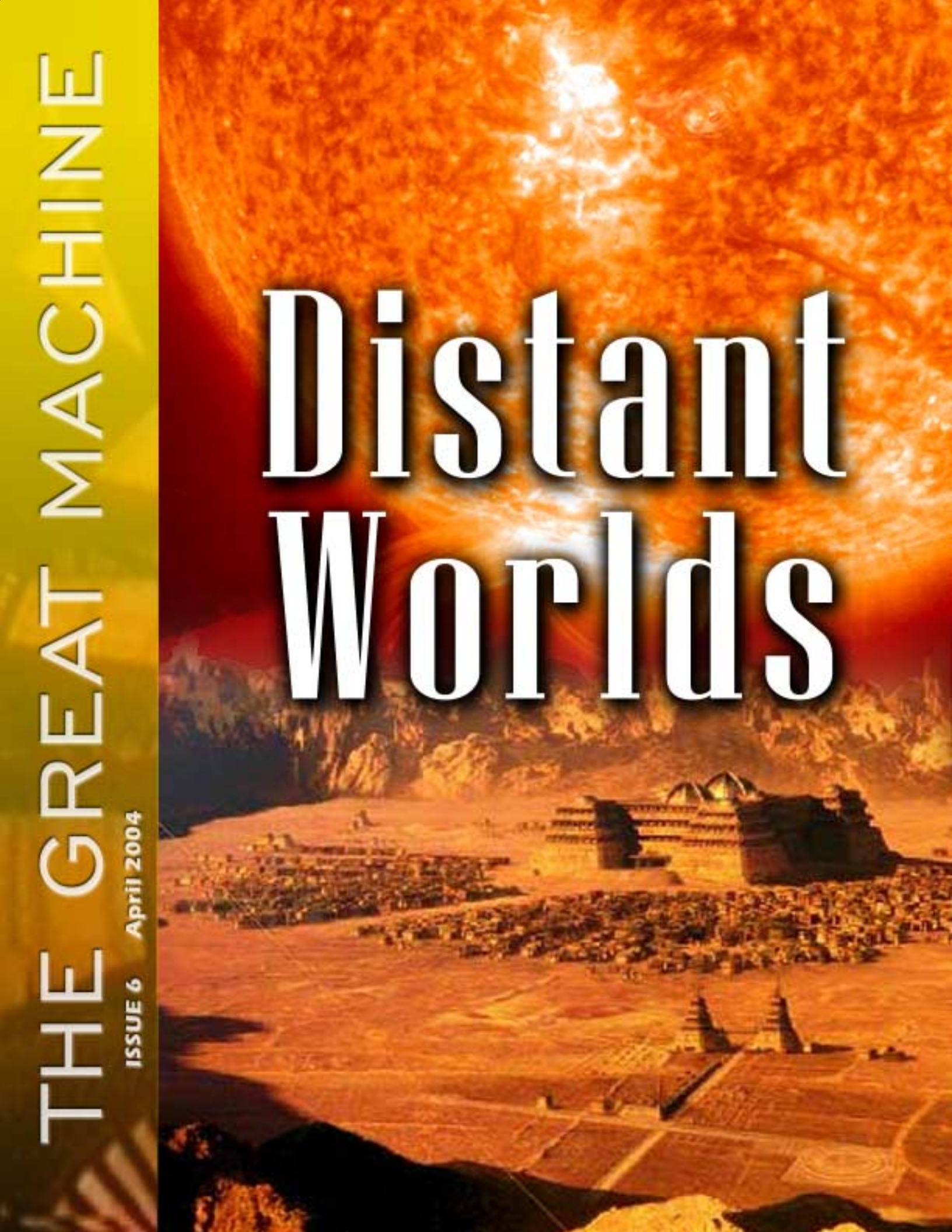
THE GREAT MACHINE
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Distant Worlds

Please don't hurt me!

Hello HUNAM, it is I, Fwiffo! After many uneasy days of hiding in dark corners of the Great Machine, that agent of the ultimate evil, Zathras, pried my digits from the doorway and took me to Draal for the anticipated punishment and torture. But instead Draal began to tell Fwiffo of many great machines of unrelenting destruction in use by thankfully distant worlds.

One empire, which Draal said was from a universe called Sandtrap or something, was ruled by Spice, while in another people used ships shaped like dinner plates. At this point, the image of my tasty flesh served up for supper with a sprinkling of spices was too much to bear and I fainted. Later Draal told me about a race of giants, bred for war with thousands of huge, planet-levelling warships.

