

# Signs & Portents

## WARGAMER

### IRON THUNDER, PART 1

Victory at Sea goes American Civil War!

### ESCORT TACTICS

How to protect your carriers in A Call to Arms

### THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

First part of a new army list for Battlefield Evolution

Plus... ACTA battle report, Victory at Sea scenario, ACTA scenario, bizarre staff emails revealed, Extinction Protocol and much, much more!

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Big news! Brain bug sighted at Mongoose Towers! That's right, I have acquired a photograph of the very nearly finished resin brain bug being prepared for the second edition of Starship Troopers. If that isn't enough, Adrian is working on MI Skyhook as I type, preparing it for a life in resin. We have all of us been waiting a long time to see MI flyers and with the move to resin for bigger models it's finally going to happen!

And that neatly takes care of a goodly part of my editorial. Other than that, you'll notice we are something of an ACTA special this month, with a plethora of goodness for fans of Babylon 5. I can't promise this every month, of course. With the return of Starship Troopers and my own cunning plans for World at War, my advice is: get it while you can.



For those of you with an interest in World War II, I have assembled a crack support team including TableScape and Bolt Action Miniatures, who will be providing the Studio with the terrain and miniatures you will see in the rules and in S&P next year. Make sure you check out their ads in this issue.

Last, but certainly not least, we are beginning the serialisation of Iron Thunder, our variant Victory at Sea rules set in the American Civil War. Damn the torpedoes and Happy New Year!

**Ian**





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<p><b>Iron Thunder, part 1</b></p> <p>American Civil War Naval actions using Victory at Sea. Part one of these great rules is inside.</p>  <p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>Caught at Anchor</b></p> <p>A nice little carrier group scenario to lead you into the New Year.</p>  <p><b>13</b></p>
<p><b>35</b></p>  <p>NO SITUATION, SIR. CO--</p> <p>—SERGEANT BLACKHILL WAS DEMONSTRATING A DISARMING TECHNIQUE I'D BEEN HAVING TROUBLE WITH.</p> <p>IT'S - IT'S A GOOD TECHNIQUE, SIR. I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER IT.</p> <p>KEEP IT OUT OF CORRIDORS, GIRLS. WANT TO HAVE SISSY FIGHTS, REQUEST A ROOMER TO FLEESE.</p> <p>MOVE ALONG, NOW.</p> <p>YOU'RE PUSHING THAT KID TOO HARD, JEFF. HE'S A GOOD SOLDIER, BUT YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO WORK WITH HIM.</p>	 <p><b>Alan Oliver is back again with more guidance for A Call to Arms players.</b></p> <p><b>26</b></p>
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## Soul Hunters Updated **10**

This very popular article updated to the second edition of A Call to Arms.



## The United States Air Force - Part One **43**

Jason Bracich provides a variant new army list for use with Battlefield Evolution.



## A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing **47**

Raiders and pak'ma'ra are minor players in the Babylon 5 galaxy, but that doesn't mean they don't have their followers. With that in mind here's a scenario especially for them.



## Retribution At Quadrant 15 **50**

Time for a heavyweight battle report between ACTA games designer Matthew Sprange and top tournament player Tristan Lomas. Can Tristan live with the B5 maestro?

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## Convention and Events Diary

**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 Salute 08.** ExCel Centre, London, UK.  
Saturday 19th April 2008.  
<http://www.salute.co.uk>

**0 Mongoose Hall 08.** Croft Sports Centre, Swindon, UK.  
Sunday 11th May 2008.  
<http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>

**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 Q-Con XV.** Queen's University Belfast Students' Union  
Friday 27th - Sunday 29th June 2008  
[www.q-con.org.uk](http://www.q-con.org.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

# A Difference of Opinions

Ian Barstow

A short while ago a debate kicked off in the Studio about whose *A Call to Arms* fleet was the best. Obviously this was a highbrow affair as you'd expect from the staff of a gaming company. Having kept all the emails I thought you might like a little insight into how the 'professionals' think. Here are your contenders...

Matthew Sprange (Minbari)  
 Nick 'The Greek' Robinson (Centauri)  
 Chris Longhurst (Earth Alliance)  
 My Exceedingly Good Self (Dilgar)  
 Russell 'Phil' Veal (Narn)

**Ian:** So, here we are. My question is, which of us has the best fleet in *A Call to Arms*. Obviously it's me but for the sake of a good argument let's assume there might be an alternative option. Anybody brave enough?

**Matthew:** Well, obviously it's MY Minbari – they have the sleekest, best-looking ships, can hide behind Stealth, and are loaded with the biggest guns in the game! What's not to love?

**Greek:** Bish, bosh. The Minbari are a bunch of wimps and one-trick ponies, one failure of their precious stealth they fall to pieces, literally! Wimpy boneheads. On the other hand the fleet of the great Centauri Republic is the most dynamic to use, with their speed and agility they can manoeuvre themselves into a great position on the field and can deal a great deal of damage with all those double damage weapons.

**Matthew:** Wimpy? How can you say wimpy? The Republic tried making first contact with the Minbari, and then decided it was a very, very bad idea...and who needs Double Damage, when you have Triple Damage Beams?

**Chris:** Minbari are easy to beat. All you have to do is let them destroy you and when you get down to your last half-dozen ships they surrender.

**Ian:** Well, other than Matthew it's common knowledge that nobody actually likes the Minbari, but you're all missing the obvious. It's clear that the awesome Dilgar are the fleet of choice for the serious player. OK, we've got a few flying bricks but the majority of the ships look like they were designed by Jules Verne, and that green, red and brass colour scheme just wipes the floor with the rest of you.

**Greek:** Yeah, pity your fleet is all that shiny metal colour scheme the minis originally came with. And anyway everyone knows purple is the best colour. Just ask Mr Pink – 'Purple is a cool colour'. Dilgar have no subtlety – they make even the Narn appear gentle. Just move forward and throw billions of dice. BORING. Your beard is rubbish as well.

**Ian:** Typical Centauri. Underhand and snide. And I'll have you know my fleet is painted just nicely, thank you. It just took a while.

**Russell:** The Minbari hide, the Centauri try and stab you in the back, the Dilgar are extinct... but at the end of the day there is nothing better than bringing the fight to your enemies in true, old fashioned, don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes up close and personal and the Narn are the fleet for doing just that. They are tough, have so many crew so they

will fight on until the ship is a burning wreck. The resolve of the Narn makes them one of the most dangerous fleets out there. They can mix it up from any angle with deadly guns on every side of their ships. They have E-mines to blast those pesky fighters out the sky, a good range of beam weapons as well as some of the best looking ships in the game. Who wants a flying magnet when you can have a wedge!

**Ian:** Well at least it's a more reasoned argument than picking on a bloke's facial hair. The Narn are too crude for my liking though. No sophistication. The choice of the unimaginative.

**Chris:** Wedge schmedge. I'll have you know the brick is scientifically proven to be the most space-worthy shape. Plus, we've [*the Earth Alliance*] got proper missiles.

**Russell:** With these missiles you surely are just compensating for something?

**Ian:** Mostly the naff colour scheme. I mean, who wants to play with a fleet that looks like Panzers In Space? Did I mention our very cool Captain Nemo look?

**Chris:** Yeah. Compensating for saving everybody's ass. How many races have created a messiah, huh? Oh, wait, that's right, just us – and we've done it twice! Or three times, if you count Sinclair. Yeah, that's right Minbari – your race sucks so much that even with an ancient civilisation, high technology and the sponsorship of an elder race, they *still* needed to get their saviour on loan from the Earthers. That's why the EA paint their ships white. We see no reason to hide in space. Oh no. We *want* you to be looking our way so that when you get killed, you get killed in the FACE.

**Matthew:** Oh, ignore Dukhat and DeLenn, why don't you! And while we are on the subject, the Minbari produce that heavenly creature (DeLenn - pre hair, of course), while the best you can do is that minger Ivanova.

**Ian:** Oh, this from the bloke who goes out for dinner with Claudia Christian whenever he can...

**Matthew:** Merely separating character from actor – she doesn't like people assuming she is a real Commander :)

**Chris:** DeLenn? Who had to become half human before she could get anything done? Dukhat? Whose greatest achievement was an inconvenient death? I mean, what did he do, exactly, before pointing a load of guns at another race and getting all emo (and killed) when they responded in kind? And that's another thing – only human women have hair! Minbari? Bald. Narn? Bald. Abbai? Fins. Centauri? Shaved. Dilgar? We only see one, and that's totally a wig, which must have been made from human hair because there's apparently no other kind.

**Ian:** That is so not a wig!

**Matthew:** You dare play the emo card when you have Byron on your side? Flouncing into Babylon 5, 'oh wow, my hair, it shaketh like a breeze. Come Lyta, let me kiss you with tongues. . .' A real stand up hero that one.

**Chris:** Byron only acted like that because he was pretending to be a Minbari. You can tell, because he spouts a lot of rubbish about peace and pacifism, gets totally manipulated by any warrior-types in the vicinity, then kills himself. The only difference between him and Minbari is that Minbari are generally less successful at suicide, despite having had thousands of years to get the technique right. Who invented "We live (briefly) for the One, we die for the One"?

**Ian:** Byron is a total embarrassment who discredits anybody he comes in contact with. The Dilgar would have experimented on his hair and then fired him out of a waste extractor.

**Matthew:** You are missing the essential point. The sort of player attracted to the Earth Alliance is one who has utterly no imagination. He just goes with the trend, sees a bunch of 'cool' looking ships on the screen, and says that for me. As a life form, an Earth Alliance player is just one step up from those who play Shadows. He is just not pulling, you understand? A Minbari player on the other hand, well, here is someone who has an understanding of grace and beauty, and yet who also appreciates complete destruction. He is the kind of guy who visits art galleries and can quote poetry to a room full for attentive girls, and then go off a smash a stool over the head of the local bully at the pub. After downing eighteen pints.

**Ian:** Ha! Clearly the Minbari player would have his head too far up his own backside to be heard by the girls and then he'd be about to beat up the pub bully when he'd decide to surrender instead. In short, Minbari are the ultimate drips.

**Matthew:** Says the Dilgar player – a fleet played by the sort of person who looks back on the 70's and thinks 'yeah, that was a good time.' Locked in the past, they just cannot let go, wearing flares, listening to Cliff Richard, and talking about Love Thy Neighbour as a high point in British comedy, little realising that, like his fleet, all that belongs to history. Be forward thinking, intellectual and cool. Play Minbari.

**Ian:** There's nothing wrong with being retro. Playing the Dilgar says "I like style and I like controversy". It's for the free thinking and the imaginative; the sort of player who doesn't mind playing the bad guy because he's confident in his own sense of being.

**Matthew:** Playing Dilgar says 'I am so *old*, I have turned beige, and am now just waiting to die.' Kind of what the Dilgar did. Except the turning beige bit.

**Ian:** Oh, now the low blows are really coming in. Minbari are for the sort of person who only ever wears the same type of clothing. Unimaginative and prepared to buy in to one of the worst racial concepts since Jar Jar Binks.

**Matthew:** Hey, there is nothing wrong with Jar-Jar, you just have no appreciation for real comedy. I even named my pooch after the guy, and that is a real man's dog.

**Ian:** There's no polite answer to that.

**Greek:** So we can sum it up as: EA – Boring, boring, boring. Ships that a two year old can build with sticklebrinx. Dilgar – Slippers, pipe, Worthers Originals, wood fire, rocking chair, Smell of wee. Minbari – Space Elves. All that power and they do nothing worthwhile. In fact everyone else would have preferred it if they quit the galaxy along with their Old One friends. Narn – Make Millwall supporters seem level headed sorts. Ultimate space hooligans. But at least they aren't so boring they actually can be quite fun to pulverise into atoms. Centauri – Too busy enjoying a party (or ten) to bother with their empire. Now back to the actual benefits of the various ships.

**Ian:** Ooh, get her...

**Matthew:** Power is its own end, fool!

**Ian:** He means you, Greek.

**Chris:** In the Minbari's case, the end of anything even vaguely interesting about them. "Help Minbari, everything's going pear-shaped!" "Nope. Too busy swanning about in our perfect\* society." \*By which I mean 'totally flawed'. Minbari evolved those bone crests to make it more difficult for them to insert their heads into their own asses, yet with a little help from the Vorlons they not only triumphed over this adversity but became the galaxy's premiere cranial-rectal-interface experts.

**Matthew:** I think I've just been pwned :)

**Russell:** War is a primal thing, why not pick the most aggressive fleet out there get stuck in and take the fight to any who would oppose the Narn Regime! Plus you're extinct so can't really comment...

**Ian:** Firstly, I'd like to point out that for the purposes of the game my fleet is most definitely not extinct! Plus, as I keep having to mention, Dilgar are easily the most stylish fleet.

**Matthew:** Green. More green. Bit of red. What you really want are subtle shades of pastel blue and purple, glinting in the starlight as Minbari ships slip through your frontlines and give you a right good smacking. Oh, and not being dead helps too.

**Russell:** Surely the striking Narn patterning, although hard to paint when done right, makes my fleet one of the most striking on the tabletop and what's better than ships that look like star destroyers!

**Matthew:** We're not in it to be *liked!* We are in it to win! As for the Dilgar being stylish, they were beaten up by a bunch of no-hopers in the League who normally get battered by Raiders. Clearly, the Dilgar are neither dangerous, nor cool.

**Greek:** Unimaginative. Says the Dilgar...compared to the elegant Centauri ships the Dilgar and Narn are seriously bleugh. The Centauri are able to change their tactics to match their foes far more easily than most fleets. They are reasonably tough, have good firepower, a nice

array of fighters and are agile. With their good selection of ships they can be flexible enough to give anyone a good fight.

**Matthew:** You are talking about elegance to a Minbari? As for tactics, the Minbari are the kings of space. Their ships are tougher than yours, have much better firepower, way better fighters, and can turn with the best of them – on top of all that, they cannot be seen! Any scenario, any battle, the Minbari come tops. And the fact that the Narn have never beaten the Centauri in a stand up fight. And if they can't beat the Centauri, what chance have they got against a real fleet. Like the Minbari?

**Russell:** What you mean is, the Narn have not beaten the Centauri with the Shadows backing them up... well I seem to remember the Narn pushing the Centauri back and carving out an entire empire for themselves. Besides the Minbari are a bunch of hypocrites who can't admit that they are just humans with odd-shaped heads but pretend to be enlightened by hiding the fact they suffer from all the emotional hang ups humans do but are just too arrogant to admit it.

**Matthew:** They *are* enlightened! You cannot build a neutron laser capable of wiping out a city unless you are truly enlightened!

**Russell:** If you are saying to be enlightened mean you need to have lots of ways to destroy things then clearly the Dilgar were the most enlightened of us all.

**Ian:** I'll buy into that argument.

**Chris:** And yet, getting back on the subject, they are nowhere near as flexible as the EA. We've got more kinds of ship than anyone else – hell, we could field an entire fleet of Hyperion variants and still have a good chance of coming out on top. If the 'fleet of 10,000 missiles' isn't your thing, EA ships can close for short-range gunfights or use lasers – and everyone knows lasers are cool.

**Matthew:** Who needs flexible when you can destroy anyone you meet as soon as wink at them? Blockade mission? Kill the blockaders. Convoy duty? Kill the attackers. Recon sweep? Kill the targets. It really is very simple.

**Russell:** Besides the biggest problem with the Minbari and Earth Alliance is that between then they spawned the most annoying thing in the entire B5 universe... yes the RANGERS! A bunch of hippy new romantics dancing about with their shiny metal sticks thinking they are going to save the galaxy. I mean, please! Any race that had a hand in creating them cannot be the best!

**Matthew:** Yes, because your hair styles are obviously so much better.

**Chris:** We deny all responsibility for the Rangers.

**Ian:** It's like the battle of the Goody Two-Shoes here. All of you have prissy little fleets, but who wants to be good when you can be bad. For my money Dilgar make the Shadows look like pussies. After all, they are just stick insects basically, while we have Jha'Dur. Nice.

**Matthew:** If you go for women with a pasty planted on the front of their face.

**Chris:** Uh huh. Getting slapped around by the Earth Alliance – in old-school flying bricks, no less – and having the last member of your race casually annihilated by the Vorlons makes you totally evil.

**Ian:** Hey, who used prisoners of war as experimental guinea pigs? The Dilgar, that's right. How bad is that?

**Matthew:** Humans do it to people on their own side. . .

**So there you have it. Some of the finest minds at Mongoose reduced to personal insults within a few minutes of starting. For those of you in any doubt, obviously the Dilgar are the best because they are proper baddies, have style, and because I play them. Hope that cleared things up.**



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# Soul Hunters



## Rules for this Mysterious Race in A Call to Arms updated to Second Edition

Derina Ramsey

**“There are beings in the universe billions of years older than either of our races. Once long ago, they walked among the stars like giants, vast, timeless.”**

**- Delenn of the Minbari**

All of the advanced races of the galaxy in the era of the First Ones were near or past the threshold of immortality, as their understanding of medical science had advanced to the point where life could be prolonged indefinitely. However, all races save the Speakers had come to their immortality through artificial means, whereas the Speakers had been born naturally immortal. Now, the next generation of the Speakers were found to be aging and dying like any other sentient life forms.

A race thought to be the Mindriders created a new race of sentient life forms from the DNA of the Speakers in an attempt to keep and preserve the wisdom and power of their genetic progenitors. This experiment failed, but did create the Soul Hunters.

The Soul Hunters go from world to world collecting the souls of great poets, war leaders and visionaries just before death to capture their souls so they can live on in spirit form, listened to in the whisper galleries. A fleet of Soul Hunter ships were present during the Earth Minbari war when the great Minbari leader Dukhat, head of the legendary “Grey Council”, was killed when the Humans opened fire on the Grey Council’s Sharlin cruiser as the Minbari advanced on the Human scout fleet with their gun ports open.

The Minbari piled the dead to keep the Soul Hunters away from the great leader Dukhat. Ten years after the Earth Minbari war, Delenn was appointed to the last of the Babylon stations to keep an eye on Commander Sinclair who saved Delenn’s life when a Soul Hunters ship was brought aboard Babylon 5 after it came through the Jump Gate, partly shot away and out of control going to ram the station. The Soul Hunter was deemed mad by another of his order who came through the Jump Gate, the other told Commander



Sinclair that he was going to take out the soul of Deleenn before her time as the first failed to get Dukhat's soul during the Earth Minbari war ten years ago.

### Soul Hunter Transport

**Raid**

**Speed:** 10  
**Turn:** 2/45°  
**Hull:** 5  
**Damage:** 20  
**Crew:** 1  
**Troops:** 4  
**Craft:** None

**Special Rules:**  
Advanced Jump Point, Adaptive Armour, Stealth 4+, Advanced Anti-Fighter 2, Self Repair 1D6, Flight Computer, Breaching Pod, Atmospheric and Shields 10/2

**In Service:** Unknown



The Soul Hunter Transport operates like the Shadows and the Vorlons, in that they automatically repair critical hits in the End Phase, in the turn *after* the critical was suffered.

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	Special
Advanced Plasma Stream	20	F	3	Super AP, Triple Damage, Precise

The Soul Hunter Transport follows the same special rules as the Shadows and the Vorlons.

Soul Hunter Transport

Soul Hunters have an Initiative Value of +4

## Soul Hunter Construction Guide

First of all make sure that your painting area is clear as you don't want to have any cuts...

The parts you need are:

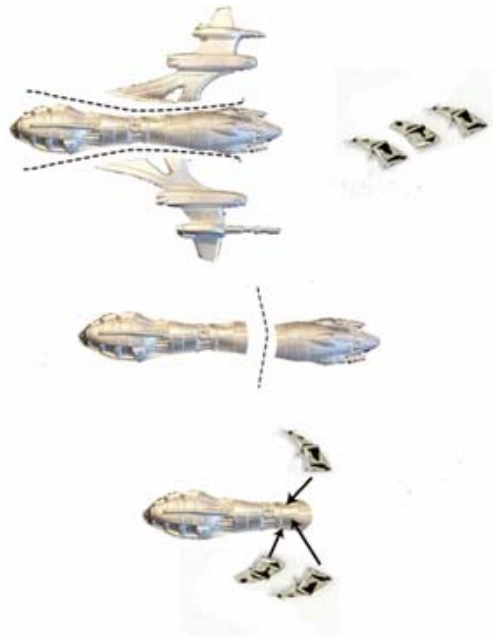
3x Centauri Sulust fin (Ref 1133621701)  
1x Drazi Warbird Hull (Ref 1133651001)

First of all clean the parts with a 1/2 round needle file to remove the

mould lines and with a pair of snips take off the wings from the Warbird hull and then file down the rough edges.


Remove the rear of the Warbird hull (about 1/3 of the length) - you can round off the rear of the new hull with a file or smooth it over using modelling putty.

Attach one Sulust fin to the top of the Warbird hull with the tip pointing backwards, the other two are at ninety degrees - one on the port side and the other to the starboard side also pointing backwards; you will need to make small incisions into the hull to create the best join for the fins.



