

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

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"Ho ho ho..."

## *Tactical Manual: Carriers*

Getting the most out of carriers in ACTA 2E.

## *Minority (Battle) Report*

Find out what the French and Italian navies have to offer.

## *Assault On Santa's Grotto*

Battlefield Evolution like you've never seen it before.

Plus... Victory at Sea scenario, ACTA 2E scenario, Extinction Protocol and much, much more!



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Well, it's Crimbo time again and as we speak I'm in the process of putting together the 'Pub Quiz' which will precede the Christmas Eatathon which is our yearly works do.

Trying to come up with interesting rounds isn't as easy as I was expecting. As quiz master I want to be involved and not just passing round paperwork, so I'm thinking things like the Who Am I Now round, where I do one of my brilliant impressions. I'm also thinking about a charades round, although last time I put my back out so that could be a bit chancey.

Yes, in short, as Matthew does his State of the Mongoose 'speech' (see Eye On Mongoose this issue) we are in a positive and jovial mood. Things are going well and the future is as exciting as ever. No doubt we'll have plenty of fresh challenges too, but we have a great team of people here to deal with such things.

I hope all of you have a jolly nice festive season, and that all your turkeys are free of that nasty bird flu thingy.

Best wishes from all of us at Mongoose.

Ian

## DANCING DRYAD

Mongoose Publishing would like to point out that we have absolutely no connection with the company Dancing Dryad. The former proprietor of the company, Matt Thomason, has been assistant editor of this magazine in a freelance capacity, however this is his last issue in that role. Matt Thomason has never been a direct employee of Mongoose Publishing and we would just like to make that clear at this time.

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**Minority (Battle) Report**

Long time rivals Chris and Nick duke it out with new fleets from Order of Battle!



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**Tactical Manual: Carriers**

This month, Alan Oliver looks at the role of the Carrier, and how to use them more efficiently.

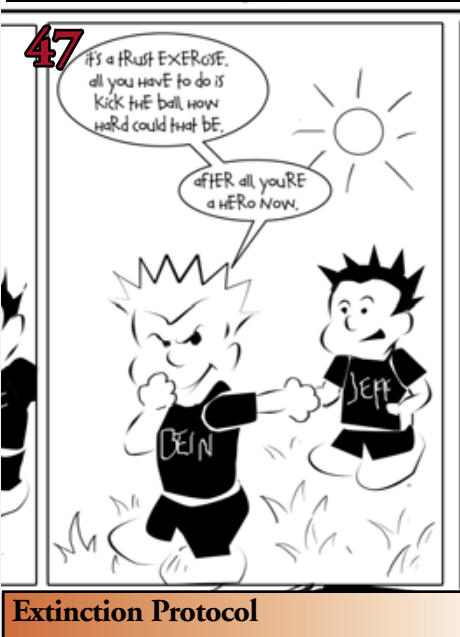


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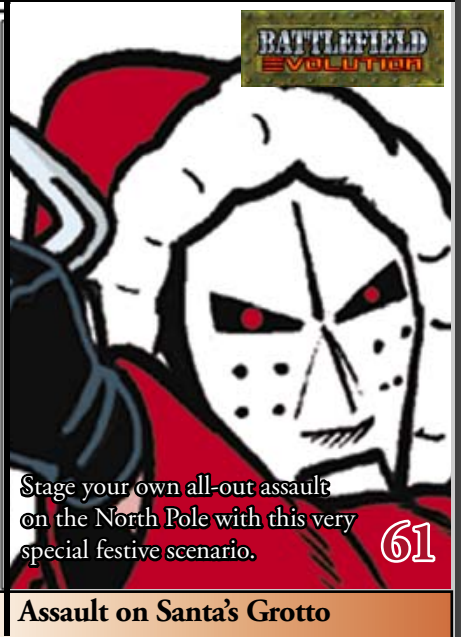
It's a FRUIT EXERCISE, all you HAVE to do is KICK THE BALL, how HARD could that BE.

after all you'RE a HERO NOW.



**Extinction Protocol**

**BATTLEFIELD EVOLUTION**



Stage your own all-out assault on the North Pole with this very special festive scenario.

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**Assault on Santa's Grotto**



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*Extinction Protocol* writer Cy Dethan talks about his upcoming work on Markosia's Starship Troopers comic.

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# STATE OF THE MONGOOSE 2007

## This month we have Matthew's yearly report

AS THE YEAR draws to a close, with Santa bringing prezies for good children and the turkeys start fearing for their feathers, it has become something of a tradition for us to look back on the past twelve months to see how we have done, and look ahead to what awaits us in the coming year. We also have a look at the way this great hobby is going though, of course, we can only give our perspective on things. Your mileage, and all that.

### Printing Facility

2007 has been a period of consolidation and reorganisation for Mongoose, not least because of the introduction of our new printing facility. The facility represents the single greatest investment Mongoose has made in one project and though we have only now really started full production, many things are already clear. Things always end up a little more expensive than you plan (obvious), time is required to get all the components working together (again, obvious) and, one day, every publisher our size will be producing books in this way.

Setting up the facility meant that, for the first four months of 2007, we released no titles at all, relying wholly on our back catalogue sales to support the company as we built up the facility to go into operation – it is a credit to our strong lines that we were able to do this, and there are perhaps only a handful of other companies that could have done the same thing without chopping staff or projects.

There are a number of other hobby games publishers that have been producing their own books for quite some time (and, in fact, they form their own sub-community within the industry!), but I believe we are the first to be able to do hardbacks, and do them in large quantities. About 50,000 books have been produced by our facility so far, and that number is rising by thousands every month as we bring new titles on line and old out of print titles back into production. Talking of original plans, we had banked on producing about 6,000 books a month

through our facility, but with a number of titles taking off pretty much all at once, we are averaging well over 8,000 a month and peaking at nearly 10,000 – and we haven't brought our back catalogue into play yet!

The investment in a printing facility like this is huge for a company of our size – over half a million Dollars, once you have factored in all the equipment, materials, the learning process and so on. However, now we have it all up and functioning, everything becomes very modular. If we need to increase the number of books we produce in a week, we simply need to add another staff member and a couple of (relatively) inexpensive machines. If we want to branch out into cards or comics, again, that is just one extra machine needed for either, and so on. Now we have the basics, expansion becomes quite easy.

The advantages can be felt throughout the company, on many different levels. Editors can print a single book out to see how it looks away from the screen (there is something about a monitor screen that hides errors). We can do limited editions as prizes very, very easily (we have already done some personalised books with the owner's name on the cover!). And we are running an almost completely stockless system – we still have our older titles warehoused at the moment (though we are entering a process of trimming many titles, particularly those with a D20 badge), but all new books and those brought back into print are produced purely to order. Even the paper, card, glues and other materials needed to produce books are ordered on a 24 hour basis, meaning we keep very little in storage. Which keeps the accountant happy!

The effects of this have already been felt by our customers. No longer trapped in a set pricing matrix by a traditional printing house (we can work quite easily in multiples of 2 pages!), our editors are suddenly free to do what they want with a book, rather than be constrained by page count. Writer got passionate about a book and over-written a few sections? No problem, we will just add a few more pages (see

Dragonewts for a good example of this). Just put together the first book of a brand new game line and need to tell a new audience about Signs & Portents? No need to chop back gaming material, we can just add another page.

We have also brought back into print some books (such as the first Drow War book) that we would never have reprinted through traditional means. Beyond that, we can do lots of exciting things in 2008 – compile the Quintessentials into a mighty tome or two (our page limit is somewhere in the region of 1,000 for standard size books), offer print versions of Signs & Portents, offer limited edition colour versions of black and white books, and so on. Then there is the Grand Project, whereby gamers can ‘build’ their own rulebooks, clicking on a web site to decide exactly what they want to include in their own personalised copy (‘Introductory scenario, check, realistic combat system, check, Late 16th Century equipment list, check. . .’). And then have it delivered to you, looking as if it had been mass produced in a run of thousands. . .

That is still someway off, but the possibilities are there.

## Flaming Cobra

We have been deluged by studios and other publishers wanting to have their books printed through our facility though, so far, we have turned most away. The fundamental problem (aside from the heavy workload our book makers currently have, making their way through the backlog caused by not releasing any books for four months) is that it will always be better for us to produce our own books rather than someone else’s, and so it only makes sense if we have spare capacity in the production cycle – at the moment, we do not.

Except when it comes to Flaming Cobra, of course. Flaming Cobra is a programme we started about a year ago, and we have spent 2007 refining it and gathering new partners. At its core, it is a very simple arrangement; a studio or publisher approaches us with a book ready to go to print. We print, distribute and market that book, all at Mongoose’s own cost – the publisher does not pay so much as a Pound when going through Flaming Cobra. When books are sold, Mongoose recovers its costs and the remainder (the profit) is split between the two parties. Very clean, very easy. And utterly without risk.

Well, that is not exactly true, of course. The studio must make its own arrangements to pay for its writers, artists and layout guys (though if they have come up through the PDF route, this is likely to have already been paid for). We take a risk by printing and distributing the books. However, we only print to order, and the costs of the facility (beyond the costs of individual books themselves) are carried by the production of our own books.

Basically, it is a no lose proposition for both sides, so long as both walk into the arrangement with their eyes open. When specing their books in terms of content and page count, we always advise our Flaming Cobra partners as best we can, based on our experience in the market – our stated aim is to make Flaming Cobra publishers as rich as possible (!). However, the final decisions are always theirs.

We have had a few titles released through Flaming Cobra so far, but many more are on the way. As I write this, Cthulhutech is being printed, and initial orders have been the highest of any Flaming Cobra book, making it a front runner in our own catalogue. We expect similar things of Spycraft, and we have other lines waiting in the wings for 2008.

## Signs & Portents

At Mongoose, we have always been a little bemused by Signs & Portents. It started life as a full colour print magazine, and stayed that way for about two years. It rarely sold more than a couple of thousand copies, and we took a little loss on most months, but it was easy to justify – filing the costs under marketing, we were producing something that regained at least most of the outlay, and it gave us something physical to plonk in front of a new customer, retailer, or distributor and say ‘this is us.’

The time came, though, for us to review this idea – as a marketing effort, it was just a little clumsy, and not targeted at all. When we decided to turn it into an online production (instantly eliminating the biggest cost associated with it – printing), many said that was a sign of failure.

In truth, we could have done nothing better for it. We split the magazine into two editions for Roleplayers and Wargamers, both at the same size as the original print edition. Within two months, we were

seeing over 12,000 unique downloads. Today, a few years later, we have well over 60,000 unique downloads, and it is rising almost month on month.

It is a little ironic that, with our printing facility, we are now looking at bringing back a printed edition for those who like to feel paper between their fingers.1

The biggest change in Signs & Portents over the next year, however, will be a subtle shift in approach. In the past, Signs & Portents has been used to support our older games, and highlight our latest releases. We are going to start taking a far broader view of the magazine over the next few months.

Which brings us neatly on to. . .

## 2008

If 2007 has been a time of consolidation, reorganisation and planning, 2008 is where everything is set into motion. There have been a lot of changes to the company behind the scenes this year with new faces appearing and solid systems put into place. We have invested in several new areas, and will be looking to capitalise on them come the New Year.

For example, aside from Signs & Portents and some tortured writings on the Internet (like, well, this one), Mongoose has never done any marketing. Ever. We have always, in effect, let our books sell themselves – which works up to a point, but a glass ceiling is hit with every good seller.

In 2008, we break that ceiling. We have a number of stated aims – revenue will increase by 40-50% in the first six months of 2008, for example. In 2009, we will be employing roughly twice as many staff as we do now (between 40 and 50 full-time staff, depending on what we call ‘Special Projects’).

So, what does this mean for you, the gamer? Well, if you have ever wanted a career in hobby gaming, we will be employing! From writers and artists to bookmakers and admin staff, Mongoose already looks to give its staff more than just another job. The difference is, we are now laying down a solid system whereby someone can look at having a serious career in their chosen hobby.

Roleplaying hobby dying? Don’t know what you are talking about, mate...

You will also be hearing a lot more about Mongoose. This goes from relatively simple things like getting a window on the day-to-day life in the office via the Planet Mongoose blog, to a greater presence in retail stores, via promotional materials and access. This will start in our strongest markets (the UK and Europe) but quickly spread to the US and other territories. You will also see more comprehensive support of our lines, going far beyond the free Signs & Portents.

These changes reach into other departments as well. For example, we have recently experienced a huge increase in the demand for our miniatures, to the extent where it has rapidly exceeded supply. New systems are being put into place to make current production more efficient, and also make it easier to expand, which will be essential in 2008 with the coming of new miniatures lines. There will be smaller changes too – a new mail order system that does not require our poor Russell handwriting every address, and Amazon-style card wraps to better protect our books in transit. All of this is designed to give you easy and ready access to Mongoose products, wherever you shop, be it in your local games store (still the best place to go!), online retailers or direct through us.

Exciting times are ahead!

## Miniatures

We have had a problem with miniatures, and it is one we recognised quite some time ago. Mongoose is a publishing company that does miniatures. Compare this to, say, Games Workshop, who have always said they are a miniatures company that does games. The difference in approach is much greater than the semantics suggests.

Overall, we produce very good miniatures games. A Call to Arms has a tendency to snag anyone who tries it, and that is a trait shared by Mighty Armies, Starship Troopers and Victory at Sea. We target our game systems at ‘post-GW’ gamers, as we call them, those who have been brought into miniatures gaming by the Big G, but have since left that side to find something with an ounce more complication and strategy. Just an ounce, mind – simplicity is still a watchword in our

mechanics. In this regard, we are quite happy to stack our games against of their rivals.

The issue we have had in the past, though, is that, as a publisher, we focus on the game – not necessarily the miniatures. We have plenty of miniatures gamers working at Mongoose, but the number with any decent artistic talent, or even just an artistic eye, can be counted on one hand. Add to that, in the past, their influence on miniatures has been marginalised, for one reason or another. That is now changing.

We now have new techniques involved in the sculpting process (all our Call to Arms ships, for example, are now designed by computer rather than physically sculpted), and we are looking to introduce rapid-prototyping into several new areas – this is actually a very exciting field, with new technology entering the market all the time. It will not be long before Adrian can design a new model, and then ‘print’ it out at his desk. We also (now) know which of the traditional sculptors can walk the walk. In short, we have gained a vast amount of experience, mostly from doing what you should never do! Still, they say that is the best way to learn. . .

It will be part way through 2008 before we have a fully-fledged miniatures department in Mongoose that runs as smoothly and efficiently as our publishing arm, but the groundwork is already being laid, with revised systems for creating a new miniatures line, greater input from our artistic staff, and tighter integration between game design and the miniatures that run alongside it.

Which brings us on to pre-painted miniatures. In one way or another, I still believe they are a significant part of the future of the miniatures hobby and, watching what other companies are bringing out, I am by no means alone. However, having gone through the baptism of fire in pre-paints thoroughly, I am also convinced that no one has got it strictly ‘right’ at the moment.

We all know a well targeted collectible (that is, random pack) miniatures game can work. It can also go disastrously wrong, but the basic model is sound, and it is one we have looked at for some projects. However, the goal (for us) has always been to produce a battle (not skirmish) level game ‘replacement’ that uses pre-paints throughout its range that offers everything a ‘traditional’ wargame does, minus the modelling and painting – and that is what no one has yet cracked.

Such a game has got to go beyond small skirmish level, and it must feature models that are of better quality than anything that has been mass-produced thus far, there must be a far greater range in poses, and the models must be cheaper. These last points are fundamental ones. If there is going to be a large movement towards pre-paints, they cannot just match the current bare metal/plastic ranges – they must beat them, in both quality and price. Only then will the ball start rolling.

Now, we know we can produce the right kind of game. The trick at the moment is fulfilling the quality and variation criteria without impacting on price. In a way it is the old argument with a slight twist; quality, variation, price – pick two.

There are ways round this, and we will be returning to pre-paints, though it will not be until the end of 2008 at the earliest, and more likely 2009. We will also likely be doing it in collaboration with another company, but more on that later.

So, where does that leave our current lines? Well, Mighty Armies left the Mongoose stable in a move to Rebel Miniatures this year, and it went with mixed feelings on my part. The game was always a good one, and had a great deal of potential (always fancied doing an Ancients version of it), but other projects always seemed to take precedence. At least with Rebel, fans of the game will continue getting the support they craved.

## A Call to Arms

The second edition of A Call to Arms has proved exceptionally popular, building on the successes of the first. A year in playtesting was well spent, and the current rules set offers greater options for players, while bringing play balance into a very narrow and tightly defined line. In short, it is a game we can really build upon.

We will be releasing just one rules book for B5: A Call to Arms every year, usually around summer, with the first being Powers & Principalities. We are still working out the contents of this tome, but you can expect to see new ships (such as the Omicron light cruiser for EA Crusade fleets and the Vorlon Frigate), new fleets (we already have draft lists for the Hyach and Ipsha), as well as a wealth of new rules such as fighting in hyperspace, maybe a new rules sub-system for fielding massive fleets, and a few other bits and pieces we have had in the works for a while. . .

You can expect to see new models from Powers & Principalities begin appearing in Signs & Portents throughout the first half of the year.

Other books will be added to the range but, in keeping with our promise, none will be required to keep up with the latest rules. The first is the B5: A Call to Arms Painting Guide, written by Adrian and featuring some of his superb models. This will be an absolutely stunning book filled with gorgeous models, and lots of handy tips – whether you want to paint like Adrian or put together an entire fleet on Saturday morning so you can play in the afternoon. This treat will be appearing in March.

The next phase for this game is to ‘deprovincialise’ it, by introducing two new, different settings. We have already proved that the basic game system works in other genres (such as Victory at Sea), and there is plenty more we can do with space combat outside of Babylon 5. The first, provisionally entitled Emergence, charts Mankind’s first manned explorations into the Solar System, where the supernations of the Earth compete for territory and resources. It is a great deal lower tech than Babylon 5, and we are working hard to give each nation a distinctive ‘look’ with some really nice miniatures. We are aiming to make the fleet lists compatible with those in Babylon 5, allowing you to switch between the two settings at will.

We have also just started negotiations on another licensed setting for A Call to Arms, one that will feature some awesome space battles, spread across several different fleets. Even though it uses the same rules as the current CTA, this game will play very, very differently. The technology in this setting is. . . different to that in B5!

This is something we spotted when ‘messing around’ with WotC’s Star Wars spacecraft, converting them for the CTA rules. Even though many of the rules stayed the same (fighters, shields, Double Damage, and so on), the different emphasis they had on the game made for a very different experience. Rebel fighters were the craft delivering the knockout blows, for example, while their capital ships ground away at Star Destroyers. Imperial fighters were there simply to stop the Rebels craft, while their big ships were the ones that caused the main destruction – all very different from Babylon 5, and these experiments are what made us realise how much ground the core rules could cover.

And no, Star Wars: A Call to Arms is not something that you will find in the shops. However, if you come to one of our open days, you might just see a very limited run, not-for-sale hardback floating around the office. Another benefit of having your own printing facility.

Emergence has no solid release date planned, though we are currently looking at the end of 2008 – that said, it could easily be leapfrogged by the ‘other’ setting, which I think some gamers will be prepared to kill for. . .

## Victory at Sea

The surprise hit of 2006 became the continued surprise throughout 2007, with gamers snatching up the core rulebook with glee, eager to re-fight the sea battles of WWII. By the time you read this, the first supplement (Order of Battle) will just be shipping, which completely revises aircraft, adds new rules for coastlines and shore batteries, and gives you more ships than you can shake a dead turbot at.

That is not all we have planned for the system, however. There are already working drafts of World War I and American Civil War versions, both of which will see print throughout 2008, and there are the beginnings of an age of sail edition, though there are currently arguments raging as to whether it should support the Napoleonic era or feature pirates! We could do both, of course – but then which one comes first?

