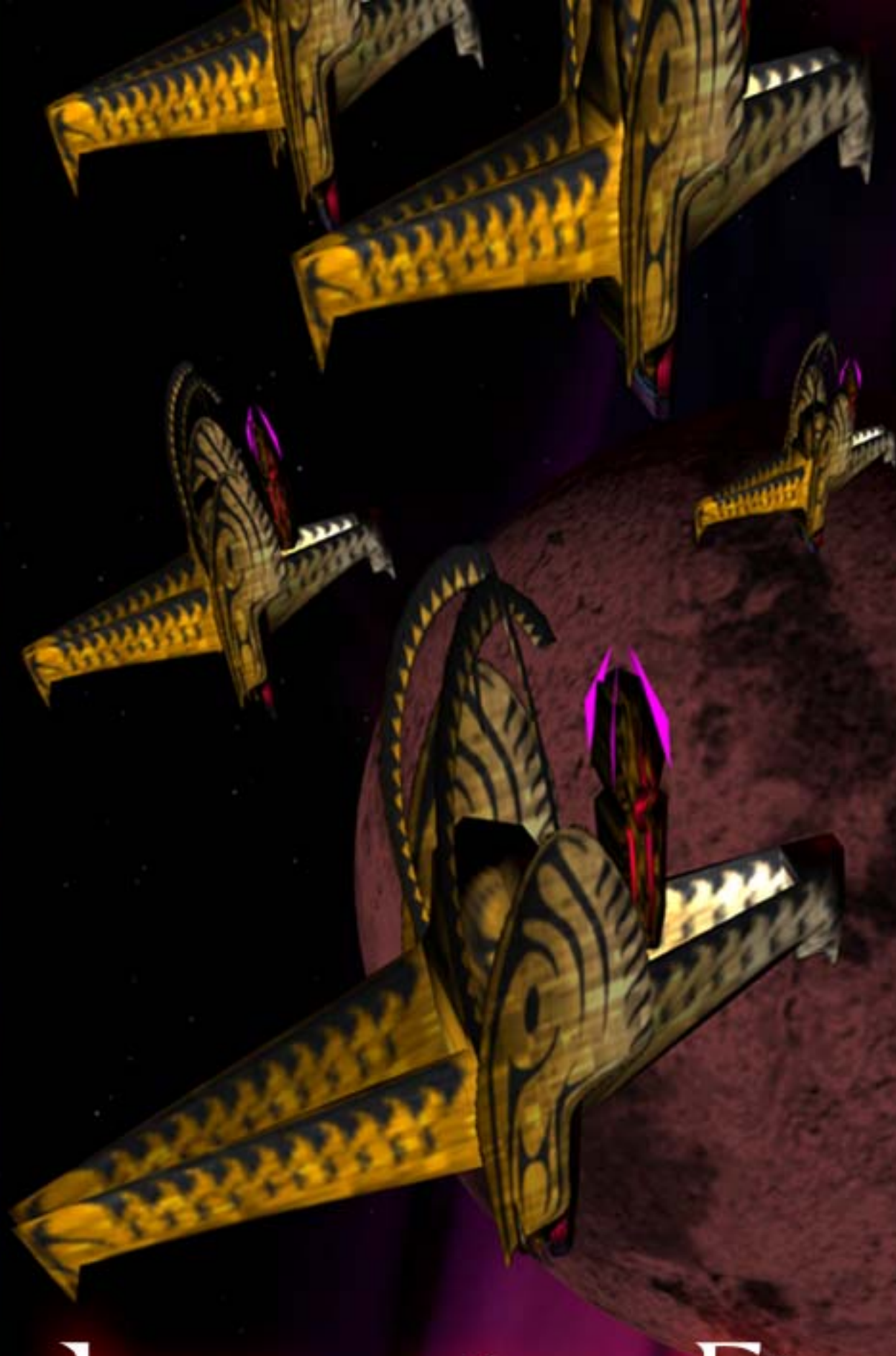


# THE GREAT MACHINE

ISSUE 1 November 2003



## Into the Fire



## Welcome you, Zathras does

Zathras welcomes you here, yes, Zathras does. Zathras is oldest living caretaker of Great Machine... now Draal say Great Machine open to all that would know its secrets. Zathras knows many of the secrets of the Great Machine... ahh... Zathras be showings you these secrets for Draal, yes?

This issue I shows you about the ships of *Into the Fire*. The cancelled Sierra game it is, yes... some thought it was our last, best hope for peace! But Zathras, Zathras know it was not to be. But no one ever asked Zathras. Zathras would have answered, but no one ask Zathras...

Oh, yes, other great things available at Great Machine for visitors to see! Great records of long ago they are, yes, very great records. Zathras thinks you will like them. Many scrolls, with information about Centauri from Legions of Fire trilogy, and a lost Human band rescued by Vree. Oh yes, Zathras remembers that, or at least Zathras tell Zathras he remembers that. Never trust Zathras... but don't tell him I said that!

The Great Machine also has information on how to design new races for Babylon 5 Wars. Yes, learn much you will. Zathras has designed races that even Draal does not know yet.

Oh, Draal is calling me! Call Zathras if you need any help!

**ZATHRAS,**  
CARETAKER

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## The Ships of Into the Fire

### A Look at the Lost Ships of the Sierra Computer Game "Into the Fire"

By Tyrel Lohr

In 1998, with Babylon 5 winding down its five year run, we as fans were just starting to see the glimmer of expanded merchandising on the horizon. The Babylon Project and Babylon 5 Wars had both graced our gaming tables, but otherwise there was very little development of other Babylon 5 related licenses.

The acquisition of the Babylon 5 license by Sierra marked a major step forward. Babylon 5 fans everywhere were finally going to see an extension of the Babylon 5 universe on their computers, allowing another avenue through which to immerse themselves in the Babylon 5 universe. There were

many different Babylon 5 products that were initially put on the slate. The first to be released would be The Official Guide to Babylon 5 CD-ROM developed in-house by Babylonian Productions. Also on the roster was an RPG and a combat flight simulator. The RPG died shortly after its inception, getting only a small amount of press before disappearing from the radar. The space combat sim, however, continued to move forward in development and eventually earned a name: *Into the Fire*.

*Into the Fire* soon appeared to be the fan community's last, best hope for Babylon 5 computer gaming. The screenshots and trailers seemed very promising and, despite multiple delays, the game looked like it would in fact come out.

But it didn't. Yosemite Entertainment, the game's developers, had suffered several set

backs, including a full move of their offices during the game's development. Finally, with Sierra's license approaching its renewal date and only a single product released thus far, Sierra (who had since been purchased by Havas) decided to cut their losses on the license and cancel *Into the Fire*. The project's fate was tied to that of Yosemite, and the production studio was sacked along with the game.

This action raised the ire of the fan community who had desperately pinned their hopes on the simulator. Attempts to get someone – anyone – to pick up the nearly finished game met with early success, but it was not meant to be. The fan interest did however spark a flurry of development since for the creation of game modifications, conversions, and entirely new applications to fill the gaping hole left by *Into the Fire*'s cancellation (one

# Into the Fire

such conversion for Freespace 2 is reviewed on page 18).

*Into the Fire* may be vaporware but before its demise it did give us a small peak into the Babylon 5 universe, including slight glimpses at races that had at the time never been developed in any other licensed work. The surviving artwork from the game is the focus of this issue of *The Great Machine*. Looking at these graphics we have to sit back and wonder “what if?” What if the game had come out? What kind of new and alien ship designs would we have seen within Babylon 5 Wars and its spin offs? How would Agents of Gaming’s development of the races have changed due to the influence of the computer game? And what kind of story did we miss out on?

On the following pages we take a look at how some of these ships could have appeared in Babylon 5 Wars. As it is these few ships are a lasting legacy of a game that died when it was almost ready to be born.

For more information on *Into the Fire* or the projects that emerged after its cancellation, please visit the First Ones website at <http://www.firstones.com>.

\* \* \*



## **The Official Guide to Babylon 5**

Developed in house by Babylonian Productions, *The Official Guide to Babylon 5* was the one and only computer product released by Sierra during the length of their Babylon 5 licensing contract.

Often derided by fans, the product did provide an interesting mix of additional racial backgrounds and video files pulled from the series itself. Also bundled

with the *Guide* was a special “Best of Babylon 5” music CD featuring a mix of Christopher Franke’s excellent music. Also featured on the CD were two themes created especially for the *Into the Fire* computer game.

Scenes from the *Into the Fire* computer game. The ship models used in the game were directly based off of the models used to produce the CGI for the television show, their complexity reduced to make them suitable for in-game use.





## Dilgar War Cruiser

Of all of the ships created by Sierra, the Dilgar War Cruiser stands out as one of the most interesting – and the most troublesome. In fact, the release of images of the new design caused a flurry among Babylon 5 Wars fans. AOG had already released their Dilgar War playtest pack, the first to be available as a pay-to-playtest packet, but the product had not yet gone to press. Fans of Babylon 5 Wars were angry when it became apparent that Sierra's Dilgar materials was poised to become first to market, and that as a consequence all of AOG's material may need to be re-thought. Most of this anger was born from the attitude taken by continuity editor Fiona Avery that made it quite clear that Sierra had the money and therefore Sierra could publish whatever it wanted.

In the end this Dilgar cruiser design saw little life beyond Sierra's website. AOG opted to keep their existing designs rather than adopt this new standard and the ship all but disappeared into obscurity.

Within the context of the Babylon 5 Wars Dilgar, the *Into the Fire* Dilgar War Cruiser is entirely out of place. The War Cruiser demonstrates an entirely different ship design methodology and aesthetic. Whereas the Dilgar Fighter is easier to accept as a Dilgar design, the War Cruiser is so fundamentally different from the existing Dilgar that it really is hard to find a good way to reconcile the differences. Would it be a new generation cruiser? Maybe a potential modern Dilgar design? Or maybe it was a late-war testbed for new technologies? There is no good answer, but it does leave a lot to the imagination. What we can tell from the battle image is that the Dilgar War Cruiser fires two beam weapons (of a similar color to those fired by the Yolu cruisers) from either wing pod.

The one thing that the Dilgar War Cruiser can be given credit for is establishing an alternate color scheme for the Dilgar in contrast to the minty green AOG Dilgar. Many fans have adopted the decoratively

adorned, earthen tone Dilgar motif for their own Dilgar miniature fleets.

## Dilgar Fighter

As with the Dilgar War Cruiser, the Dilgar Fighter is a design lost to time. An interesting design, this fighter shares many design characteristics with the larger cruiser. Both accentuate curves and open space in their design. The Dilgar Fighter is perhaps most notable for the fact that it is designed to be operate in a vertical rather than horizontal alignment. This setup is often a rare find in science fiction, where the writers and designers are trying too hard to emulate modern-day atmospheric fighters.

## Pak'Ma'Ra Ship

This Pak'Ma'Ra ship was featured in the *Into the Fire* game promotional insert that was to be printed and included with Agents of Gaming's future game supplements, acting as a cross-promotion attempt by Sierra. The illustration suggests that the ship is simply another

# Into the Fire

combatant in battle, and provides a less than perfect view of the craft.

As there was never any data released on the ship, and it in fact doesn't exist outside of this one graphic, it is hard to determine anything about the ship's capabilities. Its general size can be partially determined if we consider that the closest of the two Pak'Ma'Ra ships is in close proximity to the Hyperion Cruiser also in the foreground. However, as many such promotion graphics are created with an eye towards enticement rather than accuracy, this type of inference is dubious at best.

## Yolu Ship

Three instances of this particular Yolu vessel can be found in the *Into the Fire* illustration. Unlike the Pak'Ma'Ra vessel, the Yolu ship provides some actual evidence related to its capabilities. Two of the three Yolu ships are actually seen firing in the graphic, giving an important insight into their capabilities. Four long, purplish-pink beams are being fired from each of the two craft, with each beam emanating from one of the four purple dots located on the bow of the ship.

The aesthetics of these Yolu ships are in many ways very close to the top-down views found on AOG's own Yolu ships. Again, it may be another instance of AOG giving a tip of the hat to the Sierra designs and attempting to maintain continuity between B5W and the dead computer game.

## Mysterious Narn Vessel

At first glance I assumed this ship to be none other than the T'Rakk Frigate, one of the few *Into the Fire* ship designs to be directly translated over into the game. But,

upon close inspection, I notice that the two ships have several striking differences. Firstly, the indentations at the ends of the forward hull projections don't match up to the T'Rakk. Secondly, the Narn ship has the green banding at the base of the projections where the T'Rakk would instead have a silver crossbar. It almost looks like there is a nose segment between the projections as well, but it is hard to tell whether it is indeed part of the Narn ship or some other vessel peeking through the explosions.

What can be determined from the graphic is that this Narn ship is the source of the two large laser beams firing through the middle of the battle scene. So, just like the G'Quan that would follow, this early Narn ship was equipped with a pair of laser cannons of some kind mounted on the forward section.

Perhaps one of the biggest questions involved with this mysterious Narn vessel has to be "why are the Narn fighting the Dilgar?" Based on statements by Ambassador G'Kar during the first season episode "Deathwalker" and subsequent accounts of the Dilgar War it has become apparent that the Narn did not engage in hostilities against the Dilgar Imperium. And what of the Frazis? Assuming that the illustration depicts a Dilgar War era battle then the Frazi, by AOG's reckoning, would not yet have been deployed. Either Sierra believes the Frazi was development much earlier, or they included a similar design to appeal to the Babylon 5 fanbase. Could this be an early, experimental Frazi unit?

## Mysterious Vessel #1

The most enigmatic craft in the battle scene has to be the one that is firing the very large yellow beam across the battle. This beam coloration is in stark contrast to the rest of the weapons fire evident in the scene. Whose ship could this be? Is it a Dilgar vessel? It certainly is sitting behind the main Dilgar battle line, and there are no other allied units visible in that area. It could also be another unknown ship belonging to one of the co-belligerents, but given the setup of the image I find this unlikely. After all, it *is* firing on the allies!

## Other Ships

### Abbai Ship

Not featured on the Sierra Babylon 5 games website, the Abbai ship was one of the designs that was on the drawing board but did not come to light until after the game's cancellation. The ship was to be the first real view of an Abbai ship, and to say that the craft is unconventional would be putting it lightly. Spindly and visibly frail, the Abbai ship would have been far different from Agents of Gaming's own Abbai ships.



