to take out another fighter but do minimal damage to one of the Primuses. The turn ended with the T'Loth taking more of a beating from my other ships.

Russell

I had to hope I got lucky, but with the current trend in this game I could see this was not going to be the case. Losing initiative again led to my losing the rest of my fleet except my lumbering T'Loth (man these are tough!) meaning this was game over. I actually wanted to ram Nick's Primus with my T'Rakk but was a mere one damage point from being crippled and so could not issue the special order. Alas this was going to be another black day for the Narn Regime.



Turn Five

Nick

With only one ship left it was inevitable that Russell would lose initiative again. The badly damaged T'Loth was destroyed in short order, with first one then the other Primus managing to pour on some heavy firepower onto the hapless ship. Victory was mine, and I still had more than half my fleet active (although in a much battered state).

Russell

What can I say? I lost the initiative and was blown out of the stars without my T'Loth's guns causing

much in the way of damage (most of Nick's ships now staying out of range). A painful lesson leaned, not only about how mistakes can get you seriously punished, but also how lucky Nick's dice rolling is. I was warned, but I didn't believe them. Now I know the truth. Oh yes.

Conclusion

Nick

The consensus around the Studio is that I am a lucky so-and-so (or words to that effect), and my continual success in battle reports is nothing to do with skill, proper force selection or tactics. Sadly I suspect that the office is correct in this, as it

looked as though I was going to get a real pasting at one stage and then my ships just tore through the Narn fleet with a succession of criticals and lucky dice rolls.

Using the fleets straight from the boxed sets was novel, and the spruced up Vorchans played their part in a superb victory for the Republic (previously I was not a fan of the flying deathtraps, now they are a great asset to have in a Centauri fleet). The firepower thrown out by my fleet was impressive (if skewed by some consistently lucky dice rolling) and I shall enjoy conquering new worlds with them in the future!

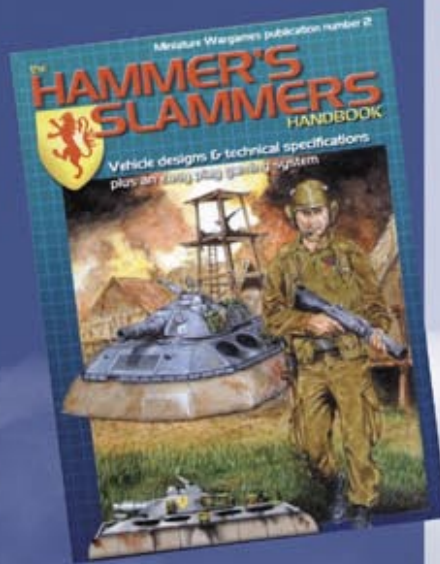
Russell

Well, this was a great game. No, honestly! Although Nick will protest that he is a lucky so-and-so generally he made some very good decisions and utilised his ships better than me (I am new, after all). In hindsight I think my plan was going well until turn 3, but I did not deploy my ships as well as I could have and really made a mistake not firing the G'Karith first on turn 3 as it might have done some damage to Nick's fleet, perhaps even enough to give my beleaguered force some hope of victory. But this game was close and shows how great a battle between two 'out of the box' fleets can work and be balanced. It also shows that the redesigned fleet boxes are really good building blocks for 2nd Edition. Luck, of course, plays a part in any dice-based game but making good decisions to stack the odds in your favour will win you the game in most cases. I like the fact the game really hung in the balance and just when I thought I had victory in my sights it swung right around. Typical Centauri luck!



Final encirclement...

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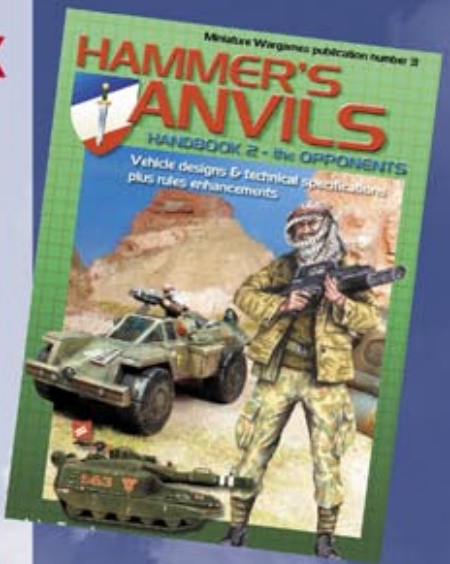
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NEW

THE COMING OF THE FORTH

Continuing Our Look at a New Race for Starship Troopers

Matthew Sprange

Though the Forth do not possess the passion for developing bigger and better weapons of war in the manner of Skinnie Tyrants and humans, they always had the technological ability to construct a highly effective military from scratch, using nothing more than the developments their society had already attained. Walkers built to protect the physically weak Forth became fighting machines, information systems were developed into battle computers and energy sources were harnessed into weapons of frightening potency. There were few technological barriers for the Forth to overcome when they built their new army and fleet.

Weaponry

Though often appearing primitive when mounted on advanced fighting machines, projectile weapons are simple to maintain, cheap to produce, and highly effective on the battlefield, qualities the Forth can readily appreciate. The construction of fighting machines, rather than relatively simple power suits, to equip a force allows the Forth to take advantage of huge ammunition stores. Thus, even relatively low calibre weapons such as the Chermas point defence cannon can be a fearsome obstacle for enemy infantry to approach, ensuring that the fighting machines rarely risk close combat, which remains the one major weakness of the Forth.



Specialised projectile weapons such as the large Cagnitus chaingun and Chanklas sniper cannon fill the mid-range of Forth projectile weapons, the latter incorporating advanced sensor optics that can literally pinpoint an enemy from across the battlefield. The range is rounded off with the large calibre cannon that fulfil the same function as the heavy guns used in the largest armoured vehicles of the Mobile Infantry.

Though these weapons are well understood by SICON Military Intelligence and their counterparts within the Hegemony, the Forth also support their own unique technologies and push the boundaries of other sciences to a great degree. Good examples here are the lasers and blasters often found mounted upon their fighting machines.

While the Skinnies enjoy a certain skill in laser weaponry construction, avoiding many of the pitfalls that SICON has been unable to overcome, the Forth have taken the technology further than anyone else. Using exceptionally high quality crystal focussing lenses, allied to the efficient power sources of the fighting machines, the Forth have created flexible pulse laser weaponry that is capable of functioning over great ranges. The rapid rate of fire of these pulse lasers can be easily combined with the firepower of cheaper chainguns, allowing the Forth to hose entire areas clear of marauding Arachnids or other massed infantry.

Blaster technology was unknown to SICON before the Forth appeared and debate rages hard among its scientists as to the fundamental nature of these weapons. Some are convinced

they are merely logical extensions of laser technology while others opine they use particle-based emissions to create their devastating effects. Regardless, the blaster weapons of the Forth make a mockery of any armour, literally boiling it away in a flash to channel an explosion into the heart of a target. They seem to be limited in power, however, and while a power suit is no defence against such weaponry, thick metal plates seem capable of deflecting the worst of the blast away, almost as if the weapon relies on complete penetration to deliver its effects.