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# Caught at Anchor

## A Scenario for Victory at Sea



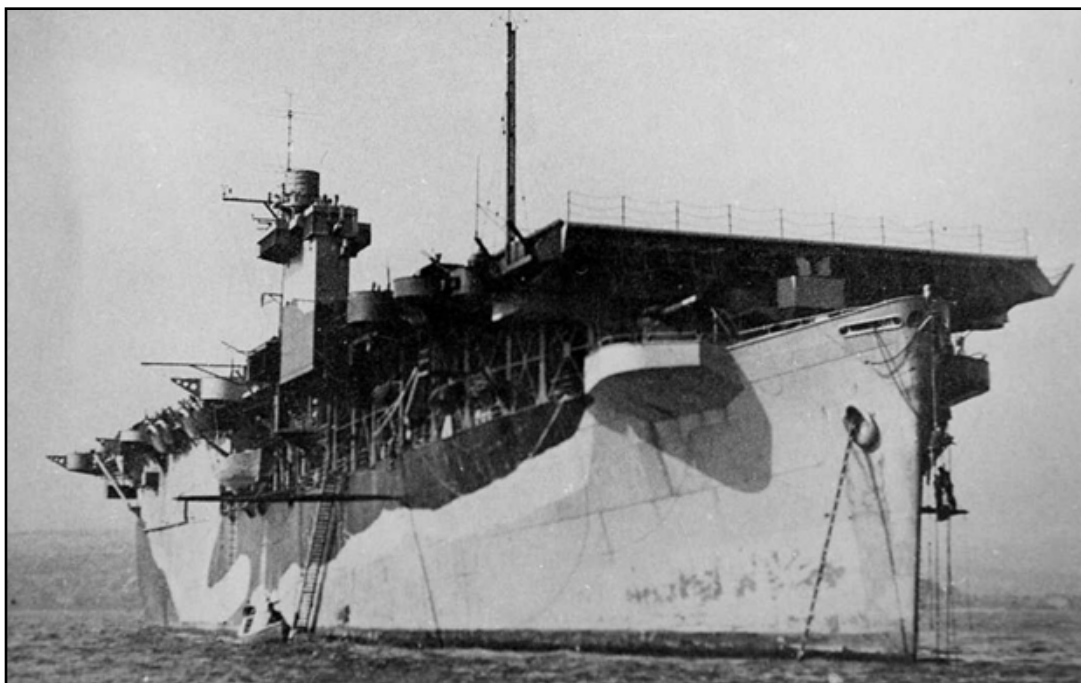
Andrew Granger

A carrier task force cruising near enemy-held waters learns of a rare opportunity. An enemy task force is anchored near a small island, awaiting re-supply and re-fuelling. With time a factor, and the distance too great to send in surface ships, it falls to the aircraft to strike the surprise blow. Massing every aircraft that can be spared, the carriers turn into the wind and launch the attack.

### Fleets

The attacker has five Fleet Allocation Points at priority level Raid with which to choose from his chosen fleet list. These points must be used on squadrons of carrier-based aircraft.

The defender has six Fleet Allocation Points at priority level Raid with which to choose from his chosen fleet list. The defender may choose freely with the exception that submarines may not be chosen.



### Pre-Battle Preparation

The defender sets up first. Place a small island, 12" in diameter, no closer than 3" to the one short map edge, centred on that map edge. The defender may deploy his ships within 6"

of the island, with the ships no more than 3" away from each other.

The Attacker deploys from a point along one long map edge 18" from the edge of the defender's deployment zone. The attacker

may keep a portion of his aircraft of the map as reserves, but may only bring the reserves into the game if he still has aircraft on the map at the start of that turn.

## Aircraft

Carriers in the defending fleet may not have aircraft in the air at the start of the game. Land-based aircraft may have one squadron

in the air at the start of the game, representing combat air patrols.

## Scenario Rules

The defender's ships do not expect trouble, and so are surprised. The defender may not take any action during the first turn. In addition, the ships are considered to be skeleton crewed for the second turn. From

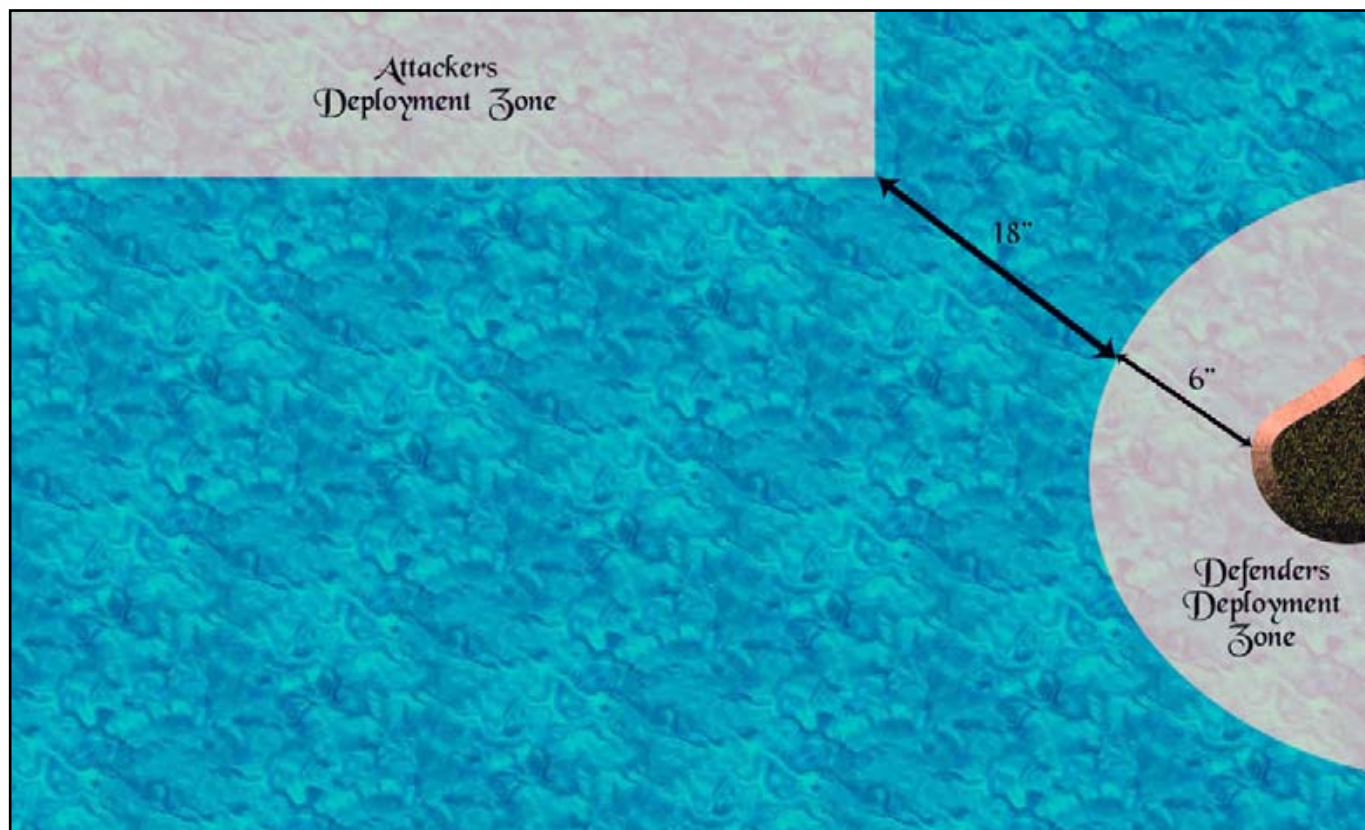
the third turn on, the defender ships may act as normal.

## Game Length

10 turns.

## Victory and Defeat

This scenario uses victory points to determine who wins.

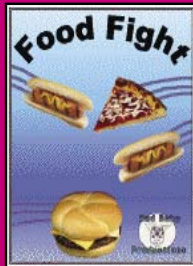
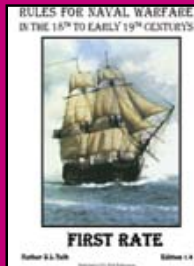


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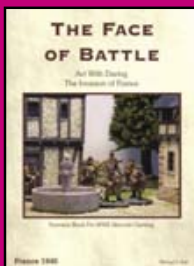
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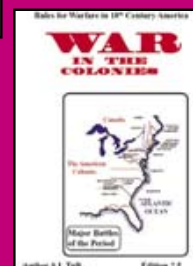
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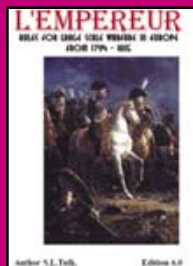


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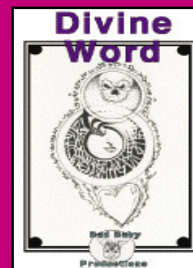


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# IRON THUNDER

## AMERICAN CIVIL WAR NAVAL ACTIONS USING VICTORY AT SEA PART ONE

by Ray Garbee

### INTRODUCTION

“It follows than as certain as that night succeeds the day, that without a decisive naval force we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious.”

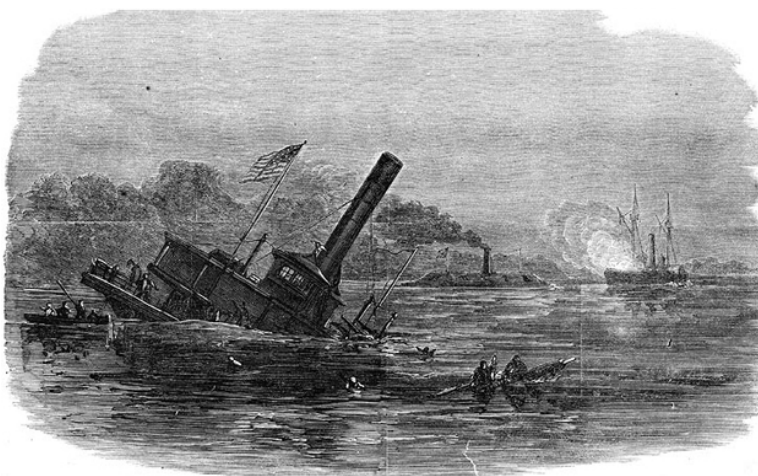
*- President George Washington, 15 November 1781, to Marquis de Lafayette*

Iron Thunder is a game of naval combat during the American Civil War. Throughout the conflict the sailors and officers of both sides sought to enforce the policies of their respective governments, often through force. Now you can play out these battles on the tabletop with squadrons of warships representing the Union and Confederate navies.

### IRON THUNDER

The game is divided into several sections. While these may seem to contain a number of rules you will need to remember, it is far easier than it looks. The core rules of Iron Thunder are detailed in the following sections;

**The Turn:** A short description on how players take turns moving and attacking with their ships.



**Movement Phase:** This section describes how ships move during a game turn.

**Gunnery Phase:** Once your ships have moved into positions of advantage, you will want to cut loose with the massive cannons that arm your ironclads.

**Special Actions:** Ships need not only maneuver and fire – there are a whole range of Special Actions that players can choose from to enhance their vessels’ performance in a game turn.

**Special Traits:** Many ships and weapons have special rules that make them different from the norm – these are all described in this chapter.

These chapters contain all you need to know to begin playing Iron Thunder though you need only consult the Special Actions and Special Traits chapters as a reference, rather than trying to memorise them from the outset. Once you are familiar with these, you can proceed to the Advanced Rules and beyond, to experience the full dynamics of squadron level naval combat in the American Civil War.

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

As well as these rules, there are several other things you will require in order to play Iron Thunder properly. A minimum of two players are required, each with his own squadron of ships. You will also need a flat playing surface – in general we assume a 4 x 6 space is available, though specific scenarios may require more or less.

In addition to this, you will also need pen, paper, a number of six-sided dice and a ruler or





measuring tape marked in inches. You will also need to make copies of the Ship Information Form so that you can fill out one form for each ship in each squadron. With all this, you are ready to begin playing Iron Thunder.

## SCALE

Iron Thunder can be played with any sized miniatures. Game distances are scaled so one inch represents 1800 real world inches. Expressed in a more useful ratio, one inch on the table represents 150 feet in the real world. Each game turn represents three minutes of elapsed time. Players wishing to use 1/600 scale figures can either play the game as is, or triple all ranges and movement rates to reflect the larger scale.

All distances in Iron Thunder are measured from centre point of a ship or structure. All distances in Iron Thunder are measured in inches.

## ROLLING DICE

Iron Thunder uses the ordinary six-sided dice. It will be useful for players to have at least a dozen dice, as it greatly speeds play during multiple dice rolls.

If you are told to roll a die (a single dice) in the rules, roll it as normal and read the number of pips on the top. However you will sometimes

see strange references telling you to roll 2d6, 5d6 or 6d6 and so on. A number before the 'd' tells you how many dice to roll and the number after the 'd' notes that the type of dice are six-sided.

You may be asked to add or subtract a fixed number to the total result on a dice. For example 2d6+2 mean rolling 2 dice and adding 2 to the final total.

## RE-ROLLS

Some special situations may call for you to re-roll a dice. This simply means you ignore the first result that a dice rolled and roll again. You must always accept the result of the second roll, even if it is worse than the first roll – re-rolls can be used to get you out of a tricky situation but they are never guaranteed! Also, you may only ever re-roll a specific dice once, even if you have multiple opportunities to re-roll a dice result.

## PRE-MEASURING

You are not permitted to pre-measure distances in Iron Thunder. Ships of the era had no rangefinders more sophisticated than the eyes of their captain and crew. Ships had no speedometers to accurately gauge their speed. Firing must be declared and carried out, even if the target is determined to be out of range.

## ROUNDING

You will on occasion be instructed to either multiply or divide a number to determine a modified value. Unless otherwise noted, always round the modified value down to the nearest whole number.

## MOVEMENT & FIRING

Iron Thunder is played on a flat surface that represents the surface of the ocean, a bay or river.

Ships may not pass through one another without dicing for collision.

Every ship in Iron Thunder has a number of firing arcs, all of which are marked out on bases of the models used. These are the areas that various weapons can fire into, as noted in their descriptions in the Ship and Weapons Performance lists.

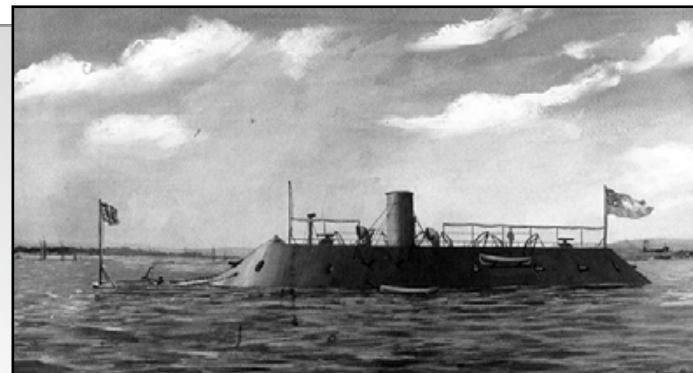
**Table 1. Firing arcs**

Fore [F]	90 degrees forward
Aft [A]	90 degrees astern
Port [P]	90 degrees left
Starboard [S]	90 degrees right
Turret	360 degrees
Turret Aft arc [Ta]	270 degrees astern
Turret Fore Arc [Tf]	270 degrees forward
Limited Fore Arc [Fl]	Directly ahead
Limited Aft Arc [Al]	Directly astern
Turntable [Tt]	360 degrees

All ships have fire arcs defined in 90 degree increments. The arc that lies 45 degrees on either side of the bow encompasses the Fore arc.

## SHIPS IN IRON THUNDER

A huge variety of ships were used in the American Civil War. These range from tiny steam launches armed with spar torpedoes through converted merchant ships, gunboats, ships of the line up to the heavily armoured ironclads and monitors. Each ship in the game is defined by its Ship Information Form (SIF). A ships roster looks like this – the example is the ironclad CSS Virginia, the epitome of a Confederate casemate ironclad.

**CSS VIRGINIA****Ships in class:** Virginia**Speed:** 13"**Turning:** 1/45**Target:** 4+**Armour:** 5+**Crew:** 32/11**Flooding:** -**Special Traits:** Armoured, Ram, Lumbering, armoured hull**Points Cost:** War**Command:** Regular (+4)**In Service:** March, 1862**Damage:** 20/4**XP Dice:** -**Flotation:** 6

Weapon	Range	Arc	AD	SF	Special
Heavy Rifle	40"	P,Fa,S	2	1	Super AP, Double Damage, Slow-loading
Medium SB	20"	P	3	3	
Medium SB	20"	S	3	3	
Medium Rifle	40"	P	1	1	AP, Double Damage
Medium Rifle	40"	S	1	1	AP, Double Damage
Heavy Rifle	40"	P,Ba,S	2	1	Super AP, Double Damage, Slow-loading

**Name:** The name of the vessel. What a ship is called is up to you, but we find that using the historical name of a ship helps your opponent remember what vessel he is fighting.

**Ships in Class:** These are the actual names of ships in this class as shown in the data list.

**Speed:** This is the maximum movement in inches that a ship can usually move in a single turn.

**Crew:** Much the same as Damage, this shows how many crew are onboard a ship. The second figure show how far the crew can be depleted before they become a Skeleton Crew.

**Turns:** As described in the movement phase chapter, this reflects how quickly a ship can turn to come about on its enemies.

**In Service:** The date that this ship was commissioned into its respective navy.

**Target:** The higher the value, the smaller the target to be hit by incoming fire.

**Armour:** How resilient the ship is to damage that struck the vessel.

**Damage:** The first figure shows how many points of damage a ship can withstand before being destroyed. The second figure marks the point at which the the ship becomes Crippled.

**Flooding:** Flooding represents the amount of water flowing into the hull of a ship.

**Flotation:** Flotation represents the buoyancy of a vessel. When a vessel reaches zero buoyancy it will sink, regardless of remaining damage.

**Special Traits:** Many ships have special traits that allow them to perform actions that cannot be performed by the average ship.

**Command:** The average figure here will be 4, which denotes a trained naval crew onboard. This can vary to show especially green or veteran sailors.

**Weapons:** Nearly every ships will have some weapons, all of which will be listed here. Every weapon is defined by its range, which fire arc it can fire into, and the number of Attack Dice (guns or size of weapon) it uses. Some weapons also have Special Traits which further influence their effect in the game.

## THE TURN

During each turn of Iron Thunder, players will make many tactical decisions, ships will move and the fire devastating attacks on one another. To make the process of naval combat easier, each game turn is split into four distinct phases. Players will run through each phase together and when each turn is complete, every ship on each player's side will have had a chance to act and affect the outcome of the battle.

The four phases are played in order – Initiative Phase, Movement Phase, Attack Phase and End Phase. When the End Phase is complete, the turn ends and the next turn begins with the Initiative Phase.

## INITIATIVE PHASE

The Initiative Phase is used to resolve any actions that do not require players to make any choices (such as moving ships that are Running Adrift) and to decide who will have the Initiative for the game turn – in other words, who has gained a position of tactical advantage.

At the start of each turn, both players roll for Initiative using 2d6. To this result, each player will modify the total, depending on the fleet he is using. Every fleet has its own modifiers, as described in the Data Annex. The full list is also listed in the Initiative Modifiers table.

Any ties are re-rolled.

**Average Crew Quality:** Take the crew quality value of each ship, add the values together and divide that sum by the number of ships in the squadron. Round to the nearest whole number. The side with the higher value gains this modifier to its initiative dice.

**Greatest number of ironclads/monitors:** The side with the greater number of ironclads (including any monitors) gains this modifier to its initiative dice.

**Friendly shore batteries or coastal forts present:** Shore batteries are stationary things. As such their opponents chose how and when to engage the batteries. A side with batteries or forts present on the table suffers this modifier to its initiative dice.

**Admiral present in Squadron:** A senior officer is present to plan and direct the operation. A player gains this modifier if an Admiral is present on any ship in the squadron. If the Admiral's flagship is sunk, that player loses the effect for the remainder of the game.

**Squadron has an inspired officer present in a ship:** A good ship's captain can have a decisive effect on a battle. A player gains this modifier to his initiative dice for each ship that has an inspired officer.

**Squadron has a "Dolt" officer present in a ship:** A bad ship's captain can have a detrimental effect on a battle. A player suffers this modifier to his initiative dice for each ship that has an inspired officer.

## MOVEMENT PHASE

The player that won the Initiative Phase by rolling higher than his opponent will now decide whether to move a ship first or force his opponent to do so. Players then alternate moving ships. First, a player nominates one of his ships and moves it. It is also at this point that the player decides if the ship will perform any Special Actions, which may well affect the ships movement for the turn. Then his opponent player nominates one of his ships and moves it, decides if it will perform a Special Action and then move it. This continues until all ships have been moved. Note that a particularly large fleet may still have ships to move after its enemy has finished moving all of its own. In this case, the larger fleet will carry on moving until all ships have had the opportunity to move.