Victory at Sea has already sealed itself as one of our second tier games, receiving regular support in the form of both supplements and articles in Signs & Portents, and it looks set to continue as such for a good few years yet. We have, at this time, no plans to do miniatures for any of the Victory at Sea games ourselves as, with the likes of Navwar, there are already huge ranges of good quality miniatures available.

## Battlefield Evolution

Oh, you long suffering fans of Battlefield Evolution. Truly you know pain!

Anyone who has stuck with this game through thick and thin knows what it has to offer. Quick and easy play, fast and lethal firefights, plus scalability that allows the game to span infantry, armour and aircraft.



With this base, we are not going to let the game slip from our fingers. However, there were certain issues that had to be addressed, most of which are tied into the pre-paint problems I listed above.

So, what can you expect?

Well, we got a phone call shortly after wave 3 had been released. A bunch of guys in a far off country had seen the Battlefield Evolution range and liked them so much, they told their marketing guys that they just had to get us on board to do games and models based on the projects they were working on.

Now, those of you who have been following Battlefield Evolution's progress on our forums will know we have been placed under an NDA with regards to this new phase in the game's development. . . and that NDA is still under effect. We had hoped that this situation would finally be resolved by the time the State of the Mongoose went out, but 'twas not to be. There are, unfortunately, still some legal wranglings to iron out. However, we'll tell you what we can now.

Battlefield Evolution will meld into a series of new games, all compatible with one another and the original Battlefield Evolution. They will all be based on the varied products of our new partner-to-be. We are currently looking to kick off with the first in the second quarter of 2008, featuring extremely high-tech armies waging war, but we are already talking about adding other related titles that will be appearing in the near future.

What this means is that you will have a variety of 'settings' (or perhaps 'theatres' is more appropriate) that you will be able to keep 'pure' by using the units featured in each game, or you can begin mixing them. For example, you might find that terrorists in [insert major American city here] are proving a bit much for the unit normally assigned to deal with them – so, take a squad from one of the other games, and see how the terrorists fare against a frontline military unit. Or perhaps the terrorists are getting beaten on a regular basis, so swap them out for a unit from an army of the future.

Each game will be completely compatible with the others, and units will be able to move freely between them (they will also include everything you need to use your current Battlefield Evolution units, thus giving current players a healthy head start in each game). However, we will

also be taking the opportunity to tweak the system to reflect the scale of warfare being played out. For example, the game that features larger armies will play a lot like Battlefield Evolution does now. Those concentrating on smaller actions, on the other hand, will have a slightly more sophisticated firing and damage system – however, both games will include all the rules you need to use units from one in the other.

In conjunction with our partner-to-be, we have a two phase plan for these games. The first is to produce games strictly for the hobby games market – the majority of the miniatures will be bare metal, you will be building your own terrain, and the rules will have plenty of 'bite' for veteran gamers. In short, 'traditional' wargames. Phase two will leverage the strengths of our partner-to-be to produce a mass market pre-paint series of games, complete with starter sets and booster packs of new units – everything we envisioned for Battlefield Evolution, but with a far, far wider reach. That will come later.

In the meantime, prepare yourself for some absolutely vicious firefights.

There. Think we have managed to avoid violating any NDAs. You know have all the details except the 'flavouring' which, sorry to say, is the one thing we cannot reveal yet. Still, keep checking back, as we are hoping to be able to fill in the blanks very soon.

## Starship Troopers

We have always said that Starship Troopers and Battlefield Evolution were tied – what happened to one would happen to the other. It made sense, as the pre-paints from one game would lead on to pre-paints for the other. This decision was made all the easier by an interruption in the licence (a debate over the licence erupted up in Hollywood - nothing to do with us, though Mongoose got caught up in it) that effectively closed the door on any new development for over a year – this was why releases suddenly stopped, though we could not say anything about it at the time (though if you do some digging about, it is now a matter of public record)!

A while ago, when the licence issues were finally resolved by the lawyers (and we got a few more years bolted on to the licence in compensation), we decided to break the chain between the games, and let Starship Troopers fly on its own – as it always deserved to do.

The game will be re-released this summer, fitter, leaner, and with at least 75% more bug-kicking action! It will not be the Evolution rules set we have already previewed, but something much closer to the first edition, with a couple of Evo ideas thrown in for good measure. For example, we have had a lot of success with the 'one reaction' rule, and that looks like it could stay. We will be swinging completely the other way in terms of background information, however, with far more setting detail planned for the new game. There will be a return to army lists, rather than unit cards.

Starship Troopers will be taking advantage of the new systems we have laid down for the development of miniatures, outlined earlier, and we have drafted a long term fan of the game who has proven a critical eye – David Wiggins, known as ScipioAmericanus on our forums – to lend a hand on development of the new game. Alongside the regular commentary we will keep on our forums, Starship Troopers will become much like A Call to Arms has – a game truly for the fans and by the fans.

Most important, of course, will be the miniatures. Some of the old range will stay, such as the Warrior Bugs, Marauders and Exosuits. Others, such as many of the Skinnies, will be completely revised – added to these will be a new Brain Bug (no longer made of metal) and an absolutely stonking new Tanker Bug! Others will disappear altogether, to be replaced with all new units. And flying models, led by the Skyhook and TAC Fighter, will be released as close to the new rulebook as possible – the MI have waited too long for them! Fans have been wanting the airborne units since the game was first released, and so we have made them a top priority this time round. They will be the first of the new models to be prepped after the Brain Bug. The Viking, in particular, is a model to absolutely die for, and will dominate the battlefield with its massive size!

Keep an eye out on Signs & Portents throughout the first half of 2008, as we preview the new models and rules of Starship Troopers, and also for ties to the Starship Troopers RPG, now powered by the Traveller rules set.

There is one other thing lurking on the periphery of the Starship Troopers universe. A dig through Adrian's desk turned up some prototypes he had been working on – 6mm scale LAMI, Exosuits and

Tanker Bug. Now, we have no solid plans for such a mass battle game but the models. . . do look good. Something to watch for, perhaps in 2009 or 2010. We'll preview the first sculpts on Planet Mongoose once they had had a lick of paint, and we'll see what you all think.

## Other Games

Our R&D guys always have new projects in the works, of course. Ian Barstow has been leading World at War (working title) as a private project of sorts. 28mm based, this game brings the Battlefield Evolution rules to the battlefields of World War II – as with Victory at Sea, no miniatures are planned for this line, but we will be very interested in seeing how people take to this game. A great deal of work has already gone into this project, so expect to see it sometime around May.

For my part, I have been tinkering with something provisionally titled V-Max Racing, which may make an appearance in Signs & Portents as a free game before we give it the full green light (much as Victory at Sea did). Think of high speed hover vehicles loaded with armour and weapons, somewhere near the end of the current Century. Now put them on a race track in a wide range of defined leagues, thundering along at 400 mph through twisting circuits, dodging obstacles, while shells explode around them. Each skimmer can be heavily modified, with launch control systems, new weapons, reactor upgrades, military-spec targeting systems. . . the list is almost endless – and yes, many of these mods will be reflected on the actual models, with players able to get hold of 'booster' packs from specialist modification firms.

Adrian has been playing around with some concepts for these skimmers, taking basic design features, and then adjusting them to fit the style of specific manufacturers. So, for example, a skimmer from Italian manufacturer De Lucca will all have some common elements that mark them as the finest skimmers money can buy; long, sleek, agile. Those from British company Aston Greaves will be more like shire horses with Merlin engines, big brutes yet still highly desirable. Germany is represented by Kleinvogel and Japan by Fujimoto, while the US has both Bell and Universal Dynamics producing some extremely powerful machines. We even have Malaysian and Swedish manufacturers sketched out, though we'll have to see if they make the final grade when the game is released.

We are aiming to make the models as visually appealing as possible, so this is one to look out for. All you need to play will be one skimmer and the rulebook, or you can dive right in and create an entire team and run it through a whole season of racing. We even have Jeremy Needall from the Top Thrust news channel giving his own special in-depth reviews on each skimmer (though that idea may not make it into the finished draft!).

At the moment we are still playing around with the designs of the skimmers, though the core rules are pretty much laid out. Look for this one later in 2008, unless Adrian suddenly has a spurt of inspiration!

Finally, there is Gangs of Mega-City One, a game that found its niche among both Dredd fans and those interested in skirmish games of gang warfare. We will still be publishing the occasional article in Signs & Portents for this game, but our eyes are currently looking at other events in Dredd land. As with the roleplaying game, once these come to light, we will be going at a Dredd miniatures line full bore, likely with a revised game that places more emphasis on the Judges themselves.

#### Special Projects

This is the catchall for projects that do not fit our traditional roleplaying and miniatures games. Chief among them at the moment are the Lone Wolf gamebooks, currently enjoying their re-release as collector's hardbacks, with mainstream softbacks to appear in book shops in 2008. They will be joined by some brand new novels set in the world of Magnamund, and this is something we will be watching very carefully, as we have always had an interest in entering the novel market – we have a set of Armageddon 2089 novels already waiting in the wings, and plenty more ideas we would like to pursue. It is far too early to speculate on where we will go next, and it will likely be 2009 before we take a serious swing at novels. Look out for them in the next State of the Mongoose!

Speaking of Lone Wolf, Mr Dever is due to start work on books 29-32, finally completing the series. Those who have scooped the Magnamund Mega-Deal will be the first to read these new books (several months before anyone else gets the chance), though they will be waiting a little while yet – Magnamund was not built in a day!

We have been discussing other projects with Mr Dever, including replica Sommerswerds. We have decided not to take a 'cheap' approach

here, but instead commission the highest quality blades from a top swordsmith. So, they will not be inexpensive, as they say – we are currently predicting a four figure price tag, but these blades will be things of absolute beauty; real stones in the hilt, intricate carvings along the blade, your own unique Kai name inscribed, marking it as your own. . . Probably not for everyone, but we had the chance to pursue this project, and just had to go for it! The swordsmith is currently researching how to produce a realistic golden blade (real gold-plating is an option – quite stunning on something as large as a bastard sword!), so stay tuned for updates. We are not expecting massive demand, but there will still be a waiting list, as we are currently looking at six months for each to be crafted. If you want the ultimate in fantasy collectibles, step forward. . .

Finally, we have also been looking at doing incredibly detailed multi-volume encyclopaedias for some time now, creating 'definitive' works based on various settings. A decent amount of writing time needs to be sectioned off for these projects, but we have already discussed the possibility of both Mega-City One and Glorantha for encyclopaedic treatment (can you imagine what a collected Gloranthan library might look like??). Anyway, something for the future. Not necessarily 2008, but sometime.

#### Summary

And that concludes the State of the Mongoose 2007. This year has been an interesting one, as the Chinese say, but as a whole, the company has been gearing itself up to reach for the next level. In order to do so, we have had to trim a few things down and change the way we do others, sometimes in quite fundamental ways. This process is now nearly complete, and we are very excited at the possibilities 2008 will bring, in terms of both roleplaying and miniatures.

We are not batting down the hatches and preparing to ride the storm of a shrinking market – far from it. Mongoose is looking to expand, and enjoy the rich and diverse industry in which we belong.

## Convention and Events Diary

0 Dragonmeet 2007. Kensington Town Hall, London, UK.

Saturday 1st December 2007.  
<http://www.dragonmeet.com/>

0 Warpcon XVIII. University College Cork, Ireland.

Friday 25th - Sunday 27th January 2008.  
<http://www.warpcon.com/>

0 Conception 2008. Naish Holiday Village, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset, UK.

Wednesday 30th January - Sunday 3rd February 2008.  
<http://conception.modus-operandi.co.uk/>

0 K2 2008. Killarney Country Club, Killarney, Ireland.

Friday 7th - Monday 10th March 2008.  
[lir@lspace.org](mailto:lir@lspace.org)

0 TravCon 08. Redwings Lodge, Sawtry, UK.

Friday 14th - Sunday 16th March 2008.  
<http://www.bits.org.uk/>

0 Tentacles 2008. Castle Stahleck, Bacharach, Germany.

Friday 9th - Monday 12th May 2008.  
<http://www.tentacles-convention.de/>

0 UK Games Expo 2008. The Clarendon Suites, Stirling Road, Edgbaston,

Birmingham, UK.  
 Saturday 31st May - Sunday 1st June 2008.  
<http://www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk>

0 Continuum 2008. John Foster Hall [also known as New Hall], Leicester

University. UK.  
 Friday 1st - Monday 4th August 2008.  
<http://www.continuum.uk.net>

0 Gen Con UK 2008. University of Reading, Berkshire. UK.

Thursday 28th - Sunday 31st August 2008.  
<http://www.horsemenevents.com/>

0 Game '08. New Century House, Manchester, UK.

Saturday 1st - Sunday 2nd November 2008.  
<http://www.game08.eu/>

## ConQuest VEGAS

On April 18th-20th 2008 (the weekend before the GAMA Trade Show), ConQuest VEGAS will play host to what could potentially be the largest A Call to Arms Tournament in the US.

Check out <http://www.conquestvegas.com> for more details on this event, or call 805 218-9590

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MGP 910020 ARACHNID PLASMA BUGS  
MGP 910026 ARACHNID RIPPLER BUG SWARM  
MGP 910048 ARACHNID WARRIOR BUG MEGA SWARM

# Wolf Pack



## A Scenario for A Call to Arms

**Matthew Sprange**

During the Narn-Centauri War of 2259, the Narn were hard-pressed from the outset of hostilities. Desperately trying to hold the fleet together, the Kha'Ri recalled ships from across the Regime to stall the Centauri advance. Cutting through Corillan space, Centauri raiding elements attempted to take many Narn vessels by surprise as they travelled to a rallying point in the Tachunq system, destroying them before they could gather their strength.

### Historical Note

The Centauri raiding ships caused massive damage to the Narn fleet before being forced to withdraw in the face of heavy opposition.

### Narn Fleet

- 1 G'Quan-class heavy cruiser (Crew Quality 6)
- 2 T'Loth-class assault cruisers (Crew Quality 3),
- 3 Corporate Tankers (Crew Quality 2)
- 1 Patrol Boat (Crew Quality 3)
- 1 T'Rakk-class frigate (Crew Quality 6)
- 2 G'Karith-class patrol cruisers (Crew Quality 5)
- 1 Dag'Kar-class missile frigate (Crew Quality 4)
- 1 G'Tal-class command cruiser (Crew Quality 6)
- 4 Sho'Kos-class patrol cutters (Crew Quality 4)

None of these ships may be arranged into squadrons, and all will appear individually.

### Centauri Fleet

- 4 Vorchan-class warships
- 2 Demos-class warships
- 1 Corvan-class scout
- 8 flights of Senti medium fighters.

All ships have well-trained crews with Crew Quality 5.

The Vorchans and Demos are organised into two squadrons, each consisting 2 Vorchans and 1 Demos.

### Pre-Battle Preparation

No stellar debris is used, other than the planet and asteroid field shown on the map. The Narn deploys the G'Quan first in his deployment zone.

The Centauri must jump in with their entire fleet in the first turn.

## Scenario Rules

At the start of every turn, the Narn player should roll one dice for each of his ships he has not yet brought on to the table. On a 6, that ship will appear from any part of a random table edge.

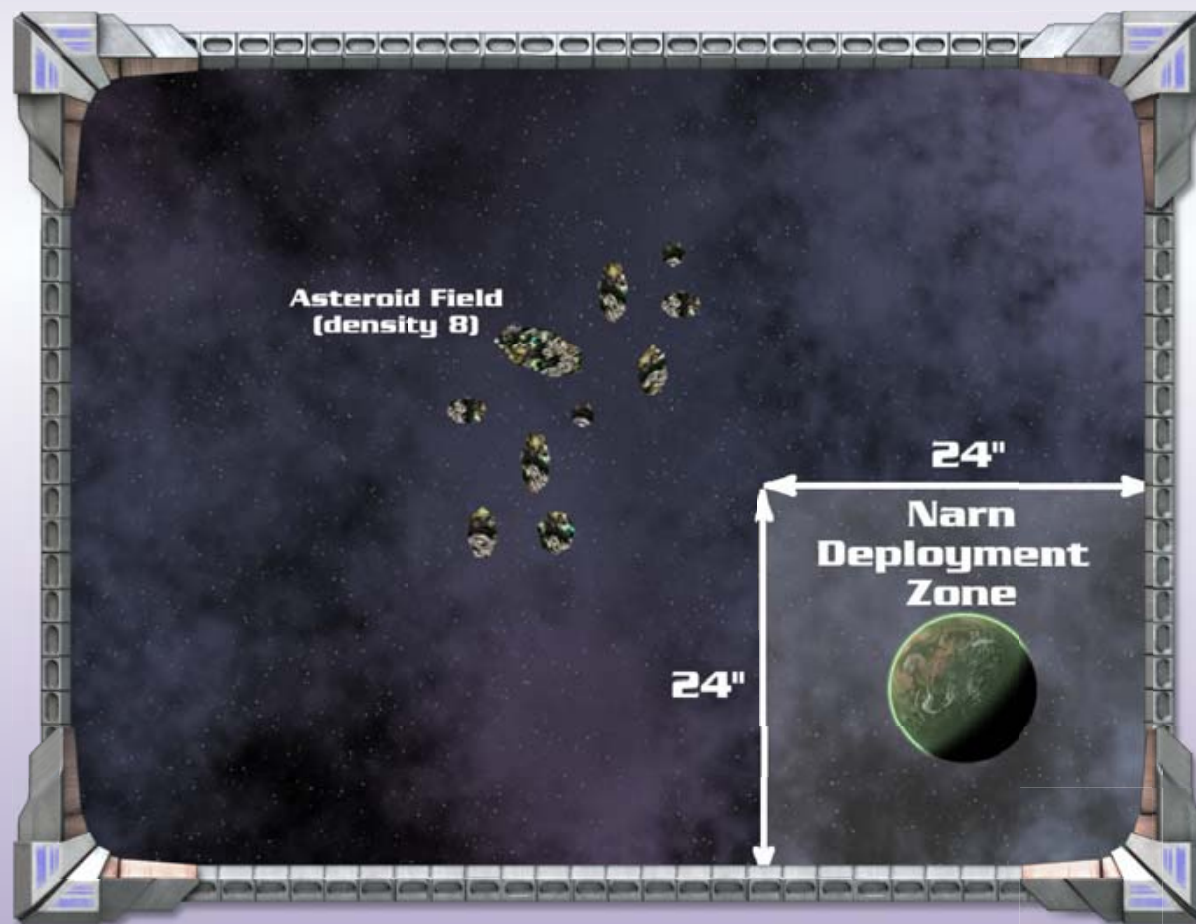
This scenario is considered to be a Skirmish level fight.

## Game Length

Until either fleet is destroyed or withdraws.

## Victory and Defeat

Victory Points are used to determine the winner of this scenario. However, the Centauri are not allowed to withdraw until they have earned at least 100 Victory Points. Civilian ships are worth 5 Victory Points each.



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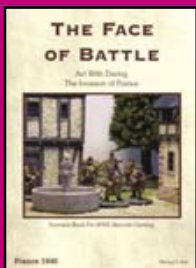
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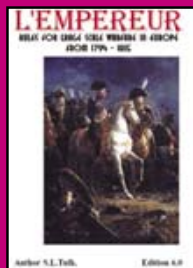
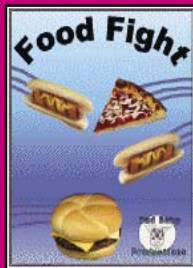
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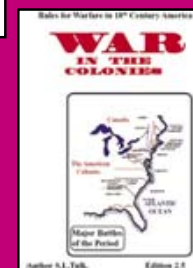
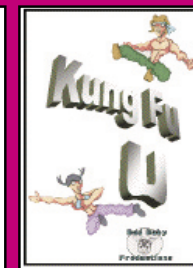
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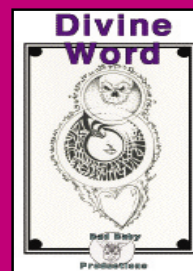


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# Minority (Battle) Report: Italy vs France

by Ammiraglio Cristoforo Longhurst (Italians)  
and Amiral Nick La Greque (French)

## Italian Pre-Game

So, Nick and I were going to face off across the blue tablecloth once again. In our last battle I had trounced him completely with a combination of halfway decent tactics, ridiculous luck and reading the rules. Those, and long lance torpedoes. This time around we were using Order of Battle, which I hadn't read and which Nick had spent the last several weeks working on. I couldn't count on my luck to run the same way twice, and I was pretty sure that Nick had come up with some way to counteract my torpedo barrage. Left with none of my former advantages, I turned down the tempting prospects of kamikaze pilots and man-guided torpedoes promised by the Japanese, and decided to play a different fleet entirely. Since I was having pasta for lunch, I chose the Italians. Nick, being the historical type that he is, decided that he wouldn't use the Americans and chose the French – a fleet he was unfamiliar with – instead.