A special mention should be made to the microwave gun used by the Forth. Though only a few of their fighting machines are capable of producing the staggering amount of power it requires to operate, its reputation has spread throughout then Mobile Infantry and rumour has sometimes proved as effective as raw firepower in its case. Focussing intense microwaves into a tight beam, this weapon can literally fry a target from the inside out. When combined with the advanced sensors and battlefield computer systems of the Forth, the microwave gun can also be fired 'blind', targeting an enemy behind a wall or hill, removing the need for the fighting machine to reveal itself. Though greatly limited in range, a tactically adept Forth can ensure he causes great damage to an enemy for little real risk.



Modular Systems

Though less obvious than the interchangeable weapon hardpoints of the fighting machines, the modular system mounts of the Forth can have a great effect on the role a fighting machine has on the battlefield, often with subtle effects an enemy will not spot until it is too late. From Abrade launching pipes to rally beacons and point defence weaponry, these modules form the basis of the immense flexibility the Forth enjoy in battle.

Of particular note are the modules that effect the weaponry mounted upon the fighting machine. Fire control arrays make weapons far more accurate, while air defence modules can turn a slow-firing cannon into a highly accurate anti-aircraft gun. There are even automated targeters that allow the pilot to slave a weapon to an intelligent computer system, automatically engaging the most relevant enemy threat.

For armies not equipped with the Fenirs fighting machine, sub-commander modules exist that effectively grant any fighting machine some of its command and control capability. Fully integrating with the pilot's existing battle computer systems, the sub-commander module relays information between nearby units, allowing them to coordinate their activities and fight far more effectively. This is an especially common module among Fenos fighting machines, as it allows large numbers of them to act independently of a more integrated command structure.

Battle Computers

To any engineer, the cockpit of an average Forth fighting machine is a thing of beauty, almost a work of art. The main viewscreen (the Forth eschew anything so basic as an armoured window) is supplemented with several additional displays, each of which is calibrated to display information relevant to the pilot and, more importantly, in a fashion that is best suited only to him. Though all Forth possess an exceptional ability to absorb information at great speed, they remain individuals and the customisation of data displays forms a great part of their own personal processing speed.

What this means is that the Forth have a situational awareness of their battlefields to a degree few other races can appreciate. Important alerts are fed to the pilot immediately, while more redundant information is either delayed or relegated to auxiliary displays, ensuring that the operation of the fighting machine is unimpaired by a sudden change in circumstances on the battlefield. Whereas many vital seconds may be lost by a Mobile Infantry trooper trying to understand an enemy's actions as a large flanking move is launched, a Forth pilot will almost instantly interpret what is happening, with a high degree of accuracy, and then make an informed decision as to the best course of action.



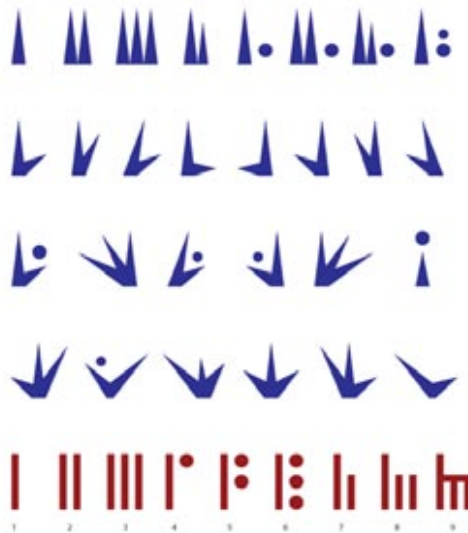
Fighting machines continue to collate and display all relevant information, even when separated from other Forth and denied the ability to share data. This makes the command structure of the Forth extremely resilient, with individual fighting machines still able to make competent decisions even if no direct orders are flowing through the army. It is for this reason that the Forth seem to fight as individuals on the battlefield, joining with other fighting machines to defeat a specific enemy before splitting off to fulfil their own roles once more, rather than in rigid units.

It can be a confusing way to fight, as many in the Mobile Infantry will admit but it is undoubtedly effective. SICON is keen to capture a Forth fighting machine intact so these battle computer systems can be studied, though without the Forth's own cerebral capabilities, it is doubtful that a similar system can be constructed for human use.

Space Travel

The Forth have so far not constructed any ships to match the mighty cruisers and dreadnoughts of the Federation's fleet, but they do have extensive numbers of destroyer-class vessels and other smaller warships. Despite their lower mass, the effect of having a hundred Forth on board a single fighting vessel cannot be underestimated. The reaction times of Forth ships is notably lower than that of the Federation, and they clearly possess a superior understanding of gravitational effects, variable velocities and three dimensional environments that give them a clear tactical edge.

FORTH ALPHABET AND NUMBERS (PRELIMINARY)



The crystalline power systems of the Forth are remarkably efficient, allowing their vessels to be both fast and well-armed, carrying a far greater payload of weaponry into battle than any equivalent Federation warship. These power systems are also relatively safe and where a Federation ship rarely reacts well to concentrated fire to its reactors, the Forth suffer from very few secondary explosions, even after a severe mauling.

There have been few pitched battles in space between the Forth and the Federation, and there remains much that is not understood about their fleet. Typically, the Forth will avoid all contact with a defending fleet, bypassing them through either trickery or stealth in order to land a force on a contested

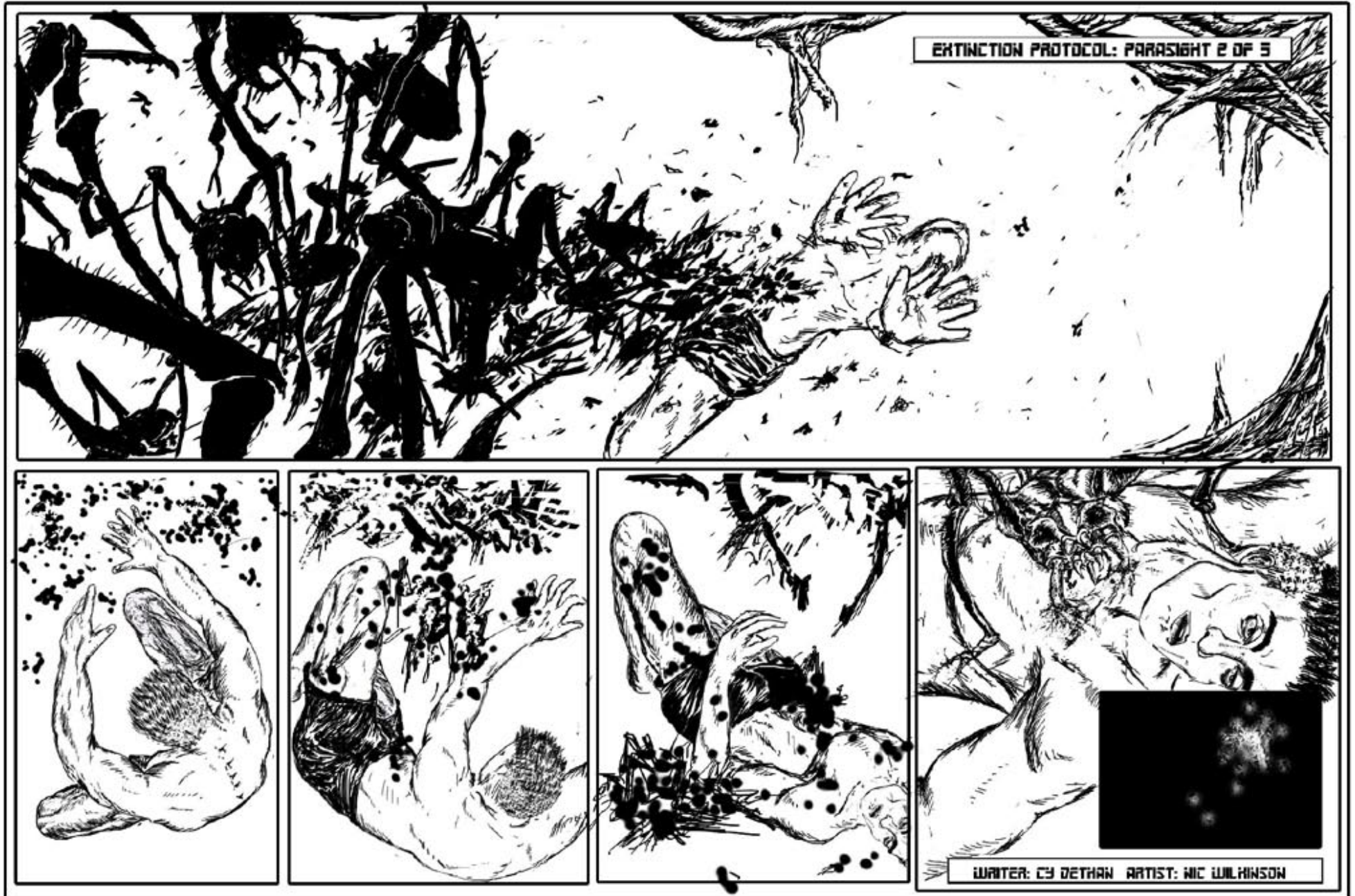
world. The ships will then either hold station to provide direct support, or retreat to the edge of the system where their advanced sensors will spot an intercepting ship long before it can reach them.