## ATTACK PHASE

Once ships have been moved into position, they are allowed to fire their weapons in an effort to destroy their enemies. Players then alternate the firing of their ships. The player who won the Initiative Phase nominates one of his ships and then attacks with it, resolving all damage dealt by that ship. His opponent then nominates one ship and attacks. This continues until all ships have attacked, or had a chance to attack. Note that it's

**Table 2. Initiative modifiers**

Side with the highest average crew quality	+ 1
Side with the greatest number of ironclads and/or monitors on the table	+ 1
Friendly shore batteries or coastal forts present on table	- 1
Admiral present in squadron	+ 1
Squadron has an inspired officer present in a ship	+ 1 per ship
Squadron has a "Dolt" officer present in a ship	- 1 per ship
Union versus Confederate force with any ironclad	- 1

not compulsory for a ship to attack, even if it has a viable target. The player may simply nominate it and choose not to fire. However, he may not select it again that turn and choose to fire – he must make that decision to attack right then and there – there is no holding back!

### END PHASE

The End Phase is used to ‘tidy up’ the battlefield and make sure all players know what is happening. This is the time that Damage Control and other book-keeping tasks are performed. Once complete, a new game turn begins.

### MOVEMENT PHASE

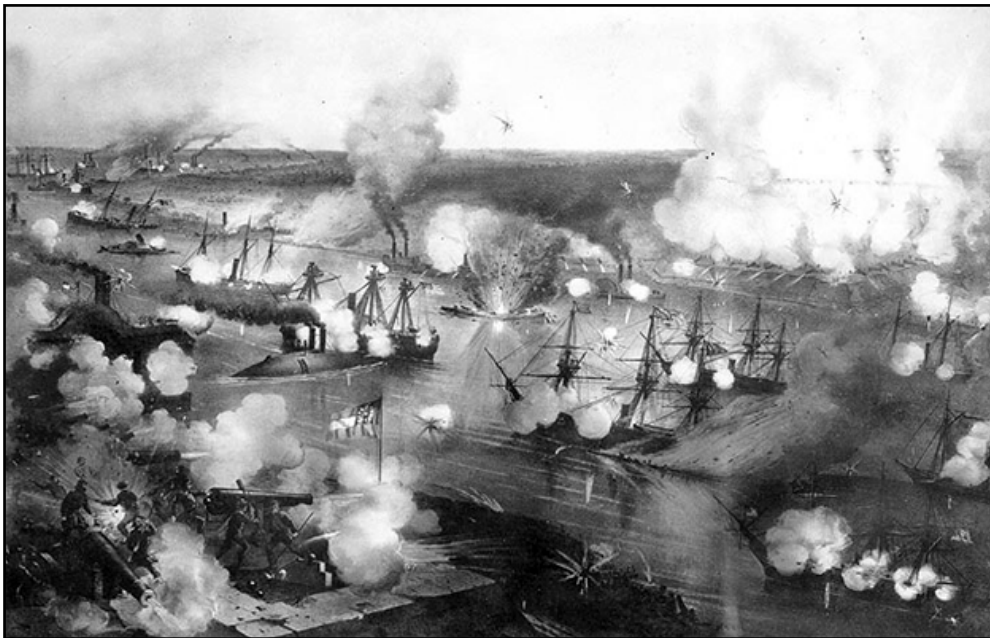
The ability to maneuver a ship into a position of advantage is vital. By outwitting your opponent, you bring your weapons to bear while minimising the weapons he can use to attack you.

Once it has been determined who has the initiative for the current turn, players take turns moving their ships. A ship may only be nominated to move once per game turn and every ship must be nominated. You are not allowed to skip ships, even if this means you will move into a position of disadvantage if you do so.

### MOVING SHIPS

When nominated to move, every ship must be moved a distance in inches between its Speed score and half this amount. All movement must be in a straight line forward.

Now that you have your ships in motion, you will at some point want to change the direction of movement. All ships have a turning score,



which rates how quickly the can turn. 1/45 degree for example indicates that the ship can make one 45 degree turn in its movement.

A ship may turn only when it has moved at least half its Speed forward in a straight line. The means that no ship can simply turn on the spot – warships are extremely heavy and inertia will carry them forward before their mass can be redirected. At any point after moving the minimum distance forward, you may execute a single turn up to the restriction of the Turn Score. If a vessel's Turn Score indicates that it may make multiple turns, a second turn may be executed at the end of its movement. If a vessel is capable of making more than 2 turns in a single movement, the additional turns are applied at the end of its movement.

Turning is done by measuring from a pivot point at the stern of the ship. The bow of the ship is turned to line up on the new heading.

A Turn Score of SM means super maneuverable. This applies to small craft such as torpedo boats, “David’s”, steam launches, ship's boats and nimble small ships like sidewheel tugboats. They are free to move in any direction the player chooses, making as many turns as he wishes along the way.

### RAMMING AND COLLISIONS

As ships move they may come into contact with other ships. This may be an intentional act – referred to as ramming - or an accident – referred to as a collision. Whatever the cause, when two ships come into contact, the potential for damage exists for each ship.

To resolve the damage, the moving ship rolls 2d6 plus any additional ramming dice provided by Special Actions. Consult the ramming table adding all modifiers that apply. The resulting damage is applied to the target. The player that

owns the ship that was struck then rolls 2d6 on the ramming table adding all modifiers that apply. The ramming ship receives the damage generated.

## RAMMING DAMAGE RESULTS

DD: Number of Damage Dice the ram inflicts on the target.

Locked: The ships involved in the ram are fouled together. Neither ship may move until they break free. A ship may break free by a successful damage control check in the end phase.

Damage from ramming and collisions is applied simultaneously to both ships.

Ships involved in a collision that causes damage may not fire any other weapon during the Attack Phase following the Movement Phase in which the ramming occurred.

A ship that rams and is not locked ends its movement at that point, regardless of any remaining movement.

**Table 3. Ramming damage**

Die roll (2d6)	Damage result
2-3	No effect
4	1 DD, Locked
5-6	2 DD, Fire critical hit
7-8	3 DD, Flooding critical hit
9-10	4 DD, Flooding critical hit, Fire critical hit
11-12	5 DD, Flooding critical, Engine critical, Locked
13-14	6 DD, Flooding, Fire, Engine, Locked
15-17	7 DD, 2 Flooding, Fire, Engine, Locked
18-20	Hulked! Locked, damage to zero, 2 Flooding
21+	Cut in half! Remove target from table, reduce hull score to zero

**Table 4. Ramming modifiers**

Modifier	Effect
Target struck by ramming vessel that is ram equipped and struck bow on	+ 2
Target's armour	- armour value
Ramming speed is less than 6"	-2
Ramming speed is greater than 18"	+1
Ramming speed is greater than 30"	+2
Target is a monitor	-1
Armoured Hull	-2
Super Armoured Hull	-4
Target is ram equipped and struck in bow arc	-2
Target was struck in Broadside aspect	+2

## SPAR TORPEDOES

One of the most innovative and destructive weapons introduced during the American Civil War, the torpedo was an explosive charge either affixed to a boom on the bow of a ship, or placed under the water in the form of a mine. Underwater torpedoes are dealt with in the Advanced Rules.

If a ship mounts a torpedo as a weapon, it must first be deployed. Deploying a torpedo is a Special Action. Once deployed, if the ship's bow moves within 1" of an enemy vessel, execute a spar torpedo attack.

A spar torpedo successfully detonates on a 4+. Use the following modifiers to the attack dice;

1862 or earlier	-2
1863	-1
1865	+1
Attacking ship speed more than 17" this turn	-1

If the torpedo fails to detonate and the ship does not ram a ship following the torpedo attack, the player may try again in next game turn. If the ship does ram another ship with an unexploded torpedo, the torpedo is lost. Mark off the torpedo from the Ship Information Form.

If the torpedo is successfully detonated, roll the damage dice indicated on the torpedo damage table. For every damage dice that causes damage, the ship also suffers a flooding critical hit.

Ships with an unarmoured hull special trait are attacked using an armour score of 2+.

**Table 5. Torpedo Damage.**

Torpedo Weight	Damage Dice	Special Traits
Light	3	
Medium	3	Double Damage
Heavy	5	Double Damage, Armour Piercing
Super Heavy	5	Double Damage, Super Armour Piercing

## OPPORTUNITY FIRE

On occasion, enemy ships will be so close and moving so fast as to pass completely across a ships fire arc in a single movement action. In some cases, a ship can react to this movement by firing weapons with fire arcs that match the arc traversed by the moving ship.

A ship is eligible to perform Opportunity Fire if it meets the following conditions; It has successfully issued the Passing Target! special action in its movement phase this current game turn; the moving ship both began and ended its movement outside of a single fire arc of

the readied ship and the weapons to be used did not fire in the previous game turn (two previous game turns for heavy and super heavy guns).

## ATTACK PHASE

### ELIGIBLE TARGETS

For a target to be attacked successfully, two conditions must be met. First, the target must lie in the appropriate fire arc of the weapon that will be firing at it, as shown on the ship's roster. Second, it must be within the range of the weapon, as also shown on the ship's roster. You must nominate a target for every weapon you intend to fire from your ship at the same time, before any attacks are made. In addition, all targets must be nominated before you check whether they are within the correct arc or within range – you are not allowed to pre-measure the range beforehand.

At all times, remember that you must measure from the center point of your ship to the center point of your target when checking for both range and determining if a target is within a fire arc.

Unless your ship has rules to the contrary, you may fire each weapon once each game turn. See the Special Traits section for exceptions to this rule.

Ships block line of sight in Iron Thunder. You may never fire through another ship, be it friendly or enemy.

### FIRING

Each weapon listed on a ships roster has an Attack Dice score listed. This is the number of dice rolled every time the weapon is fired.

When Attack Dice are rolled, the resulting number on each dice is compared to the target's Target Score. For every Attack Dice that equals or exceeds the Target score, a hit has been scored. However, each Attack Dice is modified as follows;

- Extreme Range (target is more than 20") -2
- Long Range (target is more than 10" away) -1
- Fast Moving Target (target moved more than 18" this turn) -1
- Large Silhouette (line of sight traces through port or starboard broadside) +1

A natural '6' rolled on the dice is always considered a hit, whereas a natural '1' is always considered a miss.

Once you have scored some hits on a target, it is time to see what damage you have caused. Each hit causes one dice of damage.

When Damage Dice are rolled, the resulting number on each dice is compared to the target's Armour Score. For every Damage Dice that equals or exceeds the Armour score, 1 point of damage is deducted from the target's damage score. Some hits inflict more than one hit per die rolled. Some ships have armour that renders them immune to hits from certain sized and smaller guns.

Any Damage Dice that roll a 6 may also cause a critical hit. If you roll a 6, roll the dice again immediately. If you roll a 5 or a 6 you have scored a critical hit! More details on critical hits are given below.

## WEAPONS

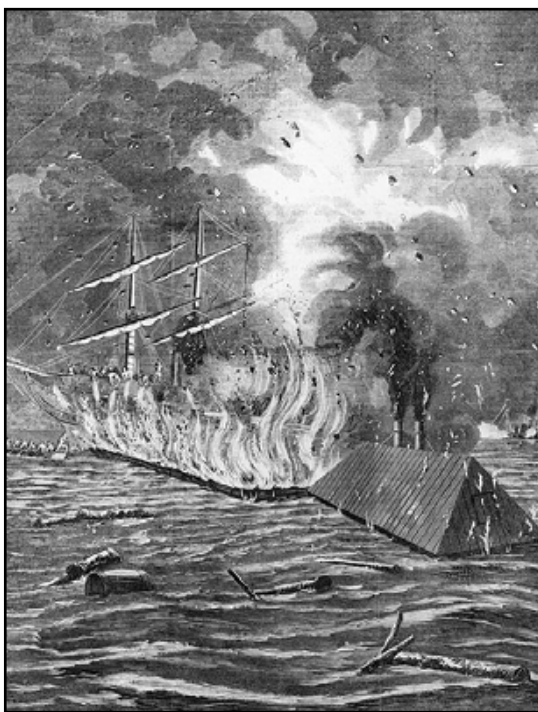
There are several types of weapons used in Iron Thunder, though not all ships possess all of them.

**Smoothbore:** Smoothbores are classic cannons – guns that shoot round solid shot or explosive shell. Though they include field pieces such as the twelve pound Napoleon, naval guns extend up to the massive Fifteen and Twenty inch Dahlgren and Rodman guns. Often abbreviated as SB (Smoothbore) and prefixed with the size category of the gun (L-light, M-medium, H-heavy, SH-super heavy).

**Rifle:** Similar to smoothbores. These cannon have rifling in the barrels to spin the cylindrical projectiles they fire. Rifles tend to be longer ranged and better penetrating than smoothbores of the same size. Abbreviated as R (Rifle) and prefixed with the size category of the gun (L-light, M-medium, H-heavy, SH-super heavy).

**Torpedo:** Explosive charges that were either attached to the end of long poles at the front of a ship (spar torpedo) or placed in floating underwater containers (the original underwater mines). Torpedoes are classified by size category (L-light, M-medium, H-heavy, SH-Super Heavy).

**Ram:** Originally used by the ancient Greeks and Romans, the ram is an armoured extension of a ship's bow. Rams are designed to collide with an enemy ship underwater and tear large holes in the hull of an opponent. The ram was used with great effect in the American Civil War. Some ships are equipped with nothing more than powerful engines and a ram, turning the ship into the naval version of a cavalry charge.



## SPLITTING FIRE

Each weapon may split its Attack Dice as the firing player desires.

## ARMOUR

During the American Civil War armour ranged from non-existent to almost impregnable to the down right laughable. In Iron Thunder, the Armour score represents how effective a ship's armour is at deflecting enemy shot.

The following types of armour are used;

**Unarmoured:** The classic wooden or light iron hulled vessel. Unarmoured vessels were extremely vulnerable to explosive shells as demonstrated by the loss of the USS Cumberland and USS

Congress to the guns of CSS Virginia during the Battle of Hampton Roads. Armour score = 2+

**Timberclad:** Heavy wooden beams are used to protect vital areas of the ship against small arms and very light cannon. Armour score = 2+

**Cottonclad:** Cotton bales are used on the ship as armour. Effective against solid shot, less effective against explosive shells and vulnerable to fire. Armour score = 3+

**Tinclad:** Light iron armour protects these ships from light cannons and smalls arms. Armour score = 3+

**Ironclad:** A fully armoured warship, ironclad armour is safe from all but the largest guns. Armour score is 3 or higher, depending on the ship.

## DAMAGE

If a ship's crew score is reduced to 0, it is considered to be abandoned. The ship may not move or fire for the rest of the game unless boarded and a prize crew put aboard. See Boarding below.

If a ship's Damage Score is reduced to 0, it is considered to be destroyed and sinking. You may remove it from the battlefield. If in shallow water, the wreck may remain as a hazard to movement.

## CRIPPLED SHIPS AND SKELETON CREWS

Both Damage and Crew scores have secondary values as noted on each ship's roster. For example, The CSS People's Victory has Damage of 34/11. This means that it can take 34 points of total damage, but when it has been reduced to 11 points a threshold has been reached.

## CRIPPLED

If the Damage score is brought to this threshold level, the ship is considered to be Crippled. Turning will be reduced to one turn per turn and Speed will be permanently reduced by half. In addition, the Small Arms value will be halved (round fractions down). Roll a die for every weapon and special trait the ship possesses, on a result of 4+ the turret or trait is destroyed.

## SKELETON CREWS

If the Crew score of the ship is reduced below the threshold level, the crew is considered to be running with a Skeleton Crew. No Special Actions may be attempted and only one weapons system may be fired in each game turn. In addition, the ship suffers a -2 penalty to all damage control rolls.

## CRITICAL HITS

If a critical hit has been scored while rolling Damage Dice, roll 2d6 on the table below to determine exactly what has been hit.

Table 6. Critical Hits

2d6	Critical Location
2	Vital Systems
3-5	Crew
6-8	Engines
9-11	Weapons
12	Vital Systems

Once the location of a critical hit has been determined, roll on the appropriate table below. The special effects of critical hits are cumulative. You should note each critical hit scored, as each must be repaired separately during Damage Control.

Critical hits often cause extra hits to Damage and Crew, as noted in their descriptions below.

### Crew

D6	Area	Damage	Crew	Effect
1-2	Fire	+0	+1	Fire starts
3-4	Multiple Fires	+0	+2	1d6 fires start
5	Flooding	+2	+0	Add 1 point flooding
6	Multiple Explosions	+1d6	+1d6	1d6 fires start

### Engines

D6	Area	Damage	Crew	Effect
1-2	Engine damaged	+1	+1	-3 speed
3-4	Props damaged	+1	+1	-6 Speed
5	Firebox damaged	+2	+2	-9 Speed, fire starts
6	Boiler bursts	+3	+3	Speed to zero, no special actions, target score drops by 1



### Weapons

D6	Area	Damage	Crew	Effect
1-2	Small Arms	+1	+3	Small Arms AD halved for rest of game
3-4	Broadside weapon damaged	+2	+3	One weapon which bears in either broadside loses 2 AD
5	Chase armament damaged	+2	+2	One weapon which bears to either bow or stern arcs loses 2 AD
6	Magazine explosion	+2	+6	No guns can fire for 1d3 turns, 1d6 fires start

### Vital Systems

D6	Area	Damage	Crew	Effect
1	Bridge Hit	+1	+4	No Special Actions allowed
2	Rudder	+2	+1	No turns are permitted
3	Engineering	+2	+5	No Damage Control permitted
4	Gun Deck	+3	+3	Each weapon may only fire on a roll of 4+
5	Secondary Explosions	+3	+4	1d6 fires start
6	Catastrophic Explosion			Damage score to zero, ship sinks



Note that damage to Vital Systems cannot be repaired through Damage Control.

## END PHASE

Once all the players have moved and attacked with all their ships, the End Phase is played out to complete the turn. This is used to complete any book-keeping needed for special rules, as well as providing a vital change for players to repair any damage their ships have sustained from critical hits.

## BOARDING

Boarding occurs when ships from opposing sides are in contact as a result of ramming or a collision and at least one side has issued the special action *Away Boarders!* In a boarding action, both sides struggle in hand to hand combat for control of the ship being boarded. Each ship rolls 2d6. In addition a ship receives boarding dice equal to the attack dice of weapons either rated as small arms or if a ship has successfully issued the *Prepare to Repel Boarders* special action. Take the total small arms dice of each ship involved in the boarding action and

calculate each ship's total. Apply the modifiers to each die rolled listed on the boarding modifiers table below.

The side with the highest total on the dice is the winner of the boarding action. If the result is a tie, then both sides lose 1d6 crew, (but not the last point of crew) and the action continues next turn.

**Table 7. Boarding Modifiers**

Condition	Modifier
Target is ironclad or monitor	-2
Ship has twice the crew of opponent	+1
Ship has three times the crew of opponent	+2

The difference in the die rolls is the number of crew casualties that the losing player suffers. The attacker always suffers a minimum of 1d6/2 casualties – even if they win. If the attacker wins, the target is captured and strikes (See *Strike Your Colours* special action). If the defender wins, the attacker is repulsed and loses an additional 1d6 attack dice from any small arms weapons mounted on his ship.

## DAMAGE CONTROL

During the End Phase, players can repair their ships through Damage Control. The player who won the initiative during the turn does this first, for all of his ships that have been damaged.

Many critical hits have special effects that further debilitate a ship beyond the raw damage they cause. Weapons can be silenced, hull can be flooded and munitions explosions can wreak havoc on a ships

structure. These special effects are the only things that Damage Control can repair – it cannot be used to restore Damage or Crew points. A player may only attempt to repair one critical hit on each of his ships per turn.

Damage Control can repair Flooding critical hits. Each successful damage Control roll reduces flooding by 2 points. Once Flooding has been stopped, Flotation can be returned to its initial value at a rate of 1 point per successful damage control roll.

To repair a critical hit by Damage Control, select one effect a ship is currently suffering and roll 1d6, adding the ships Command Score. On a result of 9 or more, the effect has been repaired and the ship can continue to operate normally. If you roll less than 9 the effect persists and though you may try again in the End Phase of the next turn.

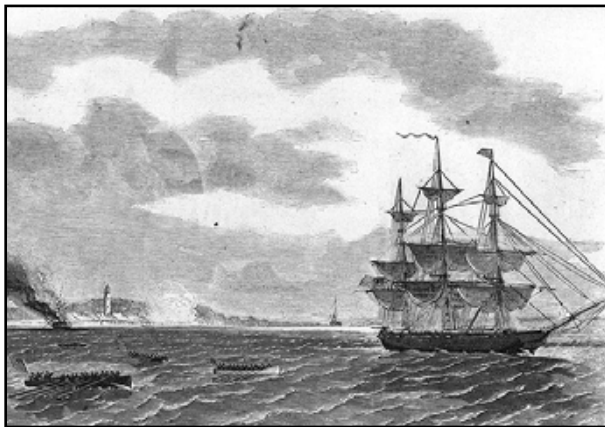
Critical hits to Vital Systems are never repaired.

## FIRE

Fire is lethal aboard ships. In enclosed spaces, fire can sweep through a wooden ship creating an inferno no one can survive.

Certain critical hits will start fires in addition to other damage they cause. In each end phase, roll 1d6 for each fire currently raging on board, adding the ship's Command score. For every score of seven or more, one fire will be extinguished.