After I regained consciousness a second time, Draal told me he was going to send me home. I then asked if there was any chance of me being accidentally sent to one of these numerous other scary dimensions, and he replied saying that the risk was very small for a brave Spathiwan like me. Believing inaction to be the better part of valour, I demanded, well, begged Draal on my appendages to let me stay a little longer.

CAPTAIN FWIFFO,
SPATHI OF THE WORLD

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Prequel to Prescience

by Christian Meador

"It is by my will alone I set my mind in motion. It is by the juice of sapho that the thoughts acquire speed, the lips acquire stain, the stain becomes a warning." Genlo dripped the bittersweet taste of the sapho down upon his ruddy lips. Each drop shimmered from the display lights on the bridge, the steady thrumming of the machinery of the ship of war fading away into nothingness. *"It is by will alone I set my mind in motion."*

Genlo shuddered, his every nerve on fire. He then sighed like a satiated lover as the sapho spread first through his veins, then straight to his hyper-accelerated neurons. He disliked using the precious juice so far from home and any chance of replenishment, yet he understood the reward offered by this unexpected opportunity. *To break the Guild Monopoly on space travel*, his thoughts reflected. *That is a prize worthy of the Harkonnens!* He focused his mind on to the concept of proferred rewards… and studiously avoided thinking what the Beast would do to him if he failed.

"Mentat, I would have your counsel." The crisp tenor of Lord Captain Torn Ruatha penetrated Genlo's reverie, and for a moment a look of distaste shimmered on the Mentat's face. Then realizing his error, it quickly vanished, and Genlo bowed and walked humbly up to the young naval officer. While not as favored as Feyd, the Ruathas still had far to much influence at Geidi Prime for one such as he to show disrespect. Yet if the strangers technology could do as his calculations had predicted… Hugh Genlo might yet be a name to be reckoned with in the Halls of the Harkonnens.

"Yes, Lord Captain Ruatha," Genlo purred with a sibilant note to his voice, "how might I be of assistance?"

"Speak to me again of the nature of space we seek."

Genlo stopped for a second, his eyes searching through the shadows of the command chamber. He registered again the hum of Ixian machinery throughout the room, heard the low voices of the junior officers passing information from station to station. The machines he trusted, as they had been thoroughly vetted using snooper-scopes. He had seen to this himself. The crewmen, however… how could you ever tell the thoughts of the human mind? Such calculations should be within his boundaries as a mentat, but there were so many variables, so many subtleties that could make the difference between loyalty and betrayal. What could not be calculated still filled Genlo with a sense of dread.

The Lord Captain frowned, following the gaze of the stooped older man. "You fear a traitor in our midst?" The handsome Ruathan laughed, a chilling thing. "These men are mine, mentat. Mine alone. They have been broken down and reassembled as my will bequest. They know well the risks they take for even thinking of subversion. The pain of their heart plug reminds them, from moment to moment."

Genlo nodded, as much to himself as to the Lord Captain. "My apologies, my Lord. It is simply the Mentat way to consider all of the possibilities."

"And it is the way of the Lord Captaincy to expect questions to be answered."

Genlo paid obeisance, knuckling his hand to his forehead as he bowed. "Of course, my Lord. Again, accept my most sincere apologies." After a moment when the Lord Captain didn't reply, Genlo continued.

"The area that the Heighliner has deposited us in has many unusual features. This area lies far outside the charted Empire. Time and space here seem to have different properties than those to which we are accustomed."

"Yes, you spoke of that at the briefing. I am not certain I followed the implications of your theory, however."

Genlo hesitated a second, puzzled. It was unusual for one of the upper hierarchy of Baron Harkonnen's holding to admit weakness, even a simple ignorance of a matter outside their normal scope of knowledge. While weakness on Giedi Prime would quickly be seized upon, ignorance in the depths of space would be a calamity even greater. In a microsecond Genlo filed this observation away for future analysis of what this might mean in his dealings with Torn Ruatha.

"Sire," the mentat cautiously began, "the calculations begin to drift into the realm of philosophy instead of science. They are numerous areas of understanding that are necessary to process all of the data from this region." Genlo brought out an old folder of notes, wrinkled by the weight time and smelling faintly of sapho. "If I may be permitted to instruct you in some of the basics of Theonian physics and Holtzman's derivatives, I feel that I might…."

The Lord Captain shook his head slightly, stopping Genlo's ramblings. "I do not question the veracity of your calculations, Mentat. I seek knowledge of what those mathematics mean to my fleet and their crew."