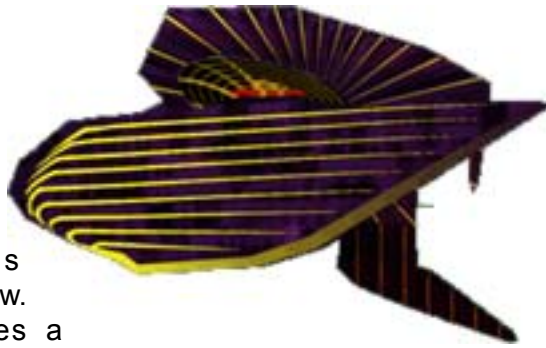


## The Hyach Gunship

As with most of the alien warships released by Sierra's game team, this Hyach ship was classified as a "gunship." This classification is nebulous and can have multiple interpretations depending on your point of view.

The ship itself bares a startling aesthetic similarity to one of Agents of Gaming's own Hyach ships: the Alichu Kav. The hull striping on this model is replicated in large part on the Fleet Action-scale Alichu Kav miniature, and the basic top-down hull shape is very much the same.

In any event, the *Into the Fire* Hyach ship is close enough in design to the AOG ships that it isn't too hard to imagine this vessel flying alongside the likes of the Irokai Kam or Urutha Kal.



## Minbari OSAT

The Minbari OSAT design was the first real look at a rendition of a Minbari fixed defense element other than the Norgath Starbase from "War Without End". The Minbari OSAT is yet another of the forgotten designs to be born of the *Into the Fire* computer game. Interestingly enough, many of the Babylon 5 game conversions include this type of Minbari OSAT.

\* \* \*

## Hurr Gunship

As with the Hyach Gunship, the Hurr Gunship is an easy fit with the existing B5W Hurr ships. Ever since viewing this graphic I have thought that the Hurr ships were at least based in part on this design. In fact, this design from Sierra was the first glimpse we ever got at a Hurr ship design, as *Militaries of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds-2* was developed and released much later.



## Narn OSAT

The Narn defense satellite was one of the many Narn designs to be created for the *Into the Fire* game. Little information is known about the intentions of the Narn OSAT, and like many of the *Into the Fire* units it remains a mystery.



## The Dilgar Connection?

By Paul Brown

The battle scene at the heart of this issue raises a few questions. Aside from differing ship designs, one major issue is the involvement of the Narn in an apparently Dilgar era battle, a war which by all accounts they did not take part in. That makes two assumptions however, that the battle takes place during the Dilgar war and that the Narn are on the allied side. Let me propose another idea: We know from the first season of B5 that the Narn are trying to gain every advantage they can and during *In the Beginning* G'Kar offers asylum to Sheridan. With neutral ties to the Dilgar, what if the Narn had offered them asylum before war's end? Showdowns-6 rumours that the Descari used Dilgar scientists to advance their technology, what if the Narn had done the same thing? They have made leaps and bounds in the decades before the show. Is Bor'goth a secret Narn research facility, or is it the last Dilgar colony? The battle, in my interpretation, shows a Narn cruiser firing at a formation of Earth vessels and several Yolu cruisers firing at Narn ships off-screen. Perhaps the Dilgar designs are so radical because they're decades older. I believe that there are some interesting alternate-history possibilities that may be worth exploring.



## Icons of the Imperium

*By Paul Brown*

The Jajuka Cruiser and the Korraath Heavy Fighter represented two radical departures from traditional Dilgar doctrine. Not conforming to the utilitarian, military efficiency of other Dilgar designs, they are instead models of elegance and extravagance. The reasoning behind this design departure lies in the roles of the two craft. The expensive Jajuka Imperial Cruiser served in a role comparable to that of a royal or imperial guard, most recognisable within the Centauri fleets who utilise elite Vorchans to escort the Emperor's Transport. These cruisers formed the sole components of a defensive fleet permanently assigned to the Dilgar ruling council. They acted as transports for top government officials and participated in formal military ceremonies. Each vessel was composed of a central core attached to a larger dorsal hull. The expansive top hull was then adorned with a symbol representing one of each of the Dilgar Warmasters. Each Dilgar

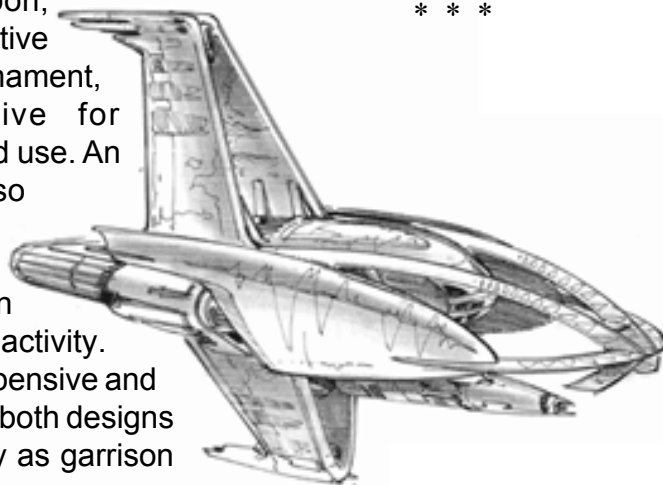
officer who had achieved the rank of Warmaster was honoured through a symbolic representation at home by a Jajuka Imperial Cruiser in addition to their normal rewards of a personal flagship. The extent of the fleet was thus limited by the number of Dilgar who were appointed to the rank of Warmaster.

Along with each Jajuka Imperial Cruiser was a squadron of ceremonial fighter craft. The Korraath Heavy Fighter was built in the same extremely stylised fashion of the Jajuka. Comparable in capabilities to the more common Thorun, they differed in their use of a single Heavy Bolt Cannon. This weapon, though more destructive than the Thorun armament, was too expensive for practical, widespread use. An imperfect design also led to frequent maintenance problems even through periods of inactivity.

Due to the expensive and impractical nature of both designs they remained solely as garrison

units which served to protect the government, honour the militaries' leaders and to bolster pride and morale throughout the Dilgar ranks. The fleet participated in the final battle at Omelos and was completely destroyed during the engagement. Due to the rare deployment of the design, few people are aware of its existence. Some scholars have claimed that the allied governments have tried to suppress any knowledge of the two craft's existence as the elegance of both designs would not conform to the party line that the Dilgar were an evil and ugly people bent only on conquest and xenocide.

\* \* \*





# The Tarthikur Project



*By Tyrel Lohr*

History remembers the Dilgar as one of the most ambitious races to have appeared in the galaxy. The fact that they were so successful in achieving their objectives and wreaking terror across the League was their excellent research and development capabilities. In the span of two decades the Dilgar had managed to make technological leaps that would have taken the other races a century.

One of the largest late-war military development projects undertaken by the Dilgar was the Tarthikur Project. This project was charged with the duty to acquire, reverse engineer, and put to use promising alien technologies captured during the invasion. Many hulls were planned for eventual production, but only the Tarthikur was built before the defeat of the Dilgar.

## Tarthikur Shield Cruiser

During the Dilgar Invasion, Dilgar scientists applied their uncanny scientific knack towards reverse engineering the weapons of other powers. One of the first systems to be pursued by the Dilgar was the Abbai gravitic shielding

technology. The capabilities of Abbai shielding had stymied Dilgar attempts to finish off the Abbai and some believed that it was a technology of interest to the Imperium.

The Tarthikur Shield Cruiser was developed as a part of the Dilgar advanced weapons programs during the war. The ship was to be the first shield-equipped starship in the Dilgar arsenal. Larger than a Targath Strike Cruiser, the Tarthikur would act as less of a strike carrier and more of a heavy cruiser hull. The shielding system would help preserve the ship's integrity in battle as it worked to wear down the opposition's own capital ship units.

Not unsurprisingly the Dilgar encountered several problems along the way. Their knowledge of gravitic shields was good enough to replicate a passable version of the technology, although it required an exotic hull configuration to pull off. The problem was with their ability to maintain a coherent gravitic shield. Too often the shield would collapse unexpectedly due to an overtaxed reactor. The Dilgar compensated by doubling the amount of power directed to the shielding, allowing the ship to at least maintain partial shielding at all times. Other systems were adjusted accordingly to make

up for the larger reactor that this necessitated, cutting into the ship's crew accommodations and making living conditions on the ship even more spartan than usual.

The first Tarthikurs were built with Heavy Bolter weapons in their side weapons pods, but these were quickly refitted to experimental Heavy Laser Cannons as soon as they became available. No Tarthikur equipped with Heavy Bolters ever saw combat, so this is little more than an interesting historical footnote.

The Tarthikur Shield Cruisers that were constructed before the final Battle of Omelos were all grouped into a single fleet, something that was very unorthodox considering their potential value spread throughout the fleet. The Dilgar instead believed that the Tarthikurs would be more effective operating together as a true ship-killing squadron for breaking down the allies defenses. The Battle of Omelos proved the wisdom of the War Council's decision as the Tarthikur squadron was one of the most notable Dilgar combat units to participate in the fateful battle, single-handedly breaking through an EA/Pak'Ma'Ra cruiser line before being taken down.

# Into the Fire

It is very likely that construction of Tarthikur Shield Cruisers would have been accelerated had the Dilgar's war against the League gone as planned. It is fortunate for nearby races that this plan was not realized, as a fleet laden with Tarthikur Shield Cruisers would have been more than a match for even the best warships of the EA and Narn, and proven a competent opponent for the Centauri.

## Dilgar Tarthikur-X Advanced Cruiser

In the months leading up to the final Battle at Omelos, the Dilgar War Council knew that the Imperium was doomed. Their only hope lay in creating a stalemate in the war. Victory was no longer a realistic goal, but if the Dilgar could once again secure the initiative there was at least the chance of survival for the Dilgar species.

During these chaotic last days the Dilgar began experimenting with massive modifications to one of their few Tarthikur Shield Cruisers in an attempt to convert it into an advanced fleet command cruiser. No expense was spared on the conversion of the ship. All of its major systems received sweeping upgrades as part of the refit process. The reactor was improved and the Medium Bolters upgraded to heavy models. The shields were likewise hardened, the equals of even the best shielding operated by the Abbai.

The most striking upgrade to the Tarthikur was the installation of a Spinal Laser. Most ships could never hope to incorporate such a weapon if not built from the ground up around the gun, but the Tarthikur's spacious aesthetic lent it to the mounting of just such a

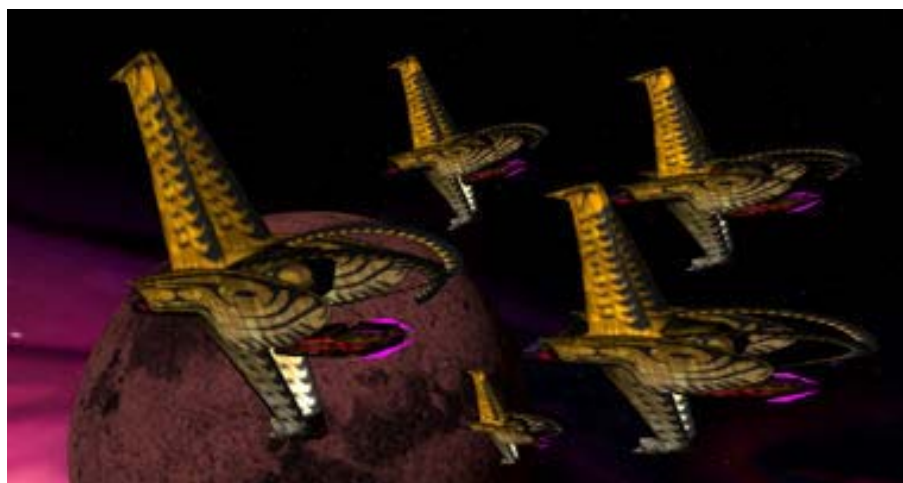
weapon. A laser assemblage was constructed and mounted to the front of the ship and tied directly into the ship's new reactor, drawing as much power as required.

This situation did have its drawbacks. The Spinal Laser was continually hooked to the reactor, causing a continuous power bleed that could not be corrected without entirely deactivating the new laser system. The shields also proved finicky and were prone to simply collapsing if additional ship systems

were not deactivated to offset the drain on the ship's reactor.

It is doubtful that the Dilgar would have been able to work out all of the bugs involved in the hybrid alien technologies. In any case history did not give them the chance. The prototype Tarthikur-X stood with the Dilgar forces at Omelos and was destroyed alongside the rest of the Dilgar fleet.

\* \* \*



## Dilgar Torvasa Pulse Fighter

Based on notes by Jeremy Ward and Charles Taylor

The Torvasa Pulse Fighter was one of the many secret projects being developed by the Dilgar during the last years of the war. The Thorun Dartfighter was an exceptional fighter and had won the Dilgar many of its early victories, but the War Council desired a stronger, better fighter to help turn the tide against their enemies.

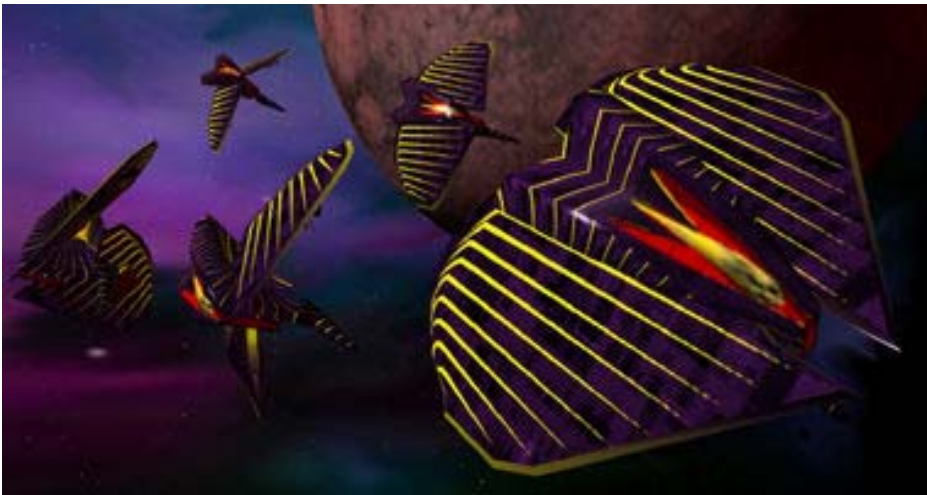
The Torvasa Pulse Fighter is equipped with a Light Pulse Bolter, a weapon capable of firing several successive weapon charges per recharge cycle. This gives the fighter the potential of doing more damage than a Thorun

on a good hit. The Light Pulse Bolter uses a special Flight Level Hit Chart to determine the number of pulses that hit the target, setting it apart from typical fighter units.