After agreeing to a 6-point Battle game, picking my fleet was easy. New rules in Order of Battle limit how much you can break your points down (probably to prevent me playing a 5-point War

game with eighty destroyers) and the Italian fleet only has a few ships anyway. The only selection of note was the Aquila, Italy's only carrier. I believed that it was my only way to acquire aeroplanes because Battle points no longer break down to Patrol level, but I had forgotten that you can always use a point to select a ship (or squadron) of a lower value on a 1-for-1 basis even without breaking it down. The Aquila got me eleven flights of fighters, which meant that I was completely unable to play around with the new rules for bombing, dive bombing and so on. Oh well, next time.

### Italian Fleet

- A - Littorio (Littorio-class battleship)
- B - Caio Duilio (Caio Duilio-class battleship)
- C - Andrea Doria (Caio Duilio-class battleship)
- D - Aquila (Aquila-class light carrier)
- E - Trento (Trento-class cruiser)
- F - Duca D'Aosta (Duca D'Aosta-class cruiser)
- G - Eugenio Di Savoia (Duca D'Aosta-class B - cruiser)
- H - Emanuele (Duca D'Aosta-class cruiser)
- I - Filiberto (Duca D'Aosta-class cruiser)

## French Pre-game

Well here was a chance to get even with Chris after my last defeat. Handing him the only copy of Order of Battle he then chuckled with glee at the prospect of Japanese Carriers, manned torpedoes and kamikaze attacks. He waxed lyrical as I was busily constructing a carefully designed American fleet I felt comfortable would end the threat of Chris on the Victory at Sea gaming table. He asked me questions on the rules to ensure he had understood them right, no doubt keen to ensure the Japanese would have another victory. My American fleet was almost ready when he showed me his fleet list. Of Italians.

Now I could have kept the Americans, but knowing Chris to be the sneaky kind of chap that would take advantage of my carefully constructed anti-Japanese American fleet if I revealed it in another game I binned the Americans entirely and went for the other Mediterranean naval power – the French. Theoretically the French fleet was designed to take on their regional foes so they are a good match. I had to rush the fleet selection after the wasted time on making an

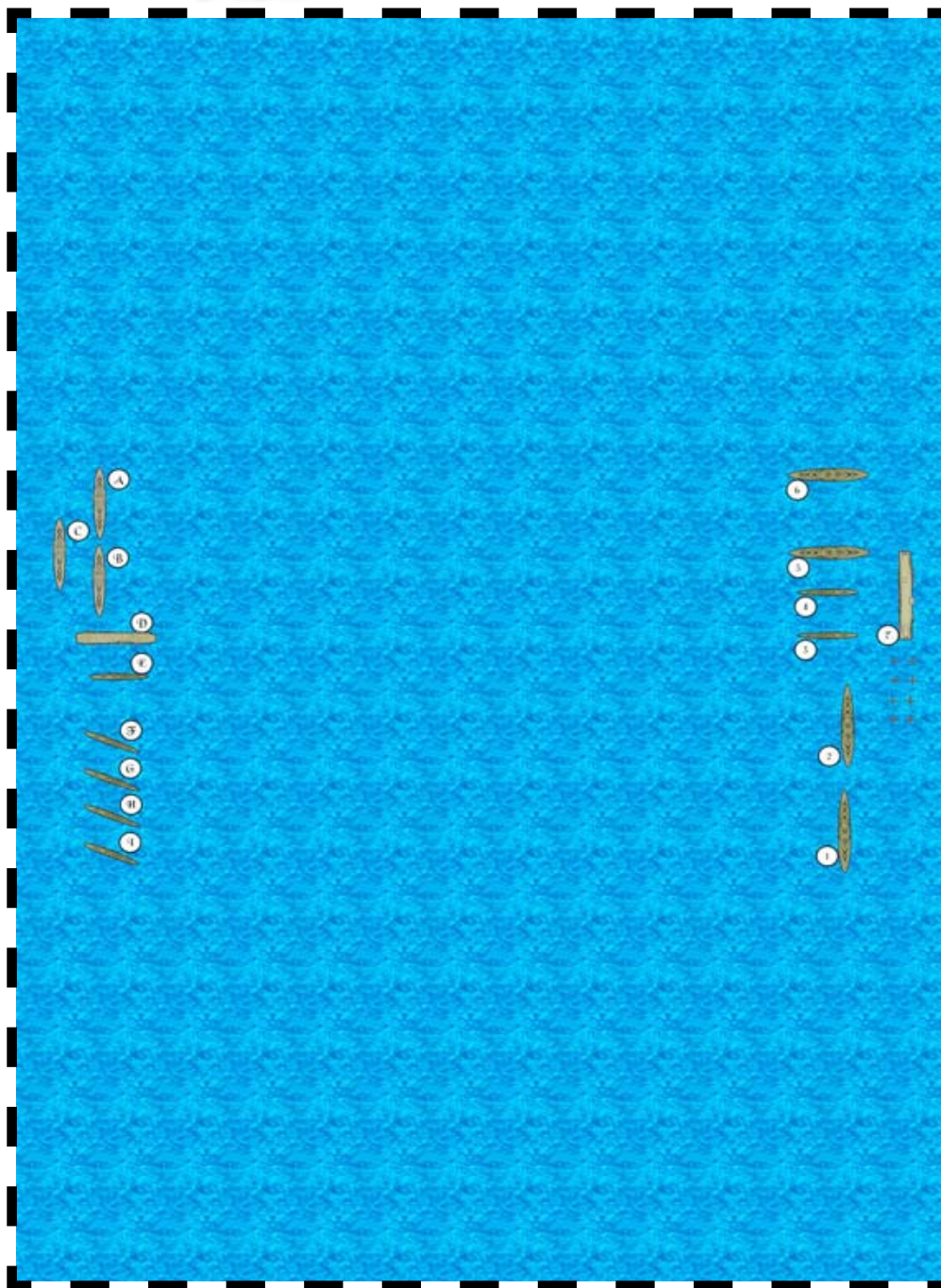
American fleet and decided a powerful flagship in the Richelieu. I went for a strong battleship line with the Dunkerque, Bretagne and Provence, having a tactic in mind to deal with whatever the pesky Italians threw at me. I grabbed the Bearn carrier, as I did not believe Chris would bother with the Aquila and the French bombers would be able to hurt any Italian cruisers, and a couple of cruisers, the Duquesne and Tourville rounded off my task force.

### Task Force Soixante-Neuf (French)

- 1 - Bretagne (Bretagne-class Battleship)
- 2 - Provence (Bretagne-class Battleship)
- 3 - Duquesne (Duquesne-class Cruiser)
- 4 - Tourville (Duquesne-class Cruiser)
- 5 - Richelieu (Richelieu-class Battleship)
- 6 - Dunkerque (Dunkerque-class Battleship)
- 7 - Bearn (Bearn-class Aircraft Carrier)

## Set Up

Chris won the dice roll and I had to set up first. I planned to have the Dunkerque and Richelieu move towards the Italian force with my cruisers supporting them. Meanwhile the other battleships would move parallel to the Italian set up zone, shielding the Bearn. Depending on what the Italians decided to do I would then be able to move either group in to support the other. The choice of the Aquila meant that in order to use my torpedo bombers I would need to ensure I had aerial superiority early in the game by taking out the Italian carrier and then hope the French fighters would hold their own against their Italian counterparts.



## Turn 1: Italians

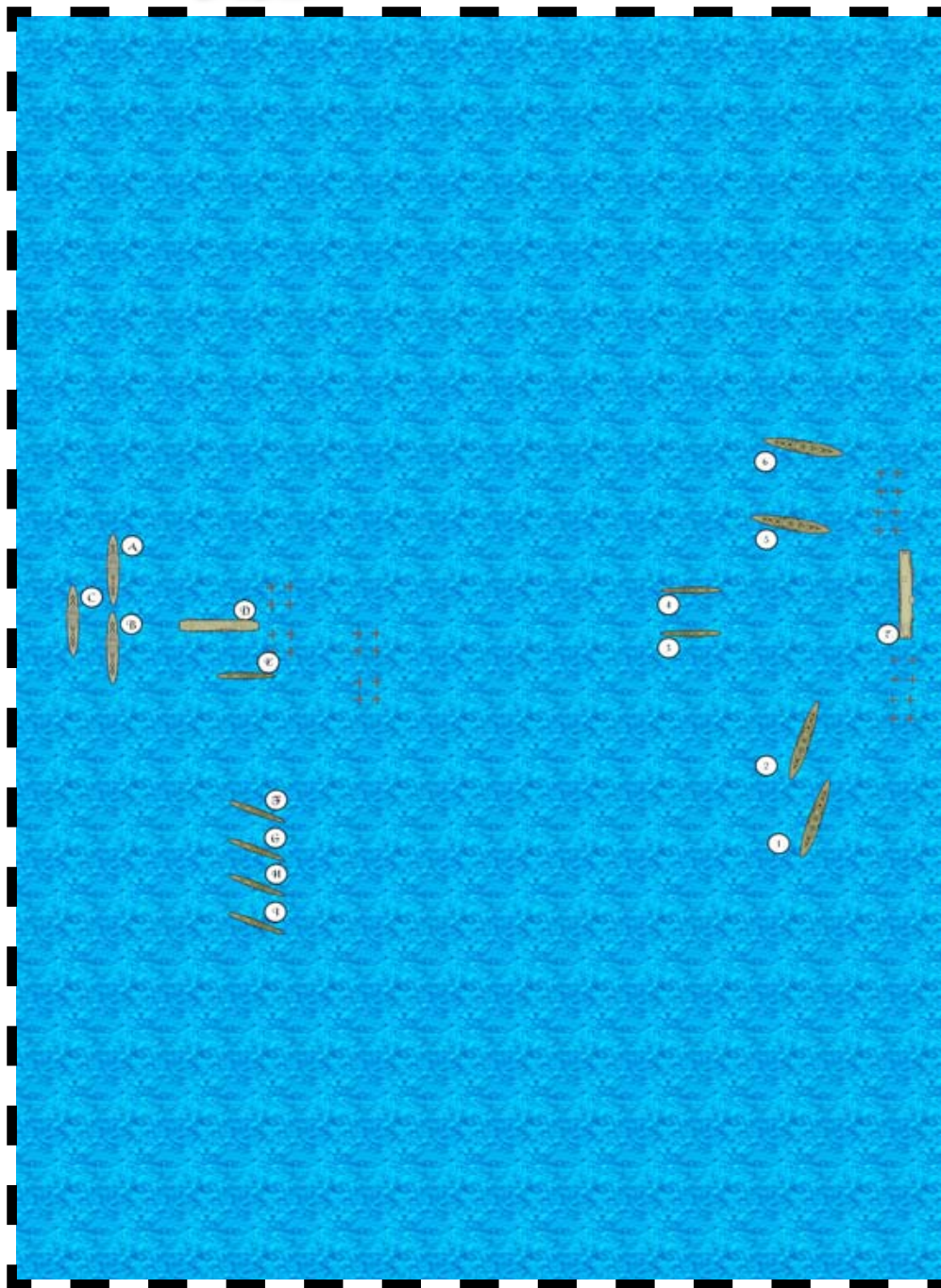
The fleet moved forward and, in some cases, sideways. The Littorio lobbed some shells at the Richelieu, to no effect. The two Caio Duilio-class battleships opened fire... and I realised I had set them up *way* too far back, because they were well out of range. And pointing the wrong way to easily close the range. Not a good start.

## Turn 1: French

Having won initiative I hoped to get a few good shots in with my longer ranged guns as Chris moved his ships into range. With the Aquila moving forward I hoped to take this ship out allowing my fighters and bombers to attack the rest of his fleet, whilst having the Richelieu and Dunkerque advance slowly, to keep them out of the range of most of the Italian guns.

However I had failed to appreciate the program of positive discrimination in place in the French navy during the Second World War. However I would point out that recruiting the blind to work in gunnery is probably going a little too far. The Dunkerque opened up on the Aquila and missed. The number of 1's were heartbreaking, little did I know a pattern was being set...

Overall the first turn of firing was more or less even. The Dunkerque took some damage whilst I managed to get hits on the Trento, Caio Duilio and Aquila (the Duquesne actually having someone on board who could shoot straight). Unfortunately my strategy of using aircraft looked highly unlikely to succeed. The Aquila would now be able to get a total of six fighters (with four already in the air and two more about to be launched next turn) in the air against the Bearn's paltry four the odds were against my being able to control the skies.



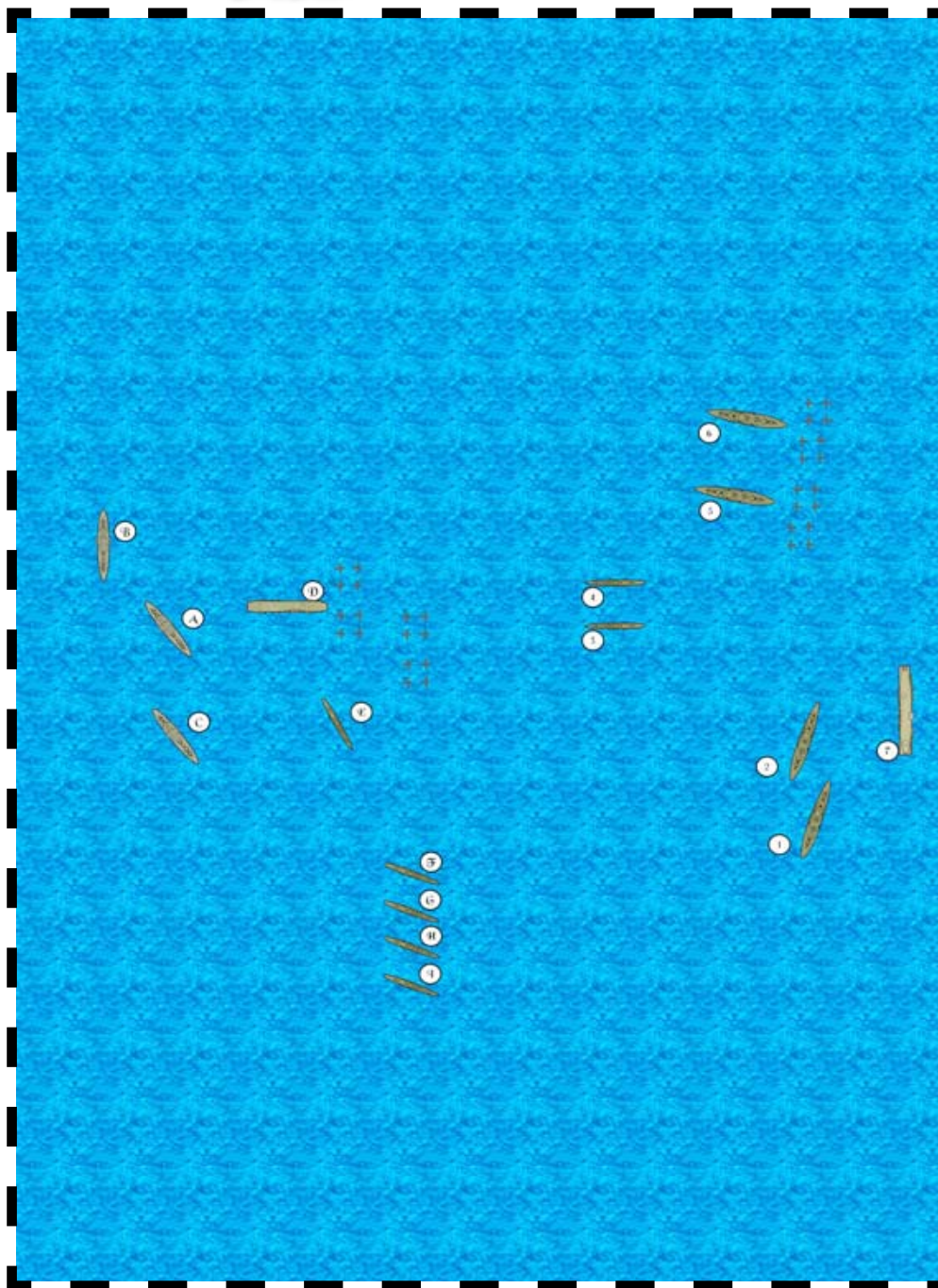
## Turn 2: Italians

The fleet continued to move forwards. The Trento and Aquila took heavy fire but survived. Unfortunately the Aquila was crippled, which meant the fighters I had in the air – all four of them – were the only ones I was going to get. Meanwhile, Greek's carrier continued smugly launching planes from behind the safety of two battleships. The two Caio Duilios began the slow turn to bring them into range. A lucky shot took the engine clean out of one of the French cruisers, but failed to impair its ability to return fire.

## Turn 2: French

With the two Battleship groups moving apart I continued to try and put my plan (such as it was) into place. The Aquila was finally crippled from the combined firepower of the Bretagne and Provence (with some help from my cruisers), leaving it unable to launch any more aircraft, but this was probably too little too late. I decided against launching torpedo bombers, hoping that the French fighters would do enough to allow the bombers to make a difference. I had hoped that she would be in this position sooner but the lousy dice rolls were not helping my cause.

The Trento and Littorio also suffered some damage from the erratic French gunnery, whilst the Tourville lost power to her engines, as the combined firepower of Chris's cruisers inflicted severe damage upon her. The Dunkerque also suffered a little more damage and was now edging towards uselessness, but she would be able to help next turn, at least.