Genlo fumbled with the parchment, attempting to make it disappear under his robe. "Um, yes sire. Of course." He shook his head at his unaccustomed nervousness at speaking with this man. "To speak simply, My Lord, it is my estimation that this area might be a tear into another reality. A different universe, bleeding into our own at this locality. The data allows this, if not offers it as the only conclusive proof. However, in combination with the encounter with the Strangers at the new colony in this region, I find it the most elegant answer to this enigma."

Torn Ruatha frowned, and Genlo wondered if the mind of the Lord Captain could conceive of this possibility. Indeed, many of the other mentats had scoffed at his suggestion. But Genlo had uttered his belief enough times so word of the possibility had reached the ears of Baron Vladimir Harkonnen himself. Combined with the implications of their strangers at the Rabani colony, who appeared to travel through the vastness of space without the use of the Guild Navigators… Genlo had calculated this to the ten thousandth percentile, and he knew the Baron would *want* to believe this was possible.

Now all Genlo had to do is be proven correct.

Ruatha took a long stride to the other side of the bridge, checking the monitor controls above a proficient looking navigator. A moment later an Ensign saluted and offered the Ruathan a shigawie reader, which he casually signed. "Well, Mentat, we shall find out if your calculations are correct. We enter the Bleed within the hour."

Genlo nodded with a grim resignation, torn between elation and fear. His stomach churned with knowledge that his future, for boon or bane, would soon be decided. He turned to leave the bridge to return to his cabin, to recheck his calculations for the thousandth time.

"Mentat." The Lord Captains voice once again cut through the bridge despite its calm, considered manner.

"My Lord?"

"Have you considered if it is truly another reality bleeding into ours?" Lord Captain Ruatha's voice asked in an entirely too reasonable tone. "Or could if be our universe, bleeding into theirs?"

Genlo stopped, the implications of that statement burning through him. What would the laws of different realities be? What if they could not coexist? Or could the Bleed be to a third reality, separate and distinct from the other two? And if that proved true, how many different universes might abridge that area of space-time. A thousand possibilities spun through his head, and not even the juice of the Sappho could allows his mind to work through the possibilities

inherent in that concept. The variables were all consuming.

"My Lord, a question if you will?"

"Yes, Genlo. What is it you wish?" The Lord Captain was again looking through the dispatches of the day on the reader.

"Have you ever taken Mentat training, my Lord?"

Torn Ruatha's eyebrow raised then, his face a mask of amusement and disdain.

"No, Genlo. I have not."

"If I may be so bold, sire…. Perhaps you should have. You appear to have a natural aptitude."

The Ruathan turned to face the disshelved mentat, his eyes burning into Genlo's with a fierceness that Genlo had never before seen. A wild fire burning inside, masked by the ice known only in the depths of the empty places of the universe.

"Become a Master of Assassins? Or a dweller among lost tomes? No, Mentat. Such a life is not for me. I seek the majesty of battle. Only there can a man's worth truly be told. Only there can the depths of his soul be tested." The Lord Captain strode across the bridge in two quick motions, grabbing Genlo's robe with an intensity born of immaculate will.

"Find me the Bleed, Mentat. Find me the Strangers within. Let us see if we can wrest the secrets of the stars from them. No more shall we be beholden to the vile putrescence that is the Guild." Torn Ruatha's eyes shone with an unholy fervor. "We shall take back our birthright as Lords of the Stars. We shall take it back regardless of the cost, in lives, ships or souls. And when we return, the Empire will quake with the slightest whisper of our coming."

The mentat fell back as the Lord Captain released him. A cheer came from the men of the bridge, pouring praise upon the suddenly silent Torn Ruatha. Hugh Genlo scrambled up from his prostate state, and quickly fled the bridge to the protection of the hallway beyond.

Genlo shook his head as he passed by crewmen through the corridors, seeking refuge in his cabin. He couldn't get the image of the malevolence of the Ruathan's eyes, the burning venom held within, out of his consciousness. Genlo didn't know what had happened to the young Lord Captain at the hands of the Guild. Or perhaps the wound came from the treatment of his elders, as life in House Harkonnen was rarely gentle and never kind. Yet no matter the case, there was one thing Mentat Hugh Genlo had calculated without a fraction of a doubt.

Lord Captain Torn Ruatha was quite insane.

The Ixian built, Harkonnen flagged Assault Cruiser *Endless Silence* glided through space. A full legion of Shock Troops waited in its hold, and the fleet spread out like Worm sign in its wake. A faint shimmer passed along the hull, and one by one the fleet faded from sight. They left their own reality for one undreamt of.