The Torvasas were not constructed soon enough or quick enough to make any real difference in the Dilgar War. Few know of this design due to their restricted deployment within the Imperium fleets.







## Hyach Heltat Kar Attack Frigate

By Tyrel Lohr

The Hyach need for a fast attack unit culminated in the production of the Heltat Kar Attack Frigate. These fast and maneuverable frigate units were heavily armed for their size. The Hyach intended the Heltat Kar to operate in groups of three to six frigates each to maximize efficiency and tactical effectiveness.

Heltat Kars were primarily operated in an anti-piracy role, escorting valuable convoys or performing reconnaissance sweeps through friendly systems in search of raider activity. Those raiders foolish enough to prey on Hyach shipping were targeted by Heltat Kar flotillas and easily destroyed, often dissuading future raider operations in Hyach space.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the Heltat Kar is its incorporation of early stealth technologies and techniques. It was felt that a certain degree of stealth would be required for its anti-piracy mission and to that end the Heltat's sensors are specially

tuned to emit less background radiation, reducing the ship's overall defense profile. This technology would be greatly expanded when incorporated in a very similar Hyach warship, the Alichu Kav.

\* \* \*



## Tavori Kam Gunship

By Charles "Danesti" Haught

After referring to the Into the Fire statistics for the ship, I felt that a Blast Laser sounded more like what the game designers were calling a Medium Laser.

I actually really like this little ship. In numbers they would be hell and even as part of a fleet it gives the Hyach a touch more long range, non-Spinal Laser punch.

## Fraza Heavy Fighter

By Tyrel Lohr

During the Narn's early expansion period they relied heavily on the Gorith Medium Fighter as their primary fighter type. However, beginning in 2227, the Narns introduced their first heavy fighter design: the Fraza Heavy Fighter. The Fraza Heavy Fighter is physically identical to the more advanced Frazi and served as a testbed for many of the technologies which were incorporated in the later design. Standard sensor detection methods cannot tell the difference between the Fraza and the Frazi. Their true nature can only be determined when they perform actions that the other would be incapable of.



In combat, the Fraza Heavy Fighter proved to be largely ineffective.

The Gorith was a much better fighter with better dogfighting capabilities and similar firepower. The lack of thrust on the Fraza limited its usefulness considerably. The extra port and starboard armors on the Fraza were one of the few advantages that the fighter had over the Gorith. This lackluster performance was the major reason for the Fraza's limited deployment. As stated on the ship control sheet, during the period 2227-2249 only one flight of Frazas can be purchased per four flights of fighters.



## Abbai Byalla Corvette

By Paul Brown

In the mid-nineteenth century, regional tensions of the time were causing the Abbai to feel a certain amount of unease. Increasing raider activity in particular was being born from small conflicts and the then-chaotic state of the Drazi. In an effort to protect their merchant shipping lines, the Abbai set about creating a light warship to perform the roles of escort and pirate hunter. The relatively new shielding technology of the time was thought too cost prohibitive for what was essentially an auxiliary warship. The Byalla Corvette would instead rely on its thin profile to avoid taking damage while engaging pirates with a relatively strong armament for the day. Two laser cutters along with a pair of particle beams provided the main offence while a sensor spear gave the ship the added edge against ill-equipped pirates. As the Orieni-Centauri war broke out and threatened to spill into neighbouring territories the corvette began to see use as a light support ship for larger fleets. In 2032 the class received a refit, with the laser cutters replaced by second-line medium laser weaponry as well as

enhancements to the sensor grid. The unusual design however did not lend itself well to the inclusion of shield technology and so the ship fell out of favour with the Abbai military as the years passed. The design was eventually decommissioned in the early 2100s and is believed to have had an influence on later Tiraca and Shykara Frigate designs.



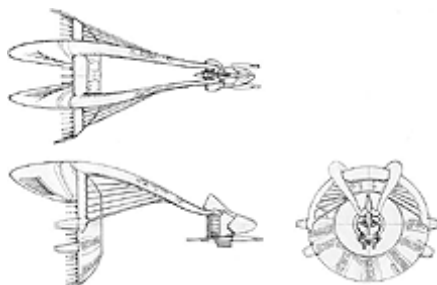
## Abbai Shykara Defense Frigate

By Tyrel Lohr

The Shykara design project was a marked departure from standard Abbai fair and was quite ambitious in its aims. Using state of the art gravitic technologies, Abbai scientists hoped to design a new ship which could have abnormally strong gravitic shields. The requirements of the project forced the Abbai to adopt similarly unique ship design schematics in order to accommodate the implementation of the advanced shielding arrays.

The end result was the Shykara Defense Frigate. The frigate uses a distributed network of shield generators to reinforce the gravitic shielding. The ship was only able to mount two of the improved shield generators, and they took up most of the ship's internal volume. Entire sections of the ship's hull are filled with only shield related equipment.

Armed almost solely for its own defense, the Shykara was planned to be used for general police duties in the fleet, and most were implemented in that form. The Shykaras that survived the Dilgar Invasion were all scrapped, as that conflict proved that the lack of offensive weaponry on the Shykara was a detriment to its service and the price of the improved shielding was simply too high in terms of production costs.





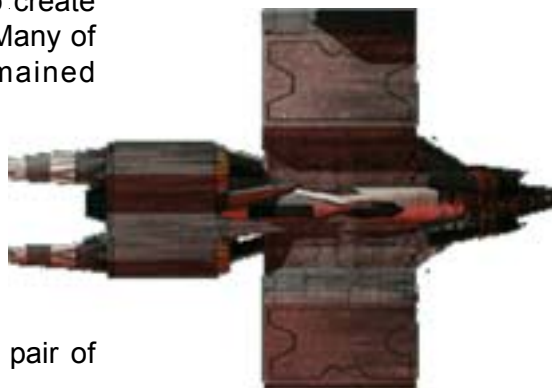


## Hurr Vorka Heavy Frigate

By Paul Brown

As the Hurr gained a greater knowledge of starship construction through their own experience and through the study of the philosophies of other races, they began to re-evaluate some of their own design practices. The first few ships of the Hurr fleet were based upon simple, easy to construct hulls which could be modified with a minimal amount of effort. But the Hurr found that some variants were unsuited for the situations they found themselves in, resulting in substandard performance. The Hurr decided that they would try a new philosophy, of building a new ship that would fill the "jack of all trades" niche that many other races had employed to great success. The common Orak hull was used as the base, which was then expanded and reinforced to create a larger and stronger hull. Many of the components remained essentially the same as they existed in the basic Orak, as the Hurr aimed to conserve production costs. The basic four particle beams were installed, with an additional fifth beam facing rearward between a pair of

new, more efficient main thrusters. Two Class-S racks were installed in the wings facing forward and several different missile types were made the standard loadout to improve their flexibility. But the key to a more flexible design was still missing. The Hurr had observed some of the multi-mode firing weapons employed by other races, particularly the Centauri, and wanted to utilise these systems on their new ship but they didn't have the technology. Fortunately for the Hurr the Pak'Ma'Ra, who had sold them the Plasma Streamer, were willing to supply them with Plasma Accelerators like those the Hurr had witnessed on the Vorchan. The weapon was installed in the nose in place of the common Heavy Plasma Cannon, providing a lethal and yet flexible punch. The Vorka Heavy Frigate entered production in the 2240s and has seen limited deployment



among Hurr forces. Thus far the Hurr have been unable to reproduce the Plasma Accelerator in a cost-efficient manner and so the number of Vorka they produce remains dependant upon what the Pak'Ma'Ra are willing to sell. The Vorka, for its part, still retains the problems of poor manoeuvrability and lack of rear anti-ship weaponry common among Hurr ships. This coupled with the fact the Vorka has no inherent fighter-support will likely prevent the Vorka from becoming a more prominent ship in the Hurr navy.



## Hurr Ortacca Ballistics Frigate

By Tyrel Lohr

In an attempt to distance themselves from Pak'Ma'Ra weapons dealers, the Hurr initiated a program in the late 2250's to begin retrofitting their Vorka fleet with more conventional, homegrown weapon systems. The most successful of these was the Ortacca Ballistics Frigate.

The Ortacca trades the plasma accelerator for two more Class-S Missile Racks and a single medium plasma cannon. The Ortacca is an effective ballistics support platform but the Androma Republic was unable to finance the construction or conversion of many new hulls of the class. This construction limitation left the Ortacca as a rare variant.

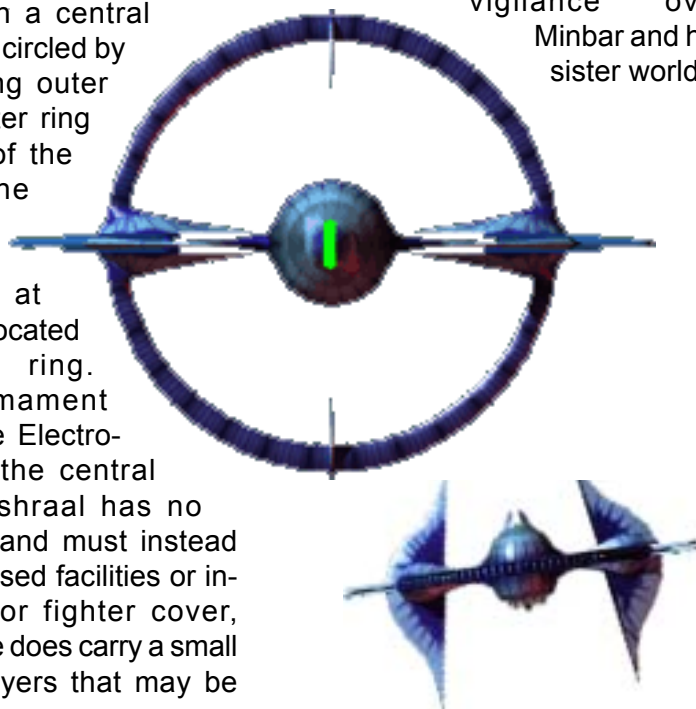


## Minbari Ashraal Guardpost

By Paul Brown

Whereas the Sheganna OSAT is a deployable, cheap static defence unit the Ashraal is designed as a more permanent, smaller substitute for the Norgath to only be deployed deep within Minbari territory. Typically found around colony worlds, the Ashraal is most prevalent within the Protectorate systems where the cost of a Norgath is far too prohibitive to warrant its construction. The small base is constructed with a central habitation hub encircled by a rapidly rotating outer section. The outer ring contains most of the armament in the form of four neutron and fusion cannons at various points, located along the ring. Secondary armament consists of three Electro-pulse guns on the central section. The Ashraal has no fighter capacity and must instead rely on planet-based facilities or in-system fleets for fighter cover, though each base does carry a small compliment of flyers that may be

armed for combat. These bases are typically deployed in numbers and are commonly supplemented with unmanned Sheganna OSATs. With their lower construction costs, the Minbari are able to more effectively cover a planet's orbit with multiple Ashraals than with the more expensive and restricted Norgath. Serving onboard an Ashraal, as with any defensive installation, is considered disdainful to the Warrior Caste, though there are those among the caste who realise the greater honour and sacrifice in performing constant vigilance over Minbar and her sister worlds.



## Narn T'Dok Escort Carrier

by Tyrel Lohr

Following several campaigns against neighboring worlds, the Narn began relying more and more on their larger T'Loth cruisers for power projection. This left the older T'Rakk Frigates to fill in the gaps, providing support for the more valuable cruisers.

The T'Dok Escort Carrier is a modification of the T'Rakk designed to provide Narn fleets with additional anti-fighter support. Providing excellent Twin Array coverage, as well as a flight of Goriths, the T'Dok is meant to escort T'Loths into battle and protect them from enemy fighters at all costs.

This variant was easy to produce, and effective for its lower cost. Despite this the T'Dok was largely replaced by the growing numbers of T'Loth and newer Narn ship hulls being deployed by the Regime.







## Narn T'Sok Heavy Destroyer

By Paul Brown

Coming into service in the early 2230s, the T'Sok was created as a long range patrol craft for the Narn Regime. Using the T'Rakk as a starting point, the hull was heavily modified from the ground up with additional structures added, significantly beefing up the structure. Few can tell that it is related to the T'Rakk without the help of prior knowledge. The T'Sok entered only limited production, and though a vessel appreciated by her captains, it failed to gain serious popularity. One of the main failings was seen as its lack of hangar capacity for fighters, such as that of the Ka'Tor Battle Destroyer. Lacking fighters, it was ill suited to combat most raiders and other opponents who favoured cheap fighters over larger ships. Most T'Soks were soon relegated to auxiliary positions or training facilities. Its greatest achievement was to serve as inspiration for the venerable Var'Nic destroyer which entered service in 2241. All T'Soks which remained in service during the War of Retribution are believed to have been destroyed.

## Narn Na'Tal Early Cruiser

By Tyrel Lohr

The Na'Tal Early Cruiser was one of the first military design projects to emerge from the Narn Regime following the successful implementation of the END Project that spawned such ships as the T'Rakk and T'Loth. Following the Narn's early conquests it was determined that a new light cruiser was needed to supplement the existing early T'Loth Assault Ships.

The Na'Tal is larger than a T'Rakk and similarly better equipped to handle the enemy threat. Two medium laser cannons and one heavy plasma cannon make up the majority of the ship's anti-ship firepower. The ship's secondary arsenal of five twin arrays provides close-in defense against fighters and small combat ships. Visually the Na'Tal betrays design aesthetics similar to those found in the G'Quan, T'Rakk, Dag'Kar and Bin'Tak. The basic shape of the ship resembles a synthesis of the T'Rakk and G'Quan hulls, though the forward prongs have a quality similar to the Dag'Kar and the dorsal spire is similar to that of the Bin'Tak.

The Na'Tal Early Cruiser did not serve for long in the Narn fleet before being replaced by other more capable combat craft. The Narn moved away from fielding light cruiser hulls in the future, instead investing their assets in either smaller, cheaper destroyers or larger heavy cruisers.