Fighters have so far not been witnessed in the fleets of the Forth but their existence is assumed after detailed analysis of various hatches and ports on Forth ships, as well as the military thinking of this race – a space superiority fighter, built along the same lines as a typical fighting machine, with the same powerful weapons and integrated battle computer systems would be a fearsome foe for any TAC Fighter pilot.



Forth Machine Iconography

Extinction Protocol









[I HEARD A LOT OF CRAZY TALK ABOUT YOU WHEN I TRANSFERRED OVER.]

[I HEARD YOU WERE LOOKING TO DIE OUT HERE.]



[DON'T NEED TO GO LOOKING FOR THAT - OR AIN'T YOU HEARD THERE'S A WAR ON?]

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

YOU WERE OFFERED A PATH OUT OF HARM'S WAY AND YOU TURNED IT DOWN.]



[I DIDN'T BUST MY ASS IN BASIC TO SERVE OUT MY TOUR BEHIND A RECRUITMENT DESK.]

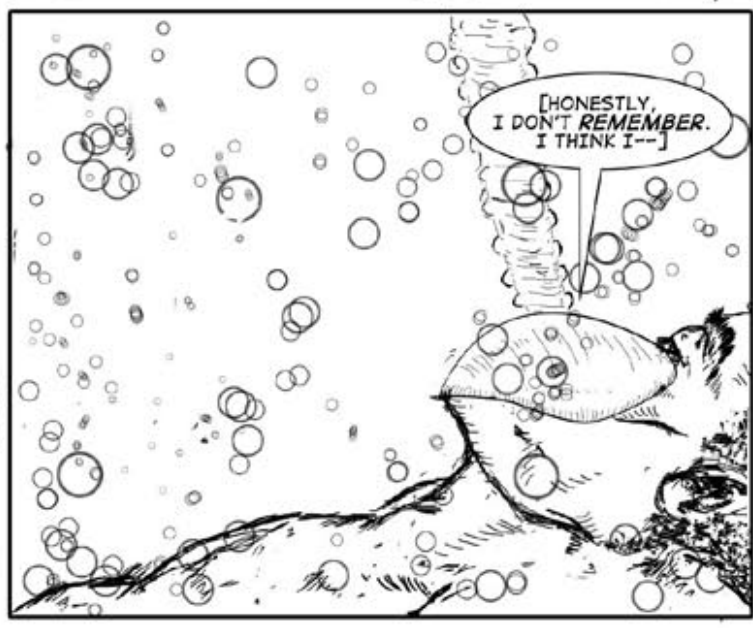
[I SIGNED UP TO DEFEND SOMETHING BIGGER AND MORE IMPORTANT THAN MYSELF.]

HEH - YOU'RE AN IDEALIST.]



[I'M A SOLDIER. AND IF YOU DON'T GET THAT THEN YOU DON'T GET A THING ABOUT ME.]

[YOU, THOUGH. YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE. DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHY YOU SIGNED UP?]