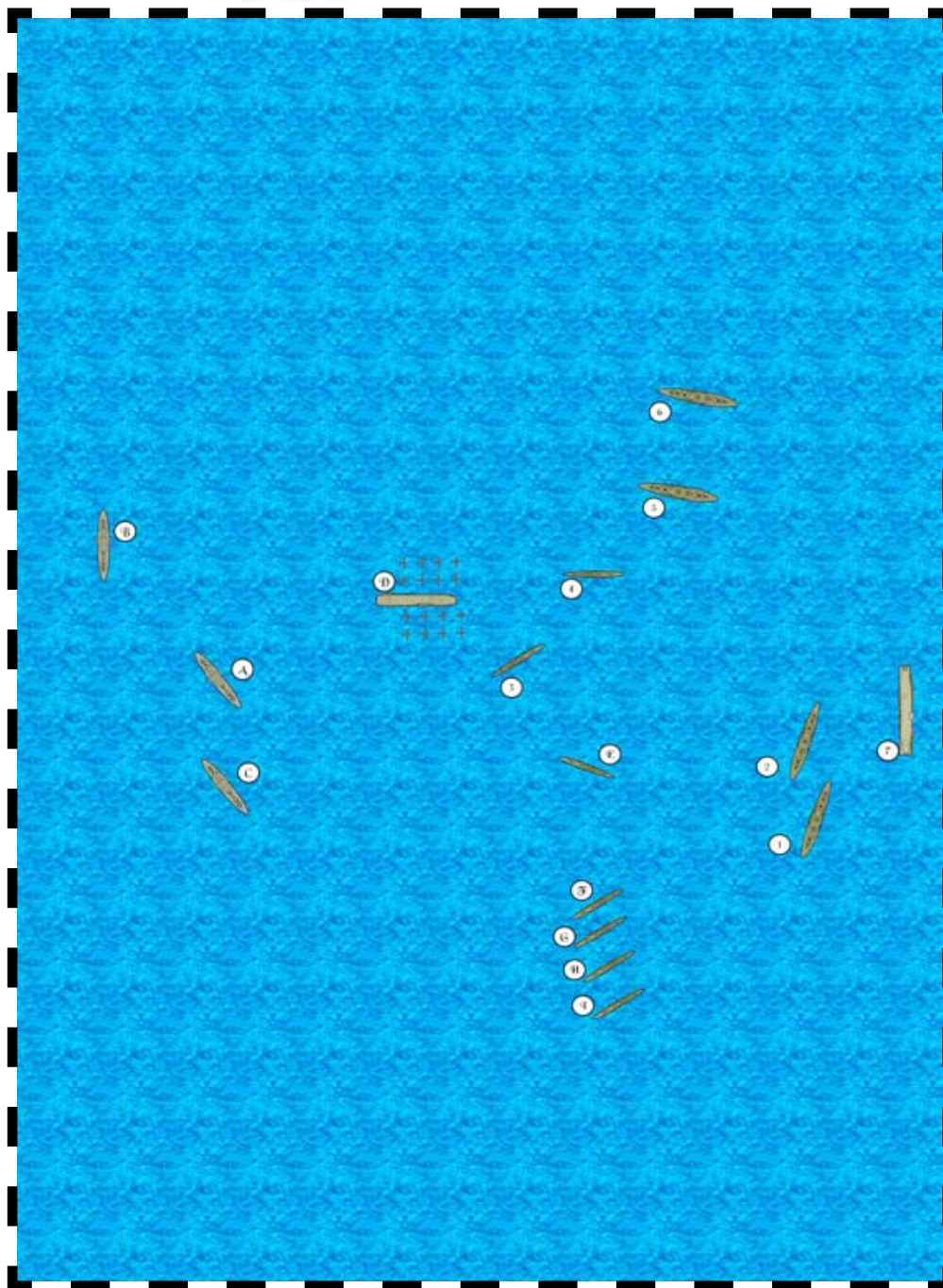
## Turn 3: Italians

The Aquila crawled forward at top speed (1½” after being shot to hell), firing its secondary armament at the immobile cruiser and knocking a few armour plates off. The Trento made a tight turn to line up at least one lot of torpedoes before it fell to pieces, and succeeded. The torpedoes were woefully ineffective and the Trento was shelled to the bottom of the sea... which was nice. The Aquila also got hammered, but bravely pushed on, nothing more than a floating scaffold with some Italians clinging to it. The battleships continued exchanging shells to very little effect.

## Turn 3: French

Chris won initiative this turn but it made little difference. My fighters swung into action, and were pretty much shot from the sky, one lone fighter flight left facing the five surviving Italian flights. So my plan to achieve victory through use of bombers had literally gone down in flames.

I managed to do some notable damage to the Andrea Doria, finished off the Trento with a salvo of torpedoes from the now immobile Duquesne, which also managed to get some solid hits upon the Aquila. The Richelieu and Dunquerque managed to be pretty much ineffective against the Littorio and a few points of damage were spread around various ships in both forces. The most notable damage was to the Dunquerque, who lost one of her two main turrets due to a critical hit as well as suffering more damage. Things were not looking good for her.



## Turn 4: Italians

Everything looked like it was coming together. My mostly-ignored cruisers were now in torpedo range, my battleships still had their paint jobs mostly intact, and I had won the war for the skies with my handful of fighters. By concentrating fire I managed to punch enough holes in the Dunkerque to send her to the bottom, removing a significant piece of Nick's firepower, but my turn was marred by two things: firstly, that the Aquila finally disintegrated under fire, leaving my valiant pilots with nowhere to land; secondly, that what I thought was torpedo range was actually a fraction of an inch *outside* torpedo range, and I wasted the starboard torpedoes on all four of my cruisers. Oops. It was about this stage that I started really missing my long lances.

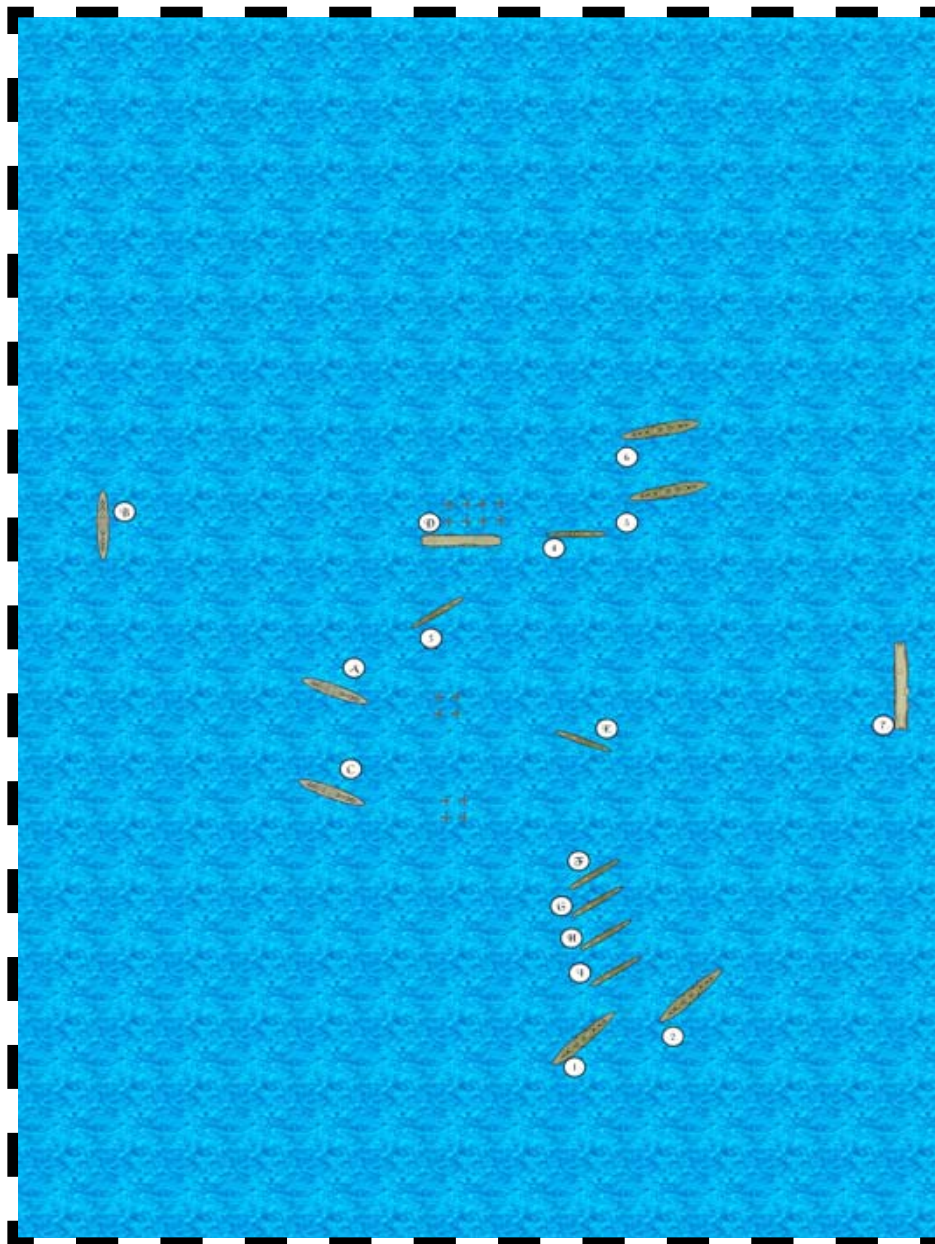
Fortunately, the return fire from the two battleships was laughably ineffective, almost-but-not-quite crippling only a single cruiser.

## Turn 4: French

I hoped that I would be able to get the Dunkerque to do some damage before she succumbed to the attentions of the Italian fleet, fortunately I won initiative ensuring she would go down fighting. Some more manoeuvring saw the Duquesne move close in to the Italian battleships, unfortunately I had already used my torpedoes, much to my chagrin.

The Dunkerque failed to sink the Aquila which was a bit of a disappointment. The ship was taking so much more time to sink than I had hoped. In fact the blind gunners of the French battleships were singularly unimpressive with their aim, again. It was left to the Duquesne to finish off the Aquila. Fortunately Chris managed to misjudge the distance between his torpedo armed cruisers and my Battleships Provence and Bretagne, however since they had proved extraordinarily useless to this point I was not as happy as I might otherwise would have been.

Oh. And Chris sank the Dunkerque. A pretty major setback for me, really.



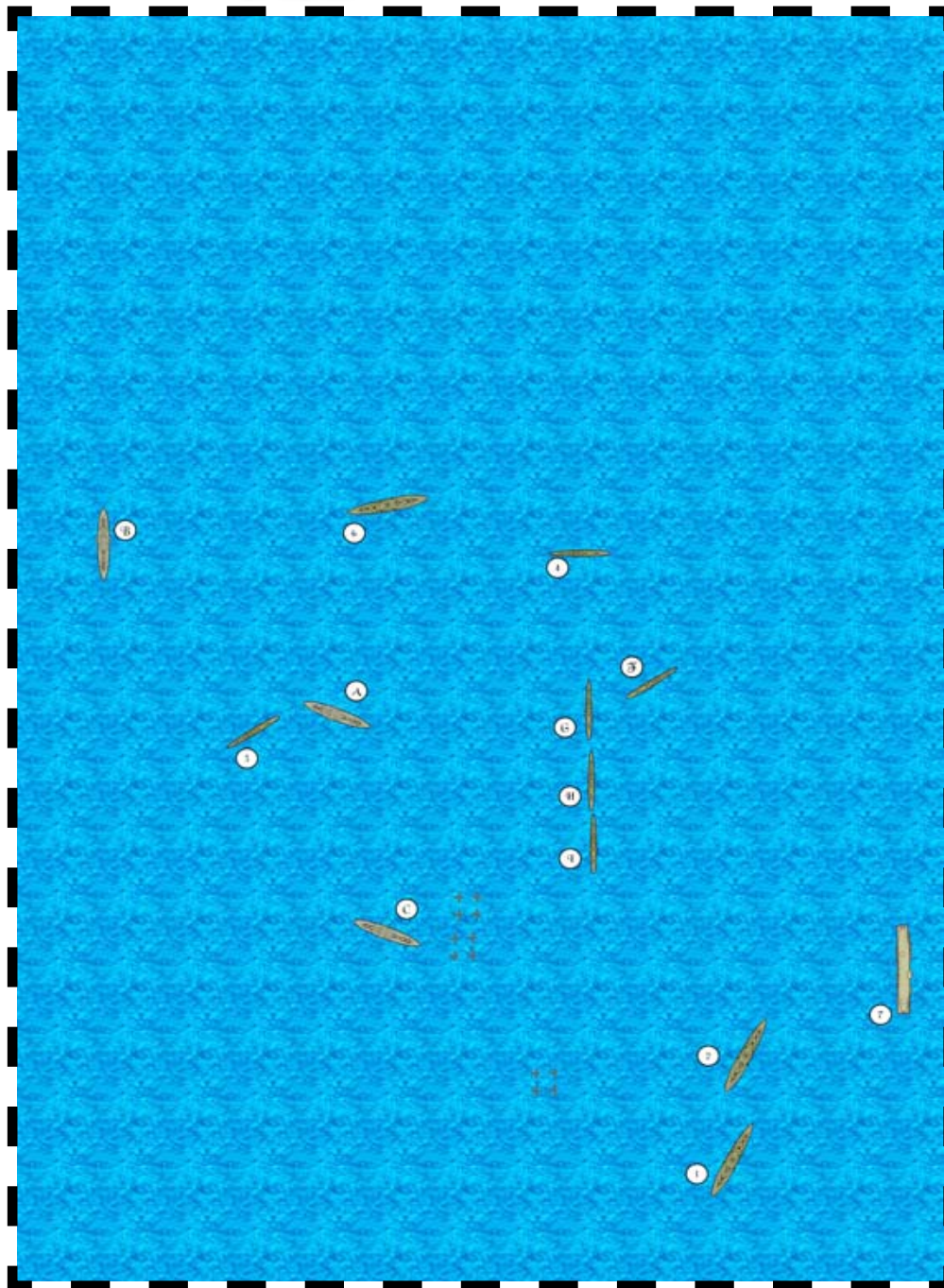
## Turn 5: Italians

With the Trento and Aquila gone, the centre part of my battle line was looking a bit bare. In addition, the *Caio Duilio's* rudder was stuck and it could only go in a straight line. The only interesting bit of movement was my cruisers, now chasing the *Richelieu*. As they scooted off, they plinked away at the French battleships with their weedy guns (all Weak) and did a surprising amount of damage. The battleships concentrated their fire on the *Richelieu*, hoping for a decisive hit, but succeeded only in damaging it. Secondary weapons fire (finally) sunk the French cruisers.

The French Bretagne-classes continued to be useless, damaging-but-not-crippling the fourth of the four cruisers. The *Richelieu*, on the other hand, pounded the tar out of the *Caio Duilio*, crippling it, setting it on fire and removing two of its turrets. With my two and a half battleships against Nick's three, things were looking iffy.

## Turn 5: French

Things looked up, for a moment at least. The *Caio Duilio* was crippled, losing half of its turrets and looking very much the worse for wear, my badly damaged cruisers were finished off and the *Richelieu* took some meaty blows, but now I had an edge with my big guns and the cruiser advantage Chris had might quickly disappear as all of them had taken a bit of a pounding from my various secondary guns (even with my appalling gunnery rolls).



## Turn 6: Italians

‘Why are you bringing your carrier around?’ I asked Nick. ‘I rule the skies, and it’s only got crappy guns. Just scoot it off the table already.’

‘It’s got torpedoes,’ he answered with glee. ‘I’m going to torpedo your battleship!’

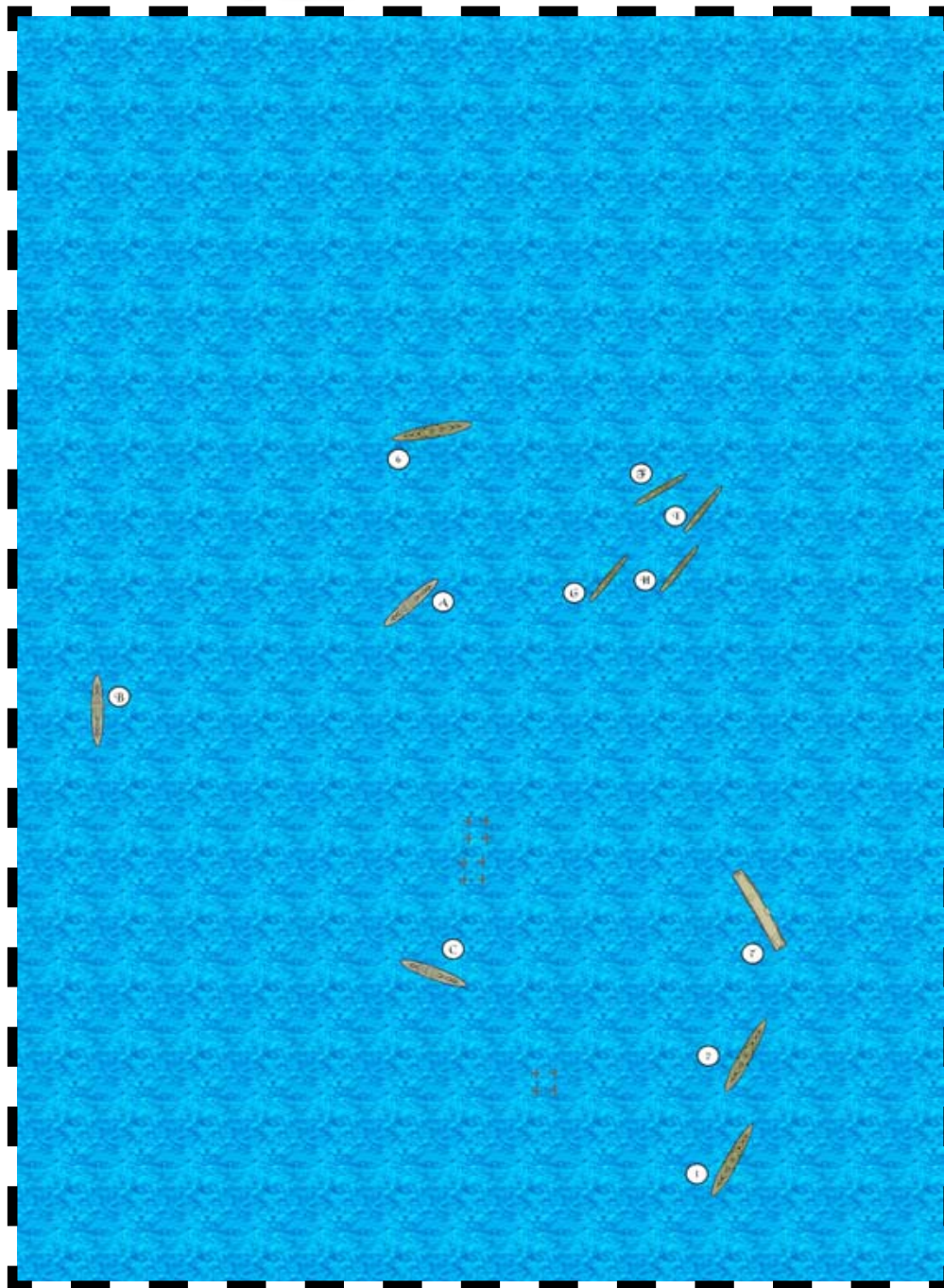
I checked. The French aircraft carrier does indeed pack torpedoes. Oh, those crazy French ship designers.

The two Bretagne-classes took over shelling the Caio Duilio, proving about as useful as they had all game by inflicting no harm whatsoever. The Richelieu turned its attention to the Andrea Doria and shelled *her* into the stone age as well, blowing off two turrets and crippling her.

Meanwhile, my cruisers were chasing the Richelieu around the map in a Benny Hill style, trying to line up their last torpedo shots. Because the Richelieu only has forward-mounted turrets and next to no secondaries, they remained unharmed (at least, no more harmed than before) but just couldn’t catch up to the bigger ship.

## Turn 6: French

Chris won initiative and did some serious harm to the Richelieu, a critical on her engines leaving her dead in the water. In return I managed to cripple the Andrea Doria, knocking her main guns down to two two gun turrets, a severe reduction in her firepower. Things were getting edgy, with my seeming advantage looking better, with the Italian battleships looking very ropey.





## Turn 7: Italians

The Richelieu bore down on the Littorio. The Bretagne-classes manoeuvred to shell the Caio Duilio and Andrea Doria. The Richelieu's guns roared! Bits of the Littorio went everywhere! But it was too little, too late. My lovely battleship had remained almost untouched up to this point, and it wasn't even down to  $\frac{3}{4}$  damage. The return fire nearly crippled the Richelieu.