## Narn Ja'Korr Heavy OSAT

By Paul Brown

Forming the centrepiece of any defensive network, the Ja'Korr is the heaviest unmanned installation fielded by the Narns. Unlike the prevalent T'Gan, the Ja'Korr relies on direct-fire weaponry for most of its offensive firepower rather than guided and proximity munitions. Main armament consists of three heavy weapons: one pulse cannon and two laser cannons mounted along the same spine of satellite. Flanking this trio of deadly weapons are two small missile racks that are designed to destroy incoming fighters. Though both the Ion Torpedo and Energy Mine are effective at destroying enemy fighters they ultimately lack the long range accuracy against smaller targets and so the Ja'Korr was equipped with highly manoeuvrable, low-yield warheads. Its weaponry is rounded out with a pair of twin arrays on the central body. The Ja'Korr is an effective ship killer and is a prime target for most races making assaults against Narn holdings. Due to its size, the Ja'Korr sees deployment only in larger, more important areas and is typically coupled with T'Gans and minefields. Its cost, however, has limited its deployment to approximately one unit for every five other OSAT units though the makeup of individual defence grids will vary.



## Pak'Ma'Ra Tar'tek'zon Long Range Cruiser

By Charles "Danesti" Haught

Pak'ma'ra curiosity inspired them to travel all over the galaxy, many making their way beyond the borders of the Centauri, Minbari and Hyach. In these travels they came across several newly established governments, many of which had been former Centauri subjects, including the Territorial Annex of the Xothan Autocracy, the Nashani, and the Medushaans, as well as the Orieni Empire. Through exploration into these areas of space they expanded their trade operations. Due to the remoteness of these new trade partners, the outgoing cargo from the Pak'ma'ra homeworld was often restricted to highly valuable processed ore and Quantum 40. But as this traffic increased so did the amount of Pak'ma'ra shipping that fell prey to raiders.

The Pak'ma'ra decided to build a long-range cruiser capable of carrying decent amounts of these precious cargoes and delivering them to their destination safely. The Tar'tek'zon was born from this need for a large cruiser capable of defending its valuable holds. These ships were quite an unpleasant surprise to the first raider groups that attacked them thinking they were nothing more than ponderous Pak'ma'ra freighters. And despite the shortage of Pak'ma'ra pilots, these ships always carry fighters if they are traveling any distance from Melat.

As the war with the Dilgar reached its peak and the Pak'ma'ra were becoming more desperate to get supplies through Dilgar-controlled space, more and more Tar'tek'zons were recalled from their previous duties. While they proved more successful in completing their runs than any other class of Pak'ma'ra ship, they often sustained heavy losses. Still, in any battle that the Pak'ma'ra took part, Tar'tek'zon Cruisers led the charge.

As newer and more powerful warships were commissioned the Tar'tek'zons were typically scrapped, mothballed or stripped for additional cargo space. What had once been the mightiest ship in the Pak'ma'ra Navy faded into obscurity over the next 40 years.

## Pak'Ma'Ra Pes'ta'lu Destroyer

By Tyrel Lohr

An early Pak'Ma'Ra destroyer design, the Pes'ta'lu is much more combat oriented than some Pak'Ma'Ra ship designs. The Pes'ta'lu is equipped with enough cargo to run short priority shipping runs, typically transporting a small quantity of valuable parts or goods to individual buyers. Most of the time, however, the Pes'ta'lu Destroyer serves on the edge of Pak'Ma'Ra space, defending Pak'Ma'Ra traders from raiders and other opportunists looking to capture some of the valuable Quantum 40 shipments making their way out of Melat.

The Dilgar War was the great conflict for the Pes'ta'lu Destroyer and many of the craft served as heavy escorts for the Pak'Ma'Ra relief convoys breaking the Dilgar blockade to bring emergency supplies to the embattled League worlds. The Pes'ta'lu proved a worthy adversary for the likes of the Jashakar and Ochlavita and helped to preserve Pak'Ma'Ra lives and cargo during those treacherous days. Many Pes'ta'lu Destroyers were conscripted into Alliance duty to help during the final push to Omelos, providing fast reaction support for the larger capital ships of the Earth Alliance and Yolu forces.

The Pes'ta'lu Destroyer served within the Pak'Ma'Ra navy for decades after the Dilgar War, eventually being replaced by the newer Urik'hal Fast Destroyer. The Urik'hal has many design characteristics in common with the older Pes'ta'lu, notably the emphasis on speed and a heavy hitting armament. Pes'ta'lu Destroyers remained in service after the introduction of the Urik'hal but were relegated to secondary positions and less important duties.





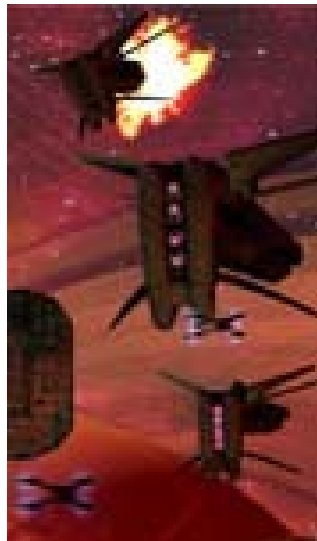
## Yolu Gelnarte Heavy Battlecruiser

By Tyrel Lohr

The Yolu at one point in their history experimented with the possibility of deploying Heavy Molecular Disruptors within their fleet. These larger versions of the standard Molecular Disruptor have enhanced range and damage, allowing the Yolu vital mid-range firepower. Heavy Molecular Disruptors are also more damaging than standard molecular disruptors, providing even more destructive potential to the existing Yolu fleet. The promise of both extended range and higher damage was simply too great for the Yolu to turn down.

The Gelnarte Heavy Battlecruiser was the first vessel to be equipped with these new weapons. Larger than an Aluin Gunship, the Gelnarte is equipped with four Heavy Molecular Disruptors. The ship's weapon emitters occupy the entire forward section of the ship, leaving little room for other weapons, let alone the ship's forward mounted jump engine. The four guns do however give the Gelnarte enough forward firepower to destroy most enemy mainline cruisers in a single salvo.

The Yolu ultimately decided against the use of the Heavy Molecular Disruptor. Despite this, the Gelnarte Heavy Battlecruisers that had already been produced were kept in service to provide heavy fire support to existing Yolu war fleets operating along their border. These craft saw conflict during the Dilgar Invasion, taking part in many engagements, including the Battle of Omelos. Few Dilgar ships could stand up to the damage output of a single Heavy Molecular Disruptor, and it was the Gelnarte Heavy Battlecruisers that proved invaluable in cutting through Dilgar cruiser lines during the last battles of the war.



## Devaskur War Cruiser

By Jeremy Ward

During the turning of the Dilgar War in 2231, the Dilgar War Council began to see a desperate need for a front-line cruiser to lead medium and heavy pentacans against the Alliance. The Mishakur was too rare and valuable to risk, and none of the other designs fielded by the Dilgar had the direct firepower to lead the pentacans in attacks on enemy cruiser squadrons. Earth vessels, while technologically inferior, possessed immense amounts of resiliency, allowing them to shrug off Dilgar heavy weapons fire. This allowed Earth to negate the Dilgar's range advantage, allowing them to reach close range and blow Dilgar ships to pieces using plasma and particle fire. The Dilgar did not enjoy fighter superiority over the Alliance as well, which meant that the Dilgar would eventually lose in a war of attrition. A new unit was needed to break the deadlock. So construction began on a new heavy front-line cruiser, incorporating Dilgar and EA design methods. Dilgar ships tended to be light on structure, favoring firepower over resiliency. The Devaskur was designed to supplement the Mishakur, acting as the pentacan leader, and eventually replacing the Leskrati as the main jumpship. She carried 18 fighters, giving her an advantage over most other heavy cruisers of the League and Earth. The Devaskur concentrated on the use of an intensive heavy weapon armament, using three heavy bolters and two quad pulsars to blast ships apart. Her three squadrons would overwhelm the capital ship units of most opponents, and gave devoted fighters support to Ochlavita strike groups. They also added two missile racks for mid-range power and support, as well as eight scatter-pulsars and four energy pulsars to engage fighters and small ships. The Devaskur was an impressive design, but the Dilgar never had enough resources to construct them on a large scale. They served to strengthen the Dilgar defensive lines, doing especially well against Hyperion squadrons and Markab cruisers. Eventually there were no resources left, and the last Devaskur was destroyed ramming the Markab command ship for the Drol sect at the battle of Omelos.



**LOST: One Earth Dog**  
**"Bubbles"**  
**Last seen on colony**  
**in Quadrant 14**

**Call Warleader G'Ruff**  
**if you have any info.**

## *Born of Fire:* The Babylon Project - Release 2



### A Review of the Babylon 5 / Freespace 2 Conversion

By Paul Brown

The cancellation of the Babylon 5 Simulator *Into the Fire* fuelled a lot of dissent among Babylon 5 fans who were hoping to jump into the seat of a Starfury to blast boneheads and Raiders just as Star Wars fans were able to fly X-Wings and Tie Fighters. While the movement to revitalise the game ultimately failed, the dream for a Babylon 5 flight simulator did not. A group of dedicated fans began working on modifying existing game

systems to adapt them to the Babylon 5 universe. One of these total conversions utilized the Freespace 2 game engine.

When the first release came out I was as excited as anyone else and downloaded it immediately after hearing news of it. But, while initially impressed, my interest waned because of the limited range of ships, lack of exciting or involving missions and it generally wasn't as fun as I was hoping it would be. So when I heard that Release 2 was available for download I was not as excited, but in the end I decided to give it a shot.

As it turns out my reserved approach would not be without justification. In a manner that all

Babylon 5 Wars fans will be well acquainted with, Release 2 was released early and consequently contains several if not many errors. The first thing I needed after downloading and installing the main file was a small patch to make the missions playable as it was impossible to pass the opening mission despite achieving all objectives within. Luckily for the player, there are several other campaigns designed by third parties to download as well. But the one campaign I downloaded, the *Tale of the EAS Janus*, is not without its own problems. For instance there is a mission depicting the Black Star's ambush of the Lexington fleet. The ship that the player is assigned to, a



Nova Dreadnought, is supposed to flee the battle area but instead stays within range of the Sharlin and slowly destroys it because the Sharlin, without orders, simply sits there and takes it. Meanwhile the player is suppose to defend the Nova, mainly against asteroids, but this mission is ultimately futile because the Nova never leaves the asteroid field and so just as the Nova will eventually destroy the Sharlin, so will the asteroids destroy the Nova. Several of the Release 2 missions also to my mind have poor design choices integrated into them. Particularly with ships arriving or mission objectives. One mission where the player is supposed to defend a G'Quan while it escapes an ambush has the ship transmitting a final 'we're doomed' message when the hull hits one percent. Yet the problem is, the ship isn't dead at one percent, the designer only assumes it will be. And so during one of my attempts at this mission the ship actually escapes with one percent hull remaining and technically I complete my mission but I still fail my objectives because the primary goal is to not have the message sent rather than having the ship leave alive. There's just a few odd choices in the mission design department. Some of them aren't actually problems in the mission as above, but can be simply put down

as artistic license. As I have some experience designing missions myself, I would have probably done things differently.

But negative comments aside, the positives in this release far outweigh any inherent problems. The first thing people will notice which is improved over Release 1 is the amount of available ships, in particular, player-flyable ships. The player is able to fly Zephyrs (Delta-Vs), Auroras, Thunderbolts, Sentris, Frazis and probably Nials, though no missions feature the player as a Minbari. In addition to these fighters, there are new ships for the Centauri and Narn plus about a half-dozen Earth Alliance and civilian vessels. The release seems to be geared mainly towards Earth-Minbari conflicts or Earth Civil War battles. Consequently, most of the third-party campaigns in development are geared towards these conflicts. Though I must say that several notable ships, including the Minbari White Star, are absent from the release.

Problems with the campaign structure aside, several of the non-campaign missions are very



A Centauri Senti attacks its target.

enjoyable. In particular, those missions where the player flies Narn or Centauri fighters. Though I absolutely loathe the Centauri in Babylon 5 Wars I must say that the Senti was by far the most enjoyable fighter to pilot. Possessing a high rate of fire, good missiles and nice manoeuvrability I've found myself replaying the Senti mission several times over. Now if the description of the fighter I gave you doesn't sound entirely accurate then you're right, it isn't. The most accurate fighters in terms of weapon sounds and rate of fire are the Aurora, Thunderbolt and the Zephyr. The rest vary somewhat from what we see on the screen and all fighters have the *ability* to carry missiles, though the guns remain the primary weapons. I quite like what they've done with the fighters as some



Two Hyperions fly through the night with their Starfury escort.



variety would ultimately be needed.

The bottom line with this release is not that it is necessarily phenomenal in its own right, but that it has the potential to be so. The greatest contributing factor to this has been the public release of the Freespace 2 source code. What this means is that the code can be improved to adapt the engine to Babylon 5. As it stands at the moment, several things are quite obviously missing. First is the need for a “gunship.ai”, or in other words the game needs programming for the computer to accurately fly small manoeuvrable ships such as the White Star and the entire Drazi fleet. As no ships in FS2 act in the way that these ships would act, it is not

as simple as adding a new model and weapons for said ship. Another problem lies in pulse weaponry. The only ship weapons that are fired in a series of pulses are swarm missiles. A problem arises because of the fact that the engine code expects the pulse weapons to home in on their target, so they are not fired exactly at the target and thus miss. The player for instance can fly straight at a Centauri Vorchan without fear of being hit because its twin array fire will fly right past the fighter.

Overall I'd give The Babylon Project Release 2 a four out of five. Many of the problems lie in mission design, not the fundamentals of the game. The ships, the music, and sounds are all great for what is

included, and anyone who has the game will also have FRED2 which allows them to make new, better missions. Thus anyone can overcome the one problem of the release itself with a few hours of work. You, the reader might be saying, “this is all good and stuff but I don't have Freespace 2 so I can't play it anyway”. But that isn't a problem, with the source code released and people working on it anyone can download the game. As far as I'm aware the source code is still somewhat buggy and the Babylon Project has not yet been released for the Source Code Project but with enough work it can be. I have however heard rumours of waning interest among The Babylon Project members because the traffic on their forums has decreased compared to what it was in the past. Though these rumours are simply rumours, there is the obvious danger that if people aren't interested in the work TBP is doing, that the work simply won't continue. That's a danger in any fan-made project. What you the reader can do to prevent this is to go to their forums, express your support, download the materials and possibly even volunteer to become involved in the project. Because I am a firm believer that this project will only get better and better with each new release, the only problem is keeping the interest between those releases but as I've stated that's easily fixable with a visit and a few kind words for their work.