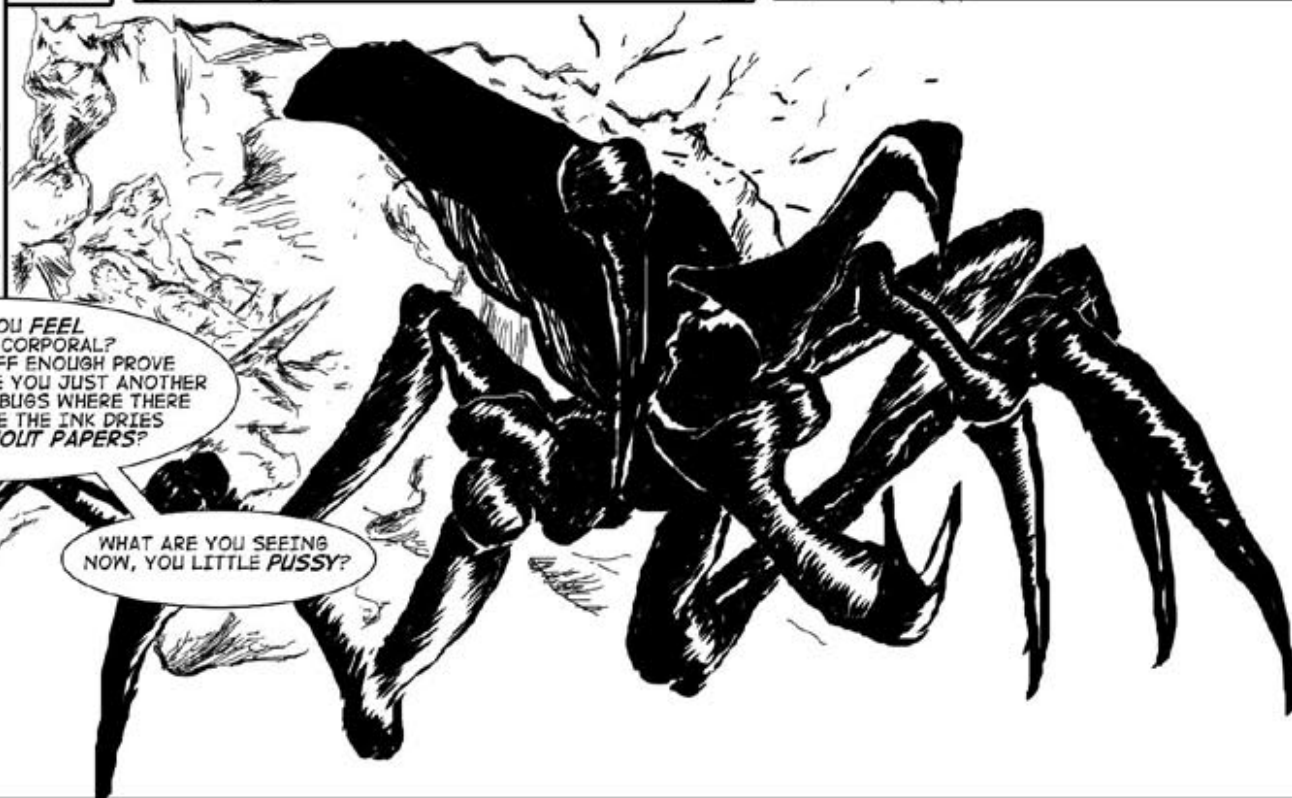
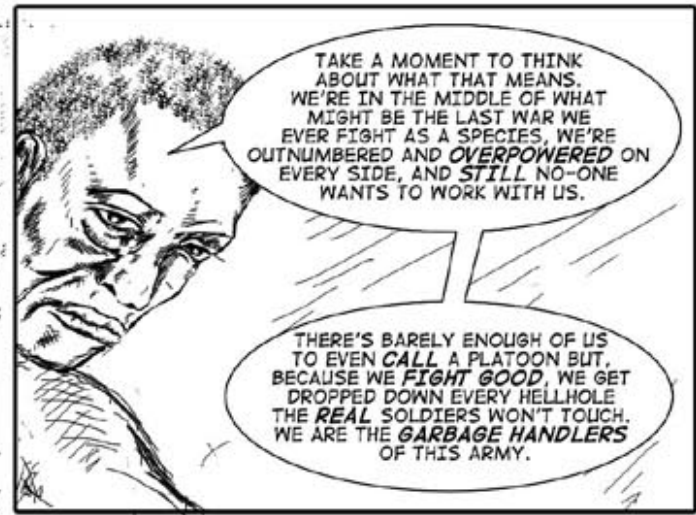


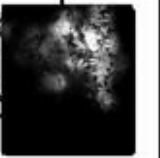
[HONESTLY, I DON'T REMEMBER. I THINK I--]



[SAVE IT, I DON'T CARE]

[YOU KILL BUGS, AND YOU DO IT WELL. MY INTEREST IN YOU BEGINS AND ENDS THERE.]





Battle Fleet Box Sets



Looking at the new range of Fleet Box Sets for A Call to Arms

Matthew Sprange

Ever since we started producing miniatures for A Call to Arms (many moons ago), we have featured fleet box sets – large boxes crammed full of ships, offering a significant discount for dedicated players interested in building their fleets quickly and efficiently.

With the coming of the second edition of the game, we decided to have another look at the way these fleet boxes were put together. Instead of throwing in as many ships as possible to make a bargain, we have instead created ready-to-go fleets that are all of the same size in Fleet Allocation Points. You will find these new box sets now all feature 5 point Battle-level fleets, with some extra fighters to give them support (the Vorlons and Shadows have 5 point War-level fleets, for obvious reasons!).

Each box set is still just \$100/£50, containing anything from \$144 to \$174 worth of ships inside – obviously a real bargain for a budding admiral looking to dominate the stars!

The Earth Alliance

As the Earth Alliance has been split into three separate fleets based on the era they represent (The Early Years, The Third Age, and Crusade Era), so too does Earth get three different box sets. The Early Years are dominated by the older class hulls, such as the Orestes, Nova and Sagittarius, supported by Tiger Starfuries, while the Third Age features the iconic ships we have all grown to love from Babylon 5 – Aurora Starfuries, Hyperions and Omegas. Players looking for the very latest in Earthside R&D will move to the Crusade Era box set, with advanced hulls such as the Apollo, Delphi and Marathon.

Of course, Earth Alliance players tend to dip in and out of their three fleet lists as the mood takes them, and you will find there is plenty of crossover between the box sets. Anyone picking up the Third Age box set will find they have a solid core of ships that can easily be used in the Early Years of Crusade Era lists, and anyone picking up all three will have a powerful fleet on their hands indeed, able to tackle any enemy from any age!

Earth Alliance Early Years

8 Flights of Tiger Starfuries
2 Nova Dreadnoughts
2 Orestes Battleships
1 Sagittarius Cruiser
2 Hyperion Heavy Cruisers
2 Artemis Heavy Frigates

Retail value \$162 – save \$62!

Earth Alliance Third Age

8 Flights of Starfuries
8 Flights of Thunderbolts
2 Omega Destroyers
2 Hyperion Heavy Cruisers
3 Olympus Corvettes
2 Artemis Heavy Frigates
1 Oracle Scout

Retail value \$160 – save \$60!

Earth Alliance Crusade Era

8 Flights of Starfuries
 8 Flights of Thunderbolts
 1 Apollo Bombardment Cruiser
 3 Chronos Attack Frigates
 2 Marathon Advanced Cruisers
 1 Hyperion Heavy Cruiser
 1 Delphi Advanced Scout

Retail value \$160 – save \$60!

Centauri Republic

2 Primus battlecruisers
 2 Centurion attack cruisers
 6 Vorchan warships
 8 Flights of Sentri fighters

Retail value \$168 – save \$68!

Narn Regime

1 G'Quan
 1 T'Loth
 2 Rongoth
 1 Sho'Kar
 1 Ka'Toc
 2 T'Rakk
 3 G'Karith
 8 Flights of Frazi

Retail value \$168 – save \$68!

Advanced Technologies

Building a Battle level fleet for the Minbari while still delivering a good deal on the miniatures themselves was actually something of a chore! After all, their ships tend to be one Priority Level higher than everyone else, so that generally means fewer ships on the table. Resisting the impulse to make them a War level fleet, we have centred the fleet around a Tinashi, a good, solid Battle level choice. It is ably supported by four Tigaras, two Leshath (don't underestimate the usefulness of these under the new Stealth rules), and three Torothas, with plenty of fighters in support.

If Rangers are more your thing, the ISA box set contains more White Stars than you can shake a dead Narn at, two high-tech White Star Gunships and three supporting Blue Stars, with a mix of Starfuries, Nials and White Star Fighters. Just add a Victory, and this fleet will be able to face pretty much anything!

Minbari Federation

1 Tinashi
 4 Tigara
 2 Leshath
 3 Torotha
 12 Flights of Nials
 4 Flights of Flyers

Retail value \$150 – save \$50!

The Old Enemies

The Narn and Centauri will be facing battles in space for many years to come, and players who have adopted these two rivals will find the fleet box sets for both complement the other very nicely. Both contain the iconic G'Quan and Primus, but while the Centauri have a smaller number of real 'bruiser' ships, capable of hurling out a massive amount of firepower (and we recommend the six Vorchans are placed into two separate squadrons for wide flanking manoeuvres), the Narn have spread their resources further to include a greater number of ships, though with smaller hulls.