For every fire a player fails to extinguish on his ship, he will lose one crew. The fire will remain and the player will have another opportunity to extinguish it in the next End Phase.



# Escort Tactics



By Alan Oliver

## Introduction

An escort is any ship that has the escort trait. There are not many escorts in use, and not all races make use of them at all. This article will cover the eleven different escorts currently in use, as well as some general tactics for their use.

There are no rules for when and where escorts can be used, and they don't have to be tied to a particular carrier or command ship. This gives the player greater freedom to pick and choose when escorts would be appropriate and what he will do with them once battle starts.

Not all fleets make use of escorts. For example the Earth Alliance started off by using a modified frigate as an escort in both the Dilgar and Minbari wars, but changed the focus of fighter defence after this. Instead of relying on escorts for anti-fighter coverage they all ships have anti-fighter weapons.

The Earth Alliance is not alone in relying on individual ship anti-fighter capabilities instead of escorts, the Dilgar Imperium, Narn Regime, Gaim Intelligence and even the mighty Vorlon Empire all use shipwide anti-fighter weapons rather than specialist ships. Two of these races have access to energy mines which are lethal to fighters anyway, and the Vorlons mount advanced anti-fighter on all their ships including their fighters. The lack of escorts is therefore not a great weakness for these fleets, although it

does prevent them from using some of the tactics discussed below.

On the other hand some races are a little more paranoid about fighters. Both the Minbari and Vree have excellent fighter defences across all of their ships but have still developed specialist escort designs. Coincidentally both of these races operate powerful fighters that are dangerous to ships, which may have influenced their thinking.

## General Principles

The significant feature of escorts is that they can transfer their anti-fighter trait to other units within eight inches. This can be other ships of the fleet or flights of fighters.

However the escorts abilities are not free, normally firepower is reduced when compared with other warships of similar size and priority. If you don't get value out of the escort's fighter protection then the allocation points spent on it will be wasted to a degree. This does vary from ship to ship, there are some that are capable warships that will not weaken the fleet's direct combat potential too much.

Anti-fighter ignores dodge, only having to get a hit against the hull of the fighter. This is why assault fighters that have to enter anti-fighter range require a good hull rating. While an individual ships anti-fighter capability may not

be sufficient to gain the hit, additional dice from the escort may be enough. These dice should be spread across as many of the attacking fighters as possible, rather than just concentrating on one, to maximise the number of fighters killed with a lucky roll.

When assigning the anti-fighter cover, it will be most effective against superiority and lower hull elite fighters, so these should be targeted first. If nothing else this will increase the number of fighters you are destroying, significant for victory points and also to gain space superiority with your own fighters. Doesn't mean you shouldn't go for the assault fighters if they are a threat, but they are not the targets of choice.

Advanced anti-fighter, although rare, is more effective as it lowers the target hull by one. However it is rare, only found on the Minbari escort. This does mean that even hull five assault fighters are a fifty fifty kill chance. There are other ships out there that have the Advanced anti-fighter trait, the Gaim Intelligence and the Vorlon Empire both mount the trait on all of their ships, and neither race feels the need to develop a dedicated escort design.

## Protecting Ships

Escorts may be assigned to protect a specific ship that is considered of vital importance to the fleet or particularly susceptible to fighter attack. However there are rarely ships important enough

to require this sort of protection but vulnerable enough to need it in open battle, and this is more likely to occur in special scenarios.

It is more likely that an escort will be ordered to protect the fleet in general, so they need to manoeuvre to keep towards the centre of the fleet formation so that their anti-fighter coverage protects as much of the fleet as possible. Anti-fighter from escorts is assigned after fighters have moved, so that you can pick and choose which ships will get the protection against which fighters.

The presence of an escort will often control where enemy fighters will move to, as they will not wish to attack anything under its coverage. This fear of engaging can be more effective than the anti-fighter coverage itself would be, driving the enemy fighters away and preventing them from achieving anything. If they did attack they would definitely take some losses, but some fighters may survive to do some damage to the enemy fleet. This chance to break through escort can be maximised by the use of high hull assault fighters in large numbers, forcing the escort to spread its coverage too thinly to ensure killing the fighters.

While command ship protection is the safest mission an escort can be assigned, this is rare. Most of the time fleet protection is as safe as your going to get. The escort will not be the primary target so you are more than likely to survive the engagement unless your whole fleet gets destroyed. The only exception to this is going to be if the enemy has heavily invested in fighters as part of his plan, then he is probably going to kill the escort quickly to reduce his fighter losses.

## Protecting Fighters

Anti-fighter can be transferred to flights of fighters, although only those engaged can use it in a dogfight. The escort assigns the transferred anti-fighter dice after the fighters have moved, so it can assign them to those fighters that can make use of it. The trick is to ensure that the dogfights take place within the coverage of the escort, as the fighters move after the escort does.

If the escort is protecting a group of assault fighters attacking the enemy fleet, the fighters can easily stay within coverage of the escort where they will gain a measure of protection from enemy superiority fighters. This is the easiest fighter support mission for an escort to perform, which is good because it's also the most useful. Assault fighters require protection from enemy superiority fighters, and an escort can provide it.

Protecting assault fighters is particularly effective as the superiority fighters that will be sent after them tend to rely upon dodge rather than hull for protection and so have a low hull rating. The other side of the coin is that supporting fighters is one of the most dangerous missions that an escort can be assigned to, especially escorting assault fighters that will have to close on the enemy fleet.

Escorting superiority fighters tasked with killing enemy fighters is more difficult. The enemy is unlikely to move into the coverage of the escort, unless you can bait them into it through moving your own superiority fighters into the coverage of the escort. This is unlikely to work in a small battle where the enemy have the time to look

at every move, but in a larger battle it may be possible to slip an escort into range.

If your fighters are hunting enemy assault fighters they are unlikely to need the support of the escort anyway, but it can be provided if you can move the escort to within coverage range of the assault fighters. Then move your superiority fighters first, engaging the assault fighters in a dogfight and pinning them in place. Anti-fighter can then be transferred to the superiority fighters for that added value. This is of more use against enemy elite fighters that can match your superiority fighters in a dogfight, but are intent on closing on your fleet to attack your ships.

Lastly there is no reason not to transfer the protection to your own fighters that are on close support missions. If the enemy engage them in dogfights to either get past them with their own assault fighters or just to knock out additional interceptors, it will be a rude shock when his superiority fighters get gunned down by transferred anti fighter fire.

## Special Actions

Some special actions are especially significant to escorts in that they enhance the escorts capabilities. Others can be performed without hampering the escorts main function.

### All Hands on Deck!

The penalty for this special action is a reduction in firepower, which is not going to affect most escorts when performing their main role. However this action is used to repair damage, and escorts will rarely be in a position to need to perform this action.

## Close Blast Doors and Activate Defence Grid!

This special action limits the escort to firing a single weapon system, but does not reduce the ships anti-fighter trait. In return it provides a one in three chance of ignoring damage which makes this an excellent special action for escorts that are escorting assault fighters in against the enemy fleet. They will be one third tougher to kill, and for ships that can do serious damage, surviving to reach weapons range is a definite bonus. However be aware that this will prevent some escorts from firing at all, the Centauri Maximus and Drazi Guardhawk for example.

## Intensify Defensive Fire!

This is the special action that seems custom made for escorts, as it doubles the anti-fighter and interceptor traits on the ship. The cost of this is half the attack dice on all weapons, but for escorts that are defending the fleet they are unlikely to be firing much, if at all, and this is a very small price to pay for the increase in the escorts capabilities. Unless the escort is needing to perform some other special action for some reason, this should be the default action for all escorts. The Centauri are the masters of this action as it doubles the interceptors that the Maximus can transfer to another ship as well as the normal escort coverage.

The movement special actions; All Stop! Come about! Max Chat etc do not really affect escorts differently to other ships, other than they may be required in order for the escort to remain in position relative to the ships or fighters it is protecting.

## Escort Classes

I have divided the ships into light, medium and heavy escorts based on their priority. As with any jump up a priority level, the ships get more capable as the priority level rises.

### Light Escorts

Light escorts generally don't have sufficient firepower to contribute to the battle in any quantity, and are too small to take much punishment. This means that they will have to avoid direct combat with the larger enemy ships. They are much more likely to survive fleet protection than fighter escort missions, however they are cheap enough that they can be treated as moderately expendable, so a suicide mission escorting a large assault fighter wing may be productive.

### Abbai Bisaria Escort Frigate

The Bisaria escort frigate is based on the Tiraca attack frigate, and its secondary weaponry is identical to that of the attack frigate, and it has a comms disruptor replacing the attack frigate's



combat laser. This makes the Bisaria well armed for a patrol priority escort. Its secondary weapons are short ranged, so will be unlikely to see much use unless it is escorting assault fighters on an attack run. Given the Abbai's luck of assault fighters, these would have to come from another league race allied to the Abbai. Escorting a Gaim wave of fighters and breaching pods would be rather spectacular, but then the combined league fleet is all about mixing and matching capabilities.

Like the other light escorts the Bisaria is only hull four, but it does have fairly descent damage and crew ratings, and the real icing is it also has a five point shield. This makes it relatively durable for a patrol priority ship even without the interceptors that larger Abbai ships carry.

The Bisaria has the lightest anti-fighter firepower of any escort, with only two dice. It is only a light escort, with little in the way of firepower and providing limited coverage, which makes it a poor quality ship. It has two things in its favour, firstly there is its good defences, secondly the ship carries a Comms disruptor.

Within the Abbai fleet most ships carry their own anti-fighter weapons but only one or two ships carry their own fighters. These fighters are only general purpose fighters that have no capacity for ship assault, nor are they of much use in a dogfight to be honest, so they are likely to be little more than mobile interceptors in the Abbai fleet. That means that anti-fighter firepower will be the main defence against enemy fighters in the Abbai fleet. This is probably why they have two designs of escort. As a light escort the Bisaria is no worse than you'd expect, and it is well suited to supporting the assault fighters of its league allies.

## Drazi Guardhawk Battle Escort

The Guardhawk is not completely toothless, having a particle repeater with half-a-dozen attack dice. However this only has a range of twelve and is boresight arc. This puts the Guardhawk on a par with the Bisaria for the amount of firepower that it brings to the battle.

Damage and crew on the Guardhawk are comparable to that of the Bisaria, however where the Abbai has shields the Drazi ship has a dodge of five. This is an all or nothing defence, so the ship may die from the first enemy volley or survive beyond all expectations.

The Guardhawk has more anti-fighter firepower than any other light or medium escort, providing excellent coverage for the Drazi fleet. This is useful as only the largest Drazi ships have any anti-fighter capability of their own, and Drazi ships have no flank or rear weapons, making them especially vulnerable to assault fighters, or any fighter for that matter.

Drazi fleet doctrine relies upon Guardhawk escorts within the fleet to protect the other ships from enemy fighters, so ship protection will be a regular mission, and the ship is well suited for this role as it can move with the rest of the fleet with ease. As a light escort even a small fleet can afford one or two of these ships to provide coverage. This is the only escort available to the Drazi fleet, but it's a good ship and few Drazi fleets will operate without them.

One last point, the Sky Serpent heavy assault fighter is more desperately in need of anti-fighter coverage than any other fighter out there. Providing anti-fighter coverage to an air wing of

Sky Serpents is something that the Guardhawk is also very good at, as it is actually faster than the Sky Serpents. For example for an allocation point at raid you can buy a Guardhawk and nine sky serpents, which is not something that many captains would like to see getting in their face.

## Vree Ximm Close Escort

The lighter of the two Vree escorts, this is a modified Xorr war saucer which as a skirmish priority hull makes this the toughest of the light escorts. It has nearly double the damage and crew of the Bisaria and Guardhawk, but lacks the advanced defences of the other two.

Weaponry on the Ximm is less than on the original Xorr, however it actually carries heavy enough firepower to do some damage to an enemy ship, and enough range to avoid the secondary weapons of most fleets. This range advantage is especially easy to take advantage of as the Vree ship is super manoeuvrable, allowing it to pick it's range to some of the enemy ships.



The Ximm carries no more dice of anti-fighter than the original Xorr, which is on a par with other patrol and skirmish priority ships in the Vree fleet. Obviously as an escort these are more useful than those of other ships.

The Vree obviously have a thing about fighters, as even their lightest patrol level ship carries three dice of anti-fighter, and their biggest ships have eight or ten dice. This is not a fleet that will often need escorts for ship protection. Mainly the Vree will use escorts to keep superiority fighters away from the Tzymm heavy fighters, so they can get into range of the enemy ships and do them some damage. The Ximm is not a multi role ship like the Vaarka escort scout, but as a dedicated escort for the fleet or for Tzymm fighters it is a good, and cost effective, choice.

## Medium Escorts

Medium escorts start to be tough enough to perform fighter protection missions with a fair chance of survival, although their firepower remains limited. They can perform any escort duties but are not powerful enough to be used as line warships, they are just not quite good enough for that.

### Earth Alliance (Early) Artemis Escort Frigate

The Artemis carries weak plasma weapons, but does at least have weapons in all arcs. Operating in a fleet support role it can put a little additional fire into enemy ships when things get up close and personal. However while it does have reasonable numbers of attack dice, they lack range or special traits and this limits the impact of the ship's firepower will have on the battle as a whole.

Hull, damage and crew are all middle of the road for a medium escort, there are better and there are worse. What will make a difference is that the ship carries interceptors for its own defence which will certainly help against fighters, and long range sniping from bombardment ships.

The anti-fighter capabilities of the Artemis are on a par with the other medium escorts, but there is very little variation between any ship in this class.

The early Earth Alliance fleet had only patchy anti-fighter coverage on their warships, and some ships are missing any anti-fighter capability at all, the Avenger heavy carrier and the Nova dreadnought for a start. These are ships that can use anti-fighter protection, and the Avenger could easily qualify for dedicated escort protection.

In the Dilgar war you have Thorun dartfighters attacking the ships in suicide runs, and the best defence against this is the anti-fighter trait, so the Artemis escort becomes essential. In the Minbari war you have Nial elite fighters attacking your ships, so the fleet can definitely use an escort or two to help fend them off, again making the Artemis escort frigate essential. This will be a dangerous time for the Artemis escort frigate, as once they have been destroyed the Minbari Nial will be able to attack much of the fleet with impunity. The Minbari are smart, they will figure this out and target the escorts early so it may be worth bringing spares along.

### **Centauri Maximus Frigate**

The Maximus frigate carries a battery of matter cannon, with a good range and damage potential. This makes it probably the most dangerous of the medium escorts. It would work very well escorting assault fighters making an



attack run on enemy ships, however the Centauri don't have an assault fighter as such so this will rarely be made use of. The exception to this is the Rutarian strike fighters once they become available. These elite fighters do not exactly need anti-fighter protection, but if it helps them get into range on the enemy fleet then a Maximus on fighter escort may be worth using.

Defensively the Maximus is the toughest of the medium escorts, having hull of six and interceptors. In addition it is only a skirmish priority ship, so it is unlikely to draw as much enemy fire as other ships, adding to the survivability of the ship. This will obviously change if on a fighter support mission with a Rutarian strike wing.

The Maximus carries four dice of anti-fighter firepower, comparable with other medium escorts. However the ship also carries the guardian array, which means that it can also transfer two dice of interceptors to other ships, or even fighters to provide them with additional

protection. This will leave the ship itself vulnerable, however that is why it's built to be tough.

The Centauri fleet doesn't fit its ships with heavy anti-fighter protection, even the big ships only have enough to fend off a casual fighter strike. As for interceptors there are only a few ships that carry them. The Maximus is therefore intended to be an integral part of fleet operations, reinforcing the defences of the other ships of the fleet. With Sentri and Razik fighters providing air superiority the fleet should be safe from enemy fighters. The Maximus is probably the best of the medium escorts, and is arguably the best design for an escort in any fleet.

### **Interstellar Alliance Nolo'Tar Ranger Frigate**

The Nolo'Tar carries a pair of fusion cannon for offensive firepower, which is not as powerful as the Maximus and of shorter range, but are still mini-beam weapons that will slice through the armour of enemy ships with ease. As an added advantage they are mounted in twin-linked batteries. This isn't enough to go hunting enemy



ships with, but might contribute to the fleet's overall firepower.

Defensively the ship is not that impressive, only average hull and no advanced defences. The only thing that it does have going for it is that it has higher damage and crew ratings than the other medium escorts. This is not enough on it's own to protect the ship however, so independent operations are not advisable.

The ship isn't capable of operating alongside the whitestar fleet as it's way too slow to keep up with them. It is even slow compared to the Victory Destroyer. This is not surprising as the Nolo'Tar was designed long before the Interstellar Alliance was conceived, so there was no consideration of matching fleet capabilities. There is one ship in the fleet that can take advantage of the protection of the Nolo'Tar, and that is the Tara'Lin Command war cruiser. However while this ship will not be slowed down by the Nolo'Tar, it carries more dice of anti-fighter than the Nolo'Tar, and these are advanced rather than the standard variety. This makes the services of the Nolo'Tar of questionable use for any ships in the Interstellar Alliance fleet. Overall while the whitestars would certainly benefit from the coverage of an escort, it is not really capable of operating alongside them due to it's limited speed, and the ships that it can operate alongside don't really need it's services. Not a ship that many Interstellar Alliance fleets will often select, and with good reason.

### Vree Vaarka Escort Scout

This is an unusual ship, the only ship in the galaxy that combines the escort and scout traits. The firepower on the Vaarka is not massive, even



by Vree standards. However between twin-linked and double damage, it is still capable of doing some damage on occasion. However it's firepower is definitely not it's strongest asset.

Defensively the ship is definitely fragile, if the enemy do manage to hit it, then even a moderate attack is likely to be fatal to the ship. The only thing that will prevent this is the stealth carried by the ship. However if the ship enters weapons range that stealth protection drops to three or more, which is not enough to keep the ship alive. If you can get in the eight to ten inch range then you can still fire and retain the four up stealth, however this is difficult.

It carries more anti-fighter firepower than the other medium escorts, enough to be impressive in any fleet other than the Vree. However it is the presence of the scout trait that makes the ship particularly impressive. It can sit at the rear of the fleet providing scout support, and still adding to the anti-fighter coverage of the fleet.

As mentioned in the description of the Ximm, the Vree fleet will rarely need escorts to protect it against enemy fighters, however there are some fleets where the additional dice will be of use. It is against these fleets that the Vaarka comes into it's own, as it can provide both scout and escort protection. In general however the Vaarl scout saucer is the better scout, and if the coverage is not required then it should be taken in place of the Vaarka.

The Vaarka is not well suited to escorting Tzymm heavy fighters as this would require it to close to ranges on the enemy where it's stealth protection will be of little use. For fighter escort you are better off with the Ximm, if for no other reason than it's cheaper.

## Heavy Escorts

Heavy escorts are intended to fight as warships while still providing coverage to the fleet. They carry less firepower than a full on warship of their priority, but the difference is less than with the smaller escorts, so they reduce the overall firepower less than other escorts. They are also generally tough enough to engage enemy ships of their priority or smaller with at least a fighting chance.

### Minbari Ashinta Heavy Escort

The Ashinta is an offensive powerhouse, probably the most heavily armed escort around. It mounts twin-linked banks of fusion cannon in all firing arcs, which have a greater range than most secondary weapons and even the primary weapons of some races.

The Ashinta is also a tough ship to kill, as it is a variant of a battle priority ship. It retains the

hull, damage, crew and stealth of the Tinashi warship, making it exceptionally solid for a ship of Raid priority. The stealth however does work best at range, so supporting the Nial heavy fighters when they attack the enemy ships will prove to be a little dangerous for it.

It also has the most lethal battery of anti-fighter weapons of any escort, having six dice of advanced anti-fighter, which is a technological advantage that no other escort can boast. The number of dice is average for a heavy escort as well, so it's lost nothing to gain this advantage.

The Minbari mount advanced anti-fighter on all of their ships as standard, and their fighters are among the best dogfighters in the galaxy, so attacks from enemy assault or elite fighters will be of little concern to the Minbari fleet anyway. This means that bizarrely while the Ashinta is probably the best heavy escort in the galaxy, the Minbari fleet will only rarely need to take advantage of it. However there are some enemies where the specialist capabilities of the Ashinta may still be of value. One of these is the Gaim Intelligence fleet, which can attack with more Klikkitak suicide drones and breaching pods than even the Minbari can handle without the aid of the Ashinta.

### Abbai Bimith Defender

The Bimith is the standard Raid priority warship for the Abbai fleet, and the escort trait appears to be more of a fringe benefit than the main focus of the design. Like the other heavy escorts the Bimith mounts an extensive array of secondary weapons, but lacks a main weapon. In this case the secondaries are rather large batteries of quad particle arrays. Although mounted in large numbers, these weapons lack the armour penetration to threaten big ships, so measure up



poorly against the fusion cannon of the Ashinta. They are also very short ranged weapons, only reaching as far as the anti-fighter coverage that the Bimith provides.