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## Related Links:

**The Babylon Project homepage:** <http://freespace.volitionwatch.com/babylon/>

**Freespace Source Code Project:** <http://freespace.volitionwatch.com/fsscp/>

**Hard Light Productions:** <http://www.3dactionplanet.com/hlp/>

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## Prometheans

### Centaury ships for the “Legions of Fire” Trilogy

*By Charles Haught a.k.a.  
Danesti*

I have loved Centaury ships since I watched the first Vorchan squadron attack a G'Quan. They are certainly the race I use most often when playing B5W. When I found Hyperion's site my love only increased, his kit bashing adding fire to the flames. Thanks to him and my own tinkering with Illustator I probably have as many, maybe even more, ships for the Centaury as AoG designed for the entire game (and if you think I am exaggerating just ask him or Tyrel).

I had started several projects involving the Centaury over the years, only to have them languish in obscurity. Then Reid published his article in Babcom about the direction that he felt the Centaury would take in the “Legions” books. I really liked the article and it spurred me to action (much thanks Reid). I looked at what he had written and what I had created over the years and instantly realized that creating the ships would be fairly easy.

My first problem came pretty quickly. I had always been of the opinion that AoG had badly downplayed the Centaury. While I understand that there are game balance issues, I believed it went beyond that. So I laid down the direction in which I would proceed and began to construct a couple of ships. I was not totally pleased with the outcome, so I contacted a couple of players for input (again, great thanks go out to Tyrel and Hyperion).

We worked to make sure the tech developments I was steering the Centaury toward were consistent with some of AoG's portrayal of the Centaury and with what we had read and seen on the series. We capitalized on the flexibility of the Centaury fleet, torqueing it up a notch. I also felt that the Centaury would continue with stealth development (much like Reid) and while the Centaury were not ready for Hyach style sub technology, they did deserve a step up from the CSS.

It was recently that I began thinking about the lack of “targets” for my ships. In the trilogy they never engage the Interstellar Alliance. I had entertained the idea of introducing some new ships for the established B5W races (which will probably still happen) as the tensions leading up to the ending of the books would certainly cause military build up amongst the members of the IA.

While pondering the lack of practical exercise for my creations it dawned on me that the Centaury had indeed “tested” their newest toys by expanding back into their territories held during the war with the Orieni. I decided to develop a couple of these races. I also contacted the

players developing the Nashani and Mendushaan to coordinate our work and avoid duplication. And the work they have done so far is really good (thought I would work in a plug for you guys).

This project has been in the makings for a very long time and while it is close to completion, it does require more playtesting and adjustments pending feedback. I am excited by the prospect of both being near completion and finally getting out something that I feel could help bring about the next “phase” of the game (OK, maybe I am being a touch over-confident, but what the hell).

Alright, to the good stuff, the first ship to see the “light”. The Diabla, a ship originally envisioned and named by Hyperion. This ship began life much like Hyperion's own version, as a moderately powerful Centaury cruiser. As I drew up the other ships I recognized the need for a support cruiser both for large Centaury fleets and for the wolf packs of Demos, Demos upgrades, replacement and wolf pack command ships (now if that is not bait I don't know what is). Designed to provide medium range support to these units, it is capable of laying down advanced fire to soften up a target as well as possessing a decent amount of the up close and personal firepower one would expect from a ship designed to fight along side a Demos/Vorchan.

Have fun with it. Go blow the innards out of a Narn cruiser or two and let me know how it fairs. While I am open to any comments, I would please ask you to refrain from commenting if you have not used the ship. I have often found the forum to be destructive of new ideas simply because someone does not like the look of something. If that is the case I will listen to/read whatever

feedback you can give me, but it will be weighed in the regard it was given. Play test info and general comments can be sent to Danesti1@aol.com or posted to the forum. Special thanks to everyone that has helped me with this project (I appreciate it more than I can tell you), and to those that will provide feedback. Let's keep Babylon 5 Wars going. And long live the Lion of the Galaxy!

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## Diabla Cruiser



This new class of warship started life as a new attack cruiser competing with the Dargan for fleet acceptance. The first Diabla was commissioned into the Centauri fleet in 2257. This ship was armed with two Heavy Arrays, two Battle Lasers and two Matter Cannons. During the War of Retribution those that participated were often used as heavy cruisers, a mission to which they were not well suited, resulting in high combat losses.

While the design had not garnered the attention the designers had hoped for, it did continue to be produced in ever increasing numbers after the war. Few were still in active service when the conflict with the Interstellar Alliance erupted. After the Centauri surrender, a substantial number of Diabla Cruisers were nearing completion. Work on these hulls was stopped and the majority were mothballed.

When the Republic began rearming itself, these hulls were pulled from mothballs. Several new technologies were available and the weapons load was changed. The new Engagement Lasers could be mounted in larger numbers due to

their smaller size and the Ranged Array was chosen over the Heavy Array. These ships proved to be far more effective in combat than their predecessor.

As the Centauri began expanding Spinward into their former territory the Diabla served as a command ship for wolf packs of Demos, Devorex, and Xeroset class warships, pending the introduction of the Atereax and Incedrux classes. These ships were highly valued, adding long-range firepower and fighter coverage to wolf packs, while also providing support fire to larger Centauri war fleets. Though not as advanced or powerful as the newer Centauri capital ships, these vessels are still entering production at a steady rate and are considered a worthy post by Centauri Captains. A number of variants of this popular hull exist with several starting to filter down into Centauri House Fleets.

By Charles "Danesti" Haught.

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## The Terran Concordat



### The Terran Concordat: A Glimpse into the History of an Offshoot Race of Humans

By Jason Stadnyk

*"We give you a choice. Return to your world with only a vague memory of this encounter. Or come with us to a new world. Help us start a new civilization, saved from your war-ridden world that is soon to crumble and fall."*

- Vree Telepath Message of the Guild of Conservation to Human Abductees (1950 to 2010)

The Terran Concordat's existence lies on the premise of the joke started between Vree Guilds. Ever since I watched the episode "Grail" wherein we were introduced to the Vree, I wondered if there was truth in the human prosecutor's claim of alien abduction. The Terran Concordat (or TC for short) became

my reality of an offshoot human race in the B5 Universe. Over next few issues, I will give an overview of the TC history and development. I will also include some scenarios using TC ships, as well as those of their opponents, in hopes of generating interest in playtesting. Feedback is always appreciated. (stad@shaw.ca)

The Guild of Conservation (GoC), the Vree's version of Green Peace, made it their mandate to save several species from extinction. They were fooled into believing the humans were about to be annihilated by the Streib so they organized a long term evacuation that lasted nearly 60 years and transplanted over 2 million humans from around the planet.

These founders traveled to the Evergreen System to the second planet, where they would call home. The planet's climate had originally ranged from deserts to rich forests. Since originally discovering that world, the GoC transplanted three ice asteroids and plunged them down upon the desert surface, creating new oceans of water.

It would take 20 years of combined effort from the inhabitants and their Vree friends to construct cities and the infrastructure necessary to be self-sustaining.

The GoC was proud of their accomplishments and realized the humans have become partially dependent on them. To break this dependence, they began to instruct the humans on the technology needed to become a space faring race. Equipped with a few obsolete ships, these humans, who had begun to call themselves the Terran Concordat, began to explore nearby asteroids in search of precious minerals.

Located in an asteroid-dense system, I wanted them to find something valuable enough to make them self-sufficient. Instead of just planting Q-40 in the system, I decided to devise the discovery of Q-60. Unlike Q-40, Q-60 is a radioactive mess that has proved too problematic for previous races who attempted to harvest it. The TC's determination and foolhardiness allowed them to attempt an experimental refining process to convert the ore to Q-40.

The payoff was great as the influx of Q-40 allowed the TC to begin trading with their Vree allies for additional goods to improve their lot. However the consequences of their wealth were also grave, as working with such an unstable material had poisoned several thousand workers with radiation. Many also died in freak work-related accidents. One such mysterious accident awakened the gene responsible for telekinesis in some of the population, and an organization not unlike Psi Corp was founded.

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## The Outside World

(From the TC Sourcebook)

In 2138, a Markab Raiding group opened a jump point into Concordat space. Outcast by their society, these Raiders hoped to profit from Vree shipping. Taking the radar blimp as nothing more than a GoC survey group, a TC patrol ship ran up against the raiding barge unprepared. While both were initially surprised, the barge was able to power up her weapon and destroy the guardship before it could escape.

The TC was shaken by this attack and attempted to hunt down the raiding barge. Unfortunately, the barge was able to escape. The raiding party returned in 2140 and was able to make off with a small quantity of Q-40. The Markab group tried again in 2141, but TC patrols were now reinforced and prevented serious attack. These Raiders settled in selling the coordinates for the system to the Kor-Lyan and Torata governments. Those governments in turn, began to sponsor raiding groups of their own to obtain the Q-40.

This continued and constant raiding would last from 2145 to 2190. Towards the end of this period, the TC's Navy would grow to respond to these threats until Raider material losses became too high. Raider activity in the future would still exist, but raiding attempts were few and less likely to succeed.

## Torata Raider Units

Many races employed privateers in hopes of reaping resources and technologies from their neighbours without the military retaliation that typically resulted from such actions. Many host empires pled ignorance if a raider was caught using their hulls. Attempts to modify the loadout of weapons and components helped to make such raider units more like cobbled-together scows than cutting edge warships.

The Torata were no different and financed their own privateer operations. The discovery of the Evergreen System by way of the Markab Pirates was a blessing and curse in disguise. Evergreen was a considerable distance from the Torata. The Uala's low population resulted in few ships that could be spared for such a journey, and conquest was ruled out following rumours that the Terran Concordat had the protection of a Vree Guild. Actions against a Vree protectorate could shatter the Torata's Vree trade agreements, depriving the Torata of access to much-needed advanced technologies. The Kor-Lyans had also begun sending raiding units to the Evergreen system so, not wanting to be left out, the Torata quickly modified what few ships they could so they could join in the raiding incursions.

### Raider Zendus Requisition Cruiser Base Hull (Restricted Deployment 10%)

Based on the Torata Heltosk Supply Cruiser (which would one day

evolve into the Heltaka), the Zendus filled a valuable role for Torata Privateers. Equipped with a jump drive and a formidable forward armament, these vessels could lay siege to enemy fortifications. Many commanders felt these vessels were invincible and began to place them in harms way more and more often. As defences of targeted systems increased, stronger fighter support began to disprove these incorrect assumptions and these hulls began to be lost in greater numbers, which led to the extinction of this design.

### Raider Hactrus Corvette Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

A precursor to the Atlac Corvette, the Hactrus was originally the Torata Lactruss Corvette (which supported three quad-groupings of light particle beam cannons). The Lactruss shined as an anti-fighter vessel, but the raider version replaced two pods with the stronger medium plasma cannons. Having a bigger, more destructive weapon made these vessels strong in packs. The effectiveness of the Hactrus helped to guide the decision to convert the Lactruss to the Atlac design used today.

Torata designers have done little to cover up their Raider prototype design. The Hactrus is still used by Raider Bands today (although using the Atlac hull for the addition of newly available technologies).



## Terran Concordat and Protectors

### Vree Zynta Guard Saucer (3rd Upgrade)

Base Hull (Unlimited  
Deployment)

The Zynta was the first gravitic saucer hull to be fielded in great numbers by the Vree. Operated since the 1800's, Zyntas have served faithfully as both a garrison craft attached to important outposts and a short-range warship. The Zynta's days were numbered when the first turretted weapon systems began to be deployed. Many were sent to be recycled and a few ended up in the hands of those trading partners who had close relationship with the Vree.

### Rook Patrol Frigate Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Rook Patrol Frigate was the most common vessel employed by the TC before the Dilgar War. The Rook was designed to give TC crews a vessel with which to patrol their space without having to rely on obsolete Vree craft for defense. These early vessels mounted two light particle cannons and two light particle beams as their only means of defense.

While able to contend with a small Raider vessel, these vessels were easily destroyed by a larger foe or by adequate numbers of enemy fighters. Working

in packs, these vessels allowed the TC to effectively patrol the entirety of their holdings. They served faithfully for over 150 years, but by the time the Dilgar invaded the technological gap had made these vessels nearly antique. The first EA invasion decimated their numbers to 30 percent. The Minbari escort groups reduced the number further. The more advanced Tigerhawk replaced the Rook Patrol Frigate shortly after that point in time.

### Batstar Light Fighter Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

Before the Delta-V became popular across the galaxy, the TC relied on the small Batstar for local fighter defense. Proven to be unsafe in combat conditions, pilots suffered a high casualty rate throughout its operational history. Sadly, necessity pushed the design passed its usefulness and the Bat Attack line of fighter craft that followed was actually a step backwards in space fighter design.

### Providence Station Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

Fabricated at the same docks that would later produce the Guardian, the Providence Stations are rotating habitats equipped with meager defenses. Providence Stations are located wherever Q-60 mining operations are present. These stations act as a home for the miners and a processing facility for their valuable ore. Several light particle cannons were mounted across the hull for defense, but the station must still rely on defense craft for protection.

As the Ge'ka'dian war heated up, these stations were the first to feel the wrath of Shloc shock troops as breaching pods had no problem attaching themselves to these installations.



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## Fighting the Bullies



### Overview

With the discovery of Evergreen, many Torata raiding parties were financed and approved by the Torata government. The prospect of gaining any quantity of Q-40 was too good of an opportunity to waste. Several regional raider groups readily accepted Torata financing, including the donation of Torata hulls for conversion into Raider craft. These Raiders would then proceed to hunt for Terran Concordat civilian mining stations in attempts to take them by surprise.

This scenario was a typical one incorporated into the training regimen of up-and-coming Terran Concordat Cadets. Many recruits felt invincible with the new technologies, but the TC government understood (and still does) how defenseless they really were. Cadets who knew how to limit losses were rewarded with transfer to Officer Training.