This should not worry the Narn too much, as their vessels are exceptionally resilient in the new edition of the rules, and a battle between the two fleets will likely be decided by who can deliver a knock out blow quickest.

If you prefer to walk on the dark side, consider the Drakh box set – a raider heavy force with enough destroyers and light cruisers to smash enemy battleships aside within minutes.

The Interstellar Alliance

2 White Star Gunships
4 White Stars
3 Blue Stars
4 Flights of Starfuries
8 Flights of White Star Fighters
4 Flights of Nials

Retail value \$144 – save \$44!

Drakh (5 Points Battle)

3 Light Cruisers
3 Fast Destroyers
6 Light Raiders
3 Heavy Raiders

Retail value \$168 – save \$68!

The (Former) League

The Sky Full of Stars supplement de-provincialised the League, allowing players to field separate but effective fleets for each race. The second edition of the rules has taken this further, with brand new fleets and ships for the League, all available for individual races.

The old favourites of the Abbai, Drazi, Brakiri and Vree are still there, all with revamped fleet box sets that will make them competitive with any of the others featured here. We have also added the pak'mara, a race that has become very popular since its first release earlier this year. It is the only Battle-level box set to feature a War-level ship (the Pshul'Shi) and, when combined with the Hurr Gunship, this makes for an extremely powerful fleet.

Abbai Matriarchy

2 Lakara
4 Bimith
3 Shyarie
3 Tiraca
8 Flights of Kotha

Retail value \$174 – save \$74!

Drakh (5 Points Battle)

3 Light Cruisers
3 Fast Destroyers
6 Light Raiders
3 Heavy Raiders

Retail value \$168 – save \$68!

Brakiri Syndicracy

2 Avioki
3 Halik
1 Brokados
3 Ikorta
12 Flights of Falkosi

Retail value \$150 – save \$50!

Drazi Freehold

1 Stormfalcon
2 Firehawks
3 Warbirds
6 Sunhawks
8 Flights of Star Snakes

Retail value \$174 – save \$74!

Old Races and Dead Races

The pak'ma'ra

- 1 Pshul'Shi
- 1 Hurr Gunship
- 2 Urik-Hal
- 3 Warbirds
- 16 Flights of Porfatis

Retail value \$148 – save \$48!

Vree Conglomerate

- 4 Xill
- 3 Xorr
- 3 Vaarl
- 6 Xaar
- 8 Flights of Tzymm

Retail value \$170 – save \$70!

The Dilgar make a triumphant return in second edition, with plenty of new hull variants to give their fans more scope on the battlefield. The box set features a wide range of heavy assault ships, such as the Tikrit and Wahant, to the fast and agile vessels, including Ochlavitas and Targraths.

Those looking for the ultimate power, however, will be drawn to the Vorlons and Shadows. With each box featuring a five point War-level fleet, other races will need to start ganging up or bringing reinforcements to take these two on. In fact, with the Shadows having the option to make their Shadow Ships Ancient, and thus Armageddon level, they easily have the most powerful fleet in the range!

Dilgar Imperium

- 8 Flights of Thorun Dartfighters
- 1 Tikrit Heavy Cruiser
- 1 Wahant Heavy Assault Ship
- 2 Omelos Light Cruisers
- 2 Targrath Strike Cruisers
- 2 Ochlavita Destroyers
- 1 Rohric Assault Ship

Retail value \$174 – save \$74!

The Vorlons

- 2 Light Cruisers
- 4 Destroyers
- 6 Transports
- 8 Flights of Fighters

Retail value \$148 – save \$48!

The Shadows

- 3 Shadow Ships
- 6 Shadow Scouts
- 16 Flights of Fighters

Retail value \$162 – save \$62!

UNOFFICIAL

DEATH IN THE CURSED EARTH



TAKE YOUR GAMES OUTSIDE THE MEGA-CITY : PART THREE

Gary Berner

Continued from S&P Wargamer 45...

Mutation rules for use in your Cursed Earth games

Mutations

The following rules are designed to replace those within the Gangs of Mega-City One rulebook when running games in the Cursed Earth.

Some gang leaders and members begin the game with one or more mutations. Other characters may be mutated by exposure to radiation within the Cursed Earth.

Mutant characters (including Muties, Mutant Psykers, and Mutant Overlords) begin the game with D6 mutations. In addition to this, any gang member taking part in a Cursed Earth scenario should roll a 2D at the beginning of the scenario - on the roll of 12 they have manifested a random mutation from the tables below.

Random Mutations

Roll on the following table to determine the nature of a new mutation (note that gang members that begin with mutations may have special rules determining the type of mutation they begin with - see the gang member's description for details)

2D	Mutation Type
3-6	Physical Deformity
7-9	Physical Enhancement
10-12	Cosmetic Mutation
15-16	Special Ability
17-18	Psychic Ability

Players are encouraged to model mutations on their gang members.

Physical Deformities

These mutations create a negative disabling effect for the mutant. Each may be taken only once.

1D	Mutation
1	<p>Missing Eye The mutant has only a single eye (which may well be in the centre of its head, giving a cyclopean look, or one eye may simply just be missing). -1 Ag.</p>
2	<p>Missing Arm One arm is now missing - treat as a “blown apart” injury to the arm (see p25 of the rulebook).</p>
3	<p>Missing Leg One leg is now missing - treat as a “blown apart” injury to the arm (see p25 of the rulebook).</p>
4	<p>Missing Internal Organs Although not externally obvious, the mutants is missing one or more internal organs. This is either something non-essential such as a single lung or kidney, or the mutant’s internal systems are altered to compensate. However, the strain of coping with the missing organ(s) causes -1 CCD.</p>
5	<p>Relocated Parts One or more body parts are protruding from somewhere other than they really ought to. The mutant suffers -1 Ag due to the awkwardness of this.</p>
6	<p>Missing Head The mutant’s head is no longer present. Its brain has luckily been relocated inside the body, but the lack of sensory organs means this gang member is effectively retired from combat permanently.</p>

Physical Enhancements

These mutations grant positive physical abilities. These may be taken multiple times, stacking their effects.

1D	Mutation
1	<p>Superior Strength The strength of this mutant allows it to pound on opponents, with an extra +1CCD.</p>
2	<p>Superior Agility The mutant gains +1Ag due to its uncanny dexterity.</p>
3	<p>Tough Skin The skin of this mutant is rock-hard, adding 1 Res and 1 Hts.</p>
4	<p>Additional Arm The mutant gains an extra arm, allowing it to wield an additional close combat weapon - these weapons follow the same rules as fighting with two weapons (rulebook p26) with each additional weapon granting an extra parry and an extra close combat die, as well as stacking -1 penaltys to CC.</p>
5	<p>Long Legs The mutant’s legs have grown longer, granting +1” to Spd.</p>
6	<p>Sharp Protrusions The mutant has gained the use of sharp protruding parts somewhere on its body. These could take the form of spikes over their entire body, claws on their hands, or blades poking out of their shoulders. Whatever their physical form, these count as a permanent knife carried by the mutant.</p>

Cosmetic Mutations

Although these give no change in game terms, these have been included for purposes of adding character and uniqueness to gang members.