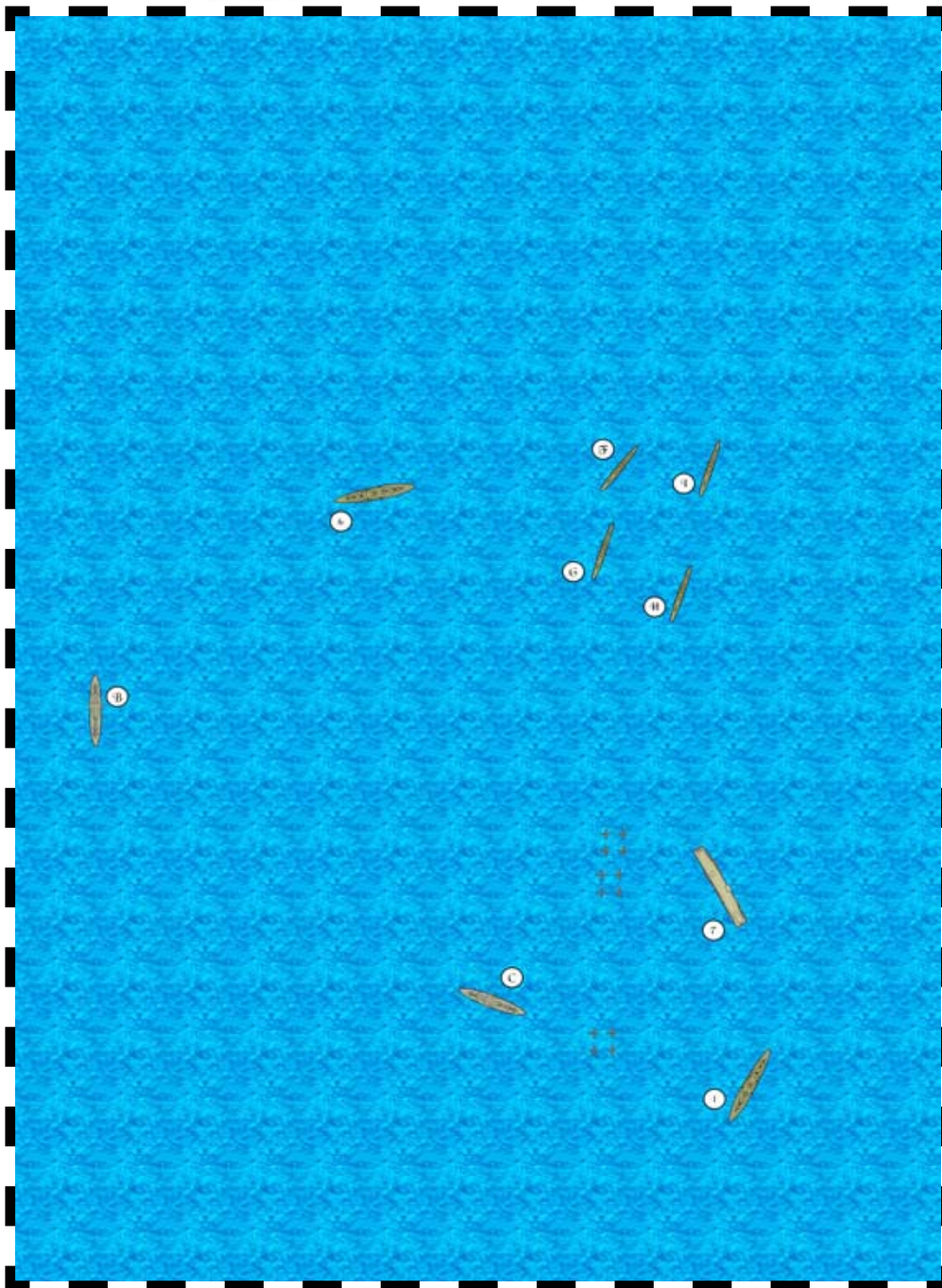
The lead Bretagne opened fire, lightly scratching the paintwork of the Andrea Doria. Taking a desperate shot, the Caio Duilio fired its sole remaining fore turret at the other Bretagne – and hit the ammunition magazine. One ginormous explosion later, the ship was crippled, on fire, and weaponless.

The French surrendered.

## Turn 7: French

I won initiative and pored some more fir on the Littorio, but nowhere near enough with far too many shots missing. The Bretagne and Provence looked to be in pole position, just about ready to finish off their two opposing ships when disaster struck, a lucky critcl hit impacted into Provence's magazines, causing enough damage to make her crippled and losing the ability to fire for two turns. Had this not had happened Chris would almost certainly have lost one of his battleships since the Provence would have fired next.

The situation was now hopeless barring some seriously obscene dice rolls in my favour. All my ships had fired and Chris was about to launch a barrage of torpedoes and his big guns from his cruisers and the Littorio respectively on the dead in the water Richelieu. At this point I decided that the walk home was a lot more attractive than watching the remnants of my fleet disappear and conceded the game to Chris.



## Aftermath

### Chris

Victory! Again! It was very close all the way through and I still think it could have gone either way if we had played a few more turns, since my victory was basically down to a fluke shot. It's not like the Bretagnes had contributed anything up to that point anyway – it had all been the Richelieu and those *insane* guns, plus a load of torpedoes from one of the doomed cruisers.

In retrospect, if I had actually read the French fleet lists in any detail I would have used a different plan – speed forwards and get behind the battleships where they have no turrets. I would also have read my own fleet list and realised that the Caio Duilio class had a significantly shorter range than the Littorio. Having them in range from the first turn would have made a big difference – the Richelieu would have sunk, for starters.

Another thing I noticed was the total ineffectiveness of my torpedoes. I think I've just been spoiled by the Japanese and their long lances – more torpedo-carrying ships, more attack dice and better range – but I was expecting something better than just a couple of points of damage here and there. It just goes to show, different fleets need different tactics.

All in all, I won because Nick made mistakes and I rolled a lot of sixes, not through any great plan of my own. The French fleet, I think, needs a fairly quirky approach to make best use of its fairly quirky ships. I think I might take them for a sail next time, and see what I can do with the Surcouf and this wacky torpedo-laden aircraft carrier...

### Nick

Curses, foiled again! I thought I had a solid plan, and then awful dice rolling came to disrupt it. My new plan to ignore the cruisers and take care of the battleships almost worked, and quite probably would have done but for a crucial critical right at the end of the game.

I suffered appallingly bad luck in criticals, managing to knock out the occasional AA gun, minor secondary armament and reduce Chris's speed from engine hits, nothing too inspiring. Chris managed to put two of my ships without any engines, knocked out one four gun turret and had the crucial magazine hit as well. Had I managed to gain one of those things would have been so different and I feel that it would be the Regia Marina that would have fled the battlefield with their tails between their legs.

Curse my bad luck. Next time I will crush him beneath my victorious heel!

	Start	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Italian Fleet</b>								
Littorio	40	40	37	36			32	27
Caio Duilio	30	28			16	5		
Andrea Doria	30			20			9	5
Aquila	28	26	9	3	Sunk			
Trento	14	8	5	Sunk				
Duca D'Aosta	11				4			
Eugenio Di Savoia	11			5				
Emanuele	11					7		
Filiberto	11			10	8			
<b>French Fleet</b>								
Richelieu	42					26	18	16
Dunkerque	34	28	22	11	Sunk			
Bretagne	27				22		13	6
Provence	27		26	24	23	22		13
Bearne	29							
Duquesne	13			9	4	Sunk		
Tourville	13		11			Sunk		

# Tactical Manual:

# Carriers



## Using Carriers in A Call to Arms Second Edition

**Alan Oliver**

As a natural progression from the previous article on fighters, this time we're looking at carriers. Not all carriers are created equal, especially when you consider that any ship that carries half a dozen fighters can be considered a carrier. Different ships will use their carriers in different ways, and so they can be divided into five broad groups.

For purposes of this article, any ship that can carry fighters will be considered a carrier. Carriers come in five different exciting flavours; Casual, Combat, Strike, Support and Bombardment carriers.

*Casual Carriers* only carry a few flights of fighters so their air wing doesn't make up a significant part of the ships combat potential.

*Combat Carriers* carry more fighters than casual carriers, but are still not optimised as carriers. In some respects they are just heavy casual carriers.

*Strike Carriers* are fully capable carriers that are intended to perform their role in the thick of combat, fighting alongside the dedicated warships of the fleet while still providing their fighter assets.

*Support Carriers* are dedicated carriers that are specialists, not intended to enter combat directly at all but to just provide their assets from range.

Lastly, *Bombardment Carriers* carry long range weapons that will contribute to the combat potential of the fleet but are not designed to close with the enemy and engage at close range.

I'll be using the fighter classifications discussed in the previous article freely; general purpose, superiority, assault and elite. I'm using the term 'air wing' to describe all the fighters carried by a particular ship. CAP is Combat Air Patrol, which is just a catchy name for the fighters that a ship can have launched at the start of an engagement. This is one flight for most ships, half of it's fighters for fleet carriers. Max Chat you are all probably familiar with, but just in case it's a term for all power to engines currently in use in the British navy.

## Casual Carriers

These ships typically carry only one or two flights of fighters, although a few carry more. While technically carriers they operate as normal warships, not taking special actions to account for their fighters. The fighters that they carry can be used in different ways although this will depend on the class of fighter carried. Those with General Purpose fighters may want to use them as additional interceptors or as escorts for the ships against the assault fighters of the enemy fleet.

If casual carriers have assault or elite fighters and you have enough of them then they can be formed into an independent strike group to send after enemy ships. If there are only a few of them, then this is only practical against crippled ships or other weak targets. However the main point is that once the fighters are away, the casual carrier's own actions will not be affected by their presence or absence.

Some fleets make greater use of casual carriers than others. The main powers all use them quite extensively, most Earth Alliance, Minbari, Centauri and Narn ships are casual carriers. The ancients don't use casual carriers, and nor do most league races, although

there are a few exceptions. This means that the main powers will typically have a larger number of fighters within their fleet than the others, who will have to either accept a disparity in fighters or spend allocation points on buying carriers or independent wings of fighters.

While the other types of carriers will be covered individually, there are thirty nine ships that are casual carriers so they will not get discussed individually in this article. All these ships will be covered in other articles.

## Combat Carriers

These carriers tend to be larger ships that carry a larger number of fighters, but are still not fleet carriers and therefore lack the dedicated facilities to improve the performance of the fighters that they carry. They come between casual carriers and strike carriers in terms of capabilities.

However while they carry a number of fighters and in many cases can launch and recover the fighters quickly, their actual performance and role on the battlefield is little different from that of a casual carrier. I will look at each ship in turn, however will only do so briefly as in most cases these ships

will all be following the same sort of tactical approach.

For a start most of these ships will want to scramble early in the battle, as this will typically launch half their fighters, which combined with the CAP leaves them with few fighters left on the deck to worry about. The remaining fighter or fighters can generally be launched during combat at any point where the ship is not otherwise performing a special action. There are a few combat carriers that will still have more than a flight of fighters on the deck, and these may need to scramble for a second time to get the rest out, but this is much less of an imperative than the first scramble.

Once the fighters are off the deck, these carriers will generally act like standard warships, as they have no need to look after their fighters. The actions of the fighters will depend on the type of fighter being carried, assault or elite fighters can be used to attack the enemy, superiority fighters will engage the enemy fighter fleet, general purpose fighters can be used to escort their carrier, or other ships of the fleet.

## Abbai Milani Carrier

This is a weak dedicated carrier but a strong warship for its size. It carries the Kotha fighter which is a very weak general purpose fighter but is the only carrier in the Abbai fleet. Get the fighters launched and use them as mobile interceptors for the larger ships in the Abbai fleet, and the carrier can then be used as a warship.

## Abbai & Brakiri Brivoki Advanced Warship

This is a huge ship, the fighters it carries are definitely a secondary system compared to the weapon systems of the ship. Whether it's the Abbai or Brakiri version, the fighters it carries are just general purpose models. However the Brakiri Brivoki can substitute Pikatos heavy fighters for the standard Falkosi fighters, giving the ship an effective assault air wing, and this will probably be a good idea.

## Centauri Adira Royal Battleship

The Adira carries elite fighters, so the scramble to get them launched is definitely worth while. However it also lacks interceptors so should borrow cheaper fighters from elsewhere in the fleet to give it some cover. The Rutarians are elite fighters and are best used killing enemy fighters or assaulting enemy ships, but if the Adira is coming under long range missile bombardment it may be worth using them as interceptors.

The main weapon of the Adira has relatively good range, however the ship comes into its own when it gets to close range, so a rapid advance is advisable. It has large arrays of weapons to port and starboard so its best position is in among the enemy ships, firing in all directions. The Gravitic Energy Grid is the ideal active defence for this, as it doesn't lose effectiveness under multiple attacks. So once the Rutarians have been launched the Adira will probably be on Max Chat towards the heart of the enemy fleet.

## Centauri Octurion Battleship

The Octurions air wing is twenty four Senti fighters, but should exchange these for Razik superiority fighters as discussed in the fighters article. The Octurion lacks interceptors, and may need the protection so these Razik can be detailed to escort the ship if there are not assault fighters that they need to be out killing.

The Octurion has shorter range than the Adira so will want to get in among the enemy as quickly as possible, but be aware that it doesn't have the active defences of the larger ship so will take damage more quickly.



## Dilgar Mishakur Dreadnought

The Mishakur carries superiority fighters as standard, but can substitute these for assault fighters freely. As the dreadnought lacks interceptors it may need to use the fighters as interceptors, or use them against the enemy fighters or to attack the enemy ships.

To avoid a conflict between the need for an early scramble and the desire to concentrate all fire with the Anti-ship missiles on the first turn a Jashakar-Vi scout should redirect fire on the target vessel. If the Jashakar-Vi is operating in a pentagon commanded by an Ochlavita-Ki it will have the advantage of improved crew quality checks, which makes this easier. In this way the Mishakur can still scramble fighters on turn one while still putting accurate missiles into the target.



## Drazi Fireraptor Battleship

The Fireraptors air wing is a single Sky Serpent and two dozen Star snake light fighters. This provides an attack wing of the sky serpent and escorting light fighters, while still leaving fighters to escort the battleship itself, which given it's lack of active defences is not a terrible idea. Incidentally the scramble order at the start of the battle will launch all the remaining fighters on the battleship, allowing the ship to get on with fighting the battle. With the missile rack, the Fireraptor could sit back and operate as a bombardment carrier, however this is a Drazi ship and it is much more potent getting in there right up in the enemies face.

## Drazi Nightfalcon Heavy Carrier

The Nightfalcon carries a smaller air wing than the Fireraptor, but does carry three Sky serpent assault fighters, which makes it far more aggressive than that of the Fireraptor. The carrier itself can do little to support the fighters once they are launched, so it will be acting just as any other Drazi ship once the fighters are launched. The Star snake light fighters can either be used to escort the Sky serpents or the Fireraptor, but are probably best used escorting the Sky Serpents.

## Earth Alliance Nova Dreadnought

There are two different versions of this ship, however in carrier terms there is little to choose between them. The earlier ship carries Nova starfuries which are a general purpose fighter, but these can be swapped for a weak assault fighter or later for the Aurora starfury, which is a decent superiority fighter. The later version carries the Aurora as standard, but can exchange these for Thunderbolt starfury assault fighters. Both versions of the ship carry interceptors, so will not need fighters to escort them, which means that the superiority or assault fighters can be used directly to attack the enemy.

The scramble will launch half the fighters, after which the Nova will want to accelerate towards the enemy as both versions of the ship are short ranged brawlers that want to slide between the enemy ships and open up with massive broadsides that light up the sky.

## Earth Alliance Omega Command Destroyer

This ship is available in two different fleets, but the ship is identical in both fleets. It's air wing is big enough to make a difference, and these are Aurora starfuries as standard. These can freely be exchanged for Thunderbolts to turn the air wing into a powerful assault system. The ship carries enough interceptors and anti-fighter firepower that it doesn't need it's own fighter escort, so taking the air wing as Thunderbolts to use offensively doesn't leave the ship vulnerable.

You also have the option in the crusade fleet of upgrading the Auroras to Firebolts, which are one of the best elite fighters around and will cover both the superiority and assault roles. However you will need to spend additional points on them, and if you do then you probably only want to upgrade four of them for a patrol point, then take the other two as Thunderbolt or Aurora starfuries.

## Earth Alliance Omega Destroyer

The standard omega carries less fighters, but is still capable of deploying the same fighter models as the command variant. Again it has the interceptors and anti-fighter fire to not need the fighters to escort it, allowing their use against the enemy.

There is an alternative with the Omega, as it's main beam has sufficient range to hang back and snipe at the enemy, although it does carry significant secondary weaponry so that is better used up close. However the range advantage over a number of other fleets is not something to be ignored.

## Earth Alliance Warlock Advanced Destroyer

This ship is obviously a warship first and a carrier second, but an air wing of two dozen thunderbolt starfuries is a respectable assault fighter force. The ship is capable of operating at long and medium range, and the main weapon has the longest range in the Earth Alliance fleet, with the exception of long range missiles. It has sufficient interceptors and anti-fighter fire not to need escorting by the thunderbolts, which would be a waste of them anyway.

Again in the crusade fleet there is the option of upgrading these to Firebolt starfuries for an elite fighter wing. This is a good idea if the points can be found as they are very good fighters.



## ISA Tara'Lin Command War Cruiser

This ship carries the elite Shial fighter, but not in sufficient numbers to dominate the battlefield. It would also require a second scramble to get the fighters off the deck, but fortunately it has sufficient long range firepower that it can afford to close the range slowly anyway. It will operate best at ranges between twenty and thirty inches, where it is within neutron laser range and stealth is at a bonus. The enemy fleet should be split between the forward and port or starboard arcs, as this doubles the attack dice of neutron laser hitting the enemy.

## ISA Victory Destroyer

The victory carries a nice blend of Aurora superiority starfuries and Thunderbolt assault starfuries. The initial scramble will launch twenty four of the thirty fighters still on the deck, leaving only six which can be launched at any opportunity during the battle. The defences on the Victory are such that it is highly unlikely to need to use any of the fighters to escort it, the combination of adaptive armour, heavy interceptors and a good anti-fighter battery making them redundant. The starfuries are therefore free to do what

they do best, hunting down enemy fighters and attacking enemy ships.

The Victory remains a ship that operates best circling around the outside of a battle rather than flying straight into the heart of it, due to its turret based secondary weapons, which while formidable when engaging a single target, do not compare favourably with capital ships of other races. The main lightning cannon is of limited usefulness due to the loss of power that follows, but is powerful enough to kill many ships with a single hit. Instead the Improved neutron lasers will be the most often used main beam.

## Minbari Sharlin War Cruiser

The Sharlin carries a large elite air wing, and is a long range ship, which means it can afford to take the time to scramble on the first two turns to get all the remaining fighters off the deck. In fact during these turns it will probably not be moving forward that fast anyway, as it will want to extend the time that the neutron lasers are in range but the stealth protection is improved. Once launched the fighters can be used in any role, even providing interceptor cover if it becomes necessary.

This might be because the Sharlin is operating at short range, or the stealth trait has been lost to a lucky critical hit.

## Narn Bin'Tak Dreadnought

Depending on the enemy the Bin'Tak will either want to sit back and make use of its long range advantage or close to bring the secondary weapons into range. For example against the Centauri sitting back gives it the advantage, while against the Minbari it will definitely want to close the range. Its slow speed means that to close it will need to use Max Chat orders repeatedly, preventing fighter launch. The ship is a one scramble carrier, and this might easily be timed to coincide with an early energy mine launch, as concentrate all fire special action would not be appropriate. Once launched the Frazi will be used as interceptors while the ship closes with the enemy to counter long range bombardment, then break off to act as assault fighters once the range has closed. This is a common approach among Narn ships, even the casual carriers will tend to use their air wings defensively as they close to protect against missile fire.



## **Narn G'Vrahn Fast Cruiser**

This ship carries a thirty Frazi air wing and will need two turns at scramble to launch them all. This is less of a problem as the ship operates better at long range than when it closes, and in fact has one of the longest range weapons on any fleet anywhere with the advanced energy mines. The ship has it's own interceptors so there's no need to keep the Frazi escorting the ship, and so they can be leant to other ships in the fleet as they close on the enemy, then switch to the assault role when the fleets engage at close range.

## **Narn Ka'Bin'Tak Super Dreadnought**

This behemoth is a two scramble carrier with as many fighters as the T'Rann heavy carrier. Fortunately it has the long range weapons that the slow approach as it scrambles these fighters will not prevent it from reaching out to the enemy and giving them a gentle caress. The air wing will typically follow normal Narn doctrine and escort the ship till the range closes then break off to attack the enemy.