### Attacker: Torata Raiders

3 Torata Hactrus Corvettes  
1 Torata Zendus Requisition Cruiser  
2 Raider Schooner  
w/ 24 Dragon Light Fighters

### Defender: Terran Concordat

3 TC Rook Patrol Frigate  
1 TC Providence Civil Refinery  
w/ 12 Batstar Light Fighters  
1 Vree Guard Ship  
w/ 12 Zorth Light Fighters

**Special Rules:** The side Reactors on the Providence are designed to deactivate when destroyed, preventing the typical destruction of a section's structure with the loss of a reactor. When a station loses 2 of these reactors, the base will shutdown and surrender, usually jettisoning whatever cargo had been collected.

### Victory Conditions:

#### Raider Victory

**Total Victory:** Destroy all TC military ships and cause the Providence to spill its cargo while suffering only 50% fleet losses. (Cadet demoted)

**Partial Victory:** Destroy all TC military ships, but with fleet losses greater than 50%. (Cadet transferred to ground forces)

#### Terran Concordat Victory

**Total Victory:** Destroys the Raiders without losing 50% of your fighters and 50% of your ships. (Cadet Promoted to Officer Training)

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## THE DRAWING BOARD

### From Concept to Execution: Designing New Races for Babylon 5 Wars *By Tyrel Lohr*

One of the questions that has been asked time and time again over the years has to be "How do you go about designing your own race for Babylon 5 Wars?" Of course, this question is most often followed by the other perennial favorite: "Is there any way to calculate the point values of new units?" No, Virginia, there is no magic point calculation system. But don't let that hold back your creativity when it comes to designing new races. Point values can be plucked from the air through guesstimation; the hardest part is getting the ideas off the drawing board to begin with.

When I first sit down to approach the creation of a new race – whether it be for the Escalation Wars universe, Babylon 5, or Star Trek – the first question I have to ask myself is "where does this new race sit within the context of the existing material?" It is easy to get carried away and only realize once you are deep in the development process that some of your initial decisions don't make sense or don't fit within the context of the universe you are working with. Oftentimes it is good to look back at the units and technologies of the other powers that this new race will be interacting with to get a good grounding as to what you are trying to accomplish. If you are trying to design a small EA client state and end up creating

a power whose ships rival even those of the Vorlon Empire you know you have a problem (I hope).

Once you have a good grounding in the universe in which your race is going to exist it is time to quite literally go to the drawing board and begin brainstorming. Grab a drawing pad, clipboard, paper, and some writing instruments and set to work. In most cases you will already have several ideas regarding varying aspects of the new alien race. You will use this vague imagery during the first phase of the design process to figure out who or what exactly your new race is and where they are coming from. Here are some of the things that you should consider at this step of the design process:

### Physiology

What does this new alien race look like? Or are they aliens at all but rather a new faction made up of members of another race or

aces? When creating a new alien race from scratch the implications of the racial appearance are staggering.

Even if you aren't a very good artist it can be a valuable asset to sit down with a scratch piece of paper and begin doodling what the aliens look like. This will help you get a good feel for what exactly the race may look like, or at least highlight some of their more important physical features. As long as you aren't drawing stick-aliens you should be able to see some of your new race's characteristics come out in the drawing. In fact, the worse your drawing skill the better the insight you will probably get into where you are going with your aliens as you will have a tendency to exaggerate their key features, calling them out. Someone with greater artistic skill can sometimes hurt their cause by trying too hard to doctor up their image or make it 'perfect,' and in the interim obscure the kinds of details that they are looking for by doing the drawing in the first place.

The outward appearance of the alien race will help to clue you in to the kind of world that they came from. If the race has thick, wooly hair then it is a good bet that they aren't from a desert world but rather a world with a colder climate. It also lets you know what kind of hardships the race could have expected during the development of their civilizations from their equivalent of the Stone Age up to the modern period. It will also inform you of some potential social hang-ups or quirks for their race. If the race was from a desert world, water might be more valuable to them and they have begun



An eel-like Borillian. Originally a low-tech protagonist of the Centauri in a small campaign, the Borillians eventually were co-opted into the Escalation Wars universe. This is the intial concept art completed for the Borillians to demonstrate their basic appearance.

worshipping it as a sign of divinity. Or, if their homeworld was covered with craggy mountains the race may have adapted in some way, either being able to scale sheer rock faces or climb like a mountain goat.

In regards to appearance, one of the biggest mistakes that people can make when designing their race is to borrow too heavily from terrestrial lifeforms. Too much of science fiction is filled with races that amount to little more than “the bug men” or “the bird men.” While these can sometimes be fun and appropriate in some situations, they have been done to death. So, though you might start with your alien race having a specific terrestrial analog, it is important when fleshing out your new race to add additional layers of complexity until you have created something truly different, but with the original species that the race was based on shining through.

What kind of evolutionary process led to this sentient being? Tracing the genetic lineage of your alien race will help to flesh out where exactly they came from and some of the basic instincts or skills the race may have. For example, an alien race descended from a nocturnal predator would likely retain the keen night vision of their ancestors. Or a race whose ancestor’s diet consisted primarily of hard shell mollusks could have strong, crushing jaws originally intended for breaking the mollusks’ hard shells.

Investigating the evolution of your race over the years can also help you to identify what other kinds of lifeforms inhabit your race’s homeworld. Whether they be large, plodding herbivores or small, dangerously intelligent predators, you will at least know what kind of critters your race has had to deal with on their road to sentience.

Another thing to consider exploring is the alien’s sexual processes. For most races this can be a little extreme, but it can also be an important element of fleshing out who exactly the race is. How many sexes does the race have? Who carries the children after conception? What length is the gestation period? All of these questions can have important ramifications on both the physiology and society of the alien race. After all, look at the Centauri; we didn’t need to know that they had six sexual appendages or anything about their sexual nature, but by its inclusion the Centauri became that much richer in background.

In practice there are very few alien races with which I have explored the sexual aspect. One of the first was the Anticians, a race that eventually ended up in the Escalation Wars universe. The Anticians are your typical ‘fish head guys.’ Humanoid in shape with green, scaled skin and black eyes (similar to the Greys from the popular UFO mythos). Atop the Antician’s head is a thick crest, much smoother and less fish-like compared to those of Babylon 5’s Abbai. When I was first designing the race I had considered what the function of the crest should be. I knew from my mental picture of the race that the male crest would be very colorful, a kind of mating plumage as is common among birds. But what other purpose would the crest serve? After much deliberation I decided that the crest was actually the location of their sexual organs and that the Antician sexual act amounted to two Anticians head-butting one another. After conception, the Antician female then begins developing an elastic egg sack at the base of the back of her head that looks and feels much

like a balloon. The egg sack then fills with hundreds of eggs before finally hardening and falling off. At this point the egg sack is immersed in water and the tadpole-like Antician children are given their chance to hatch. Infant mortality is incredibly high, and out of any one pregnancy only a handful will survive to maturity (which is good, as otherwise the Anticians would be severely over populated!).

What does this information tell us about the Anticians, other than how they ‘get it on?’ It has important social ramifications. The Antician society ended up with the notion that expectant mothers should return to the oceans of Anticia to give birth in the birthing pools of their homeworld if at all possible. The concept also became an important part of their religious beliefs, with the birthing pools actually operated by various religious groups with water priestesses presiding over the births and caring for the developing young.

## Society

Now that we have identified the important physical traits of the new race it is time to delve into the psychological and sociological elements of the race. Every race values different things, and it is sometimes important to see if there are any important traits or quirks in this regard that could endear



A ceremonial  
Sshel'ath battle dagger.



them to other races or cause potential conflict.

Within the context the existing Babylon 5 races, there are many examples of racial social themes. The Abbai are pacifists, the Brakiri dislike comets, the Centauri are decadent, and the Minbari are reserved and introspective, just to name a few. Usually the overriding theme for a race is easier to determine than the more individual details, but if the race is to have a theme then this is a good time to choose it. Again, refer back to your initial concepts for the race and decide if there is anything that really sticks out about their personality. An arrogant race with very short-temperers are not likely to have tea time as one of their racial past times.

"How is that important?" you might ask. Well, if the short-tempered race isn't up for a nice fireside tea party then their leisure time is going to be spent elsewhere doing activities more conducive to their personalities. Perhaps they enjoy competitive, combative sports to pass the time, or singing improvisational ballads about the sun, the moons, and the local bar. The more you know about your races the better you are, and the better prepared you will be to decide what they would do in any given situation.

Depending on how far you want to get into the background of the race it can always be fun to begin developing a cursory outline of their popular culture or racial myths. Myths are especially fun as it lets you know what kind of racial legend they have opted to bring forward with them into the modern era. Creation myths are often the best, as they can often cut to the core of the race's basic beliefs and provide valuable insights into the race's mindset.

## History

Perhaps one of the most important facets of your race's background is their history. Because of this it is one of the aspects of race design that you should (and will) spend the most of your time working on.

When you first sit down to develop your race's back history remember that everything you put to paper is not written in stone. In fact, you should continually be questioning the dates and events of your race's history. If they don't make sense in the context of your later development then you need to do something about it, but that can happen later, once more of your world is fleshed out. It is because of this that developing a new power within an existing fictional universe (Babylon 5 et. al.) is much easier than creating one from scratch. You know the history of the universe from the other race's perspectives, so you can more easily develop your own history using that as a reference point. Did the Minbari fight a massive war with the Ghura Matriarchate over the Sol system in 2232? No, so if try putting that into the Ghura's history then people are going to scoff and ignore everything else that you have done. You can take some artistic liberty with your source materials, but be warned that when playing in someone else's sandbox you should attempt to use their sand and not import your own and call it theirs.

For my more important races I typically start at the dawn of recorded history and move my way forward. What were the early alien civilizations like? What did they value? What kind of economies and lifestyles did they enjoy? It becomes easier at this point to get a feeling

for what the base desires and motivations of the race could be.

From this point we begin the process of mapping out a cursory path from these early beginnings to the perceived modern era. What major developments fundamentally changed their existence? The race couldn't have simply jumped from their Bronze Age tool making to building starships overnight (barring mysterious black Monoliths). There has to be a rhyme and reason to how they got to the point they did, and the race likely learned from the lessons of the past, or at least were unconsciously shaped by them.

For example, the political entity that you envision your race being governed by: where did it come from? Is it a new organization? A synthesis of some past ruling body? Was this a radical departure from typical governance on the world, or does it draw on past historical precedents? Nothing should exist in a vacuum, and there should be at least a little bit of thought put into how the alien race got their start.

The history leading up to the beginning of the race's space faring days is mostly back history that helps to add extra flavor to the race and greater depth to their characterization. It isn't needed, and in most cases you can get by with only a few short paragraphs explaining what the primitive Huckluvians were doing before they built their first fusion reactor (and promptly blew themselves up due to a measurement conversion mistake... pesky Imperial system anyway).

The more important part of the race's history – at least more important to us, the war gamer, perhaps less important to others – is the modern history that begins with the race's entry into space. It is

at this point that we typically begin exploring the epic rise, expansion, and decline of our race's power and influence within the galactic community, providing the historical background for our ships to exist.

When doing this, I often decide up front who exactly is the race's primary opponent. In *Babylon 5*, the Earthers have the Minbari, the Centauri have the Narn, and the League has the Dilgar and Centauri. In *Star Trek*, the Federation, Klingons, and Romulans are continually at odds with one other. *Star Wars* has a black and white conflict between the Imperials and the Rebels. The list could go on and on. What foe has your power been in conflict with for the longest period of time? Who was their toughest opponent? This will become important when designing your ships and technologies, but it also lets you begin drawing up a rough timeline of events by placing the years of the conflicts. As you assemble these dates on the timeline remember to jot down the reasons for the conflict and the resolution, as these will be very important parts of your race's history.

The timeline approach to your race's history will help you to sort out the major events and determine if there is enough time between Event A and Event B, or if the timeline needs adjusted. This lets you see all of the major events in your race's history in one place so that you can make sure things look right before you spend the time writing all of your background text. Oftentimes you will realize that there was not enough time for your race to rebuild after the last war, or that the new super weapon just couldn't be developed in the amount of time given. The timeline makes it easier to pick things kinds of mistakes or

gaffes out before you get to much further into the history.

With the timeline done it is time to start converting your rough historical notes into an actual background history. Start wherever you are most comfortable and just start writing down and expanding upon your history. It is understandable if your first draft or two of the history is not game supplement quality. It isn't expected to be. You will have all the time in the world to go back over it and rearrange, edit, and modify the text copy, but at this point it really is just important to get all of your thoughts down so that you don't forget them.

At this stage of development it is vitally important that you make different versions of your historical texts at each phase of development. Ideally you should never overwrite previous versions of your race's historical notes or background history text. You never know when you will want to refer back to your initial concepts or historical underpinnings. If you destroy them in the process of writing future drafts then they will be lost and you will inevitably find yourself wanting to refer back to them when a piece of your history seems out of place.

When writing up your background fluff it can be helpful to refer back to your favorite game supplements and take a look at their writing style and/or text layout to decide where and in what order information should be put. I highly recommend *The Dilgar Invasion and Wars of the Centauri Republic* as two B5W supplements to refer to for putting together your background sections. Both provide two similar, yet different, ways of putting your information together.

As a last note on your race's history, remember that the complete histories of the wars that your race

took part in should be put in their own write ups and not integrated into the history of the race unless you have a very good reason to do so. In such cases make note of the war and its consequences in your race's back history, but place the blow-by-blow commentary (such as that for the Narn/Centauri War found in *Showdowns-5*) in its own document separate from your race's background text.

## Why is this Important?

Most of you probably wonder why any of the above is important to designing a new race. For a one-off race this level of detail is probably not necessary, however if you have any vested interest in the race or want them to be more than a two-dimension cardboard cutout you will have to walk at least a few steps down this path. Without some sort of racial identity or background to associate with the race they are little more than a name. What would your reaction be to the Narn ships in B5W if the Narn had never been seen or mentioned on *Babylon 5*? If they were simply a name and nothing more, without even a shred of background material to go with them? Chances are that you would look at their ships and say "hey, good designs there, keep up the good work" and proceed to promptly ignore them. Background materials are very important, even if they amount to "the Vulla Vulla are bug men with six eyes, eight legs, and wear big floppy shoes and big berets." That is better than nothing and, in most cases, will actually suffice for at least clueing people in to what these guys are supposed to be like.