House Harkonnen had entered the Bleed.

* * *

Dune Wars

Part 1 of 2

The Spice Must Flow: The Birth of Dune Wars

By Christian Meador

Introduction

"The space above Arrakis is filled with the ships of the Guild. The Padishah Emperor himself is there. With his favorite Truthsayer and five legions of Sardaukar. The old Baron Vladimir Harkonnen is there with Thufir Hawat and seven ships jammed with every conscript he could muster. Every Great House has its raiders above us... waiting."

"For what are they waiting?"

"For the Guild's permission to land. The Guild will strand on Arrakis any force that lands without permission."

The Padishah Emperor rules the Imperium in the universe of Dune, but only as long as he can maintain the flows of the spice Mélange. All intersystem space travel is dictated by the monopoly of the Spacing Guild, and the Guild's dominance means nothing without the prescient abilities granted to their navigators by the Spice. The power triumvirate of the Great Convention exists to ensure that the spice flow is never threatened. The existence of the Imperium depends entirely on Spice.

Yet the million worlds controlled by these great powers burns with passions that must find their expression. Generation long rivalries between the Great feudal Houses have created detailed and deadly laws concerning war and assassination. Great ideological clashes arise between the Reverend Mothers of the Bene Geserit sisterhood and the ghola masters of the Tleixalu. The Fremen suffer under the depredations of their planetary governor, awaiting for their Mahdi to arise. And a single act of love and devotion can derail the machinations of a thousand years of genetic manipulation, leading to the creation of a savior and tyrant destined to bring all the careful compromises and binding alliances crashing down to their knees.

Welcome to **Dune Wars**. Part one of this article will deal with the universal components of star combat in the Imperium – the omnipresent Spacing Guild, and the ships themselves that are largely created by one planet, Ix. Part two of this article will investigate the various political factions of the Dune universe, and the unique talents each brings to the table.

While conflict in the Imperium is most often settled by the archaic rules of politics and assassination dictated in the code of

Kanly, the brilliant machine forgers of Ix and their rivals in the House of Richese have created war machines should the conflict ever extend beyond the borders of the noble's siridar fiefs and into the confines of space. Mighty armored monitors, frigates bearing deadly lasguns, Holtzman shielded cutters and even experimental no-ships that can exit our very space-time to lie in wait for unwary travelers exist in the Imperium. But they have always been withheld from the field of battle since the formation of the Great Convention formed by the Three Pillars of the Empire; the Spacing Guild, the Emperor himself, and the Great Houses.

Of these, the Spacing Guild has had the most influence on the creation of the warships of Dune.

The Spacing Guild

The Spacing Guild is perhaps the dominant power in the galaxy prior to the coming of the Kwisatz Haderach. Having a monopoly on all faster than light travel, the Guild Heighliners are the only means of transportation and communication between the far-flung fiefs of the Imperium's million worlds. In addition they control intersystem banking, giving them additional leverage as holders of the loans on thousands of noble house and independent mercantile concerns. And the vast amount of spice they purchase has slowly mutated the talented steersman and navigators into something both more and less than human. The Navigators cast aside humanity for one simple reason; prescience is the cost of voyaging among the stars.

This extraordinary power has allowed them to help enforce two of the great dictates of the Imperium – the Great Conventions and the Guild Peace. These protocols have seriously influenced the evolution of spacefaring navies in the Dune galaxy. The foremost rule of the Great Convention prevents the use of atomic weapons on humans in the Imperium. The Guild Peace influences the laws of Kanly (House warfare and assassination) and the great refuges for the defeated houses. These dictates have limited the development of warships, yet many types still exist.

As the actual Guild Heighliners are produced on the same world as many of the other various ship types, it is obvious that the Guild is aware of the production of the warships of the House navies.

"Adjusting the oil lenses of his father's field glass, Leto shifted away from the shifting pastels of the dawn horizon, up to the vestiges of night. A glinting speck moved against the stars. When he touched the zoompad, the speck grew until Leto recognized a Heighliner in low orbit surrounded by the shimmering blur of a shield defensive system.

'Do you see it?' Paulus asked, standing at his son's shoulder.

'It's there – with full shields activated. Are they worried about military action? Here?' With such severe political and economic consequences, Leto couldn't imagine anyone attacking a Guild craft. Although the Spacing Guild had no military power of its own, it could – through the withdrawal of transportation services – cripple any solar system. And with the elaborate surveillance mechanisms, the Guild could trace and identify rogue attackers and send messages off to the Emperor, who in turn would dispatch Imperial Sardaukar according to mutual treaty."