Defensively the ship has shields on top of a respectable amount of damage and crew, as well as a limited interceptor network. While none of these are outstanding on their own, they do add up to a fairly well defended ship. However there is an imbalance between the damage and crew ratings of the ship, that means that it is likely to be crippled or even destroyed before the crew are all dead.

The ship is slow and lumbering, which will limit how well it can manoeuvre to protect the other ships of the Abbai fleet. However given that all of the ships that it will be protecting are also slow and lumbering, this is less of a problem than it might be. The Bimith carries less anti-fighter firepower than the other heavy escorts, half that of the Halik, which is why it's role as an escort seems more of an afterthought.

As previously discussed the Abbai escorts are expected to fight alongside the other warships

of the fleet, while providing extra anti-fighter coverage. This forces the Bimith into an aggressive role, closing to short range to bring it's massed particle arrays into range, which places it at the front of Abbai formations, unlike other escorts that can lurk at the rear of the fleet. Being at the front also means that it's offside flank or rear batteries are more likely to come into play as well, firing on light enemy ships that penetrate the slow moving Abbai formation. Overall the Bimith is not a ship that the Abbai can afford to miss, having no other option at Raid priority.

### Brakiri Halik Frigate

The Halik carries less firepower than the Bimith, however the weapons have greater armour penetration and range, giving the Halik the edge in firepower, although not by much. It is still inferior to the firepower of the Ashinta heavy escort.

The ship has comparable damage and crew to the Ashinta as well as significantly lower thresholds. However it lacks the advanced defences of the other heavy escorts which makes it the most vulnerable of the class. It is still a relatively tough ship, typical of the Brakiri fleet.

The Halik does have the largest battery of anti-fighter weapons of any escort, as well as the speed to keep pace with the Brakiri fleet not to mention Brakiri assault fighters. On fleet protection or fighter escort missions the Halik is a very capable ship, and will perform very well in either role.

Only two Brakiri ships lack any anti-fighter capability, the Skirmish priority Shakara scout and the war priority Cidikar heavy carrier. Assigning a Halik to protect the scout is likely to



be wasteful, but given the size of the Cidikar air wing it is valuable enough to be worth protecting with at least one Halik. In fact in a fleet big enough to need a Cidikar then a pair of Halik will probably be a good idea. One will remain close to the Cidikar, while the other can escort the Cidikar's assault fighter wing in against the enemy. The Pikatos are especially vulnerable to enemy superiority fighters, and the Halik is tough enough to escort them all the way into the enemy fleet. If you then add a wing or two of Riva super heavy fighters to the air wing, it becomes a real threat to the enemy fleet.

When not protecting a Cidikar, the Halik will remain a useful member of the fleet, providing it's coverage to the rest of the fleet as required. The lighter Brakiri carriers are also capable of carrying Pikatos assault fighters, so again escorting the assault fighters is an option.

### **Pak'ma'ra Halik Frigate**

Based on the Brakiri design, but with a complete refit of the weapons, the Halik retains a capacity to damage the enemy. However the change to plasma weapons has slightly reduced the effectiveness of the pak'ma'ra ship when compared with the Brakiri design. This puts the pak'ma'ra Halik as one of the weaker heavy escorts.

Defensively the pak'ma'ra version of the ship is tougher than the Brakiri. It retains the original damage and crew ratings, but with lower thresholds. But now it also has the redundant systems rule reducing the damage that it takes from enemy fire. This makes it a more difficult kill than the Brakiri version, but probably not as tough as the Bimith or Ashinta.



The change to plasma technology has reduced the amount of normal anti-fighter firepower on the ship. However it has provided the capacity to use it's main weapons as a plasma web, which gives them the energy mine trait in exchange for halving the attack dice. The presence of any kind of energy mine weapon on an escort elevates it's capabilities as an escort and this alone makes this ship a challenger for the title of best escort in the galaxy.

The pak'ma'ra fit all of their ships with anti-fighter weapons, but then they have to rely on them for fighter defence, as none of their ships carry fighters of any sort, and the only fighter in the whole fleet is the Porfatis system patrol boat, which is such a bad dogfighter that they had to give it anti-fighter capability of it's own. Given that many of the pak'ma'ra ships also have gaps in their weapon arcs where they cannot engage an enemy, the Halik becomes a necessary part of any pak'ma'ra fleet just to deal with the

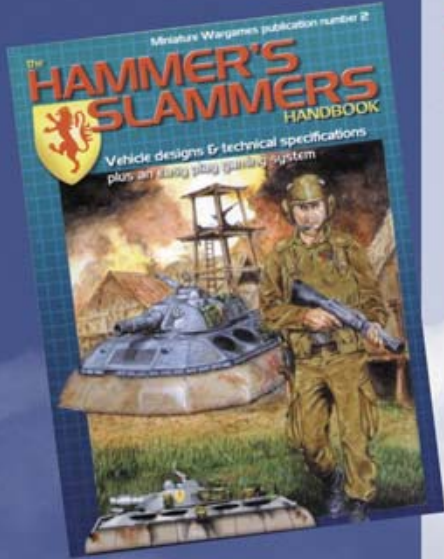
enemy fighters. The Porfatis is a definite assault fighter, so escorting them with a Halik to keep superiority fighters from killing them is also worth while. However as no ship carries the Porfatis, this has to be part of the plan from the very beginning when fleets are selected.

## **In Conclusion**

For some fleets escorts are seen as a relic of past days, a class of ships that is no longer needed. For others they are just a useful tool in the box, to be taken out if and when required. But there are some fleets in which escorts are an integral part of fleet operations.

As with all specialist ships, they can be useful, but to take them requires the sacrifice of something else, even if that is just less overall fleet firepower. The more information that you have in advance, the easier the choice is to make, hence the value placed on military intelligence. Best case you know exact details of all the enemy ships and fighters you will be facing before you have to select your ships, so you can plan exactly how many escorts and other specialist ships you want to take. The worse possible situation is where you do not know even what race of ships you will be facing, let alone the exact selection of ships that they will use. In these cases you have to decide for yourself if your fleet needs the added defences of an escort or not. Fleets like the Centauri that have their escorts integrated within a whole fleet defensive strategy will naturally take escorts.

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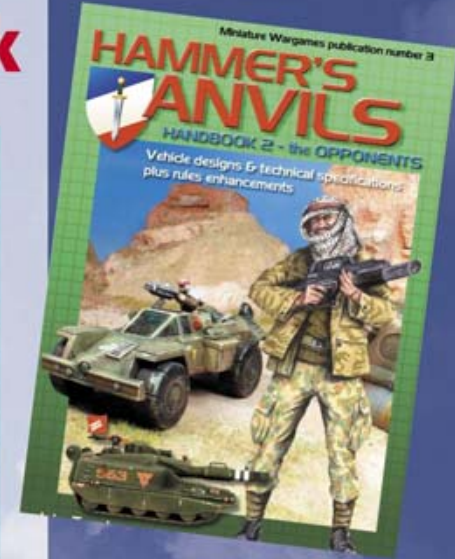
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# Extinction Protocol



GET OFF ME.

I'M ALRIGHT  
- GET OFF ME.



WHATEVER IT  
IS YOU'VE DONE TO  
ME, YOU WON'T GET  
AWAY WITH IT.



GET AWAY WITH  
*WHAT*, PRECISELY - CURING  
YOUR HALLUCINATIONS OR  
PROMOTING YOU  
TO SERGEANT?



YOU'RE--

--YOU'RE  
PROMOTING ME?

DO TRY  
TO KEEP UP



CAN YOU...

IS THAT  
EVEN LEGAL?

I THINK YOU'LL  
HAVE A HARD TIME FINDING  
ANYONE WITH THE AUTHORITY TO  
*OVER-RULE* ME.

NOW RUN ALONG,  
THERE'S A GOOD  
LITTLE PUPPY.

I'VE GOT  
OTHERS WAITING.



HURGH...

GUHR--

--HURRRGH!



CHRIST!

YOU'RE A MESS, BLACKWELL.

NAKA--

--GURGH...

NAKAGAWA.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE.?

HE DID?

KEN, LISTEN - I...

SAME AS YOU, I GUESS. THE SPECIAL OFFICER SENT FOR ME.



SAVE IT.

GET OUT OF MY WAY, CORPORAL.

THAT'S SERGEANT.

WHUF...



WHAT?



WELL  
ALRIGHT THEN...

OH GOD -

BLACKWELL, I...





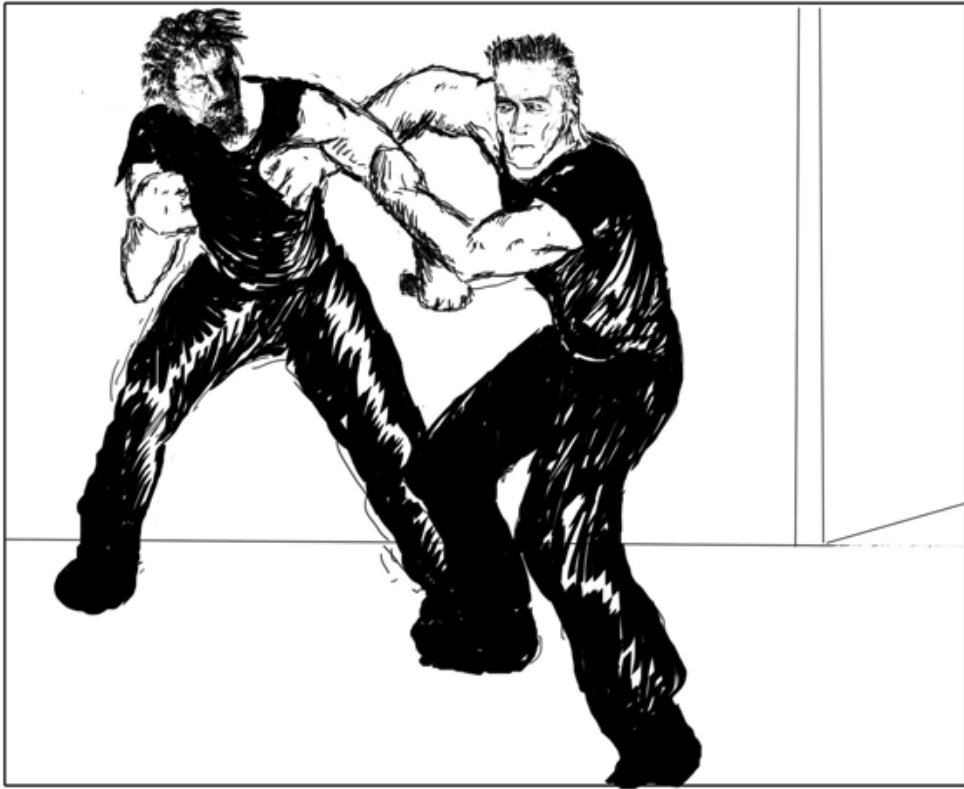
HUFF!

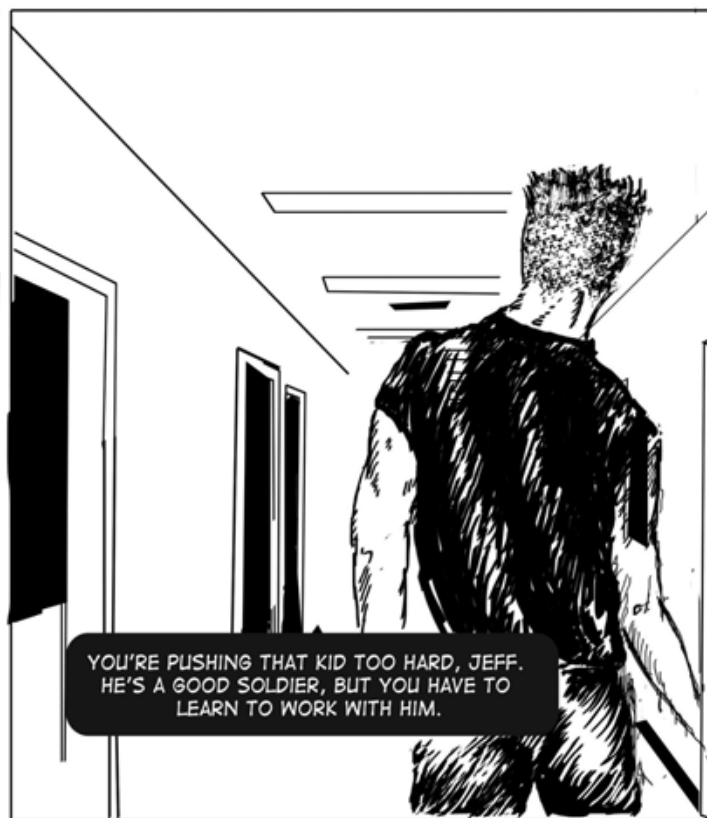
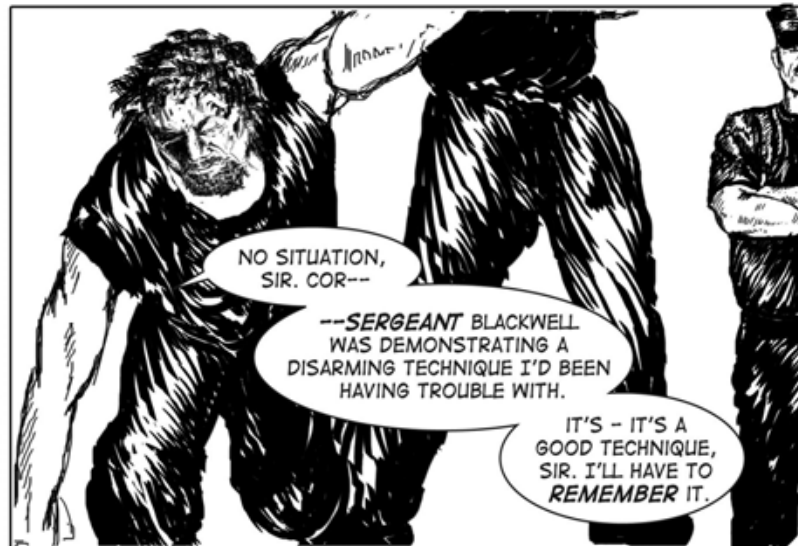
HRAH!

HUKK!

NGAH!

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We will need a brief synopsis of your intended article, no more than one page long. Also include a paragraph or two of your actual writing style, so we can see whether you have what it takes and any samples of previously published work. If we like what we see, we will commission a first draft from you and you will be on your way to becoming a Mongoose contributing writer. And every article we publish will be paid for...which is nice.

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First and foremost, the article has to be based on one of our product lines. That is not as limiting as it sounds, however. With Starship Troopers, A Call to Arms, Gangs of Mega-City One and Mighty Armies all well established, you already have plenty of options. Do not forget miniatures for other gaming lines. We already have Lone Wolf and Paranoia miniatures, so why not come up with some cross over rules? If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

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# THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



## Part one of a New Army List for use with Battlefield Evolution



Jason Bracich

**The United States** Air Force has long been the dominant air power in the world, with technology and firepower unmatched by any other nation. In the past, American military strategy has been to utilise air power to cripple an enemy's ability to coordinate their military and political efforts, then use combined arms to "mop up." As European and Chinese forces begin to bridge the technological gap, America finds itself utilising every aspect of its military might in an effort to maintain superiority on the battlefield, including prolonged use of Air Force assets.

### THE USAF

Since the end of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the Air Force struggled to re-establish its identity. No longer was the focus on mutually assured destruction of the Soviet Union; now the Air Force needed to be able to rapidly respond to crisis situations throughout the world. The challenge was to be able to operate effectively in multiple theatres of operation. This need was best demonstrated in the Global War on Terror.

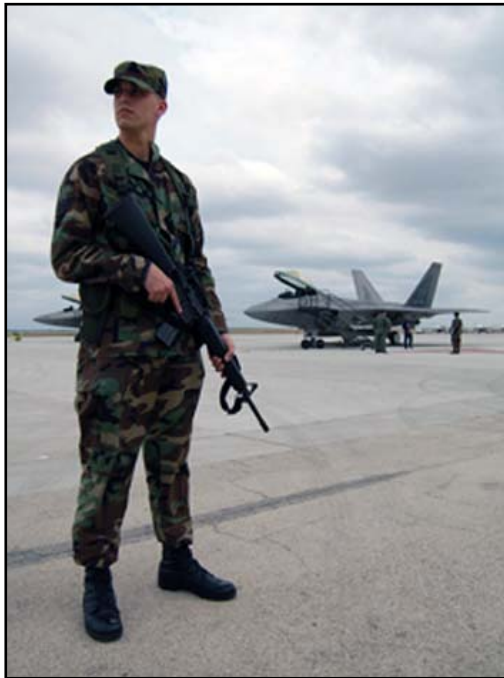
The Air Force's answer came with the development of the Air Expeditionary Wing. This concept reorganised the Air Force so that a single home airbase could deploy everything needed to establish an effective base of operations, provide its own security, and deliver strike packages anywhere within a theatre of operations. The Air Expeditionary Wing provided greater unit cohesion and dramatically improved combat operations.

Another effect of the Air Expeditionary Wing and the Global War on Terror was an expansion of the role of Security Forces. These troops began assisting the Army and Marine Corps with convoy duty and conducting ground operations well beyond their base perimeters. These forces even began conducting limited offensive operations in areas where there were no established front lines.



### INFANTRY

USAF ground forces are divided into two components: Security Forces and Special Operations Forces. Security Forces are the backbone of USAF ground operations. They not only provide peacetime police duties, but also defend airbases. In addition, Security Forces units are occasionally sent "outside the wire" to conduct raids and reconnaissance missions. Specialty units, such as sniper and working dog teams, provide Security Forces detachments with a wide variety of tactical options.



Special Operations Forces consist of highly specialised troops capable of enhancing any American military operation. From Combat Controllers able to storm airfields and guide in attack aircraft, to Pararescue Jumpers dropping into the battlefield to treat the wounded, even individual SOF troops are incredible force multipliers for any branch of the American Military.

Since most of the Air Force's budget is allocated to aircraft and munitions development, ground forces lack much of the sophisticated equipment enjoyed by the Army and Marines. Most Air Force troops lack any advanced weapon suites, although Special Tactics Teams utilise the Land Warrior system. Ground forces still maintain excellent communications gear. Some Air Force

personnel eat, sleep, and fight alongside other branches in Tactical Air Control Parties, but their equipment is focused on guiding airstrikes.

Ground vehicle development has also been largely neglected by the Air Force. The HMMWV remains the workhorse of Security Forces detachments.

### ARMOUR

As far as the Air Force is concerned, big guns belong in the sky. The most heavily armoured vehicle in the Air Force arsenal is the Vietnam-era M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier, although they rarely appear in anything but stateside units. The Air Force also employs Patriot II batteries, although these are generally stationary units.

### AIRPOWER

As one would expect, airpower is where the Air Force truly excels. While budgetary constraints forced the Marines to develop jack-of-all-trades aircraft, the Air Force has no such restriction. They have developed specialised aircraft that excel in one particular aspect of warfare, but have enough flexibility to adapt as needed. Cargo and Bomber aircraft give the Air Force unparalleled logistic and strategic attack capability, while many tactical aircraft serve as benchmarks for the world's major military powers.

The flagships of the Air Force are the F-22 Raptor and F-35A Lightning II. Both utilise stealth technology to increase their survivability. The Raptor is a dedicated

air-to-air fighter, with unsurpassed targeting capabilities. The Lightning II is the Air Force's version of the Joint Strike Fighter, and can be configured for both air-to-air and air-to-ground roles.

Dedicated close air support platforms are an important part of the Air Force mission, and one the Marines and Army appreciate the most. The A-10 Thunderbolt II is an incredibly effective tank killer, and built to survive even a direct hit from a surface-to-air missile. The AC-130U Spooky Gunship is an improvement on a Vietnam-era design, circling the battlefield and delivering a massive barrage of firepower wherever ground forces request it.

The Air Force also utilises helicopters, though not in the numbers found in the Marines





and Army. These serve mainly in a transport role, supporting Special Operations Forces. Additionally, the Air Force employs large amounts of unmanned aerial vehicles to support air and ground missions where the risk to pilots is considered too great.

### USAF ARMY LISTS

Up to now, you have been able to build forces with few restrictions, simply by obeying a total points limit and using your unit cards. To create a more realistic force, one that might actually take to the battlefield in the

near future, an army list must be used. These army lists should be used for competitive tournaments and all scenarios found later in the Advanced Rulebook.

### USAF SECURITY FORCES DETACHMENT

The primary role of Security Forces is to provide air base defence and function as military police. In times of war, however, Security Forces detachments can be deployed beyond base perimeters to root out enemy forces.

A USAF Security Force comprises one or more flights. Each flight is chosen with unit cards drawn from the categories below. You may have any number of flights in your force, so long as you fulfil the mandatory units required by each, but you may only choose one flight per 1,500 points of your total army value.

**Squad:** Minimum two units, maximum four units

**Support:** Up to one unit per Squad unit chosen

**Command:** Up to one unit

**Armour:** Up to one unit per four Squad units

**Transport:** May take as many units as necessary to carry all size 1 models

**Air:** Up to two units per 1,500 points

You may also include Emplacements in your force, spending up to half of your total points value.