## Ship Design and Technologies

Now we know a little something more about our new race and can proceed with what is perhaps the guts of the situation: their ships and technology. When first sitting down to map out a race's ships and technology it is important to take an inventory of the types of weapon you see them operating as well as the general aesthetic of their fleet.

## Weapons

In the case of weapons, you should approach the weapons by looking at the intended effects rather than the weapon stats. Do your ships fire beams, pulses, or a combination of the two? Do any of your weapons have an explosive discharge similar to a tactical nuke or an energy mine? By approaching weapons design from this angle you can take stock of just what kind of weapons you will need to match your own personal 'onscreen' evidence.

After you know just what kind of weapon types your race will be using it is time to begin looking for weapons that fit the bill. You can choose to use either stock, off-the-shelf weapon models created by Agents of Gaming or others of your own creation your own. As a caveat, it is always best to use an existing weapon system if at all possible, but only so long as it mimics the type of weapons fire that you are trying to model. If the weapon you had in mind seems to act a lot like a Medium Laser, but in your mind's eye you see it piercing through an enemy's hull and feel that it should have the Piercing ability, then you really shouldn't settle for the Medium Laser. Since the weapon that you are trying to model is capable of

Piercing you shouldn't compromise your vision for convenience sake. In this case, the best option would be to create a new weapon that has stats much like the Medium Laser but also has a Piercing option. Whether this is feasible given your race's technology level, not to mention the technology level of your background universe, is something else entirely.

Now, if the weapon you were trying to model was nothing more than a simple laser weapon, then it is fine to make use of these existing weapon systems. In most cases, mid to lower tech races (pre-Centauri in tech level in most cases) will probably make use of many of these basic weapon systems. There is no point in reinventing the wheel when an existing weapon fits your intended role and effect. Need a short-range particle weapon for anti-fighter use? The Light Particle Beam is always a good choice. Can it get bland when a lot of the races all use the same weapons? Sometimes, but it is better than creating fifty-seven varieties of Light Particle Beam when the original will do.

Perhaps one of the most important parts of developing new weapons is to seek outside consultation as to whether your new weapon stats are believable or not. There have been enough unbalanced weapons to grace the B5W community over the years that it is clear that what is reasonable to one player will be a heinous crime against nature to another. Some leeway is granted to those races that have achieved a higher level of technology (Minbari and onward), but even then these weapons should be able to stand up to criticism.

If peer review leads to derision of some of your weapon types remember that it is ultimately

your call as to how you incorporate their criticism. As I said above, if the weapon is setup so as to match a very specific vision or set of imagery you have in mind for the weapon then you should be more inclined to try and find some middle-ground between what other people have suggested and your existing ideas. In the Piercing Medium Laser example, if critics rebuff the weapon saying that it isn't technologically feasible for a power of your race's tech level, then you should sit down and really take a look at your background as well as your existing stats and see if the weapon really is too high tech for your race or if the effect is still justified.

In such cases where the technological level of your race is called into question in relation to a new weapon system you should re-evaluate the stats and consider downgrading the weapon's abilities by adding more disadvantages to the system, or taking away advantages. Again, in regards to the Piercing Medium Laser example, people have told you they hate it. *It is too high tech for your race*, they say, *especially as they have only been in space for a very short time after it was developed*. In this case, the damage or fire control could be reduced to make it a little worse, or maybe make the weapon suffer from high attenuation represented by giving it a shorter range, increasing the range penalty from -1 per 2 hexes to -2 per 3 hexes or -1 per hex.

## Systems

You should use a similar process as described above under the weapons section for determining what kind of special ship systems or racial design quirks your ships will have. Create a list of the special

# Into the Fire

abilities that the ships will have and then match these up with existing abilities or else create rules for new systems. Jammers, Computers, and Shields are good examples of systems that you can decide whether your race has available to them.

When designing new systems I can't stress enough that you should have a very good reason for doing so. For the most part among the Babylon 5 races, special ship systems are reserved for more advanced races that have been in space for an extended period of time. Few if any of the younger races have special ship systems available to them.

Other abilities that you may consider making available to your race are command bonuses (such as those for the Dilgar pentacan), limited stealth abilities, chameleon sensor suites, and the like. These abilities are not represented as damageable systems on the ship sheets but it is important to decide whether or not your race has the technological or psychological criteria necessary to make them available to your units. As with actual ship systems these abilities are also typically reserved for the more technologically advanced races.

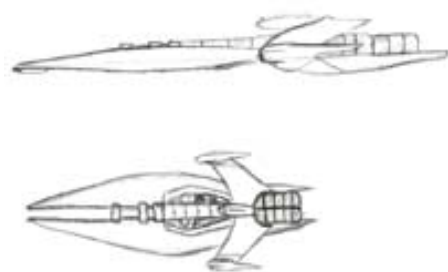
The final system related area to consider is adding actual ship design/layout quirks to the designs. These include special engine placement (Dilgar split engine systems or Hurr aft-mounted engines), special hull configurations (Drazi side/side hit charts), or

bulkheads (Gaim). If the concept for your race's ships lends itself to special design quirks then you should consider implementing them. The downside to introducing new quirks is that it can be very hard to properly balance the abilities, and the special layouts can lead to problems for certain ship designs that don't properly fit the mold.

## Ships

Now that you know about what kind of weapons and technologies your ships will be using you can begin taking a harder look at the actual ship designs for your race. The first step before you delve deeper into the ship design process is to simply grab a piece of paper and start drawing like you did when working on the race's appearance. Again, don't worry about your artistic abilities – just take some time to draw several different concept art pieces for you new race. These drawings can vary in complexity from simple top-down silhouettes or side views to full-blown concept line art. In either case, create many different concept studies using the ship design themes that you intend to use for your new race. By doing a wide variety of concept drawings you will be able to decide which ones look the best before moving on. There is nothing worse than going with your first ship design aesthetic or theme only to find out down the road that it doesn't look as good as you thought it would. If you had only finished one SCS you won't be out much time, but if you have completed several than it can become very disheartening.

As an alternative to pen and paper drawings, you can always simply go to your drawing program of choice and start doodling. Quite



The first ever piece of Circasian concept art. Note that the ships were still much more Narn inspired than their current incarnation.

often I have ended up sitting down in front of the computer and playing around in Illustrator creating numerous silhouettes in an attempt to find one that clicks. This kind of random designing can lead to some outlandish (and ugly!) silhouettes, but every once in awhile you will come across a true gem that can end up setting the flavor for an entire race's space navy.

Another pitfall of many designers (including many professionals) is to pick one ship design as the basis of the racial ship theme and then only do minor modifications to ship elements to differentiate them from other classes. Star Fleet Battles is perhaps the worst offender in this area, creating entire fleets of alien ships that are bland and emotionless. Try taking your theme in different directions and coming up with some truly unique looking designs that still have a lot in common, but are still different. Take the EA Hyperion and Omega; both of these ships are produced by the same power, yet each reflects a very different design aesthetic.

Now that you have done your drawings and selected a few to pursue it is time to do a few more drawings of it, trying a few more variations on the theme while starting to develop basic stats for the



A quick piece of art for an EA Dilgar War Era Carrier, the EAS Bismark



ship. What classification is the ship you are working on? Battleship? Frigate? Garbage scow? What type of weapons do you intend for the ship to have? When determining the abilities of a ship, especially in assigning its arsenal, you should rely more on "What beam or pulse is this ship firing?" than approaching it from the "Should I put a Light Particle Beam or Light Pulse Cannon on it?" angle. Making decisions based solely on weapon names and performance can often cause your designs to be less what you had imagined them to be and simply what would be most effective in the game. Don't replace that forward missile launcher with a pulse cannon if the only reason you have for doing so is because the pulse cannon will make the ship fight better. In cases like that you should always go with your first instincts. If nothing else be true to your initial intentions and be sure to keep notes on what your intentions were with each ship design – they will be invaluable in the future.

As with the weapons, don't pin yourself down yet as to the specific ship statistics. While you are in the early planning stages applying such things as defense values, EW amounts, and thrust costs can sometimes be counterproductive and stifle your creativity when you go to actually sit down and create the ship control

sheet. From personal experience I have found that the more statistics that I write down when designing the ship on paper the less likely I am to ever create the ship control sheet. Creating the statistics on the fly is, at least for me, part of the fun of putting together the SCS in the first place. Your own working habits will of course vary, but it is something to keep in mind nevertheless.

Typically I will record the basic weapon mounts, calling them out on a top-down view of the ship, assigning cursory arcs of fire to the weapons for future reference. I then assign a ramming factor to the design. Out of the B5W stats, the ramming factor is perhaps the best gauge of basic size and sturdiness and acts as a good yardstick for comparing the size and girth of your ship designs without locking down the amount of structure per section. If when designing the ship you have thoughts as to some of the ships abilities ("this ship is a big slow slug, and butt ugly, too") it is good to jot in a note to this effect along with your other ship notes. In these cases it is okay to put down specific ship stats for maneuvering and the like if you know what you would like the stats to be and don't want to forget.

Once you are done creating your basic ship designs you will be ready to move on and tackle filling in the details of your ships and

building the skeleton of your race's fleet structure.

## Afterward

Never be afraid to question your initial assumptions. In many cases these assumptions can be flawed or simply flat out wrong. Don't be afraid to leave your ideas and SCS sit and simmer for weeks or months before revisiting them. The longer you wait the clearer your mind will become and you will be able to ask yourself one of the most important questions a designer can ask him/herself, "Why in the !@\*% did I do *that*?!" If you can't remember why you did something then it is time to look back in your notes and see if there was a reason. If you did write a note to yourself and it makes sense, then you know that it might be an okay thing to keep. If you still don't know why you decided to put that extra gun on your Kleev'cha Battlecruiser then you could probably just take it off. Same thing with your race's background: if it doesn't make sense, rework it. I have found from personal experience that, over time, the details will fade slightly but your intentions will stick with you. If you find that your memory clashes with what was written on the page then it is probably time to go back and see which of the two is better. There have been many times going back over the racial histories of Escalation Wars races that I have remembered things occurring differently than I had written, leading me to realize that I probably needed to rewrite and rework some of my background materials.

**Coming Next Issue:** *Part-II, providing an in-depth look at ship and fleet design strategies.*



### Species Design - Part 1

#### “Resolution through Conflict”

*By Paul Brown*

How does one go about creating a new race for Babylon 5 Wars? I've made a few in my time and though many, if not all, have yet to reach completion they still exist on paper and in some cases in ship control sheets. But where does one start when creating a new species or faction? In some cases, it may simply start with a ship design and fleet methodology and then I work to fit those into a story. But the factions which I really care for, those which are well thought out, begin with one thing: conflict.

What would be the point of designing warships without a war in which to fight with them? That's one reason I stray from designing races within the context of the Babylon 5 story line. I enjoy conflict and in order to create a new race in B5 I may also need to create a conflict which doesn't necessarily suit the context of the universe.

So I begin with a conflict, or a war if you will. I prefer the centre point as being an epic, cataclysmic war and then to have the little skirmishes and little wars can be developed later. So we have a war with two or more factions involved, and now comes the development of new species.

First thing to do is decide upon a reason for conflict. Why are the two sides fighting? Two people don't simply hate each-other, there

is always a reason behind it. Whether it be mistrust, fear, misunderstanding or even the other typical reasons such as economic, political, religious or maybe one side just is lusting for power and wealth and sees the other as simply a people to be subjugated or exterminated. Once you've decided upon a reason for conflict, start to extrapolate why each faction feels the way it does. How did it get there?

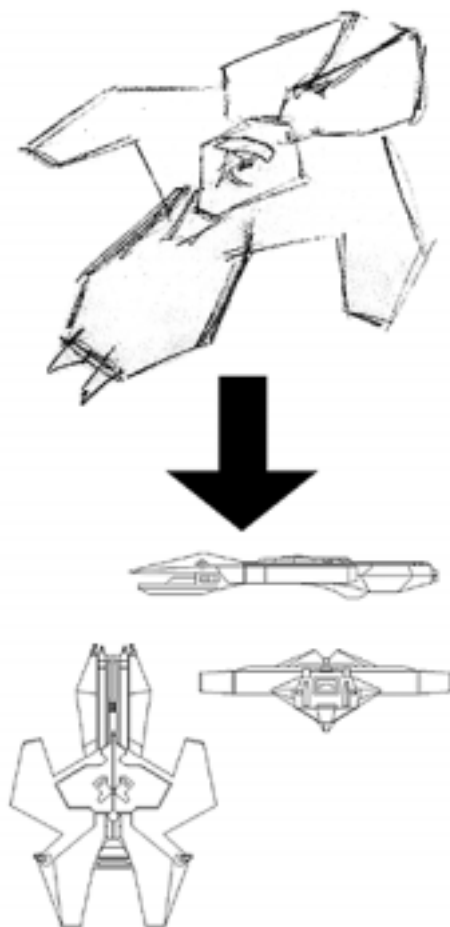
For instance if a species simply wants to expand their empire, their own planet may be resource poor or they may see themselves as God's gift to the universe and in turn the universe as God's gift to them. Power and wealth are key motivators to conflict, though other, perhaps more interesting, avenues do exist. But essentially from this one stance an entire societal and physiological development can be extrapolated.

These are, I believe, a few key things to determine: How did the current government come to power, how long has it been in power, and how long and for what reason has the conflict-promoting foreign policy been in place. Also what's the state of society and what are the views of the common person? If the common and governmental views don't mesh, has there been internal power struggles or suppression of the people? and so on. And from this information, you can extrapolate even more ideas such as how did the current conditions develop and what prompted them?

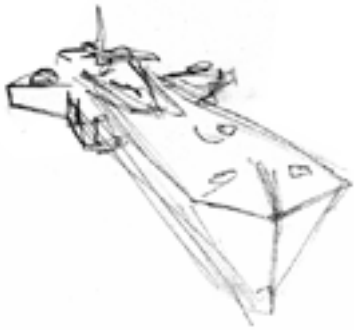
As an example, let's take the classic model of a theocratic (religion driven) government and society. The race we're looking at is called, say, the Bobbuns. They're in conflict because they believe it is their

obligation to spread their religious views throughout the galaxy and crush non-believers. The current government has been in power for nearly a century and was formed as one of the main Churches filled a power vacuum caused by a massive civil war. Many of the people are strong believers in the faith, but there are radical dissidents who do not conform with the government's teachings and wish to see it replaced, or something to that effect.