The SCS for the Heighliner is a conservative estimate, made primarily for playability issues. The movie script from Dune, while definitely a secondary source, tells us that the size of the Atriedes fleet being ferried by a Heighliner while traveling from Caladan to Dune is 3,415 ships. Needless to say, that presents scaling issue in a Babylon 5 Wars game system framework. The Heighliner presented here could be considered a minor Guild vessel, with the treatment of a Heighliner of the scope shown in the movie to be presented at a later time.

While the Guild maintains many types of ships, they are known to most of the people of the Imperium for their great Heighliners, monstrous cargo ships which can fold space to appear anywhere in the galaxy in mere seconds.

> *"…Leto saw the dimly illuminated cargo hold of the Heighliner, a vacuum chamber so large that his passenger ship, by comparison, was even smaller than a grain of pundi rice in the belly of a fish. Other ships, large and small, were arrayed in the hold: frigates, cargo-haulers, shuttles, lighters, and armored monitors."*
>
> ***House Atreides, pg 97***

The Heighliner itself is a marvel of Ixian contriving. Internally it mounts hundreds of Holtzman repulsors, able to tractor ships in to their berthing positions. If necessary such repulsors could be used to defend the ship from attack. But the best defense for the Heighliner is to simply be elsewhere, which takes but a few turns concentration from the Navigator to achieve.

The Guild Navigator is one of the foremost defenses of these craft and a prime reason that the loss of a Heighliner is almost an unheard of incident. The same limited prescience which guides the Heighliner between the vast emptiness between the stars also gives the Navigator forewarning of hostility – and more than just a little insight into how any specific danger may arise.

While the Heighliners carry no armament, their defensive screens are among the most powerful in known space. They also possess extremely powerful sensors, and they are one of the few units that possess the ability to conduct electronic warfare operations in the Imperium. Though there are very few situations that the Guild would allow the leasing of a precious Heighliner for that purpose.

The Guild ships are enormous, absolutely astounding feats of engineering. This is made doubly so when one sees the actual creation of said ship. Unlike what most would expect, the Heighliners themselves are created in large underground chambers on the machine world of Ix. The crushing gravity of the ships massive frame is nullified by large arrays of Holtzman repulsors, used later to guide other vessels into its cavernous holds. This form of construction is made possible by the nature of their space fold engines. Instead of a complex and potentially dangerous launch procedure, the vast ships simply slip between space-time to enter orbit above the planet.

The hangar bay of a Guild Heighliner betrays the ship's true purpose: to carry its cargo of lesser ships across the interstellar void. The hangar is broken up between forward and aft sections, and each has a capacity of 180 spaces. A Heighliner can even carry capital ships in its cavernous hold. The following chart should be consulted for the amount of hangar space necessary to carry the various ship types:

Ship Size	Hangar Capacity
Ultralight Fighter	1/2
Shuttle, Fighter	1
Super Heavy Fighter	2
Light Combat Vessel	3
Medium Ship	6
Heavy Combat Vessel	10
Capital Ship	20

All planetary assaults are conducted with the approval of the Spacing Guild, as without a Heighliner's space fold abilities it would take at the least decades to be able to travel from system to system. However, should the Guild agree to the need of the transport, the capacity of one Heighliner is normally sufficient for the task.

Prescience

Prescience is more than just a little difficult to enact in a tactical space warfare setting. The following guidelines should give you some ability to portray the Limited Prescience of a Navigator in Dune Wars.

1. A fleet with a Limited Prescient cannot face tactical surprise regardless of any specified scenario or campaign rule unless the opponent has some way of negating Limited Prescience. This includes a Prescient of any type in the opponent fleet, or any ship deeply phased out of space/time. Harkonnen No-Ships qualify as negating prescience under this ruling, as does any vessel dropping out of a reality that is not attuned with our dimension. For crossover purposes, this does not include ships coming out of relational dimensions such as Hyperspace, or those traveling in a subspace bubble such as a warp drive. Ancient level vessels emerging from higher level planes such as Thirdspace are too remote for a Limited Prescient to sense before they arrive, so they can gain tactical surprise.
2. Knowledge of real space. A Limited Prescient can ask to see any SCS, request arming levels of specific weapons and knowledge of any elite characters on board any ship in the game that isn't protected from Prescience.
3. Knowledge of time. A Limited Prescient has a special rule for resolving initiative. The prescient may target any capital ship, HCV, MCV, LCV, super heavy fighter or single flight of fighters on the board. Initiative for that unit is modified for the rest of the combat (until destroyed). This system requires a cup and two different colored d20s. At the beginning of the first turn, the prescient player and the player who controls the targeted vessel roll initiative normally. However, the prescient player also takes the two d20s and allows the targeted player to choose one to represent his own vessel. They are then placed in the cup, shaken, and the cup is placed face down on the table. This represents the two vessels' initiatives starting for the next turn. The prescient player is allowed to see both die rolls, though not allowed to touch the dice. This allows the prescient player to plan his turn knowing the relative initiatives of both vessels for the next turn. The initiatives are only revealed to the target player during the next turn of play at the appropriate initiative step. The dice are then rolled again for the following turn immediately, and kept secret again from the targeted player until next roll initiative sequence. The targeted vessel can only be changed upon its destruction during the game, and then the Prescient may target a new vessel.