## **Psi Corp Nemesis Advanced Destroyer**

Another behemoth, it's air wing is two dozen of the most dangerous elite fighters in the galaxy. The early scramble will leave it with only one flight to worry about launching, however it will want to get these launched as they are too good to waste. While elite, they are better as superiority than assault fighters so they should hunt down enemy fighters without fear. Only the Minbari Tishat challenges them for natural dogfight lethality.

The Nemesis itself is well defended against fighter attack so will not require fighter escort, and with the self repair and the flight computer it is a very difficult ship to kill. On that basis all you really need to do with this ship is close with the enemy, keep shooting and most important, have fun.



## **Psi Corp Shadow Omega Advanced Destroyer**

This ship operates much like the Nemesis, and the two dozen thunderbolts that it carries can freely be used to assault the enemy fleet. The ship itself is a much shorter ranged ship than the Nemesis, which means that it will need to close once it's scrambled half it's Thunderbolts. The fourth flight is worth launching when you get the chance, as the thunderbolt is a pretty good assault fighter, but should wait until the ship has reached engagement ranges with it's main weapons at least, which may require a turn or two under Max Chat orders.

## **Raider Nova Dreadnought**

The raider carries three dozen fighters, which would normally be respectable, however these are Delta-V which are terrible fighters. You can upgrade all six, and two more elsewhere, to Delta-V2 fighters for a single patrol point. This will make the air wing into something a little more meaningful, as the standard Delta-Vs will be little more than chaff to clutter the table.

Assuming the fighters have been replaced with something meaningful, the CAP and early scramble will put thirty of the thirty six fighters in play, leaving just one flight on the deck. The ship itself is a capable warship in it's own right, the air wing not being a key part of it's combat potential. It also has the defences not to need to use the fighters as escorts, allowing the air wing to attack the enemy shipping or fighters.

If it still carries the old Delta-V fighters then the best use of these is as escorts for the Nova itself, with the two spares being used as replacements when the first two flights are killed defending the ship.

### **Ancient Shadow Ship**

This ship carries six flights of fighters, and these can all start the engagement in play or waiting in hyperspace, or can be launched through the fighter dispersal tube to anywhere within the forward arc. However if neither option is taken it is actually slow at launching the fighters as it cannot even perform the scramble special action. For this reason, unless you are planning to make use of the fighter dispersal tube you should have the fighters start already launched, possibly in hyperspace so that

they can appear where-ever you need them. This is mainly because using the fighter dispersal tube prevents the ship from firing, so is only likely to happen in the opening turn of the engagement, when ships are still out of range.

### **Vree Xeel War Carrier**

This is a dedicated carrier, just not a particularly capable one, at least in terms of being a carrier. As a small warship it's relatively capable, compared with the other ships of it's size within the Vree fleet. It carries two dozen fighters, and between the CAP and the early scramble it will have three quarters of them in the air. The fighters that it carries are heavy duty Tzymm assault fighters that will be a serious threat to enemy ships. Although they can be exchanged for superiority fighters, this shouldn't be done as Vree ships carry sufficient anti-fighter batteries to defend against enemy assault fighters. This ship will work well alongside the Xorr war saucers and other skirmish priority Vree ships, providing fighters for the fleet without diluting the fleets overall firepower in any significant way.

## **Strike Carriers**

The role of the strike carrier is to provide fighter support to the fleet while still fighting along side the dedicated warships of the fleet. They have advantages over combat and support carriers but are to some extent a compromise class that cannot perform either role perfectly.

There is a close connection between the strike and bombardment carrier classes, as both types are combat ships that engage the enemy directly while still providing their fighter assets. Indeed in some fleets bombardment carriers will be fighting alongside the rest of the fleet at long range. For simplicity these ships will be covered in the bombardment carrier class.

Strike carriers have the following advantages over combat carriers; As fleet carriers their CAP is half of the fighters that they carry, which allows them to launch their entire air wing more quickly than combat carriers; They also provide the detailed information required to improve the dogfight capabilities of their fighters; Lastly they are able to repair fighters and bring some of them back into the fight.

Their advantages over support carriers are; they are designed to fight in the thick of the fighting which means more of the damaged fighters will be able to limp back to the carrier for repairs, which means more fighters recycled back into the fight. This in turn means that the repaired fighters launch that much closer to the fighting so do not waste time closing on the action; They contribute to the fleets overall firepower in a meaningful way, having enough weapons to threaten the enemy and the defences to survive in the front line of combat.

Strike carriers are all capable of launching all their remaining fighters with a single scramble special action, which means that after their fighters are launched they will be able to manoeuvre with the rest of the fleet, allowing them to take their place in the battle line. The alternative is to keep these fighters on deck ready for a surprise launch later in the battle, where they might be able to tip the balance against a key or vulnerable target.

The strike carriers from fleets that operate more than one type of fighter should start with a mix of fighters in the hangers, so that all the different types of fighters being used in the

fleet have a chance of being repaired and recycled. For example the Brakiri can freely exchange the Falkosi fighters normally carried for Pikatos assault fighters. As long as some of these are exchanged, then you'll be able to recycle both types of fighters used in the fleet.

### **Brakiri Brokados Battle Carrier**

The Brokados is a classic strike carrier, coming in at raid priority and with forty eight fighters on board. These are Falkosi general purpose fighters as standard but as has been mentioned these can be exchanged for Pikatos assault fighters without any points cost. However the Pikatos is a

weak dogfighter and will need some protection from other fighters, so you will need some Falkosi around as well, especially as with the dogfight bonus from the fleet carrier the Falkosi is up to superiority fighter standards.

The weaponry on the Brokados itself is better than that on support carriers but the ship is not massively well armed. The main weapon is a bore sight beam, however it lacks the attack dice numbers to be truly dangerous. In addition it has Graviton pulsars in every arc which are among the better secondary weapons in the galaxy in both range and armour penetration. Again attack dice are a little on the light side, but the ship is only a raid priority vessel.



## **Centauri Balvarin Carrier**

The Balvarin air wing is forty eight Senti fighters but these can and should be exchanged for Razik superiority fighters. However there are some ships out there that also carry the more advanced Rutarian fighter, and if operating alongside these ships the Balvarin should also exchange some of it's fighters for Rutarians. This will require paying a patrol point to pay for the exchange. The ideal air wing for the Balvarin would therefore be twenty four Razik superiority fighters and twenty four Rutarian elite fighters.

The ship is a decent size for the priority, the hull is tough although not hull six, and the ship does have a limited interceptor network. This means that it is not an easy kill for the enemy, and if they try it will be soaking up firepower that the rest of the warships won't have to suffer from. Firepower is short ranged, with the matter cannon the longest range at fifteen inches, and Ion cannon backing them up at twelve inches. If these weapons were not double damage, then the ship would only be a support carrier, however they are, and the ship can put out enough damage to contribute meaningfully to the battle line.

## **Dilgar Garasoch Heavy Carrier**

The Garasochs air wing is sixty Thorun dartfighters. These can be freely exchanged for torpedofighters, which should be done with some but not all of them as you want to be able to repair both types of fighter. Dartfighters can escort key ships to provide interceptor cover in the early turns, protecting the ships against missile attack as the fleets close. Once the range has closed they will engage the enemy fighters to clear the way for the torpedofighters to start to target enemy shipping.

The Garasoch is in the same speed category as the dreadnoughts so will probably be operating in a pentagon with them, rather than with the faster cruisers or as part of an assault fleet. Within a pentagon that will be getting in the enemies face it is not going to be the first target but will still be able to support it's fighters. If the pentagon also has a Ochlavita-Ki to provide a bonus to crew quality checks, that is just an added bonus.

## **Drakh Amu Mothership**

This ship is the only strike carrier that doesn't have the fleet carrier trait, but that is because it doesn't carry fighters at all, instead carrying a selection of capital ships inside it's huge hangers. This can even include cruisers, which can be a very nasty surprise for the enemy when a Dra'Vash cruiser deploys beside the Amu that they thought they had caught alone. If a Dra'Vash and a pair of Sa'Dravash are taken in the hangers, that is equal to three quarters the value in priority points of the Amu itself, which means you are getting an Armageddon ship for a battle priority point. This has got to be a good thing. For this reason the Amu should concentrate on cruisers and use Ma'cu carriers to provide the raiders for the Drakh fleet.

The Amu has one major weakness, which is the slow speed. It can launch four ships a turn, six with a scramble order, but you will want to make sure that you can launch all it's ships in one turn so that it can accelerate to attack speeds towards the enemy to bring it's massive array of weaponry to bear. The massive Gravitic Energy Grid will degrade most attacks significantly, it is only the big beams that will seriously damage the Amu. Speaking

of big beams, it has medium neutron cannon in every arc, which are just as dangerous as the Minbari neutron laser, although slightly shorter in range.

As a final bonus, the Amu also carries a dozen flights of breaching pods, and two dozen units of troops on board, which makes boarding and capturing enemy ships a real possibility. With a scramble it can launch half these breaching pods a turn, and the Atas'da breaching pod is one of the toughest around.



## Interstellar Alliance White Star Carrier

Unfortunately for the Interstellar alliance this ship's air wing is limited to white star fighters only and it cannot carry most of the fighter types used within the fleet. This means that it will only be able to repair its own air wing and that of the White Star Gunship. For a fleet that makes such extensive use of fighters, to have its only fleet carrier equipped entirely with the rarest fighter is a little unfortunate.

But things are not all bad for this ship. It only carries eight fighters, however these are super heavy fighters, rivalling the Drazi Sky Serpent or the Brakiri Riva. Unlike the other super heavy fighters the whitestar fighter is a superb dogfighter, while still carrying weaponry that will make warship captains weep. A single scramble will launch all but one of these fighters, assuming there was a CAP out already, freeing up the carrier for other special actions. The carrier itself is very capable of getting in among the enemy and mixing it up, having superior manoeuvrability for its weight class, the defences to survive or dodge enemy fire and the weaponry to seriously punish enemy shipping.

The only thing lacking on the ship is interceptors, and Aurora starfuries could be taken to provide this as escorts for the ship, as white star fighters would be wasted in that role.

## Bombardment Carriers

In many ways these are the ideal carriers, as they operate out of the hottest parts of the engagement but are still able to contribute to the battle through long range firepower. The fact that only two races have developed this into a viable tactic is not a reflection of weaponry, as a number of other races could easily build bombardment carriers, for example an Earth Alliance bombardment carrier would make use of the wide variety of missiles available to the fleet. This means it is a mixture of technology and fleet design philosophy that limits the use of bombardment carriers to only two races, the Gaim and the Minbari.

Bombardment carriers will typically be operating a long range, and this is not without its disadvantages. Fleet carriers will be less effective in recovering damaged fighters and repairing them for further action during the engagement.

Repaired fighters will also take time to get into action again, at least a turn and possibly two.

The advantage is that the bombardment carrier will be out of range from much of the enemy fleet, and those few weapons that have the range to reach can be effectively handled by the advanced defences of the respective fleets. This is similar to the way that support carriers operate, keeping out of danger while doing their job. The difference is that bombardment carriers are also directly killing enemy ships with their own firepower as well as doing their job as a carrier.

The exact range that a bombardment carrier will operate at will vary from ship to ship, but most will want to stay out of the fifteen inch danger zone where the more powerful secondary weapons come into play. Many will be operating outside of twenty or twenty five inches and some at greater ranges than that.



### **Gaim Shaakak Queen Light Cruiser**

This ship is not a fleet carrier, but all Gaim queen ships have the fighters and weaponry to qualify as bombardment carriers. The ships air wing is seventy two Klikkita fighters, which is impressive by the standards of most fleets, although only average for a Gaim ship. It also has the shortest ranged Photon bombs of any of the Gaim bombardment carriers at a trifling thirty inches. These are also concentrated into two large weapons, which makes them more suitable for firing on enemy ships than sweeping fighters. This will force the ship to operate closer to the enemy than the other queen ships, probably working alongside the Stuteeka war carrier.

This ship should never get to close range with the enemy, however if cornered the ships lack of manoeuvrability may make it vulnerable to being overrun by the enemy, at which point even it's heavy defences may be overwhelmed and the ship will then be in trouble.

### **Gaim Shrutaa Queen Battleship**

The largest ship in the Gaim fleet and one of the most difficult to kill ships anywhere in the galaxy. It's air wing of one hundred and eight Klikkita fighters and six flights of breaching pods makes for a veritable wall that can be put across the engagement zone to prevent the enemy from closing with the Shrutaa. The battleship itself can operate at ranges of up to forty inches from the main engagement, well outside the range of most weaponry except for some bombardment missiles, the occasional beam or energy mine. Against the missiles it has a heavy array of interceptors, while the others will still have to work to damage what is a very tough ship.

While the durability of the Shrutaa is without equal at battle priority, something had to give. The weaponry of the battleship in terms of direct firepower is less than overwhelming. To actually get the kill on the enemy the ship will have to maximise on the range advantage, the durability of ship to return fire and the turret arc on the Photon bombs to gradually wear away the enemy ships. Of course direct firepower is only part of the Gaim arsenal, as there are the klikkitak

missiles and breaching pods, all of which are not only capable of directly damaging the enemy but also can control movement across space. No ship is going to fly through a wall of breaching pods and Kilikkitak missiles, and a wall of these can prevent short range races from ever getting into range to fire on the bombardment carriers of the Gaim fleet.

### **Gaim Shuuka Queen Light Cruiser**

The smallest of the Gaim queen ships, this ship is not intended to lead a fleet but to provide support to larger queenships. It's Photon bombs are smaller than the larger ships, but mounted in greater numbers, allowing it to spread its firepower out over more of the table. The obvious role for this is in picking off the enemy fighters to clear the way for Klikkitak assault. The Photon bombs can still be concentrated onto a single target, and when this is done the Shuuka has the same firepower as its larger sister, the Shaakak. They also have a massive forty inches range, which is greater than the Shaakak queen light cruiser.

The air wing on the Shuuka is small by Gaim standards, with only thirty six Klikkita fighters and four flights of

breaching pods. However these are not there to be the backbone of the Gaim air superiority but just to bolster the numbers available.

### **Gaim Stuteeka War Carrier**

The only Gaim bombardment carrier that is not a queenship, this ship is much more expendable than the other Gaim bombardment carriers. This can be seen in its defences with a much thinner hull and less interceptors than the same priority Shaakak queenship.

The first role of the Stuteeka is to provide massive numbers of fighters to the Gaim fleet, which it does with one hundred and forty four fighters on the decks, not to mention four flights of breaching pods. Its second role is to provide fleet carrier capabilities to the Gaim fleet, both through improving the dogfight ratings of Gaim fighters and repairing damaged fighters. To do this it will often have to operate closer to the battle than the queenships like to get. Certainly it will need to keep the fighters within thirty inches, and it may be called upon to operate much closer than that, perhaps within ten inches of the fighter and breaching pod ramparts for improved chance of fighter repair. Any Gaim fleet will

benefit from the presence of a Stuteeka, however more than one is unlikely to ever be necessary.

The Photon bombs on the Stuteeka are again a massive forty inches in range, however the ship is unlikely to be able to take advantage of the range advantage as its role requires it to operate closer to the engagement. Again these are smaller weapons more suited for supporting the ships fighters by targeting enemy fighters, although they can still be combined against a single target.



## Minbari Morshin Carrier

The Minbari fleet is governed by two items of technology in how they operate, the neutron laser and stealth systems, and this makes all of their carriers operate as bombardment carriers. The ideal range for the Morshin to operate at is twenty to twenty four inches from the enemy, as this keeps the neutron laser in range while still increasing the ships stealth protection to six up. The neutron laser is small at only two attack dice, however it is still a double damage and precise beam and may be able to finish off a large ship already badly hit by the fleets bigger guns. If not within twenty four inches, then the Morshin will still want to remain within thirty inches of it's fighters so there is some chance of recovering damaged ships. As the range closes the Morshin will want to get within eighteen inches to bring it's fusion cannon into effective range.

Obviously with it's low hull score the Morshin relies on stealth for it's main defence, which makes close engagements against the enemy fleet dangerous. The Morshin will often be found on one end of the Minbari battle line, moving to within ten inches of one enemy

ship which is then targeted by the Nial fighters it's supporting. While still a risk, this does make good use of the air wing assault capacity.

The air wing itself consists of four dozen Nial fighters and a single flight of flyers. The Nials are elite fighters, capable of hunting down small ships while still being one of the best dogfighters in the galaxy especially when supported by a Morshin carrier. If necessary the Nial heavy fighters can be exchanged for Tishat medium fighters, which operating off a Morshin are the most powerful superiority fighters in the galaxy. However the Tishat lose too much firepower to be taken regularly, they are special tool for dealing with specific threats, such as proving to the Psi Corp that they don't have the best superiority fighters in the galaxy.

As a fleet carrier it has a CAP of two dozen Nial fighters, and it can launch the other two dozen without even requiring a scramble order. If the order is available it will enable the flyer flight to launch as well, which will empty the flight decks ready to receive damaged fighters for repair.

## Minbari Neroon Heavy War Cruiser

The Neroon is governed by the same considerations as the Morshin carrier, except that the improved neutron lasers have a range of thirty six inches, which gives the Neroon a sweet range bracket of twenty to thirty inches. With the enemy fleet divided between the forward and a flank arc, that brings two significant weapons into arc while still providing excellent stealth protection. The temptation to bring the ship forward to bring secondary fusion cannon and more arcs into action should be avoided, the enemy will be coming towards you quick enough, no need to charge them. If only one Neroon is present it will be at the heart of the Minbari fleet, but if two are present they may want to take either end of the fleet formation, spreading out the improved fighter recovery area.

The air wing is slightly larger than the Morshin, with an additional flight of flyers over the smaller carrier. The Neroon has a CAP of five flights which are most likely to be all Nial fighters, which means it can launch the rest of the Nials without scrambling. The early scramble may still be useful to



get the flyers off the deck and make the decks ready to receive casualties from the fleet.

## **Psi Corp Mothership**

The mothership is a bit of an oddity. It doesn't have the fleet carrier trait and its air wing is not massive at twenty four black omega starfuries, which are some of the most elite fighters around and far more durable than other fighters. It is a relatively small ship, and being based upon a civilian hull it is not the most durable, however it does have respectable stealth protection. All of this combines to make for a bombardment carrier, although an odd one.

The ship will want to operate in the twenty to thirty inch range bracket to maximise its stealth protection while still being able to fire on the enemy with its main weapon, a heavy laser that rivals that of a hyperion heavy cruiser. This makes the ship something of a sniper, lurking at the edge of the engagement zone taking potshots in at any vulnerable targets while trying to be engaged directly. Ideally the ship should be escorted by one or two skirmish level warships, however there is nothing suitable within the Psi corp fleet itself, so Earth Alliance ships may

have to be used for this, if the points can be spared.

## **Support Carriers**

These are the true carriers, they do not try to be warships but instead concentrate on providing fighters to the fleet. They are often very lightly armed and have weak defences, at least for their priority level and need to be protected from the enemy fleet to some degree.

Not all support carriers have the fleet carrier trait, some are too small, or the fleet that operates them simply doesn't have the technology to operate fleet carriers. This means there will be specific differences between support carrier in how they operate, but in general they will want to be some distance from the main fighting, well outside their own weapons range and hopefully outside of most weapons range from the enemy.

### **Brakiri Brikorta Light Carrier**

This is the lightest of the Brakiri carriers and it is designed to provide additional fighters to the Brakiri fleet and as such

it is unlikely to be necessary if there is a Cidikar present. In smaller fleets it provides an air wing for the other ships in the fleet, as the Brakiri do not operate casual carriers, they must rely upon their real carriers for this.

The air wing is only two dozen fighters, normally Falkosi but very often exchanged for Pikatos heavy fighters as it upgrades the air wing to a useful assault system. However the Pikatos are notoriously bad in dogfights, so if the enemy operates large numbers of fighters the Falkosi may be needed in a defensive role.