Once the society and history begins to take shape, you can focus on less important things such as physiology. Usually, the easiest way to think up a new species is to compare it to an existing animal, such as Cats with my Tolkid/Rawnjok. Cats always make







lovely aliens, though I've noticed that no one ever chooses dogs (maybe its because dogs are stupid??). Just look to the Dilgar and the Kilrathi for a few examples. From this selection you can determine their general strength, agility, mental capacity and other characteristics should you find it important. The Gaim for instance are very strong so they get marine bonuses while the Pak'ma'ra are a bit slow-witted so they have organisational problems. From here you can flesh out completely irrelevant items. For my Tolkid for example, I determined their style of dress, some hand-held weapons and close combat knives for marines, uniforms and so forth. This is the kind of material which you don't really concentrate on doing, but as you become more interested in your creation these ideas tend to surface. Be sure you have some paper and pencil to write them down! Oh and then perhaps finally, give each faction a name. I always find names some of the most challenging parts of designing new species, the trick is to make it sound kind of cool without making it sound kind of stupid. Usually I land somewhere in between.

So to summarise today's lesson:

First, begin with a conflict and determine how many factions are involved. Next determine the reasons for that conflict, remember each side may have different and not

necessarily directly-opposing reasons (one wants to spread the faith, the other wants to gain wealth). From there, determine the governmental and societal conditions which prompted those reasons. And finally, determine how the current conditions came into being through an extrapolation of the history of that race. Other details, tend to follow later. Remember you don't even need to have determined the winner of the conflict by this point. After designing your factions you may discover that you prefer one to the other and decide that they will be the winners, or for the time being, they may even be the losers if you find that path more interesting.



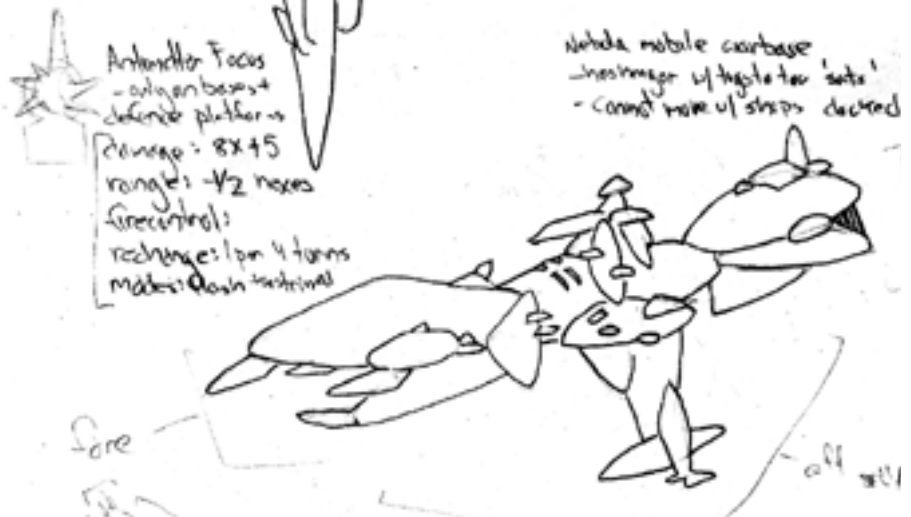
Antimatter Focus  
- oxygen based  
- defense plating  
- range: 8x45  
- range: 1/2 miles  
- fire control:  
- recharge: 1 per 4 turns  
- makes down to the ground

This should give you a firm starting point for developing the real heart of your new faction. And right from the get-go, your faction now has beliefs, motivation, character and, perhaps most importantly, conflict and the chance to develop through this conflict. You can always change things after you've started, even in these most fundamental ways. I've changed my own races many times for the sake of improving them. But once you have the heart of your race, other things should follow quite easily. Which doesn't mean you won't have decisions to make; in fact there'll be a great many more decisions to follow. But the important thing is that those decisions now have a basis and reasoning behind them which helps to keep your faction consistent and more believable.

Stayed tuned next month for some more insight into species/factional development through the beady eyes of Paul Brown.

\* \* \*

Design sketches for the advanced nebula bases of the Tol'Rawn Unity



Nebula mobile base  
- has a range of 1/2 to 1 mile  
- cannot move up steeply  
- charged

### THE ESCALATION WARS:

# The ak-Tai Republic

## A Sneak Peak at What's to Come in The War of the Seven Stars

By Tyrel Lohr

### A Brief History of the ak-Tai

In this Escalation Wars sneak peak you will be introduced to the ak-Tai Republic, an avian species hailing from the outward sectors. The leading power in the region, the ak-Tai were the principal opponents of the Circasian Empire during the War of the Seven Stars.

The ak-Tai Republic emerged from the Great War against the E'chekri stronger than their neighbors, in large part due to their distance from the conflict's front lines. The ak-Tai holdings at Rostata and Vreo had been attacked and brutalized by the E'chekri forces, but their primary production centers never came under fire. Only the Lleskath could boast the same among the worlds that would later form the Defensive Alliance of Worlds, more commonly referred to as the ak-Tai Hegemony. The Ghotekhen were all but broken by war's end, and the Solassi had suffered beneath a similar planetary siege. The ak-Tai alone held the resources and infrastructure to launch a quick recovery from the devastation of the war. They were the first to rebuild and their fleet was the first to be replenished, made stronger than ever before.

It was in this cautious atmosphere of reconstruction that the ak-Tai slowly but surely assumed the leading role in the alliance that

would come to be their namesake. The Republic stood strong, building ever more opulent fleets as a testimony to the ak-Tai people. These "glory fleets" were common among the surviving nations and acted as a point of national pride. It was because of the glory fleets that the ak-Tai built their first battleship and began the adoption of the heavier warships that would become their mainstay combat craft a century later.

The ak-Tai Hegemony at the time of the War of the Seven Stars was a faltering alliance. The other worlds resented the ak-Tai's economic and political dominance over the body. The Lleskath, who were the ak-Tai's equals militarily, remained in the alliance primarily out of pride and a sense of duty to the oaths taken by their forefathers. Meanwhile, both the Ghotekhen and the Solassi were thankful for all the ak-Tai had done to help rebuild their worlds, yet they too grew weary of the Hegemony. The ak-Tai for their part ignored the warning signs that support for the Hegemony was eroding. The ak-Tai Republic was at its height. Never before had the ak-Tai borders extended so far or the ak-Tai economy been so strong.

It was ak-Tai arrogance that would put an end to the ak-Tai dominance in the region. The ak-Tai's actions in instigating the War of the Seven Stars would cause the final fracture in the Hegemony. With the ak-Tai's secret agenda revealed, the will among the other members to fight disappeared. The Ghotekhen and Solassi ended their losing conflict with the Circasians



and their Th'sook allies and became members of the Hegemony in name only. The Lleskath withdrew from the Hegemony completely. The Lleskath felt betrayed and harbored a deep hatred and desire for vengeance against the scheming ak-Tai, setting into motion the bloody outward campaign that would destabilize the entire region during the Escalation Wars.

### ak-Tai Weapons

The ak-Tai have developed advanced particle weapons as the primary starship armament. Basic meson weaponry was developed during the Great War in an effort to counter the E'chekri's own advanced technologies. Early meson weapons were primitive and little improved over more conventional particle weapon types. The weapons slowly improved and the ak-Tai came to appreciate the meson weapons' ability to bypass limited amounts of enemy armor.

In addition to their meson weapons, the ak-Tai have traditionally operated a mix of standard particle, ballistic, and plasma technologies. Most of the ak-Tai's early technologies were purchased from other sources, including the Ukal and Solassi. It was not until the Great War and the development of meson weapons



that the ak-Tai began devoting large amount of money and resources to the development of proprietary hardware types.

The ak-Tai guard their technological advances, even going so far as to limit the amount of information made available to fellow Hegemony members. Very few have managed to finagle meson weapon technology out of ak-Tai hands, one of the few to have done so being the Tikan, an ak-Tai client state on the Lleskath border.

## ak-Tai Ships and Fighters

The ak-Tai have traditionally fielded craft that emphasize speed above all else. From the ak-Tai's earliest frigate units to their most modern battlecruisers, the ak-Tai ships are capable of some of the most amazing feats of maneuverability that any power has ever seen. The ak-Tai craft operated during the War of the Seven Stars were no exception. The quality of the ak-Tai navy again forced the Circasians to rely on their greater numbers and better training to gain an even footing.

The ships detailed below provide a broad look at the types of vessels operated by the ak-Tai. A complete order of battle and history of the war will appear in *The War of the Seven Stars* supplement.

### **Hura Light Cruiser** **Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)**

The Hura Light Cruiser was designed to take full advantage of the new Ranged Meson Cannon that had recently been developed by ak-Tai scientists. Long-range fire support units, the Hura Light Cruisers were used to escort other larger cruiser classes into battle. The ak-Tai's intent was to use the

Huras to significantly weaken the enemy before they entered optimal weapons range.

The Hura Light Cruiser proved to be a solid light cruiser hull when operated as intended. The combination of its Ranged Meson Cannons and close-in anti-fighter arsenal allowed the Hura to suitably protect the fleet from harm. Huras are unable to carry the battle on their own, however, and those light cruisers left to fend for themselves most often met a swift death at the hands of enemy strike units.

### **Rytarra Heavy Frigate** **Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)**

A new generation of ak-Tai frigate designs began to emerge just before the War of the Seven Stars. More aggressive and deadly than their predecessors, these ships incorporated a century of technological advances, creating a cutting edge warship design capable of besting those of other races.

One of these new frigate hulls was the venerable Rytarra Heavy Frigate. This jump engine equipped frigate was meant for long-range attack missions during times of war, or as fast reaction patrol units along the ak-Tai borders. The Rytarra's four forward-mounted Meson Bolters gave it an impressive first strike ability that would leave most enemy destroyers and light cruisers in flames in short order. The inclusion of decent anti-fighter defenses also ensured that the Rytarra could not easily be swarmed and subsequently destroyed by enemy fighter units, a flaw in the heavy frigate designs of other powers.

The Rytarra Heavy Frigate earned itself a reputation for being

ruthless killers for their slaughter of Circasian cruisers. The Kolanis Cruiser in particular was unable to tangle with the Rytarra and come out alive. Newer Circasian cruisers fared better when combating the Rytarra, but they were always in short supply and could not be wasted taking on ak-Tai frigates. The ak-Tai knew this and tried their hardest to tie up enemy cruiser squadrons with strike waves led by Rytarra frigates.

### **Thor'usal Heavy Cruiser** **Base Hull (Limited Deployment 33%)**

The last of the great battleship hulls, the Thor'usal Heavy Cruiser is a heavy cruiser in name only. The Thor'usal is descended from the ship lineage started with the Pro'tith Battleship during the 'glory fleet' era of Hegemony ship construction and is in fact more of a pocket battleship than a real heavy cruiser.

The ak-Tai love for the battlecruiser led to a gradual waning of interest in battleship hulls. Despite being dressed up as a heavy cruiser design the Republic's leaders knew a battleship when they saw one. Despite this they accepted the craft, a lasting legacy of the days of the glory fleets and their menacing centerpiece units. Because of the ak-Tai outlook on battleships in general, and Thor'usal Heavy Cruisers in particular, very few Thor'usal Heavy Cruisers were ever built.

The Thor'usal itself is an admirable warship, the strongest craft in the ak-Tai fleet at the time of its construction. The ship is both equipped with the best in ak-Tai weaponry and armored using the densest, most expensive composite

alloys available. Few ships of the day (barring the Ukal or Kholran) could take on a Thor'usal on an individual basis, and during the war it often took multiple enemy cruisers to take down a single Thor'usal.

## **Lasal Strike Fighter Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)**

The quintessential ak-Tai interceptor fighter design, the Lasal Strike Fighters were the primary fighter units based on ak-Tai ships during the War of Seven Stars. Nearly 80% of all fighters that saw service during the war were of the Lasal class, the balance comprised of either older or highly specialized fighter designs.

The Lasal Strike Fighters excelled at interception duties, using their high thrust and heavy hitting Paired Meson Bolts to take down enemy light and medium fighters in a single pass. The heavy armor of the fighter also helped to protect the craft from damage from the weaker guns of foreign contemporaries.

*Full details on the ak-Tai Republic, along with the other members of the Hegemony, will appear in The War of the Seven Stars supplement.*

\* \* \*



## **IN BRIEF...**

### **Fleeing the Cylon Tyranny...**



#### **Battle Spoo Updated**

Todd Boyce has updated his Battle Spoo site, adding several new Battlestar Galactica ships. Be sure to check out the site and take a look at the new Colonial and Cylon units.

URL:

<http://ravensbranch.allen.com/battlespoo.html>

### **New Babylon 5 Project?**

#### **JMS reports on two new B5 projects in the works**

"...To the many questions that have arisen here of late...yes, as I mentioned before, there is the possibility of something Babylon 5 related on the horizon, but again I don't want anyone getting excited until we know if either one of these two projects is going to actually come to fruition. We should know where this lands in the next few weeks. The only thing I will say is that they're not print projects, so if you were to assume it's for TV or film you wouldn't be too far off...but that neither of them are series. And that's all I'm going to say about them for now."

URL:

<http://www.jmsnews.com>

### **The Great Crusade**



#### **The Rebirth of the Orieni Empire**

From the minds that brought you the Free Human Union come a new supplement to the Babylon 5 Universe detailing the rebirth of the Orieni Empire and their Great Crusade against the enemies of the Gods. Includes modern ships for the Orieni Empire in addition to a detailed history of the conflict.

**Download Now:**

<http://planetside.firenebula.com/babylon5/>



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*The GREAT MACHINE is an unofficial, fan-based electronic publication dedicated to the Babylon 5 Wars game system.*

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## Coming Next Issue...



The Ur-Quan Masters are preparing for war... Babylon 5 Wars! The Great Machine takes a look at the craft of the Star Control universe. Finally players will be able to join in the epic struggle to defeat the Ur-Quan Hierarchy and their legion of battle thralls. Or perhaps you are more interested in crushing the feeble resistance of the Alliance of Free Stars? In either case, get ready for fun!

Send your design ideas and ship submissions to [submissions@firenebula.com](mailto:submissions@firenebula.com). We can't do it without you!

## Building a Better Sovereign



Join Tyrel as he re-examines the Federation Sovereign Dreadnought and its capabilities in this Star Trek Conversion article.