### USAF AIR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

When it absolutely, positively HAS to be destroyed overnight, call in a USAF Air Expeditionary Force. Containing all the firepower, support, and logistics needed to conduct a “Shock and Awe” campaign, the AEF can deal a severe blow to an opponent’s military long before ground forces come into play.

A USAF Air Expeditionary Force comprises one or more strike packages. Each strike package is chosen with unit cards drawn from the categories below. You may have any number of strike packages in your force, so long as you fulfil the mandatory units required by each, but you may only choose one strike



package per 2,000 points of your total army value.

**Squad:** Up to one unit per two Air units

**Support:** Up to one unit per Squad unit chosen

**Command:** Up to one unit

**Armour:** No units permitted.

**Transport:** May take as many units as necessary to carry all size 1 models

**Air:** Minimum two units per 1,000 points

You may also include Emplacements in your force, spending up to a quarter of your total points value.

#### OPTIONS AND UPGRADES

Unless otherwise stated, the following options may be purchased for any USAF army.

**Command Vehicles (+50 points):** One unit with the Transport special rule may be equipped with a commanding officer and an advanced communications suite. The unit

becomes a Command choice, and every turn may grant one allied unit a bonus action. No unit can ever take more than three actions in a turn, no matter how many bonuses are available.

**Smoke Launchers (+25 points):** Any model with the Armoured special rule may be given a Smoke Launcher system. Whether using specially dispersed

grenades or simply by feeding diesel directly into the exhausts of the vehicle, a great amount

of smoke can be generated in a relatively short time, effectively screening the vehicle from view.

A model with Smoke Launchers may take two consecutive Ready actions in a turn to sheathe itself in thick smoke, blocking any Line of Sight across an area up to 3" from the model. This will last for your opponent's next turn and your next turn, so long as your model does not move.

**full unit stats next issue!**

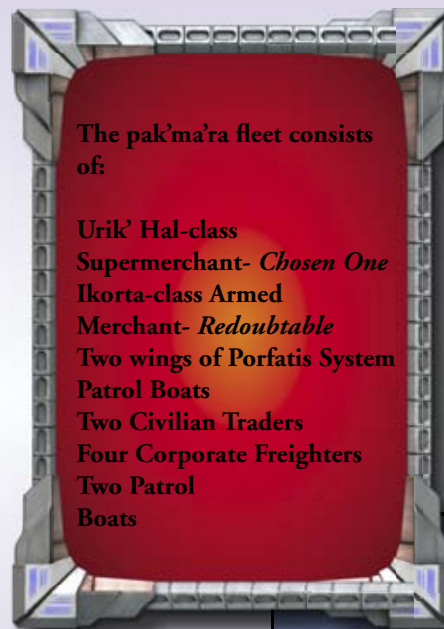


# A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Andrew Granger

**The chaos** of the Shadow War made life difficult for Raiders throughout the galaxy. The normal tricks of the trade were less useful, and escorts were more powerful and more plentiful.

But intelligence was always the mark of a successful Raider and new strategies were created to help increase the chance of securing prizes. The boldest of these, a strong attack,



aided by hidden assets, the wolf in sheep's clothing.

## Fleets

**Pre-Battle Preparation:** The pak'ma'ra player sets up first. The defender's

deployment zone is a rectangle 20" long and 8" wide, extending from the centre of one of the long map edges. The opposite edge is considered the exit edge.

The Raider may deploy anywhere along either or both short map edges, within 6" of the edge of the map. Stellar Debris is determined randomly.

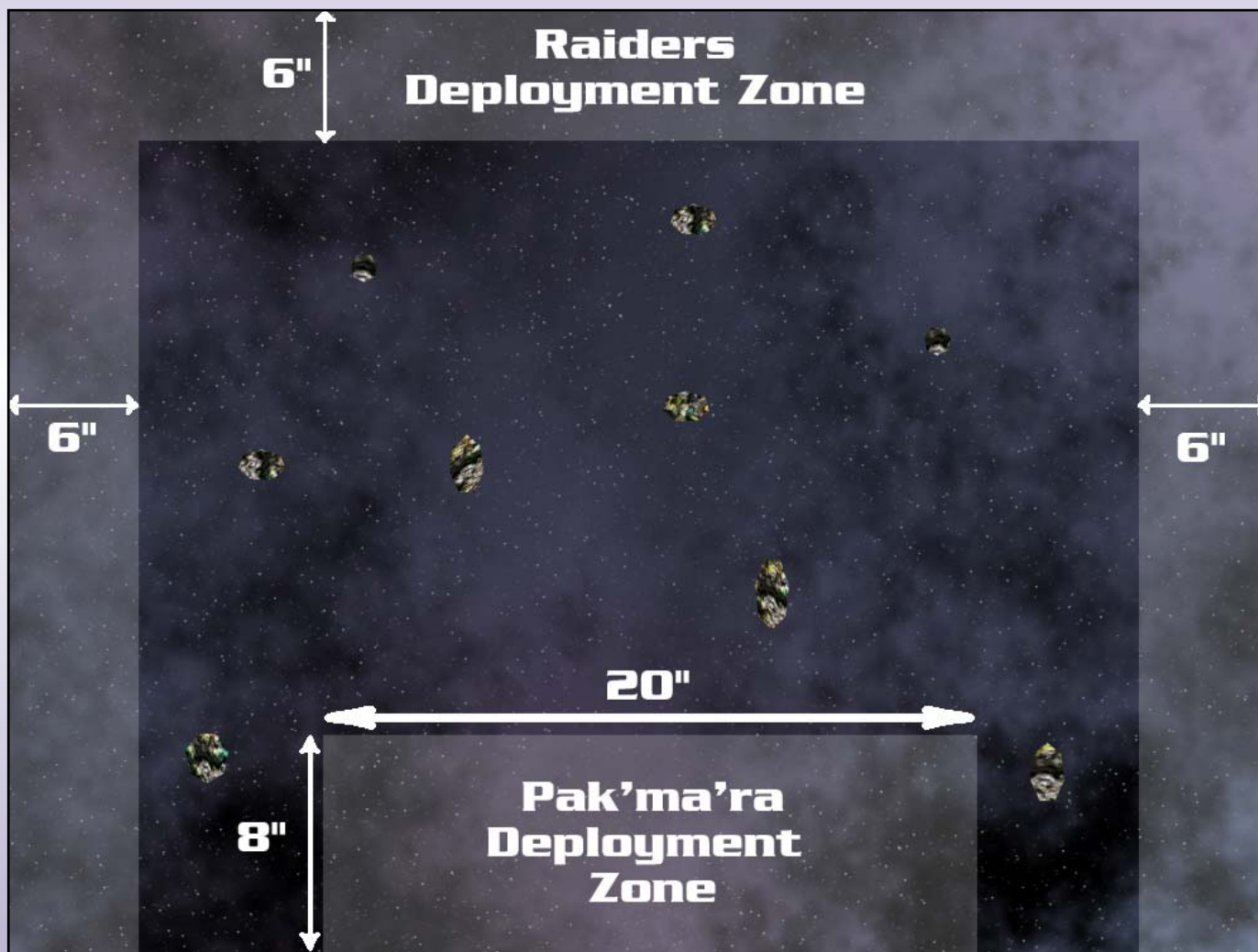
**Scenario Rules:** The Raider has snuck a modified freighter among the civilian ships in the convoy. At the start of any turn after



the second turn, the Raider may declare one of the corporate freighters to be the modified freighter. Once declared, the ship becomes one of the Raider's ships. Before that point, it belongs to the pak'ma'ra player.

**Game Length:** 10 turns or until *either side* has no ships on the table (stricken, destroyed, and surrendered ships do not count as viable ships).

**Victory and Defeat:** This scenario uses victory points to determine who wins. In addition, the Raider receives 2 VPs for every civilian ship he destroys or cripples. The pak'ma'ra player receives 2 VPs for every civilian ship that exits along the exit edge of the map.







**“Ambassador...”**

# Retribution at Quadrant 15

## A Call to Arms Battle Report



**Matthew Sprange and  
Tristan Lomas**

**We had been** talking about bringing someone from outside of Mongoose along to do a battle report for some time. A playtester, maybe, or someone we knew from the Call to Arms tournament circuit. While debating this, we had a visit from Tristan Lomas (Triggy, on our forums). Hefting the official Turbot of Challenge, he slapped me clean round the face, shouting 'Sprange! I come for you!'

Tristan is a regular feature at our Call to Arms tournaments, and he tends to do quite well them. He is what is known as a Good Player. Collecting cups and medals from our events since they started, his trophy room is packed fuller than Lewis Hamilton's. This would be an interesting match, if nothing else. Top player versus game's designer.

Frankly, I was doomed.

We decided that nothing less than an epic confrontation would do for this battle, so we opted for a 5 point War level game, using the Annihilation scenario – a real fight to the death. Tristan chose to back the Psi Corps, while I flip-flopped between Minbari and ISA for a while, before settling on the latter (though 5 Sharlins would have been fun, if not particularly exciting to read!).

### The Back Story

The ISA has known about darker forces within EarthGov, and their efforts to achieve galactic domination through the use of new – or very old – technologies. With the remnants of the old Psi Corps at their centre, these covert fleets work in deep space within hidden laboratories, searching for the vital edge that will bring about Mankind's ultimate destiny.

Rangers were dispatched throughout neutral space around the Earth Alliance in an effort to find these hidden bases. After many months of searching and chasing false leads, a major force was uncovered in Quadrant 15, close to the border of the Centauri Republic. Wasting no time, the ISA mobilised, sending every available ship in the area to destroy the cancer withering EarthGov. It was to be a costly battle, for both sides.

### The Interstellar Alliance

**Matthew:** So, a match against Tristan and his Psi Corps, with everything to play for. Well, the honour of Mongoose games designers, at least (we are so doomed!).

In the end, I chose the ISA because, aside from it being a favourite of mine, I knew it would

give me a broad range of ships, which always makes for an interesting battle report. They also have some very powerful (if fragile) ships at their disposal, so there should be a good dash of excitement too!

In a 5 point War level fleet, Armageddon ships become viable, and there was no way I was not going to take a Victory. Lovely model (made all the lovelier by Adrian's recent work for the *A Call to Arms Painting Guide*), good all round weaponry, the Lightning Cannon, and three figure Damage allied to Adaptive Armour. Practically invincible!

Staying with the big ships, I debated between a White Star Carrier and the Tara'Lin, the latter finally winning through with its Stealth and Neutron Lasers, though I pined for all those White Star Fighters!

An ISA fleet has to have White Stars it is the done thing), so the next War point went on four of those, dividing them equally between White Star I's and II's, to give me some Scouting ability as well as additional fighter support. So, one War point to go.

In the end, I decided to break the final point down several times, providing me with a White Star Gunship, another White Star, the Liandra,

and 2 Blue Stars. I knew Tristan was keen on 'initiative sinks' as they have been called, and this would help balance out my fleet with some hard-hitting ships that would not immediately attract all the firepower from the Psi Corps. That would be the Victory's job...

### Interstellar Alliance Attack Fleet

**The Excalibur** – Victory-class destroyer

**The Vin'Lini** – Tara'Lin-class command war cruiser

**White Star Gunship 12**

**White Stars 9 and 17** – White Star I

**White Stars 34, 41, and 98** – White Star II

**The Liandra** – Battle frigate  
Blue Stars 3 and 77

## The Psi Corps

**Tristan:** My first time in print for Signs and Portents and I felt under pressure to do myself justice. Matt would be my opponent and as I only found out on the day, the Interstellar Alliance would be the foe...

This fleet was originally picked with Centauri in mind as the opponent but circumstance intervened, changing the foe, but I had faith in my fleet selection and stuck with it. I chose Psi Corps as my fleet because I had never taken them in a meaningful game before and because they are a very interesting fleet to fight with

– almost the same as *Earth Alliance* but with several subtleties. In general, the fleet works best trying to skirt the enemy and keeping them at arms' length while using fighters to hold enemy ships from getting too close. Against the ISA this was always going to be a tricky proposition but I would still try!

With the game being 5 Fleet Allocation Points at War Priority Level, I decided that it was too good an opportunity to not take a Nemesis advanced destroyer. It's a solid ship with good weaponry and good fighters. It may not be the most spectacular Armageddon ship in the game but it really does fit with the EA/Psi Corps philosophy of projection of strength and survivability. Its most potent weapon, the molecular slicer beam, is pretty powerful and really needs to get lined up on valuable targets like the Victory class destroyer. This means I need 'initiative sinks' to get this beam on track, and for this I turned to the EA fleet list.

I took an Omega class destroyer as it provides more of the same as the Nemesis, particularly more fighters that I knew would be key to winning this fight, and four Chronos frigates. These are the tough little ships of my fleet with great survivability for a Skirmish level ship, and can fire in all directions and in multiple arcs – something valuable with the mix of other ships with boresight weapons in the fleet.

The rest of the fleet was based around the workhorses of the Psi Corps list – Motherships and Hunter experimental warships. I had planned on taking two Hunters and three Motherships but I ended up with three Hunters and a single Mothership. This wasn't a bad compromise as I still had plenty of ships and, more importantly, plenty of fighters.

The rest of my fleet was spent on a Fighter Carrier and a pair of Shadowcloaks for scout support.

With the fleet chosen, now I just had the creator of the game to face and every move in print for the public to see my mistakes!

### Earth Alliance/Psi Corps Experimental Battlegroup

**EAS Nemesis** – Nemesis-class advanced destroyer

**EAS Apollo** – Omega-class destroyer (with Thunderbolt Starfurys)

**EAS Vantage, EAS Damocles and EAS Furious** – Hunter-class experimental warships

**EAS Titania, EAS Umbriel, EAS Juliet and EAS Caliban** – Chronos-class frigates

**EAS Capricorn and EAS Ursa** – Shadowcloak-class escorts

**Psi Corps Mothership XIII**

**Psi Corps Fighter Carrier XXIV**

## Deployment

**Tristan:** Losing the initiative roll for deployment, I decided to keep things simple yet entice a mistake or two from Matt (you should never give up hope). I kept my long-ranged ships (the Nemesis, Mothership and Omega) in a group on my left flank by the dust cloud, keeping a swathe of open space in the middle for their beams to cover, no matter where Matt deployed.

Matt's White Stars could realistically either deploy in the centre or come around the asteroid field to my right. Through the centre was more dangerous as they could come headlong at me and use their speed to punch through and get behind me, if they came around the flank then they'd have to spend a turn or two to co-ordinate their actions. I kept the Hunters in the middle, ready to cover the centre then switch to the right if a flank attack was coming.

The Chronos were deployed on the right by the asteroid field to give the impression of a spread-out deployment and lure ships round the asteroid field. They were angled to come into the centre and get central so as to use their arcs of fire, but not advance too quickly to get caught by myriad close-range guns.

The Shadowcloaks split up onto either flank so that at least one would stay alive through the game, and the Fighter Carrier hid on the left behind the dust cloud. The fighters started in a group covering the Hunters and Chronos, with future fighters able to be launched on the left flank and cover my larger ships.

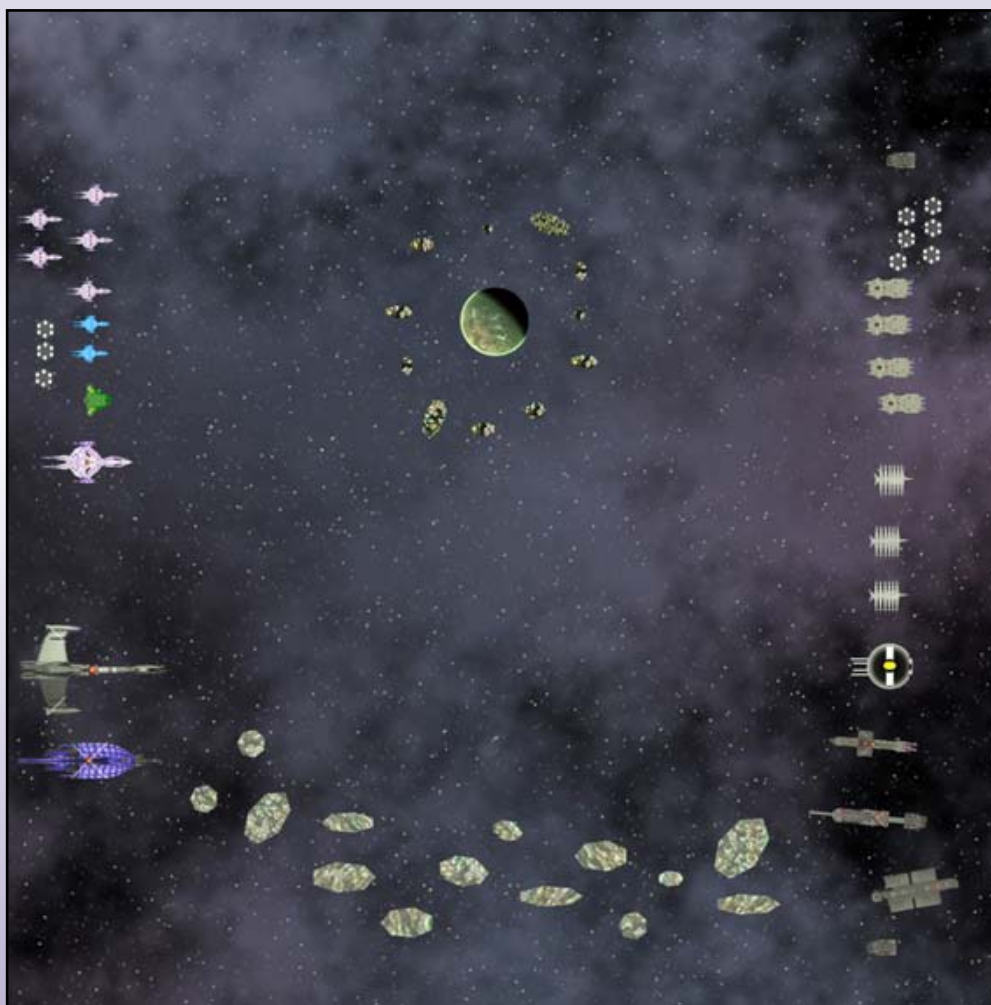
With any luck Matt would take the bait, my fighters would whittle his down and I could pick off one or two of his larger ships before his flanking group hit home. Once cleared, my fighters would be essential in the battle to take out the White Stars as their greatest weakness is to fighter attack – vessels that can outmanoeuvre them, evade their firepower and hit them with single damage weapons that minimise the effect of Adaptive Armour. Well, that was the plan...

**Matthew:** We had pushed the boat out a little for the battlefield, and it featured a large dust cloud, as well as an asteroid-ringed planet. Perfect for splitting forces then!

By losing the deployment roll, *Tristan had* been forced to set up first, allowing me to see his fleet. He had kept his hard-hitting group comprising a Nemesis, Omega, and the Psi Corps Mothership near the dust cloud, while the centre ground was held by four Chronos frigates and three Hunters – the Hunters were deployed as a squadron, and I knew their combined strength could give me a fair bit of grief.

I placed the Tara'Lin and Victory opposite Tristan's big-hitters, trusting to their Stealth and Adaptive Armour respectively to keep me out of trouble. Their superior range would allow me to score some damage before he could return fire.

We had rolled for the density of the asteroid field around the planet and, being very low, this opened up the possibility of rushing through it, should tactics demand. With this in mind, I



sent the Liandra and White Star Gunship round the close side of the asteroids to directly engage Tristan's centre group, while the White and Blue Stars would head as a pack round the far side.

This would allow them to get in close while avoiding any incoming fire, and then place them on Tristan's back line in turn 3, where they would cause all kinds of grief. I was imagining something like a knife through butter.

The only downside to this plan was that it could allow Tristan to take on my fleet piecemeal if he were quick enough, but I gambled that a 5 point War level fleet was not something that could be destroyed in just a couple of turns.