1D	Mutation
1	Long Neck The mutant's neck has grown extraordinarily long.
2	Colored Skin This mutant's skin has changed colour - your opponent gets to choose the shade!
3	Extra-pokey-bits A number of protruberances have appeared in odd locations over your gang member.
4	Faceless This mutant has no face. It can still see, hear, and smell (assuming they could before the change, anyway) as normal, but its face has been replaced by a featureless blob.
5	Enlarged Feature The gang member's nose, ears, or mouth (your choice) is now about ten times normal size.
6	Opponents Revenge Your opponent may name any one cosmetic change of their choice for your gang member. This can be absolutely anything they wish, but grants no special ability or penalty (for example - they could give your character wings, but it doesnt allow them to fly).



Special Abilities

These abilities have no specific physical manifestation - although you are free to choose one if you want!

1D	Mutation
1	Force Field This mutant has a force field they may turn on and off at will. The force field grants +3 resilience, but prevents the mutant from taking shoot actions. A ready action must be used to turn the force field on or off.
2	Flight The mutant may fly - treat it as having a powerboard (see Skysurfer rules on P79 of the rulebook)
3	Energy Beams This gang member may fire energy beams (probably from their hands, but it's up to you...) - count as being permanently equipped with a laser pistol.
4	Teleporter This mutant may teleport once per fight. To use this ability, it must take a ready action, and roll D6 - on the roll of 1-5 you may move it anywhere you wish on the table. On the roll of a 6, the teleport has failed and your opponent may move it anywhere they wish instead.
5	Intangibility By taking a ready action, the mutant may become intangible, allowing it to ignore the effects of all terrain and become immune to all kinds of damage other than psychic attacks. In addition, however, it is unable to make any attacks of any kind themselves. It may reverse this and return to normal by taking another ready action.
6	Loss of Ability Your opponent may choose to remove any one mutation of their choice from your gang member.

Psychic Abilities

These abilities are linked specifically to the mind. All psychic powers have a range (where appropriate) of 15" and require a ready action to use.

2D Mutation

2-4 Daze

See the psi-judge entry on P83 of the rulebook for details on this ability.

5-6 Demoralize

See the psi-judge entry on P83 of the rulebook for details on this ability.

7-8 Psi-lash

See the psi-judge entry on P83 of the rulebook for details on this ability.

9-10 Psi-shield

This mutant is resistant to the psychic abilities of others - no mutant psychic ability or psi-judge ability may affect this gang member.

11-12 Illusion

The gang member is able to create illusions to scare their opponents. This ability allows it to choose one target within range, and cause them to make an immediate WtF check. If this is failed, the model will lose its next action, spending it quaking in fear.

13-14 Mind Control

The gang member takes control of any gang member on the opposing side (within range), and may make them perform one single action. However, there is a chance of psychic backlash - the mutant must make a WtF check or they take one 1D+3 damage.

15-16 Danger Sense

This gang member is extremely aware of anything that may threaten its life, and always counts as being in light cover.

17-18 Precognition

While this ability grants no specific bonuses to the mutant, it allows it to foresee the actions of the other side before the fight, and warn the gang appropriately - the mutants gang gains one free turn after both sides have set up. If both sides have a mutant with this ability, neither gains an extra turn.



OI, MONGOOSE, WHERE'S ME TROOPERS EVO?

A Look at the Trials and tribulations of Producing a new Miniatures Game

Matthew Sprange

It has been over a year in the making, has involved nearly every Mongoose Publishing employee to one degree or another, and seen the investment of a bob or two, as they say. A quick glance at our forums will reveal gamers salivating at the thought of Starship Troopers Evolution, eager for a glimpse of the latest preview, and a sign in the heavens that the game's release is imminent.

So, why isn't it here yet?

There are three basic types of games that Mongoose Publishing produces. Book-based games (mainly of the roleplaying variety, though games such as Victory at Sea fall into this category too) are something we have been doing for over six years now, and we have a very well tried and tested system involving writers, editors, marketing and, with our new printing facility, production and shipping. We have the staff to cope with the six or seven new releases we produce every month and from an initial idea, it is a fairly smooth train to a final book.

We also produce metal miniatures, such as those used with our Babylon 5: A Call to Arms game. Again, this is something we have had running for

a few years now, and with a sculptor based in our office and the production facility based in Ohio, things again run smoothly (the supply problems of the past, caused simply by too high a demand from retailers, has been fixed by a switch in priorities to our own mail order customers).

Then there is the third kind of game, heralded earlier this year with Battlefield Evolution – the pre-painted miniatures game. This is completely new territory for us and, as usual when approaching a new project, we tried something a little smaller and less grand before embarking on the main game (in this case, Battlefield Evolution was the pioneering game, while Starship Troopers was held back to ensure everything would be ready when we commenced with it). This approach is something we have done since we started in business;

- A Call to Arms was to be our first metal miniatures game, so we pioneered it with Mighty Armies, ensuring we knew how to produce metal miniatures before going into full production on the (much) larger game.

- The Babylon 5 RPG was to be our first all colour hardback, so we proceeded it with Armageddon 2089.
- Starship Troopers was to be our first game using plastics, so we produced Gangs of Mega-City One beforehand.

And so on – you can see the logical progression we have followed in the past, and Battlefield Evolution was to lead Starship Troopers Evolution.





LEARNING THE LESSONS

As soon as we released *Battlefield Evolution*, we watched forums (on several web sites) like hawks and pricked up our ears whenever gamers, retailers or distributors said anything about the game. All comments were compiled and studied. What were we doing right? What were we doing wrong? How could we take the lessons from *Battlefield Evolution* and, not only improve that line, but also apply them to *Starship Troopers*?

It quickly became apparent that we had got some things very right – hitting the nail on the head, so to speak. A non-collectible pre-painted miniatures game was just the ticket for many gamers. We had also achieved a great deal with the rules system, in both terms of playability and clarity. That is not to say that there was no one who did not fall in love with the rules immediately, but for the majority of players, we had got things right.

We also listened to the criticisms. The first was the quality of both painting and sculpting, and this is something we turned our immediate attention to. From the instigation of waves 2 and 3, such as with the Fedayeen Squad, or the SAS Section,

we boosted the level of detail to a level far higher than the initial wave 1 releases. Concerns were also raised over costs. And, of course, the fact that there were no new releases at the start of every month, as we had originally intended.

It was vital that we attended to these three points before *Starship Troopers Evolution* could go ahead.

In terms of the quality of the models, we wanted to push the boat out further with *Starship Troopers* and the factory we use was more than ready to respond. We have been working with them for nearly a year now, and the masters for the first wave of *Starship Troopers* models have had constant tweaks and touches. We are about 98% of the way there on the final designs and approvals.

...for the majority of players, we had got things right

some of the *Starship Troopers* models (though even some older designs, such as the Tanker Bug, have been completely reworked for the new game – the new Tanker looks nothing like the previous one!). However, the bottom line is, well, the bottom line – we have to charge based on what something costs us to produce. And we are still not completely comfortable with that side of things.