The Brikorta itself is not heavily armed for a skirmish level ship, but is not toothless either. And once its fighters are away there is little it can do to support them therefore it is free to make what use it can of these weapons. While not able to kill enemy ships alone, it may be able to tip the balance on a damaged ship on occasion.

### **Brakiri Cidikar Heavy Carrier**

This is the largest and heaviest of the Brakiri carriers and its air wing is so large it is capable of providing fighters for an entire fleet. It carries so



many fighters that it rivals the two largest carriers around, the Poseidon and the Stuteeka, and dwarfs the air wings of most carriers. It also carries both Falkosi and Pikatos as standard allowing both models of fighter to be supported.

The air wing is one hundred and twenty fighters, sixty of each design, and the CAP for the carrier will be sixty fighters. This is likely to be the entire Falkosi wing, which can be distributed around the other Brakiri ships to provide fighter cover as required. The Cidikar itself should not operate without four flights of Falkosi in close support as it has no anti-fighter firepower of its own and its interceptor network is weak. Launching the Pikatos will take two turns, even with scramble special actions, which is highly advisable on the first turn.

The Cidikar is not without weapons, including a heavy laser that is roughly equal to that on a Hyperion in range and effectiveness. This means that the ship can lurk at the rear of the Brakiri fleet and as the range shortens it may be able to provide some covering fire to the warships of the Brakiri fleet against ships penetrating the formation.

### **Drakh Ma'cu Carrier**

The Ma'cu is a fairly standard support carrier with the obvious exception that it carries skirmish priority gunships rather than fighters. It lacks the defences to get into the thick of the fighting like a strike carrier, and it lacks the long range firepower to contribute as a bombardment carrier. It cannot support the raiders that it carries in any way once they are launched. Given all of the above, you may ask what the use of the Ma'cu is and why it would ever be taken as part of a fleet. The answer is simple, it's free. At a battle priority ship with space for four skirmish priority ships in its hangers, it costs the same as the raiders would if you bought them separately. Suddenly the Ma'cu looks to be a much better choice.

While the firepower isn't great and the ship lacks the defences to shrug off

enemy fire, it should still roll forward once the raiders are launched as if nothing else it looks like a big fat and juicy target to the enemy, and if they are shooting the Ma'cu they are not shooting something more valuable.

### **Earth Alliance Avenger Heavy Carrier**

The Avenger was the main carrier for the Earth Alliance in the early years period, the supporting carrier during the third age and had become obsolete by the Crusade era. By the standards of most races it is a respectable support carrier, with four dozen fighters on the deck and fleet carrier capabilities. It is only the vast scale of the Poseidon super carrier that makes the Avenger seam inadequate. Support carriers work well with the Earth Alliance fleets as most of their fleet are casual carriers, each ship bringing a few more fighters to the engagement. All of these fighters can be repaired by the fleet carriers, which means they will consistently feed freshly repaired fighters back into the engagement, far more so than the carriers of some fleets.

The air wing varies between the two time periods, but this should be mixed up anyway to support all of the fighters

used in the fleet. The CAP for the Avenger is four flights, which means the remaining fighters can be launched in a single turn without the need for a scramble special action, so by the end of the first turn the flight decks will be clear to receive damaged fighters.

The Avenger lacks fighter defences and its interceptor network is weak, so if the enemy get close it may need to assign one or two flights of Aurora starfuries to close support. In the earlier fleet there is the Artemis escort variant available and if the fleet is large enough one or two should be assigned to the Avenger to protect it. The weaponry on the Avenger is the weakest aspect of the ship, being



small in number and short in range. They are little more than a fig leaf, a symbolic addition to the ship so that it is not completely toothless.

### **Earth Alliance Explorer Survey Ship**

This ship is an oddity, no other race operates a ship anything like it in their fleets. It is really something of a mobile base of operations and should not be taking part in offensive operations at all. When caught by the enemy it is forced to act in the role of a support carrier by its nature. This isn't the role it was designed for, it's just how it can best contribute to its own survival when caught up in the fighting.

The air wing of three dozen Aurora starfuries is respectable and contributes to the Earth Alliance total fighter forces considerably. However the Explorer doesn't have the facilities to repair or rearm the fighters so once they are away it can do little to help them.

The ship itself lacks significant weapons whichever version of it is used. However it does have one thing going for it that most support carriers would kill for, which is the scout trait. Even once the fighters are launched the explorer can continue to provide

electronic support for the fleet, breaking stealth or redirecting fire. And this from a ship that is moderately difficult to kill.

### **Earth Alliance Poseidon Super Carrier**

Up there with the Cidikar and Stuteeka for the numbers of fighters carried, this is one of the top carriers in the galaxy. By the Crusade era the earth alliance had abandoned smaller carrier designs to use these giants exclusively in the support carrier role simply because they are so good at it.

The air wing is one hundred and forty four fighters, Aurora starfuries as standard but usually changing some to Thunderbolts and in the later years Firebolts as well for well covered reasons. The Poseidon starts with one of the largest CAPs around at seventy two fighters. Enough to provide complete fighter close support to itself and two other ships. These are likely to be Auroras rather than assault or elite fighters. A scramble order will launch ten flights, leaving only a couple of flights on the deck to be launched where possible. These might be saved to be combined with

the first fighters repaired to create a large wave of additional fighters.

The Poseidon itself has massive arrays of anti-fighter weapons and an interceptor network matched only by the Victory destroyer, on loan to the earth alliance fleet from the Interstellar alliance. This means that the Poseidon doesn't need to keep fighters in close support of itself, nor does it need escorts, which is fortunate because the earth alliance fleet abandoned the concept of escort ships years before the Poseidon was first introduced. The Poseidon mounts what would be an impressive array of secondary weapons on a ship of its size, if they were backing up main guns of some sort. As it is, these are its main guns and as such they are not up to the standards expected of a war priority ship. However any enemy that you can lure into attacking the Poseidon at close range will be in for a rude surprise.

While the Poseidon itself is not armed to operate as a bombardment carrier, you can get a similar effect by combining a Poseidon with two or three Apollo bombardment cruisers into a single squadron. Obviously this is something only available in large battles, however these ships would

compliment each other well. Add in a Delphi advanced scout and you have a nasty long range support squadron.

## **Narn T'Rann Heavy Carrier**

After the heady heights of the Poseidon we come crashing down to the T'Rann heavy carrier. This is not a good ship and has little to recommend it to the Narn admiral.

The air wing of forty eight Frazi is only moderately impressive for a support carrier, but that's only to be expected for a ship of this priority. The Frazi themselves should not be

wasted protecting the carrier, as once the fighters are launched it's only role is to get shot at lots and soak up damage that might otherwise be hitting real warships. The fighters may end up in close support of more important ships, or can be used in the assault role that they are designed for.

The only strength of the T'Rann is that its built on the hull of the T'Loth assault ship, which means that it has far more damage and crew than any raid priority ship has any right to expect. This means that it can be thrown into the enemies teeth and there is the chance that they won't simply ignore it and will waste firepower on it, which



is definitely what you want. Just don't let it get into different arcs than the rest of your fleet, you want them to be firing weapons at it *instead of* at your other ships, not *as well as*.

### **Psi Corp Fighter Carrier**

This is just a jump capable ship to transport a dozen Black Omega starfury fighters to the engagement. Once it's deployed them, it really has little to offer the engagement other than possibly causing confusion in the enemy fleet with their psychic crew. However the ship is only skirmish priority, so you cannot expect that much from it anyway.

The medium pulse cannon it carries are nothing impressive even at skirmish priority. The hull score of four is weak, the lack of interceptors is unfortunate, the only bright side is that it has limited stealth, although if it has closed with the enemy to cause confusion the stealth will offer no protection, and it does have some anti-fighter weapons.

The best use of this ship is at patrol and skirmish priorities, where the fighters it carries will make a difference and will need it for transport home.

### **Raider Strike Carrier**

This is a converted civilian ship, never forget that! However it is capable of doing the job that the Raiders intended it to do, which is to control their large fighter fleets and provide them with the support systems of a fleet carrier.

The air wing of two dozen delta V fighters is nothing that will worry any kind of serious warship. These should be upgraded to V2s, and a pair of strike carriers can get the upgrade for a single patrol point. Delta V2s operating off a strike carrier actually become superiority fighters, which makes them competitive in fighter combat. With some Double V heavy fighters along to attack the enemy ships, you might actually be able to achieve something. As a fleet carrier the strike carrier can start with two flights of fighters launched, however it is capable of launching or recovering all of its fighters in a single turn without even needing a scramble action, something that few, if any, other carriers can manage.

The Strike carrier itself has a little anti-fighter firepower but no interceptors, so may want to use a flight as interceptors, especially as the ship is only hull four.

It's weapons are limited in range, and lack the damage output to seriously threaten a warship. On the bright side the ship does have fairly good damage and crew for a ship of its size.

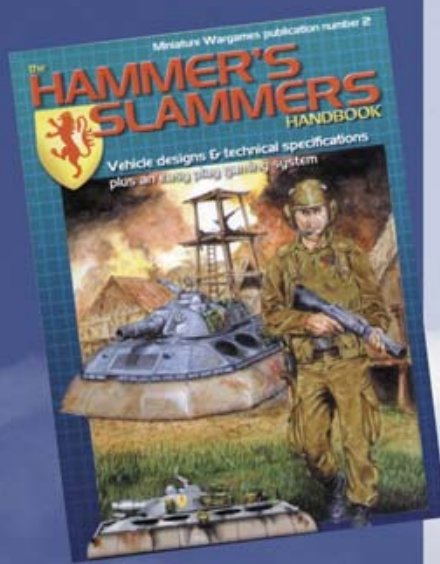
### **In Conclusion**

Carriers are so widespread among the fleets of ACTA that you will be using some sort of carrier in almost every battle. This has hopefully given you some idea as to what you can and cannot expect from them.

It's worth remembering that fighters are dangerous to small ships, but as the ships get larger the threat represented by the fighters decreases, and this is only natural. However there are now a number of uses that fighters can be put to other uses than just attacking the enemy ships head on, so their use has become more interesting. Carriers, especially fleet carriers, make fighters more capable, and those fleets that operate good fleet carriers should use this advantage wherever possible.

Clear skies and good hunting!

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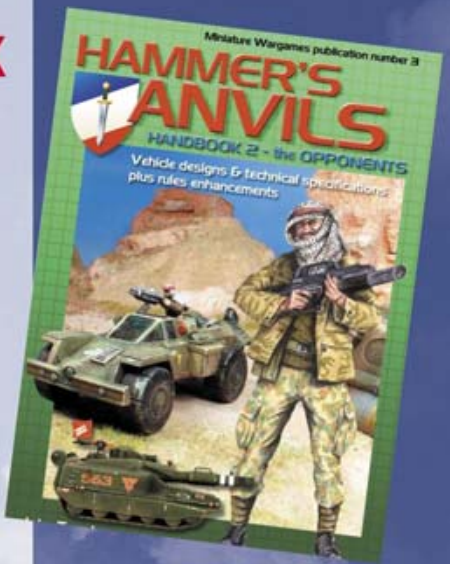
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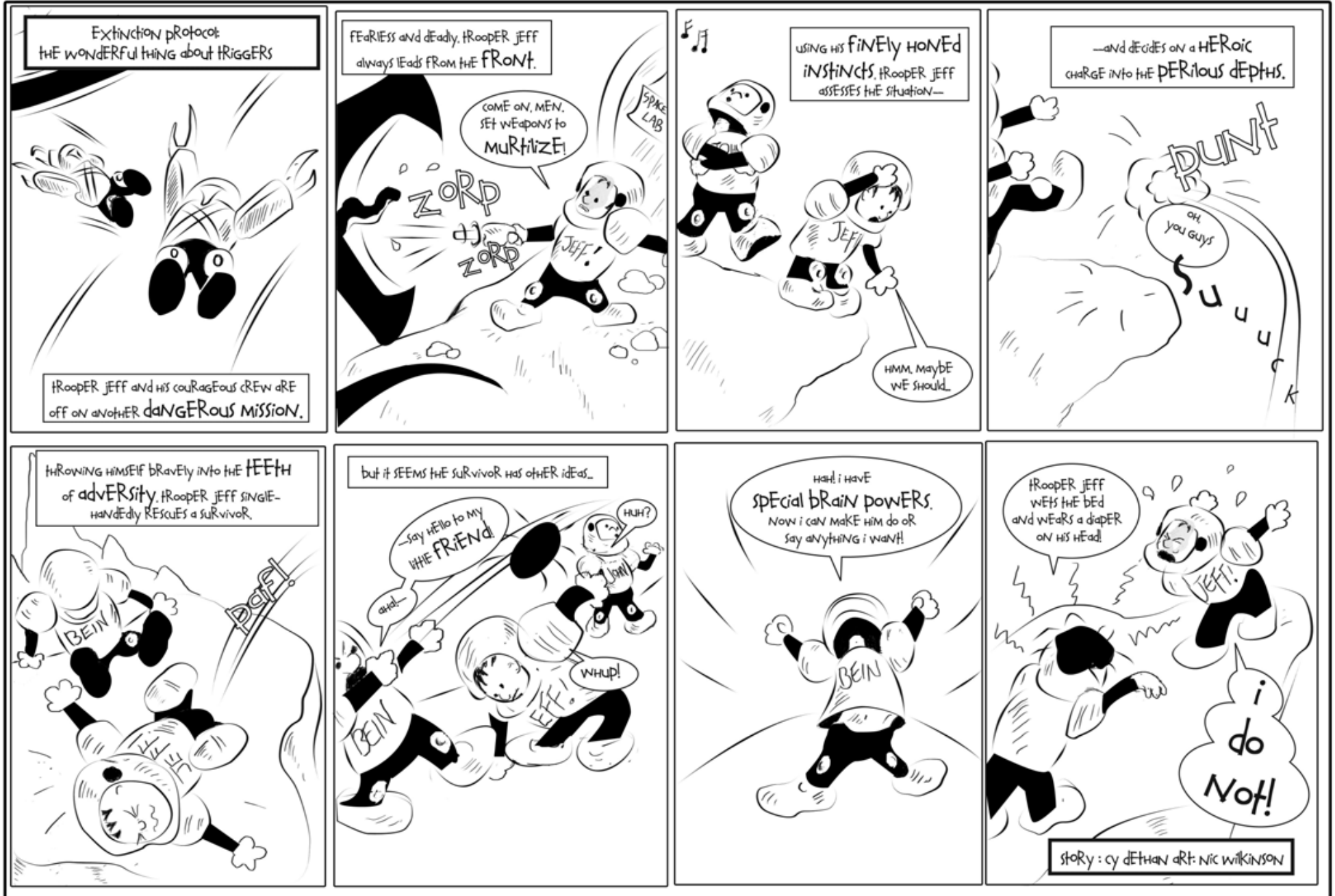
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with a single bound, Hooper Jeff rescues the survivor and heads for home, suddenly—



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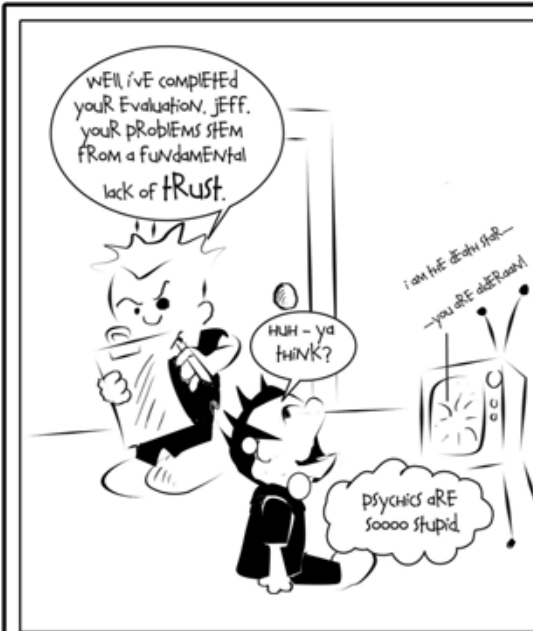


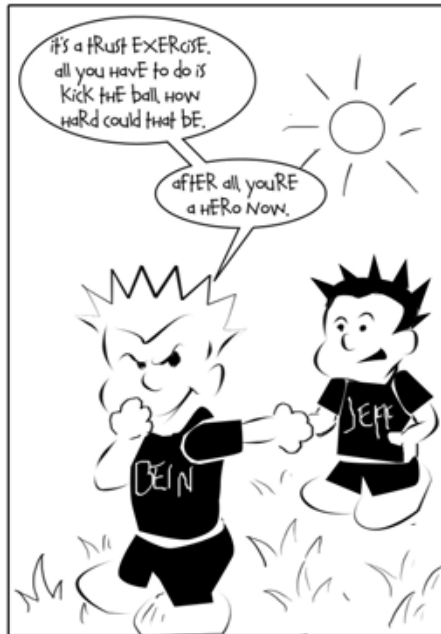
i sometimes worry that i'm not very good at my job...













GAH!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?  
WHA--  
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?



WHAT HAPPENED, CORPORAL?



HE GOT OUT OF HIS RESTRAINTS, HE...

CORPORAL...

HE GOT OUT...



CORPORAL!

NO HE DIDN'T.

HE'S STILL A LITTLE EMOTIONAL, I'M AFRAID. NOT UNCOMMON AFTER A STAY IN THE TANK.

WE DON'T JUST STAND THERE--



--HELP SERGEANT BLACKWELL TO HIS FEET.

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# Vive La France



The French take on... The French? in Victory at Sea

**Andrew Granger**

The turmoil caused by the fall of France led to a serious problem for French ships, some of which followed orders to return to port, others of which sought the safety of international waters. On this occasion, two task forces, each with different plans regarding their future, encountered each other just inside French waters. The resulting combat saw Frenchmen exchange

fire while attempting to make port, or make good their escape.

## Fleets

### The Free French Fleet

La Galissonniere-class cruiser *Jean DeVienne*

Sufferen-class cruiser *Foch*

La Fantasque-class destroyer *Le Malin, L'Indomitable*

Bourrasque-class cruiser *Mistral*

### The Vichy French Fleet

La Galissonniere-class cruiser *Marsellaise*

Suffren-class cruiser *Colbert*

La Fantasque-class destroyer *L'Audaient, le Terrible*

Bourrasque-class destroyer *Simoun*



## Pre-Battle Preparation      Victory and Defeat

Roll for initiative as normal, the player who loses will be forced to set up first.

The fleets are deployed anywhere in their own deployment zones, 10" squares in the opposite corners of the table.

### Aircraft

No aircraft are used in this scenario.

### Conditions

Roll a dice. On a five or more this scenario takes place using the bad weather rules.