### Turn One

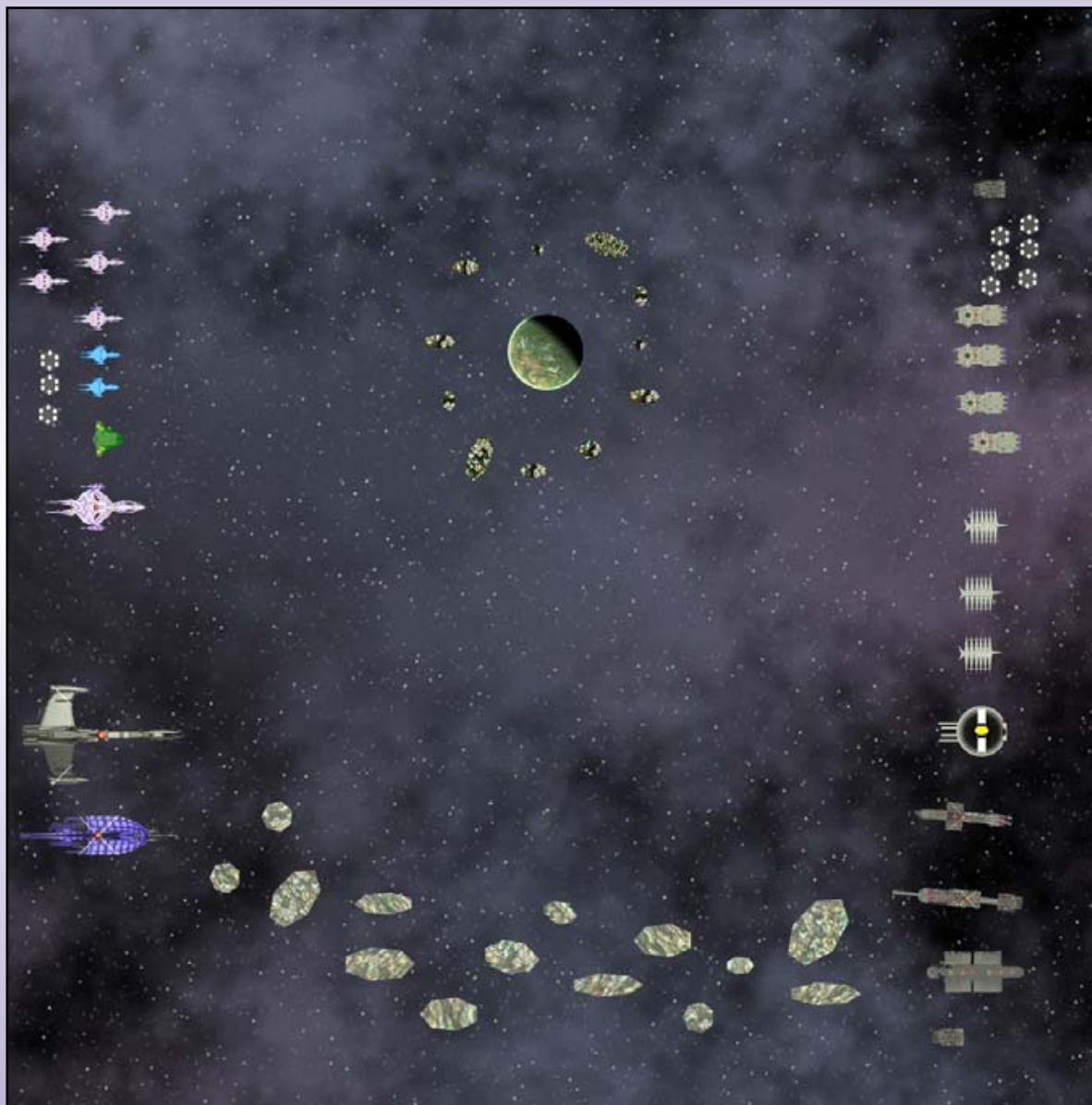
**Matthew:** With the Victory and Tara'Lin on my side, I owned the Initiative Phase, frankly. The White Stars began their flanking move with the Blue Stars leading the way, while the Liandra and White Star Gunship mirrored their move on the other side of the planet.

The Victory and Tara'Lin both used their superior range to target one of the Hunters that were floating towards me, but both were defeated by Stealth. So much for my idea about scoring damage at range. . .

**Tristan:** Without any meaningful moves, I set up my

fleet to move into the centre, ready for the inevitable onslaught next turn. I needed to get my damage in quickly as the White Stars were coming but they wouldn't arrive until turn 3 so I

had at least a little time. I got off lightly with my Hunters surviving intact and wanted my ships to all hit home in turn 2.



## Turn Two

**Matthew:** Now the action hots up! My Nials hurtled through the asteroids as if they were clear space, throttling up to engage Black Omegas and Shadowfuries. The dogfights were brief but vicious, with flights falling on both sides in roughly equal measure.

Finally finding its way through the Stealth technology the Earth ships seemed to have acquired, the Victory blasted one Hunter, even as the Hunters and White Star Gunship traded fire. The Hunters suffered a little in the exchange, but the Gunship was completely overwhelmed by the incoming firepower, and exploded within seconds. The Liandra fared no better as it was pounded into oblivion by the Chronos frigates backing the Hunters up. Some might say there was a certain justice in the Liandra being destroyed, but it did me no good whatsoever.

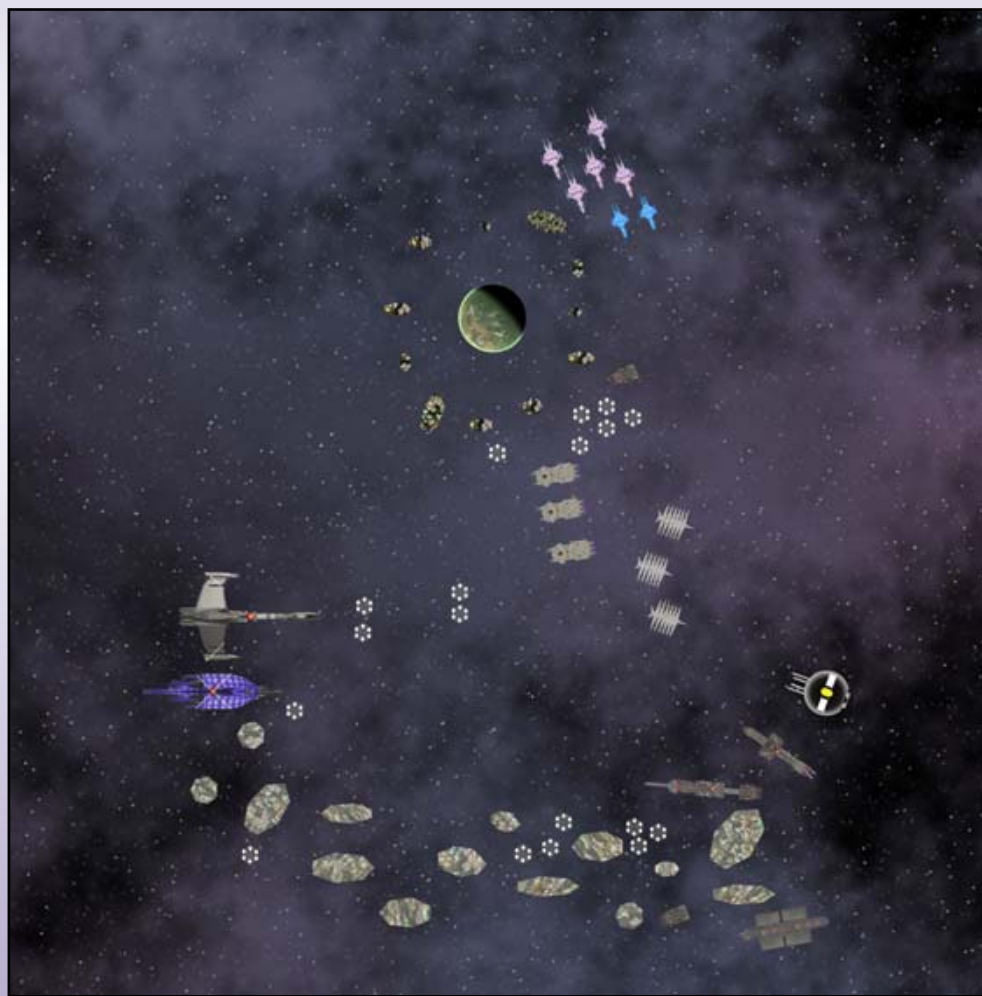
Bigger trouble lurked on my right flank, as the Nemesis lined up on the Tara'Lin with its Molecular Slicer Beam. Hel tracking array functioning perfectly, it spied the Minbari ship through the haze of Stealth, and landed a crippling hit. Listing to one side, the Tara'Lin had lost its Jump Engines, Command trait and, worst of all Stealth! It was practically out of the fight before it had begun.

It looked as though my worst nightmare had come true – Tristan was indeed taking my fleet apart piecemeal, served up nicely by yours truly.

**Tristan:** This was a turn where I had to do a lot of damage and my fleet didn't disappoint. The dogfights saw a whittling of fighters from both sides, which suited me fine as I outnumbered Matt on the fighter front, with my freshly launched reserves ready to join the fight.

The Nemesis took aim at the Tara'Lin as the only worthwhile target in range and able to be lined up with its boresight, useful as I was planning on using the Hel Track here anyway. Everything else lined up on the White Star Gunship in an attempt to remove another threatening target before it could cause much harm. The Nemesis locked on, with the aid of a Shadowcloak, and ripped through the Tara'Lin, crippling it and taking out the precise combination of traits to prevent its flight or continued survival - job done!

I was pretty happy that I had enough firepower to take out the White Star Gunship and so it proved, with the omni-directional Chronos frigates proving their worth and taking out the Liandra as a useful initiative sink. With only a single Hunter partially damaged, this was a good turn, with everything so far going to plan. Next turn I could wait and see where the flanking White Stars and Blue Stars turned up before choosing whether to put my firepower into them or the Victory.



## Turn Three

**Matthew:** Okay, what could I salvage here then?

Not much, it first seemed. Scouts were active on both sides, painting targets and reducing Stealth on select vessels. Tristan now brought the Psi Corps Mothership into play and, lining up on the now defenceless Tara'Lin, its beam sliced the war cruiser in two, a huge explosion catching a poor flight of Thunderbolts into the bargain. The Nemesis now switched its attention to the Victory, but the Adaptive Armour proved to be worth its weight in, well, Neutron Lasers.

I had to pull something out of the hat, as I was now three ships down, and one of those was one of my front-liners. So, to work!

Deciding to leave the Nemesis until later (and knowing I might regret that), I lined the Victory up on Tristan's Omega, and gave it the full weight of lasers. A massive explosion ripped through the Omega, proving the ISA had the means to make the Earthers think twice. Then, the White Stars struck.

Screaming round the side of the planet, they threw themselves into the flight. The Blue Stars split off from the main group to launch an attack on the Mothership, damaging its engines, while the White Stars, keeping perfect formation, streaked towards the Hunters.

Only the Neutron Lasers were in range, but their opening shots sliced one Hunter apart. Then the second went down, catching the third in the blast and setting off secondary explosions on the third. Elated by their effect on the battlefield, the remaining White Stars lined up on the last Hunter and destroyed it utterly, leaving the

centre of the fight a lot clearer than it had been!

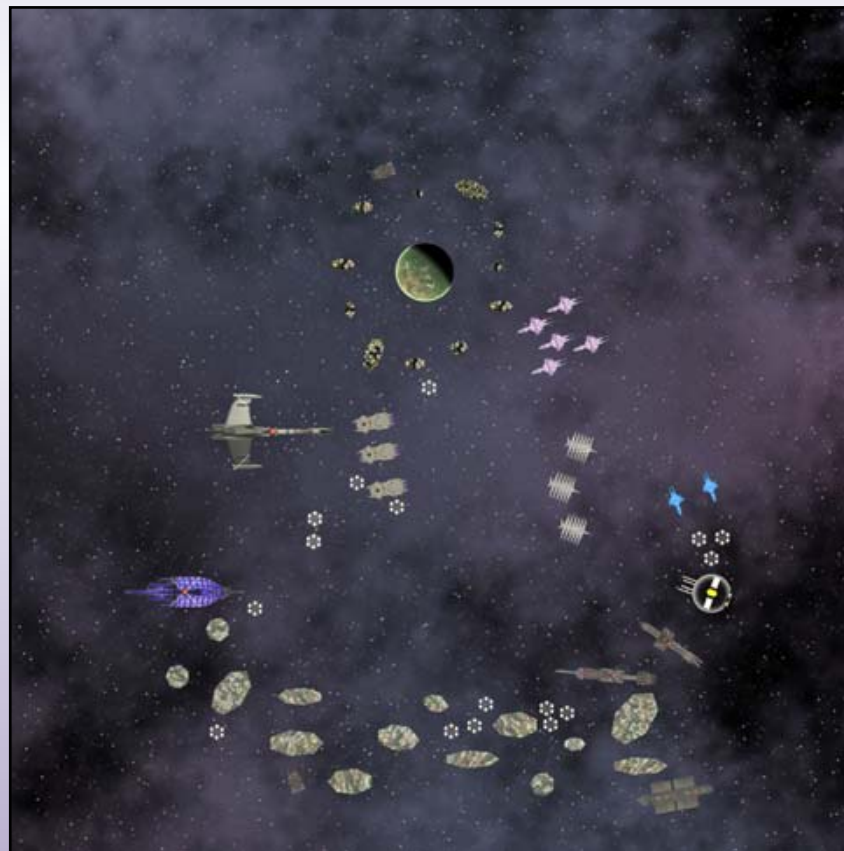
I cannot begin to tell you how many dice I managed to roll a 4 or more on with the beams, after just a single initial dice had been successful.

An exciting turn – Tristan's mean squadron had been laid to rest in just a single round. Now, the advantage was up for grabs.

**Tristan:** I had hoped that this turn would see me cement my position as winning the game, but boy was I proved wrong! A moderate exchange of fire saw the Tara'Lin finished off and the Omega and Victory taking moderate damage. The Hunters and Nemesis had inflicted some pain on the Excalibur with some weapons and engine damage but nothing fatal. This was always going to prove a hard slog to take it down.

With my fighters gaining superiority over the battlefield I thought that I only need to stay calm and avoid any mistakes to ensure victory but that was before the White Stars struck. One managed to fail to see a Hunter and another failed

to get any hits with its Neutron Laser but the other three were nothing less than devastating. Seven hits from the first White Star saw off the damaged Hunter, nine from the next one causing the immediate explosion of the second. By this point I was a little peeved but, as always when I play a game, wrote it off as luck and got on with the job in hand. The third failed to see the final Hunter but the fourth White Star topped all the others with ten hits (only getting one initial hit again with its beam) and destroying my taskforce in one fell swoop. Thankfully the final one failed to harm a Chronos but I was down on ships now and down on firepower too.



## Turn Four

**Matthew:** The Victory's secondary weapons managed to destroy a Chronos, but the Neutron Lasers managed to completely miss the Nemesis – I ask you, how big is that ship?

Like little terriers, the Blue Stars continued to nip around the heels of the Mothership. Though they were just chipping away at it, their superior Dodge managed to keep them safe from harm. Their bigger brothers continued the assault through Tristan's fleet, sweeping round on the Omega, and finishing it off (thus achieving what the Victory failed at. . .).

The Victory and Nemesis were getting close now, and a lucky hit smashed through the Victory's engines, setting the ship adrift without control. I still had weapons, but with the engines damaged and no control at the helm, my biggest asset might soon be made irrelevant, especially as it was drifting towards the dust cloud.

**Tristan:** Time for a re-evaluation of my battleplan here, and I decided that I needed to concentrate everything I could at the Victory while only spreading casual fire and fighters on the White Stars. This was because a lot of my fleet was boresighted and any White Star I damaged would have been able to fly away and evade any significant fire in future turns. The Excalibur however, particularly with its engine damage, wasn't going anywhere fast. That and I'd be able to get in two turns of Nemesis fire on it, hopefully taking it out of the fight.

That was the plan, and as it turned out, it failed spectacularly. I had the Psi Corps Mothership, Nemesis and Omega Destroyer all lined up on the Excalibur, with all failing to

register a single hit, and also the Omega having the aft beam lined up on a Blue Star and failing to roll a single 4+ too. 22 beam dice and not a single 4+, I wasn't a happy bunny and I was at this point wanting to borrow Matt's dice.

Given that my firepower amounted to only a few hits from the Chronos on the White Stars,

I needed Matt's fleet to calm down from its previous successes. Due to manoeuvring they couldn't do much more than finish off the Omega and lightly hurt the Nemesis but it kept the pressure on me and Matt was now most definitely in the ascendancy.





## Turn Five

**Matthew:** Having kept them in tight formation since the start of the game, I finally split my White Stars apart, sending two to help the Blue Stars finish off the Mothership (which they managed to do with consummate ease), as the rest headed for the Nemesis. Tristan still had his Shadowcloaks and Fighter Carrier on the periphery of the battlefield, and with them acting as initiative sinks, he was able to force my White Stars to move before the Nemesis, making me plan very carefully on their placement, trying to ensure that no matter where the Nemesis went, it would remain in the White Star's fire arcs.

The engineers on the Victory had apparently either fallen asleep or not bothered to report for duty as the ship continued to drift, and it was now heading away from the main battle area. What made it worse was that my plans to call All Hands on Deck went out of the window when Tristan scored a hit on the Victory's reactor, which denied me any Special Actions. This was unfortunate because, as well as the drifting engines, the Victory had managed to accrue a substantial number of critical hits, mainly focussed on the engines and weaponry (I was three Attack Dice down on all weapons).

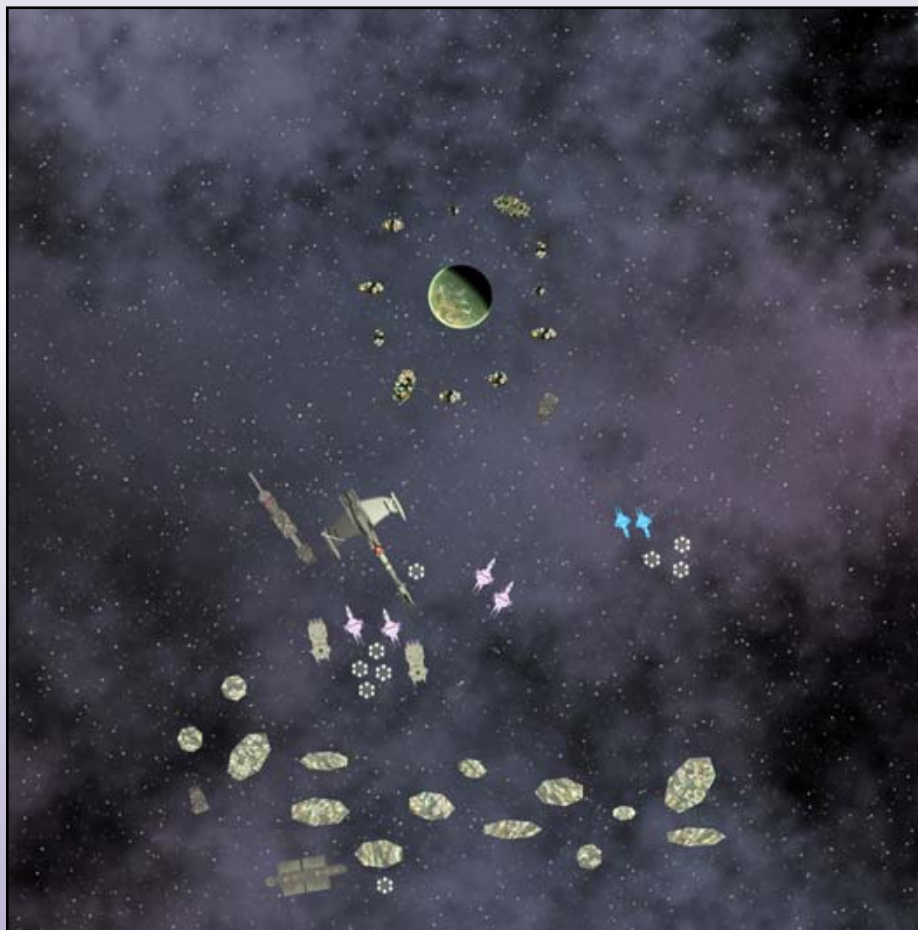
**Tristan:** With the White Stars now increasingly unpredictable in their movements, I needed to score some kills at this point. To this end, after the White Stars had moved, the Chronos frigates lined up as many different arcs as possible on the spread of White Stars. Combined with the firepower from my remaining fighters, I finished off one White Star and heavily damaged another. With their Adaptive Armour, I had adopted a policy of splitting my shots as much as possible so as to reduce the number of hits on each individual

White Star. This meant *there were individual* hits still causing a point of damage rather than two or three points being halved and rounded down to one anyway. The exception was for the railguns where they are already Double Damage so wouldn't benefit from this splitting of fire; this meant they all targeted a single ship.

The Nemesis lined up its boresight on the Excalibur, probably for the last time as they passed each other. This molecular slicer shot had to count and it did, with a good ten hits and

three criticals causing a reactor explosion and two more hits to the weapon systems, further reducing Attack Dice. The other guns were effective too and the Victory was now down to about 40 points of damage.

With my force dwindling and the White Stars on the tail of the Nemesis that could now only fire on a 4+, I wasn't hopeful. Matt was putting pressure on the ships that counted and I just hoped he left my fighters with enough time to really damage the White Stars.