The Point Cost of a Limited Prescient Navigator is 100% the cost of the vessel. The location of the Navigator must be the C&C. This cost is already included in the Guild Heighliner, as all these ships must include a Navigator to be capable of Space Fold travel.

The Technology of the Imperium

The Empire of a Million Worlds has been shaped by many factors over the ten thousand years of its existence. Of the rise of the Spacing Guild and the Great Conventions much has already been said, as the masters of the Imperium sought to find ways to limit the amount of damage that ever increasing technology could create. However the reasons behind this need are also profound, as mankind faced a terrible foe in his quest for the stars. Their own genius.

> "Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a man's mind."
>
> ***The Orange Catholic Bible***

The Butlerian Jihad against the machines was a pivotal point in the development of mankind, and a huge limiting factor in the technology of the Imperium. Automation of any kind is now suspect, and the creation of even expert systems capable of human competence can call down the might of the Emperor's elite Sardaukar storm troopers on the offender. The machine culture of Ix treads on this line constantly, and for their offenses were once nearly destroyed by the machinations of their own Emperor and the Bene Tlexilu.

This has limited the opportunities for research considerably among the Million Worlds. In game play in Dune Wars this translates into several technological deficiencies.

First and foremost are the limited Electronic Warfare ratings of many of the ships. For a culture ten thousand years old their sensors

are merely adequate, and behind many otherwise less advanced races in terms of crossover battles. While the sensors themselves are as powerful as any, the support automation and computer control is extremely limited, reducing their effectiveness.

Secondly, the sensor suites themselves have been pushed as far as possible when you consider their limitation in computational power. The special rules in Militaries of the League-2 for Antiquated Sensors should be considered in effect for all Dune ships. Simply put, they cannot at any time generate additional EW points through the application of additional power. In addition, their fire control ratings on their weapons are average at best.

Outside the realm of computer technology, there are also several limitations to the ships of the Imperium. The vast diversity of ship weapon technologies as seen in the Babylon 5 universe is simply non-existent. The combination of a distrustful populace with a religious hatred of overly advanced technology added to the enormous pressure the Spacing Guild has applied over the centuries to limit the proliferation of space born weaponry has taken its toll on the options available even to the machine culture of Ix or the greed of the Richese.

The following weapon systems are not available in the Dune universe: Particle, Molecular, Plasma, Gravitic, Ionic, Antimatter, or Electromagnetic. Imperium technology is limited to mostly matter and ballistic.

Vulcan Railgun

The primary weapons suite currently utilized by the various House navies is the Vulcan Railgun. VRGs are essentially high capacity slug throwers. Powered by micro-Holtzman repulsors, they fire high density calladium and titanium alloy rods at exceptional velocities to destroy enemy ships. These systems are especially adapt at stripping off the weapons batteries of opposing forces, and do relatively little collateral damage.

Gauss Cannon

The Gauss cannon has become a frequent sight on many navies' frigates as a secondary weapon. Moderate range and a larger kinetic impact have made it a favorite for taking out those supposedly non-rakeable systems found on larger enemy warships.

Blast Cannon

A more recent development is the rapid fire Blast Cannon. While the Vulcan Railgun fires a concentrated salvo of high energy projectiles, the Blast Cannon has a more diverse stream. Each individual impact does less damage than a Railgun, but it has the possibility to strike several times per salvo. The only real disadvantage is the moderate spindown time it takes to clear the weapon between shots.

Rail Interceptor Array

In addition, the development of the Blast Cannon led to a further refinement, the Rail Interceptor Array. It is primarily deployed as a defensive weapon, and is an extremely effective interceptor against any weapon other than Lasguns (-4 intercept). It may also be fired as a group defensive weapon in 'Guardian' mode, intercepting attacks against other ships at half effectiveness (-2), as long as the weapon system is interposed between the attacking ship and the ship it is defending. It may also be used in an anti-fighter capacity, targeting attacking flights of fighters. However, against units larger than fighters or shuttles, the Interceptor array's spheres are too light to do any appreciable damage.