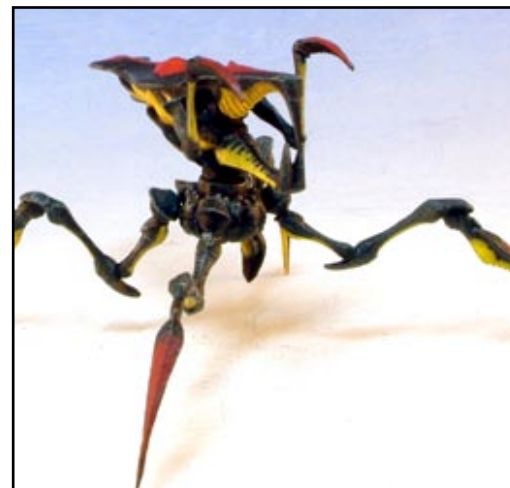
There are various ways we can boost the value to you, the gamer, of course. Including 'spare' Warrior Bugs in the box sets of the Plasma Bug, for example, was something that was raised at one of our recent tournaments. It was such a good idea, that we implemented it immediately! However, the core costs of mould, production and packaging still need to be attacked. We are currently in discussions with various factories

Costs were a more difficult area to handle. We had some advantages, such as existing designs for

with new methods of injection moulding - at the moment, for example, we are more or less locked into having four different poses in an infantry box set, with eight models total per box (there are some exceptions, but this comes down to how the moulds work).

Well, that is fine for the Mobile Infantry, but what about the Skinnies? Or the US Marine Corps, for that matter. . . At the moment, infantry boxes are among the least flexible and most expensive sets to put together – we very much need that to change before we can off you the same range of models in a pre-painted game as you would expect in a non-pre-painted game. Imagine for a moment. A Mobile Infantry box set with all the weapon options included. A Skinny infantry box set with not just eight models, but twelve, or sixteen. At the moment, this is not possible without setting the price point at \$50 or so per squad which is, clearly, too much. However, the best brains in Mongoose are on the case!

That leaves us with the problem of a regular release schedule. It is an oddity in our hobby that people want, nay, demand (!) something new for their game every month – two months is acceptable, but pushing it. Any longer than





that, and the Doomsayers will start to proclaim that the sky has fallen and the game is now dead! This doesn't happen with computer games (where sliding release schedules are expected), nor with radio controlled planes (another passion of mine). Just miniatures games (roleplaying games have a similar cycle, but gamers there tend to be a little more sanguine about waiting three months or so for their next fix).

At the moment, it is quite clear to us that our current factory is not capable of

a fast enough turnaround to release a new wave of box sets every month, which is the optimum cycle for this kind of game. Our experience with Battlefield Evolution and the previous Starship Troopers game has shown us that even the eight box sets planned for the first wave simply won't be enough for people to consider it 'complete'.

We could make the game collectible - but we feel this would be a disservice to our fans...

There are ways around this, of course. We could reduce the number of armies – but many of you have already told us that two or three armies is just not enough, as with the original Starship Troopers (and we can also compare this to A Call to Arms, which has many, many fleets to choose from). We could make the game collectible – but

we feel this would be a disservice to our fans, and it would certainly change the fundamental nature of the game itself, moving it away from the full-on battle-level game it currently is. Or we can talk to other factories, to spread the load. Which is what we are doing. This, however, takes time.

AND BATTLEFIELD EVOLUTION

These issues also affect Battlefield Evolution. We already have an existing range for this game, but we have never, ever said something is 'good enough'. If we can achieve a better game and better range of miniatures in Starship Troopers Evolution, then we will not permit Battlefield Evolution to become its red-headed stepchild (as it were). Any improvements in one game will be met with the other. We have thus decided that the new wave of Battlefield Evolution models (including the much-awaited helicopters) will also be put into a holding pattern until the production issues have been resolved properly.

This decision was a difficult one to make for a game that has already been released, but it was made easier by one other factor. Battlefield Evolution has attracted a great deal of attention, and not just within the hobby games market. We were quietly tapped on the shoulder a while ago by a company far, far larger than us. They said 'we really like what you are doing – we think we have just the right project for you. . .'

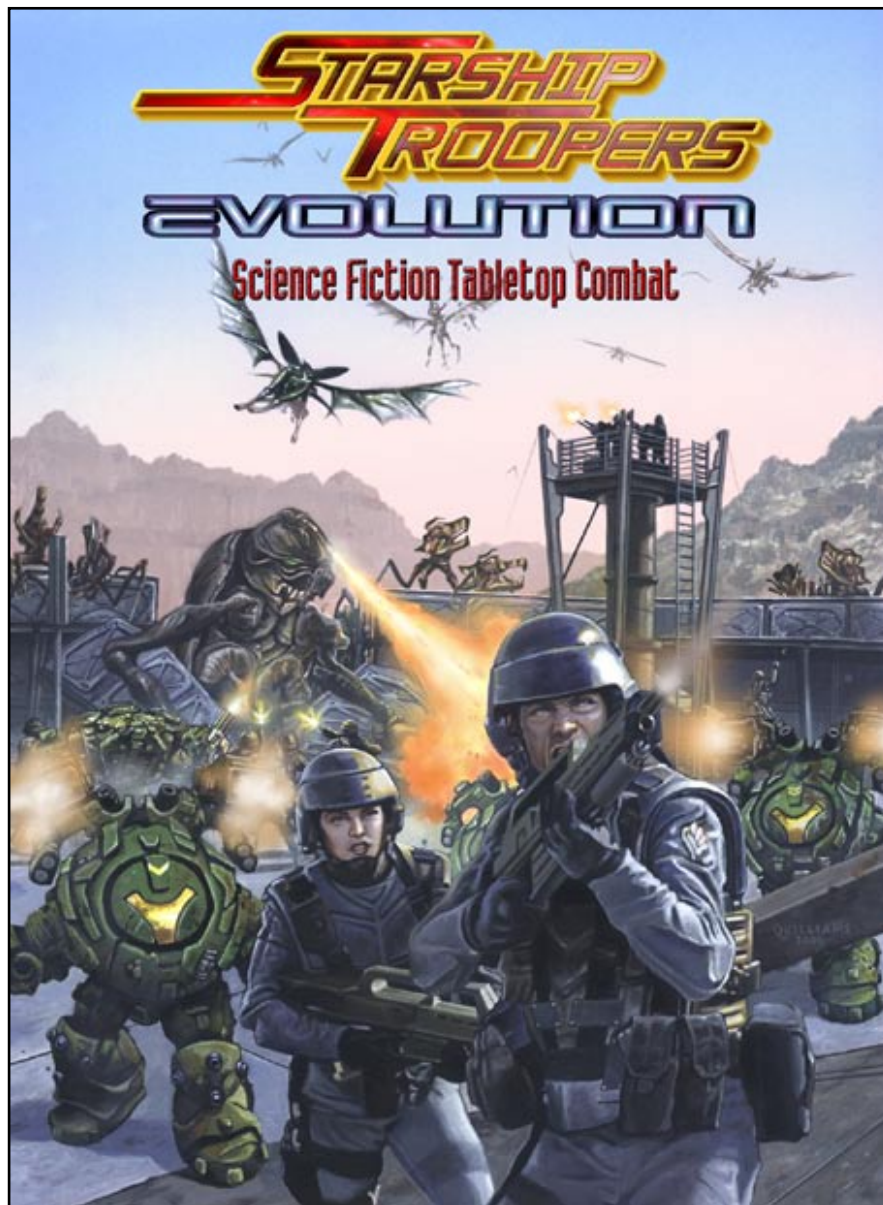
There are many, many details that have to be worked out and they will take a little time, as is the way of these things. However, this will turn Battlefield Evolution from a good game into a fantastic game.