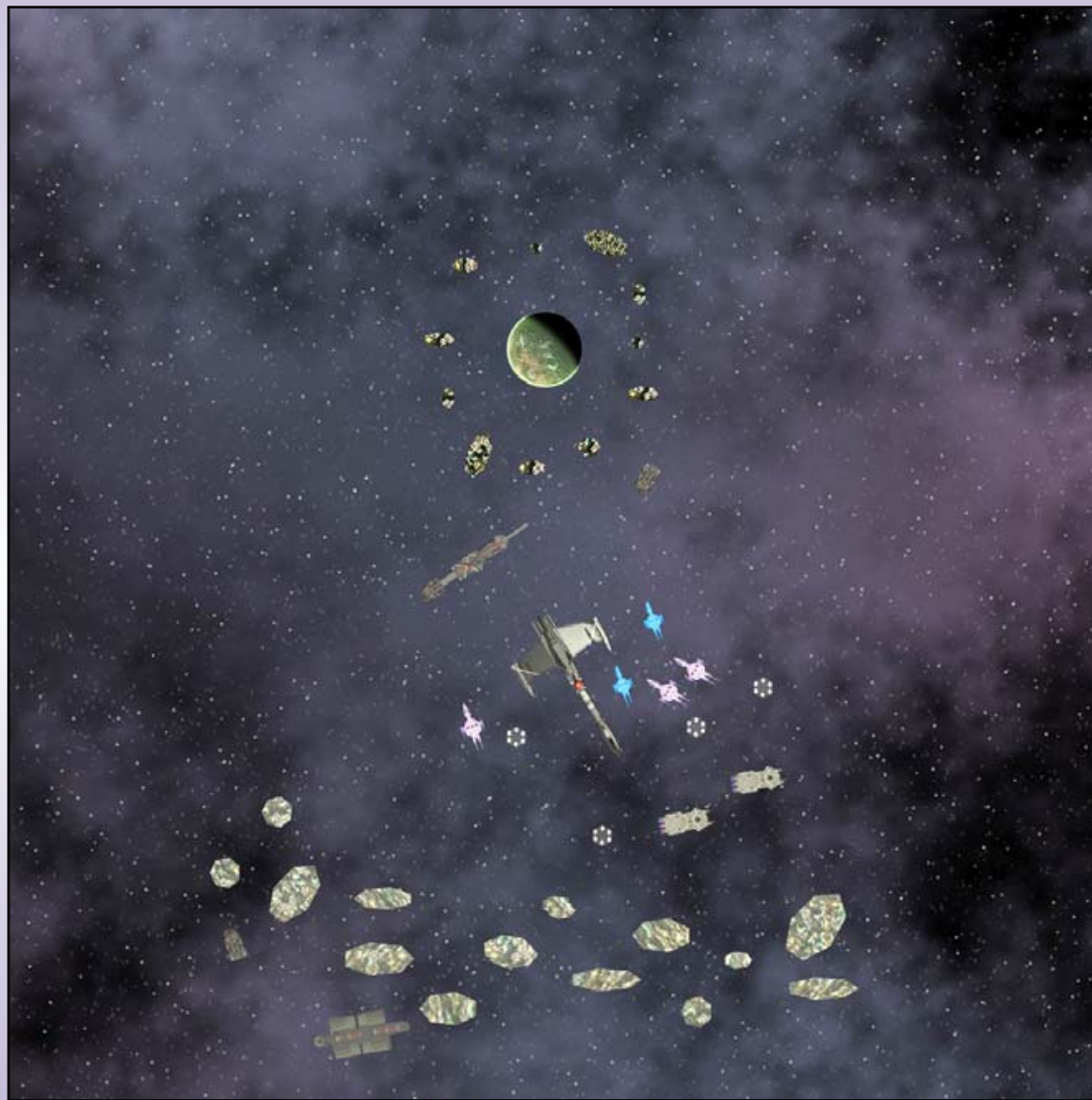
## Turn Six

**Matthew:** Determined to make good account of itself while still in range, the Victory poured fire from every weapons bay. It managed to damage both a Chronos and the Nemesis lightly, but its main achievement was in using its Pulse Cannon turrets to lay waste to Tristan's fighter force, which had been harassing my White Stars for some time.

The White Stars continued to follow the Nemesis, which by this time was having all sorts of problems with power fluctuating to its weapons. It looked as though nothing was working on board! This was compounded when a lucky hit from a White Star caught the big ship in the bridge.

**Tristan:** The Nemesis being chased by a pack of White Stars wasn't the most enjoyable of activities, and it failed both its Come About roll to turn back on the Victory and the 4+ rolls to fire its starboard and aft weaponry. It would be nice to repair this critical but I knew it wouldn't survive long enough to use Special Actions to help, and so I decided to play the odds and hope that at least half of its shots would count. This was compounded by a hit on the bridge halting my ability to make any more Special Actions anyway.

Matt had taken the very wise decision to target my fighters as they were his main threat at this point, though between the fighters and the Chronos frigates, I took down another White Star. Just three more to go; but I was running out of ships.



## Turn Seven

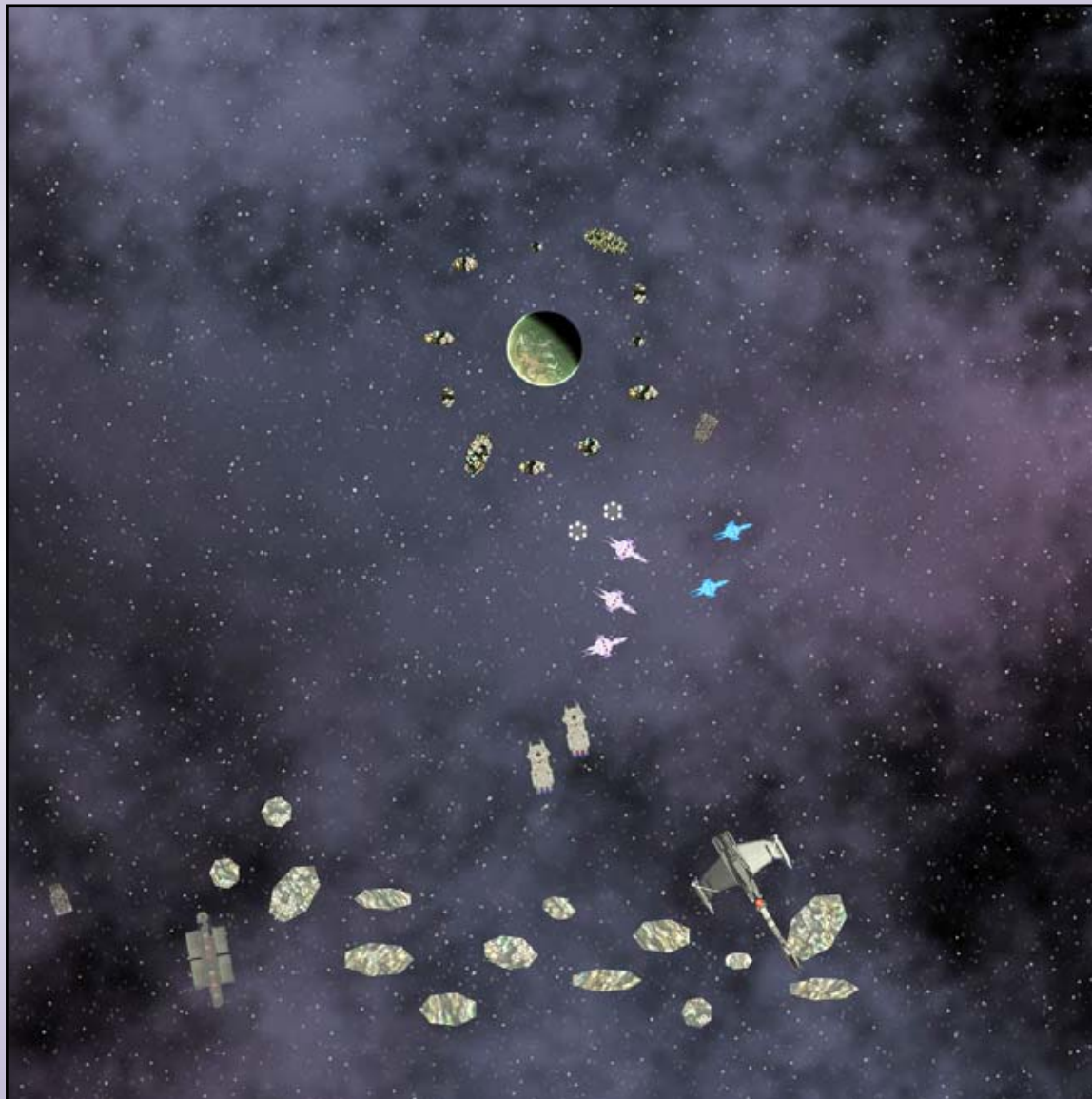
**Matthew:** The game was very much in the balance now. Could I beat down Tristan's Nemesis before he managed to whittle away all the precious Damage on my White Stars?

The Blue Stars had joined in the pursuit of the Nemesis, and the White Stars continued in chasing it round the table. The Victory, now operating at near its maximum range, continued to drift away, but its rearward fire took down a few more fighters and pounded the Nemesis further.

**Tristan:** The Nemesis yet again failed both of its 4+ rolls to fire and drifted along looking tough, but actually being rather ineffective. It was also at this point I realised that my Shadowcloaks had failed every Scout roll for the last three turns as well, which didn't help my Chronos frigates in making the most of their remaining time.

Blue Star 3 was living a charmed life and made Dodge roll after Dodge roll against fighters and pulse cannon. When I finally got a single hit through to remove the final crewman, the shot hit a bulkhead instead!

Side shots from the Chronos frigates on the Victory really paid off as this was the turn I finally Crippled it and reduced it to a Skeleton Crew. More importantly, the Anti-fighter defences were lost and the Adaptive Armour had been damaged enough so as to be rendered useless!





## Turn Eight

**Matthew:** Humble Blue Star 3 finally died! This plucky little ship had been instrumental in taking down the Mothership while under heavy fire from Tristan's fighters. Reduced to just one point of Damage and then Crew, it had clung on under the protection of its 3+ Dodge. Finally, right near the end, it succumbed to incoming fire, failing four Dodges in a row. The little ship simply could not weather that much damage, and it broke apart.

I could not be too sad though, as the White Stars continued their assault on the Nemesis, finally leaving it as a burned out hulk, devoid of crew.

Yes! Tristan's big ship was finally dead, leaving me with just the odd Chronos and auxiliary ship to mop up. Of course, my own big ship, the Victory, was sailing merrily away through the dust cloud with the edge of the board looming – in an Annihilation scenario, that is Not Good.

**Tristan:** Crunch time. The Chronos pair targeted the Victory and sadly only inflicted a couple of points of damage after the railguns failed to live up to expectations.

The Nemesis had finally been rendered devoid of crew and that freed up the White Stars to take on the rest of my fleet...

## Turn Nine

**Matthew:** Another White Star was lost, this time to a Chronos. Seeking to buy some time and reform my plans (as well as, hopefully, pull the Victory off its doomed course!), my White Stars starburst across the table, spreading out to get away from Tristan's remaining Chronos and start work on his Shadowcloaks and Fighter Carrier.

**Tristan:** Matt was still being hampered by my initiative sinks but I had a feeling this wouldn't last for much longer, and with one of my two Chronos frigates near death, I was happy when between the two of them, they finished off yet another White Star. The heavily damaged Chronos was duly blown up and it was time for the final Chronos, EAS Juliet, to face the music.

## Turn Ten

**Matthew:** My plan to hunt down Tristan's smaller ships did not start well. One White Star, seeing a Shadowcloak lurking near the planet, decided to take the shortcut through the asteroids to reach its target. After all, it would only fail on the roll of a 1...

Boom!

The biggest rock you ever saw smashed into the side of the White Star, and the ship was not exactly travelling slowly, if you take my meaning. Somehow, it managed to survive and, catching a slingshot off the planet's gravity field, re-entered the asteroids to launch an attack on

the Shadowcloak quietly circling the rocks on the far side. One determined attack later, and the Shadowcloak was just dust and flames.

**Tristan:** I was surprised by Matt's decision to send a White Star into the asteroid field but could understand the reasoning (he needed to kill initiative sinks and evade my two remaining Black Omega Starfury flights). It didn't kill the White Star but gave me a real chance of finishing off the job in subsequent turns. I just didn't rate my chances of having any other ships left by that point. At least the Victory now had a chance of drifting off the battlefield. Just two more failed repair rolls and that would be one more ship I didn't have to deal with.



## Turns Eleven to Fourteen

**Matthew:** Over the next four turns, the action switched to the other side of the battlefield, where a White and Blue Star were playing cat and mouse with a Chronos, Fighter Carrier and Shadowcloak in the dust cloud.

The good news was that, just one turn away from flying off the table, someone actually managed to find a spanner on board the Victory, and control returned to the helm. Battered heavily (just a few points away from being Crippled) and moving at the pace of an asthmatic pak'ma'ra, it slowly turned about and began crawling back to the battle, the range of its firepower hampered by the dust cloud.

These turns turned into a kind of dogfight between our smaller ships, with me finally destroying the Fighter Carrier, but at the loss of my Blue Star and two remaining White Stars. The Victory finally lumbered into range, and destroyed the Chronos and Shadowcloak, the latter with the Lightning Cannon (it was the only way to be sure).

This led the way to our final confrontation in this battle to the death.

**Tristan:** Unbelievably, a Chronos, a Fighter Carrier, a Shadowcloak and two flights of Black Omega fighters managed to destroy two White Stars and a Blue Star! A bit of nifty manoeuvring and fighters constantly attacking did the trick, not to mention the fact that I could take on the White Stars one at a time and that they were both moderately damaged to start with. This sort of fight actually advantaged the brave Psi Corps pilots as they had the initiative sinks to prevent the White Stars from ever lining up a really good shot – aside from the one turn where the Fighter Carrier was taken down, although not without taking a Blue Star with it.

## Turns Fifteen to Twenty-Two

**Matthew:** It came down to this. Two five point War level fleets reduced to a single Victory with 16 points of Damage remaining on my side, and two Black Omega flights on Tristan's. And guess who has lost his Anti-Fighter weaponry when the Victory was Crippled?

After many, many turns, the Pulse Cannon turrets (the only weaponry I had after the crew had been reduced to skeleton numbers) finally found their way past the Dodges of the Black Omegas, and destroyed them.

It had been a long, hard fight. But the ISA had, at last, gained victory. Of a sort.

**Tristan:** At this point I knew I could simply run my fighters away from the Victory and claim a stalemate but what fun would that be, particularly when the Victory was only twelve damage points from oblivion and potential Psi Corps glory?

Both Black Omega flights survived until Turn 20 and had scored 7 hits but six of those were bulkheads.

Finally the inevitable happened and I lost my fighters, leaving the Victory on only ten points of damage and a burning wreck of a ship. It was defeat, but only by the narrowest of possible margins.

### He's a Hard Man...

**Matthew:** What a game! I don't know what possessed me to suggest we play an Annihilation scenario, but it led to a heart-stopping finish. Just one ship left on the table, an Armageddon-level vessel with just 10 points of Damage remaining!

We knew Tristan was a Good Player, but playing against him, you can see why he does so well at tournaments. His attention to detail was incredible, and he rarely forgot a trait or special rule. When the game was at its darkest for him, he did not give up, and constantly looked for that edge that would bring the game back for him.

To make things worse, he's also a decent bloke who likes a laugh as he plays!

When the Tara'Lin got hammered on the second turn and it was plain it would not last a third, I

began to get 'that' sinking feeling, the one you always get when you know you are going to lose. I had divided my fleet up and allowed Tristan to tackle me a piece at a time, a dangerous ploy against someone who really knows what they are doing.

It was the rapid destruction of the Hunters at the hands of my White Stars that kept me in the game, and allowed me to stay toe-to-toe with Tristan. His tactic of constantly spreading firepower around all my White Stars whittled them all down gradually and, in the end, they just ran out of puff. Thank Valen for the Victory, is all I can say.

This was a thoroughly good game, and I look forward to locking horns with Tristan again in the future!

### He Just Doesn't Know When to Quit!

**Tristan:** That, without a doubt, has to be one of the most enjoyable games of A Call to Arms that I have ever played. The game twisted and turned so often that we were never quite sure just what was going to happen next. In fact, looking back on the battle, it's incredible to believe that this game happened as it did and wasn't scripted! It just goes to show that the show ain't over until it's over.

I thought that the game was mine for the taking by the end of turn two, but Matt took a little bit of luck in his favour and ran with it, forcing my ships into a corner, picking them off one at a time and not allowing me that chance to reform and come at him again. This was excellent mid-game pressure and was using the manoeuvrability of the White Stars and Blue Stars to maximum effect. In particular, the move to target my

fighters (by far the biggest remaining threat) with the Victory was an inspired move and probably made the difference between victory and defeat. These tactical choices were made in the midst of trying to keep a running commentary of the battle, taking photos and still keeping up the humour that was such an integral part of this game.

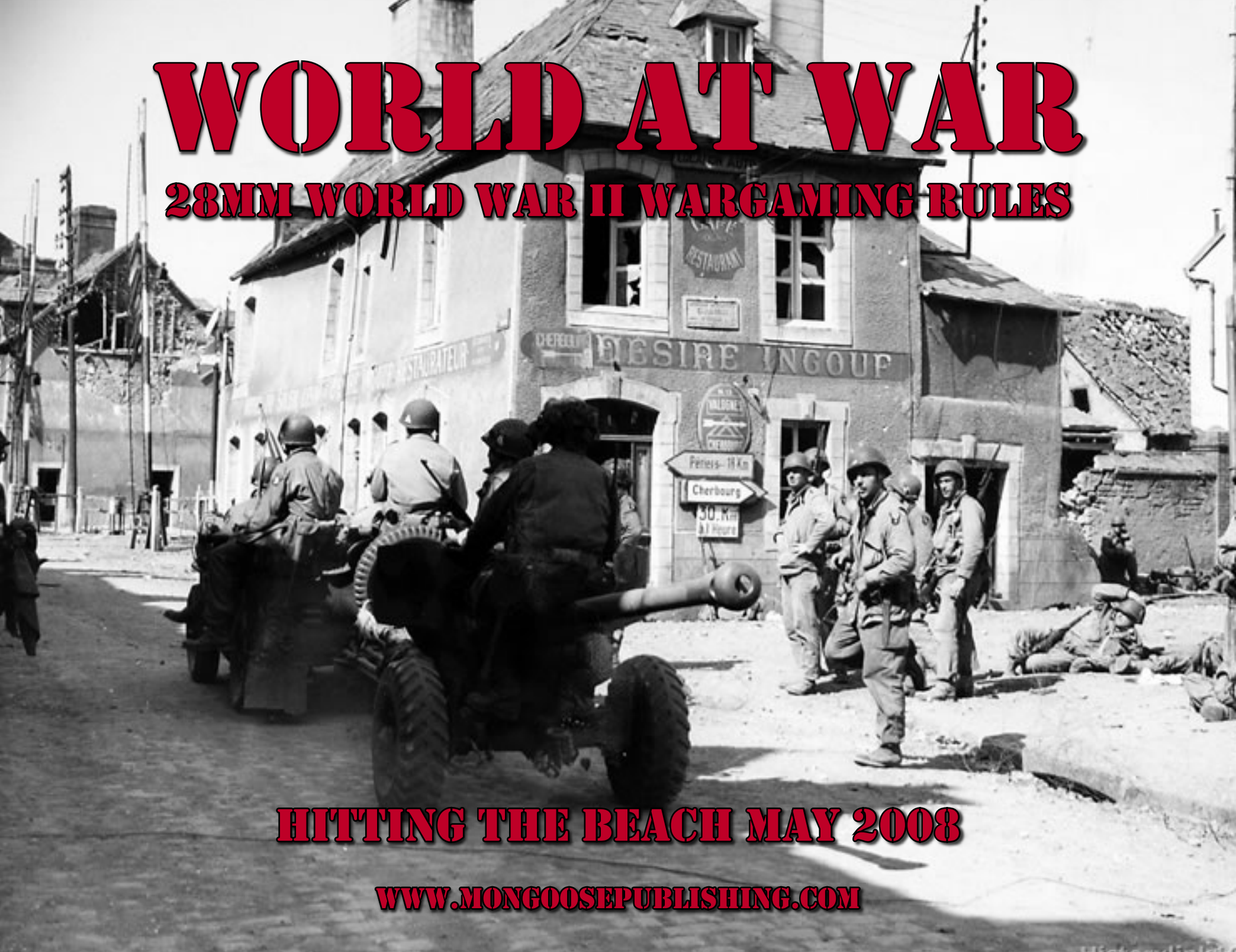
I thought my tactics were sound and my initial plan worked beautifully... that is until the White Stars decided to join the fight and my ships all suddenly forgot how to fire a beam! I wouldn't have changed anything with my initial deployment although feel that my fleet selection would really have been enhanced with a pair of Motherships instead of another Hunter. The extra fighters could have tipped the balance and the Motherships didn't share the Hunters' vulnerability to improved neutron lasers.

From Matt's point of view, given that he already had a Command bonus on the Victory (that ensured he won every initiative roll until it was finally Crippled), I would have taken a White Star Carrier instead of the Tara'Lin. The Tara'Lin's Command bonus was redundant and the extra fighters on the White Star Carrier would have been very effective indeed. Tactically I would have grouped the White Stars and Blue Stars with the White Star Gunship, using their speed to punch through my lines and then using their manoeuvrability to evade the bulk of my firepower. I may even have streaked this force through the dust cloud and forced my Chronos frigates to slowly re-enter the fight.

Either way, it was a hugely enjoyable game, and I eagerly look forward to a rematch with Matt!

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