Other Ballistic Weapons

Ballistic weapons have been developed to a high level of refinement in the Imperium, and the equivalent of Class-S and Class-L racks are often seen. The Class-R rapid fire twin rack is more rare, but the richer Great Houses occasionally have them in their inventory. All of the normal types of missiles in the Rules compendium are available to House and Imperial forces. In addition, the type I antimissile missile (Militaries of the League-2 – Kor-Lyans) occasionally makes its mark in engagements.

The Lasgun and the Holtzman Repulsor Shield

While these armament systems are very influential in the outcome of space warfare in the Million Words, two technologies and their very special interaction dominate the battlefield. Both originating primarily in the concepts of one man, the Lasgun and the Holtzman Repulsor Shield are the most technologically advanced systems in the Imperium.

Lasgun

A weapon that dates back to the days of the Butlerian Jihad, the Heavy Lasgun is just what it implies – a highly focused laser that is the most fearsome weapon deployed on any weapons platform in the Imperium. As the most damaging weapon in the House naval arsenal, it combines strong destructive power, good fire control with a long range and, being a Laser weapon, is non-interceptable. The incorporation of the Hufuf oil lens optic targeting into the base system makes it even more dangerous. While in general the sensors of House navies in the Dune universe could best be described as barely adequate, the incredible focusing abilities of the Hufuf oil lens have allowed for one significant breakthrough; the Lasgun can operate as a Piercing weapon without the normal additional 4 points of focusing EW requirement. (Note: the hufuf oil is held in static tension by an enclosing force field within a viewing tube as part of a magnifying or other light manipulation system. Because each lens element can be adjusted individually one micron at a time, the oil lens is considered the ultimate in accuracy for manipulating visible light.) This allows the Lasgun to penetrate ships hulls and threatens the key components of the primary hull.

The Heavy Lasgun should be treated as a laser class weapon, and is not interceptable, nor can it intercept. And it has one deadly drawback in its potential interaction with shielded ships creating the Holtzman effect.

The light lasgun is primarily mounted in fighters, but uses the same basic mechanics for lagsun/shield reactions, as described below.

Holtzman Shields

An electromagnetic shield that repulses objects traveling at high speeds, the Holtzman shield is both the boon and bane of any Imperium battle fleet. Against most known forms of weaponry, such as ballistics, matter, and even conjectural particle-based weapons, the Shield operates efficiently. The profile of the shielded ship is reduced by the power rating of the shield (making the ship more difficult to

successfully target), and if a strike is successful the Holtzman shield reduces the impetus of the weapon, acting as additional armor against any effective strike. This should be treated as any other Electromagnetic (EM) Shield. A primary difference is that the Holtzman shield has a 360 degree protection arc. Secondary Holtzman shields on the ship should be considered backup generators. Only one Holtzman shield may be operated at any time.

The benefits of the Holtzman shield are enormous, but have an incredibly dangerous drawback. Lasguns have a particularly dangerous effect when striking a Holtzman shield, causing an effect most closely described as a subatomic fusion reaction, generating impressive explosive force. In addition, a transverse carrier wave is created down the frequency of the Laser beam, causing damage to the ship that fired the laser as well.

If such a strike hits, roll damage as normal; then take the holtzman shield power rating (SR), and roll d6 on the following chart to determine damage to each ship. All such damage is resolved in raking mode.

Roll	Effect
1	50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x50), to firing ship, 50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x10) to target
2	50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x35), to firing ship, 50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x15) to target
3	50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x25), to firing ship, 50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x25) to target
4	50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x15), to firing ship, 50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x35) to target
5	50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x10), to firing ship, 50% Lasgun Damage + (SR x50) to target
6	Laser Frequency/Shield harmonic flare. Roll again – on a 1 through 3, Lasgun and Shield Generator are destroyed, with no additional damage applied to either vessel. On a 4-6 each ship takes Lasgun Damage + (SR x100) damage.

The Warships of the Imperium

Due to the deadliness of the Shield/Lasgun interaction, it became apparent that the utilization of these weapons technologies carried a considerable risk in any conflict. This factor more than any other has dictated the growth of fleet composition in the Imperium. Larger ships are often considered too expensive to risk on a potential Holtzman field explosions. Smaller attrition units however are often considered an acceptable casualty, especially if the reaction damages a larger vessel significantly. For this reason many of the smaller ships in Dune carry heavy protective shielding, while the larger ships often disdain it because of the threat of light lasguns which may cause fusion reactions to the larger hulls.