SO . . . WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Well, your courteous and efficient Mongoose staff are working twenty four hours a day (seriously – Mongoose is a company where the sun never sets!) to bring everything up to speed on both games. We will absolutely not release Starship Troopers Evolution as a half-measure, and not one box set will land on a shelf unless we judge it to be the very best we are capable of achieving. That is our pledge to you and if it means waiting a while longer for it to materialise, that is exactly what we will do.

In the meantime, however, keep your eyes peeled on Signs & Portents. Players of Battlefield Evolution will have a regular feature in the magazine that will enable them to use existing modern day models from other companies in their games. This will allow you to vastly expand your armies and gain experience until we are ready to release models that reflect warfare a decade or two in the future. For fans of Starship Troopers, we have compiled a (huge!) listing that will enable you to convert the original army lists to the Evolution rules. We are just looking at how to present them, as they are rather large, but it will mean your existing collections will be ready to go, instantly useable with the new rules set. For free!

As the saying goes, good things come to those who wait. The patience you invest in now will be worth it. . .





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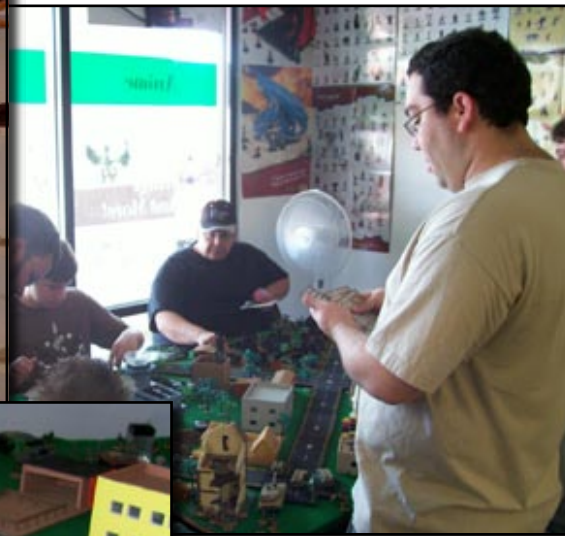
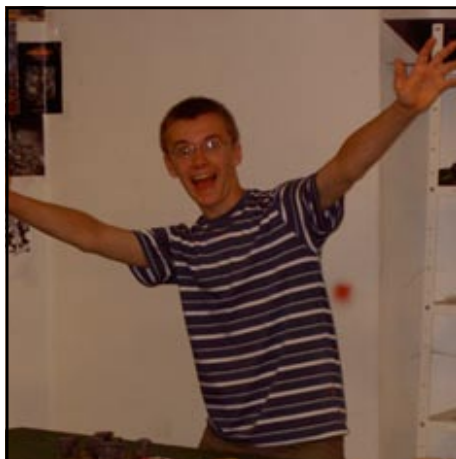
THE MONGOOSE INFANTRY

Ian Barstow, MI Coordinator

Well, it's been quite a month for the MI! Not only is membership back on the increase but we now have our brand new online database up and running - much kudos to my good friend Kenny Robb for the large amount of sterling service he's put in on this. Without him this quite literally would not have been possible.

I've decided this month to show you guys a few photos from two different parts of the world to highlight the good work being done at the moment. On this page are photos of some very enthusiastic MI from Poland and the USA, showing a variety of happy MI, especially the Polish guys, it seems!

On the next page is a little background on our new mail order guy, Russell Veal...



THE PACK-MAN

Those of you in the know will be aware that, with the massive upheavals at Mongoose Towers involving the installation of a complete print works, things have been a bit hectic to say the least! One of the areas that has unfortunately suffered has been Mail Order. Primarily this started when the 'new' mail order guy, Ed Russell, went and got himself promoted to managing the print shop - see, career opportunities in Mongoose really are exciting and rapid! This left a short-term hole which we filled using current staffers from the Studio, but that really was just a filler. What we needed was a new mail order guy, of course.

It just so happened that a friend of a friend already working in the gaming industry and with experience of just what we were looking for was looking to change jobs...enter Russell Veal! Having worked in the gaming industry already at Games Workshop, Russell knew just what was needed and on his arrival he blew through the mail order department like the mistral itself, suggesting all sorts of excellent ideas to make the whole thing more efficient.

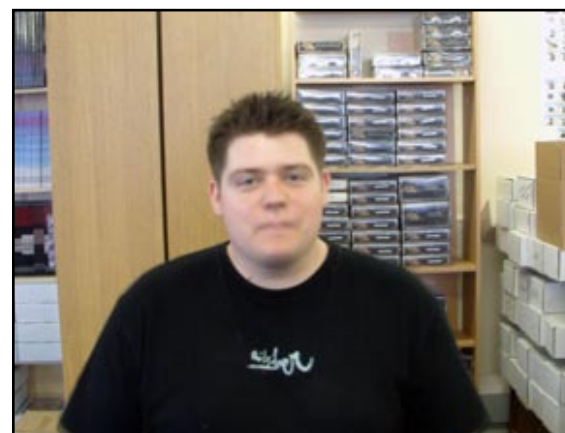
Needless to say, we thought this was a good thing. Russell also understands as a gamer that every order is high priority and he is very keen to translate that feeling into how our mail order system works. We want you to feel like your order IS special, and it really is!

So, because mail order is by nature an anonymous business we decided you ought to take a good look at the man behind your orders...well, at least you know who to chase at open days now at any rate!

If you do have any queries about mail order you can always reach out to Russell at rveal@mongoosepublishing.com. He'll be glad to help.



Russell hard at work. For the eagle-eyed that's new editor Charlie Law's head behind those boxes - Russell isn't above stealing help when he needs it!



Incredibly short or kneeling down...you decide.

Monty's Offer of the Month

GENCON GIVEAWAY

Gencon! Four days of gaming and gaming-related activity at the end of August, happening simultaneously in the US and the UK. We at Mongoose know that the temptation to remortgage your house and spend all your money on roleplaying goodies is strong, but we aim to help out: simply print this voucher and bring it along to our stand at GenCon Indy or GenCon UK and get 10% off everything!



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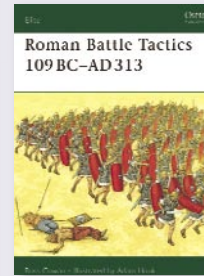
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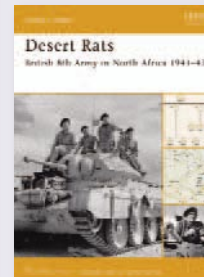
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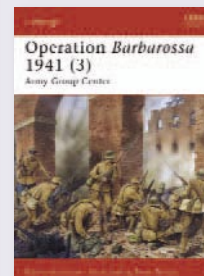
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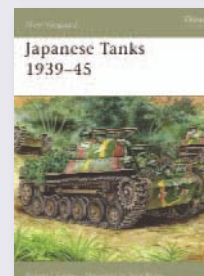
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