### Scenario Rules

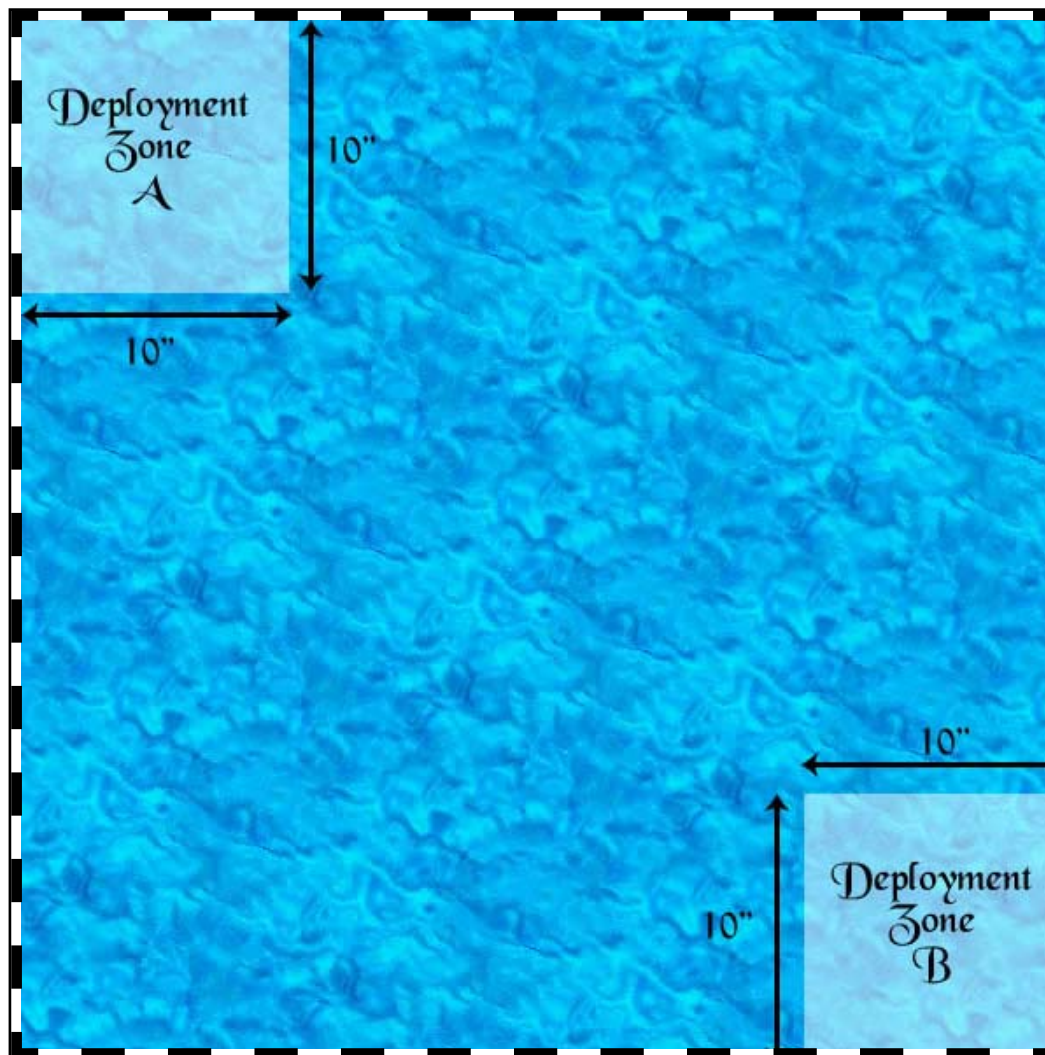
None.

### Game Length

The game continues until the victory conditions have been met.

The players must attempt to exit as many of their ships as possible

through the opponent's deployment zone. For each ship that exits, the player receives a number of victory points equal to what the opponent would earn for destroying the ship.



# BAD BLOOD AND BEYOND

## The Evolution of AAM/Markosia's Starship Troopers Comic

**Cy Dethan**

"Starship Troopers returns in an explosion of Sex, Bugs and Rock 'n' Roll!"

With these words, AAM/Markosia's flagship ongoing series relaunches with issue #5 in January 2008. In the course of my duties as its new writer I've made a lot of friends, met some excitable people in wacky costumes and been called hilarious names by noted comics journalists. It's been a wild ride getting here, and I'm having the time of my life.

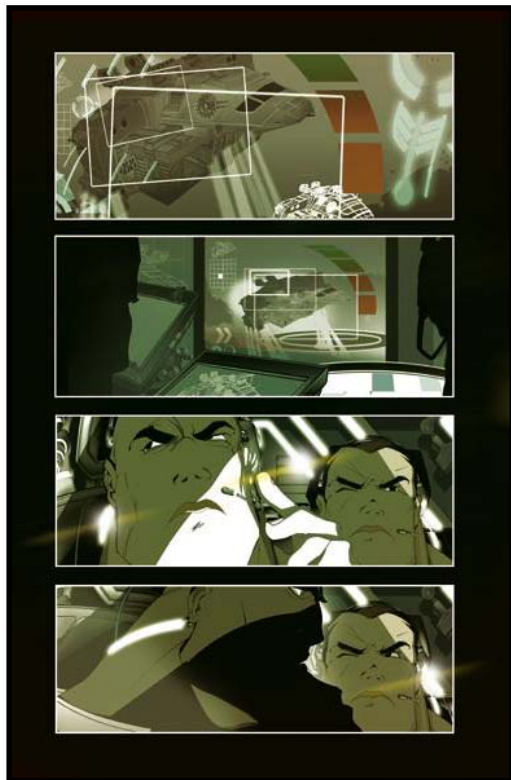
My active involvement with Starship Troopers goes back several years now, beginning (naturally enough) with Mongoose Publishing. It all started when I innocently replied to an advert from a newsgroup poster with the colourful handle of "Old Bear", asking for playtesters. I got to work on Gangs of Mega-City One, Mighty Armies and

A Call to Arms, each one fascinating in its own way. Then, unexpectedly, along came Starship Troopers: The Miniatures Game.

In addition to being the largest and most rewarding playtest assignment I'd ever taken on, Starship Troopers also opened up the possibility of comics set in a universe drawn from the book, film and Roughnecks TV series - all of which were close to my heart for one reason or another. Tony Lee was kicking things off in his now-legendary Blaze of Glory trilogy, and the transition of Signs & Portents to an online magazine appeared to present an ideal opportunity for a monthly series. I blindsided Matthew Sprange with the idea and Extinction Protocol was born.







### EXTINCTION PROTOCOL

With Nic Wilkinson signed on as artist, Extinction Protocol took shape quickly. After a few experiments, we settled on a six-page landscape format in black and white. This gave the artwork room to breathe a bit, and helped to establish a consistent rhythm for the storyline.

My characters, the Silverbacks, were conceived as something of a reject platoon, made up of cast-offs from other units who were all damaged in some way.

Individually, they were all high achievers, but something about each of them didn't quite fit the approved Mobile Infantry profile. For some, this might be as simple as bad luck. A typical Silverback might have been the last survivor from a mission that SICON denies ever took place, for example. At the other end of the spectrum, we could have Troopers with clear-cut personality or psychological problems, but who were too skilled or motivated to be cast out of military service entirely.

I knew I wanted the story to take place in the shadow of the team's ultimate demise. With that in mind, I set up a framing device from the very outset, showing a flash-forward to the apparent destruction of the platoon, before we'd even been introduced to them. With that established, I'd have the freedom to tell the story of what brought them to that position, and then dovetail the story with the framing device and bring it to a conclusion. Seventeen episodes later, that conclusion is now starting to close in.

Meanwhile, somewhere along the line, something quite unexpected had happened...

### AAM/MARKOSIA'S ONGOING SERIES

I first met Tony Lee in 2004, right when I was first trying to talk Mongoose into letting me write Starship Troopers comics. We exchanged a couple of emails, but I didn't actually bump into him again until May 2007. By this time he was the Group Editor of AAM/Markosia, and had started to think about stepping down as writer of the Starship Troopers ongoing series. One thing led to another and, within the space of about a week, I had a pitch approved and was writing my first script for the series. It happened so fast my head was spinning.





My first major decision was that I wasn't going to use Tony's characters. Naturally, I'd followed the adventures of Tamari's (and, later, Tanner's) Tigers, and they were so much a product of Tony's style and writing "voice" that it didn't seem right to take them from him. It would have felt somehow disrespectful as a writer. Of course, I also had a voice of my own to establish, and felt that a new set of characters would be the best way to do that. Having been involved with the Mongoose version of Starship Troopers for so long, I had a huge amount of established background to draw from. I

wanted to tell a story that was markedly different from Extinction Protocol, and yet still consistent with the Mongoose background material. Having depicted the Silverbacks as the "garbage handlers" of the Mobile Infantry, I figured it was time to see how the other half lived. To me, that meant Pathfinders - the MI's true elite. Taking a Pathfinder platoon as my character base would present opportunities for missions that regular Troopers could never attempt, and would really open up the Bug War for exploration. Every step of the way, I hoped to be able to show readers things they hadn't seen before, so a new type of Trooper seemed like a logical start.

### VANAUKEN'S VANDALS

The Vandals were built as much more of a cohesive whole than the Silverbacks. The missions Pathfinders are typically sent on are extremely harsh, and I reasoned that, for a team to survive for any length of time, there would be little scope for bickering and disrespect within the platoon. Every Pathfinder has earned a position among the elite, and the respect that goes with it. Anything short of complete trust among the Vandals would likely result in fatalities. In turn, this would help ensure that every death would mean something, in both personal and practical terms, to the survivors.

I was picturing the Vandals as fierce, proud warriors, so they needed a leader who could embody that. At the same time, it was important to me for all these characters to be essentially human. After all, that's really the point of the war. Enter Lieutenant Nichola Vanauken. A ferocious and dedicated soldier, Vanauken represents the Pathfinder ideal in its purest form. With her two Sergeants, the bear-like Majeski and the cunning, insightful Campanelli, I now had a backbone to support the character core. All that remained was to tell their story.



## BAD BLOOD

The groundwork of my first story arc came out of an early discussion with Tony Lee. One of the first story ideas I'd thrown at him had featured a Skinnie character in a supporting role. Since Skinnies hadn't yet been brought into Markosia's timeline, Tony tossed back the idea of me introducing them and I leapt at the chance. The Bad Blood story arc I plotted out is essentially a First Contact scenario, with the additional threat of Arachnid involvement. Since this was the first time we would get to see Pathfinders in action, I set out a story in which I hoped to really demonstrate what these guys were capable of in a crisis. Under the armour, behind the weapons, I needed to establish that Pathfinders were a breed apart from regular Troopers. In Bad Blood, I wanted to set the characters challenges above and beyond anything a normal MI platoon could hope to survive. To walk away with even a hollow victory - to walk away at all - would then be to establish the credentials required of a Pathfinder. That, I figured, would be a cast of characters worth telling stories about.

So now I had a plot, a script and the green light from my editor. It was time to see what AAM/Markosia had in mind for the artwork.



## ENTER PAUL GREEN

I have to admit, I was a little apprehensive about this side of the equation. Up to now, my *Starship Troopers* comics work had all been produced in collaboration with an artist I knew personally. Nic and I had developed a way of working together that I doubted could be replicated. I would be flying blind on this one, trying to establish a working relationship with a guy I'd never met, and whose work I hadn't seen.

Then I saw the first sample pages.

Paul Green is, in my opinion, a very significant find. He's a phenomenal talent with a huge future in the industry, and a really easy guy to work with. Everything he touched leapt instantly to life. As a writer, I found that Paul's skill in facial expressions and body language opened up an enormous toolbox for me. In Paul's hands, characters could speak volumes with the arch of an eyebrow or a slant of the shoulders. He got an instant feel for the characters, and instinctively understood what I was trying to accomplish with them. He could accurately read the intent behind my script, and find a powerful way to represent it.

The best thing about all that is, I'm going to be able to brag that I wrote the story for his first professional comics work...

## LOOKING AHEAD

Right now, I've got five issues written and enough ideas to take me right through 2008 and beyond. Paul and I have tried to strike a solid blow with *Bad Blood*, and there is plenty more to come. For my part, all I know is that I'm going in all guns blazing, and having as much fun as is possible with your power suit on.

I hope you enjoy the ride.



**Starship Troopers #5 will be available in January 2008. Pre-order your copy from your local comic shop, or buy online at [www.markosia.com](http://www.markosia.com).**

# ASSAULT ON SANTA'S GROTTA



THE ONLY GOOD ELF IS A DEAD ELF...

**Matthew Sprange**

Well, I could give you a long a twisted reason for this article. But it is Christmas, you like playing Battlefield Evolution and, hey, here's a scenario for you. . .



## HAVE YOU BEEN NAUGHTY OR NICE?

At Christmas, every good boy and every nice girl can expect a visit from Santa. Unfortunately, there are many generals in the world who feel they have been cynically overlooked by the spirit of Christmas cheer and, once the hiding place of Santa's Grotto was triangulated by satellite reconnaissance (and by Special Forces stealthily hunting down wandering elves), an attack was inevitable. Soldiers were ordered to the North Pole with orders to return with as many presents for their general as possible.

However, they were to find that Santa was by no means defenceless...

## ATTACKER'S BRIEFING

After having located Santa's Grotto, there was no time to lose. Launch your surprise assault, and carry away as many presents as you can before the elves can regroup and respond. Remember, Christmas Cheer is for the weak!

- The total points value of your force may not exceed 2,000 points.

- Your army may not include Emplacements.
- You deploy your entire army second and take the first turn.

## SANTA'S BRIEFING

The enemy has come, and aims to rob you of all the presents you have made and collected throughout the year. Defend them with your heart, your blood, your very life! The children of the world are depending on you!

- You may rearrange any terrain in your deployment zone as you see fit.
- Your army must comprise of the units listed below.
- You deploy your entire army first and take the second turn.

## SCENARIO RULES

The scenario will last until the Victory Conditions are met. Any enemy entering Santa's Grotto may pick up one present. A present will also be dropped whenever an elf is killed. If Santa is killed or a Defence Turret is destroyed, D6 presents are dropped.

## VICTORY CONDITIONS

The game ends when either Santa's Defence Force Shatters the attacker, or when the attacker has gathered at least twelve presents.

If Santa is killed, everyone (in the world) loses. But the attacker still gets his presents this year!

## SANTA'S DEFENCE FORCE

Santa can count upon the following units to defeat any attempt to break into his grotto.

- 1 Santa
- 1 Lee Majors
- 3 (Master) Chief Elves
- 2 Squads of Elf Toymakers

In addition, Santa has installed two Defence Turrets around his Grotto.





## SANTA

*Santa w/AK-47*

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	4"	D6	4+	4+	7+

The last defender of joy and happiness and mince pies.

### AK-47 Assault Rifle

Range: 20" Damage: D6

**Unit Type:** Command

## Special Rules

**Chainsaw Warrior:** Santa has access to his favourite woodcutting chainsaw and he's prepared to use it. At the start of any turn Santa may announce he is slinging his AK and breaking out the Alaskan Special. If he does so then he gains an extra 3D6 Close Combat dice.

**Michael Myers Mask:** Santa received an odd present from the Elves last year - a blood-spattered hockey mask, which he likes to wear for a laugh around the grotto. Any unit approaching within 6" of Santa must roll a D6 and on a result of 1 or 2 they are frozen in horror and cannot move or fire for the remainder of the turn.

## LEE MAJORS

*Lee Majors w/Minigun*

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	6"	2xD6+1	5+	4+	7+

He's been a very good boy. . .

## Minigun

Range: 24" Damage: 6xD6+1

**Unit Type:** Command

## Special Rules

**Hero:** Lee Majors is a hero and is unlikely to be killed. Whenever he is due to be removed from the table, roll one dice. On a 2 or more, he leaps out of danger at the last moment!

**Minigun:** This weapon causes a -2 penalty to all Armour rolls. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only.

## (MASTER) CHIEF ELF

*(Master) Chief Elf w/Hand Cannon or Missile Launcher.*

Size	Move	Close Combat	Target	Armour	Kill
1	5"	2xD6	4+	5+	7+

The best an Elf can be. Sworn to die in Santa's service.

### Hand Cannon

Range: 24" Damage: 2xD6+2

### Missile Launcher

Range: 40" Damage: D10+3

**Unit Type:** Command

## Special Rules

**Hero:** (Master) Chief Elves are heroes, though not as much as Lee Majors. Whenever one is due to be removed from the





## ELF TOYMAKERS

*Senior Toymaker w/AK-47, 7 Junior Toymakers w/ AK-47, 2 Gunner Toymakers w/Machine Gun or Rocket Launcher*

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

Comprising some of the most disciplined and well-trained elves in the world, Santa's Defence Force has a long and proud history.

### AK-47 Assault Rifle

Range: 20" Damage: D6

### Machine Gun

Range: 30" Damage: 2xD6

### Rocket Launcher

Range: 30" Damage: D6+1

**Unit Type:** Squad

## Special Rules

**Rocket Launcher:** This weapon causes a -1 penalty to Armour rolls and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6) against every model within 2" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction.

**Machine Gun:** If a Ready action is taken to set this weapon up properly (lie prone, extend bipod, etc), then all subsequent Shoot actions will gain two bonus Damage Dice though it may only shoot in its forward facing. These bonus dice are lost as soon as the model moves. In addition, every Damage Dice this

table, roll a dice. On a 4 or more, it leaps out of danger at the last moment!

**Hand Cannon:** This weapon causes a -1 penalty to Armour rolls and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6) against every model within 3" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction.

**Missile Launcher:** This weapon causes a -3 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 1" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction. If a model of Size 2 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally. This weapon may be used against Air Units.

weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only.

## GROTTO DEFENCE TURRET

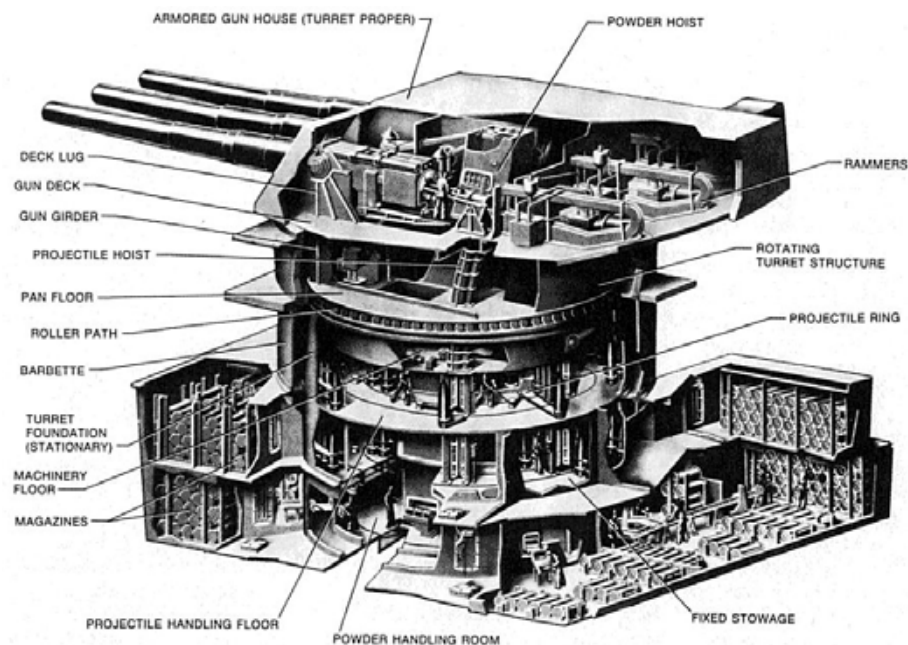
*Defence Turret w/Missile Launcher and Minigun*

Size	Target	Armour	Kill
4	10+	2+	14+

High technology has come to the North Pole with these state-of-the-art defence turrets.

### Missile Launcher

Range: 40" Damage: D10+3



**When It Comes To Defence Turrets  
Santa Ain't Foolin'...**

### Minigun

Range: 24" Damage: 6xD6+1

**Unit Type:** Structure

### Special Rules

**Hidden:** Santa loves surprises. Do not deploy any defence turrets at the start of the game. Instead, you may reveal them at the start of any turn, simply by placing them anywhere within your deployment zone (they rise out of the ground, natch).

**Minigun:** This weapon causes a -2 penalty to all Armour rolls. In addition, every Damage Dice this weapon rolls will count as two for the purposes of Suppression only.

**Missile Launcher:** A Defence Turret has 8 missiles, and may fire two every turn. This weapon causes a -3 penalty to Armour rolls, and will roll extra Damage Dice (but only D6 with no penalty to Armour rolls) against every model within 1" of the centre of the model its first Damage Dice is allocated to - these extra models need not be in Line of Sight. It may only be fired once per turn, and never as a reaction. If a model of Size 2 or greater is within the Fire Zone, you may opt to roll this weapon's Damage Dice against that model, rather than allocate normally. This weapon may be used against Air Units.

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