The machinists of Ix are the largest shipwrights in the Million Worlds. The vast majority of ship designs come from this one planet, as it is one of the few that still embrace the machine culture. However, even they have to observe the dictates of the form, and because of external pressure there are relatively few different types of hulls designed for the purpose of warfare. Richese also dabbles in warship manufacture, being especially effective in miniaturization. The twin Imperial fighter designs come from this House, as the need to provide small, effective weapons systems for the fighters lay directly in their field of expertise. Still, the vast majority of large hulls come from Ix.

Very few noble houses have their own ship building apparatus, due to the inherent cost and lack of technical sophistication. However, there are many independent small craft construction facilities, for shuttle operations and interceptor designs for planetary defense. One notable exception to this rule is House Harkonnen, who has invested in both small shipyards and an expansive research program that has yielded impressive results in its prototype No-Ship design.

Ixian Ship Designs

Most House navies are comprised of Ixian ship types. These are some of the most prominent.

Ixian Armored Monitor

The largest warship being regularly produced in the Imperium, the Monitor is primarily a system defense unit. Combining a large Lasgun and Missile capacity with the best armor Ix is capable of producing, the Monitor should be able to deter most adversaries. However, in attack it is extremely slow and unmaneuverable, and if the

need arises for it to be pressed into service in such a mode the Monitor works best as a weapons platform. The influence of the Guild in ensuring the creation of the largest hull type as a defensive unit is seen once again. Most Monitors are unshielded, instead relaying on their thick armor. It was deemed too large a hull to risk on the vagaries of a Holtzman reaction. Monitors use Class-L missile launchers.

Ixian Frigate

The ship most members of the Landsraad think of when they think of naval might, the Frigate is a versatile bearer of House standards. Carrying a normal armament of a Heavy Lasgun, Missiles, Gauss Cannons and Vulcan Railguns, the Frigate has good maneuverability for a capital ship and is relatively inexpensive to produce for its effectiveness. The House Navies have found that these ships are best used as hunter/killers, using their maneuverability to their best advantage. Without a Holtzman shield and with only moderate armor, it is not as sturdy a ship as the designers had originally hoped. However, it is an effective ship at all ranges, and the combination of weapon systems it employs is particularly advantageous when utilized in conjunction. It also is the largest vessel capable of a planetary landing, and may take off without any additional assistance.

The Imperial Navy of House Corrino and the House Navy of Harkonnen often utilize a Lasgun variant of the Frigate. Possessing staggering offensive firepower for a ship of the Imperium, it sacrifices its intermediate weapons and some of its reaction thrust for a more extensive Lasgun suite. While still reasonably maneuverable for a capital ship, it is more oriented towards being a mobile weapons platform when compared to the standard Frigate.

Ixian Assault Cruiser

The Sardaukar's ship of choice, it may land 6 imperial legions using its two assault pods during a planetary attack. The assault pods are detachable, and the Assault Cruiser merely has to attain orbit in order to deploy them. While known primarily as a weapon of the Emperor's legions, the Assault Cruiser has found its way into many House navies and has become the weapon of choice for any planned invasion. The ship itself is well situated to its role of planetary assault, being a tough design and employing four of the new Rail Interceptor Arrays. It is also one of the few carrier craft currently produced by Ix. It can carry a flight of 6 fighters and 12 shuttles into combat. A Burseg of the Sardaukar is currently looking at a prototype version that would replace the shuttle capacity for breaching pods.

Ixian Fleet Carrier

Using the same basic hull as the Assault Cruiser, this is its sister ship in many ways. The removal of the assault pods has allowed for the extension of the hull and the hangar bay, and this enables the ship to carry 36 Padishah or Shirkhan fighters into action. A relatively rare ship design in the Imperium, its role has been questioned extensively by the Guild as normally fighter support would be provided defensively through planetary facilities or during an offense being based on the Guild transport vessel.

Ixian Escort Corvette

The escort corvette is designed to protect larger capital ships from fighter and missile attack, and therefore has been fitted with a holtzman shield and two Rail Interceptor Arrays. While lacking in direct fire capability, it does carry one Class S missile launcher. A sturdy, maneuverable ship, the Escort Corvette is always a cheerful sight for House naval captains and their crews.

Richese Ship Designs

Richese Missile Corvette

Created with the same hull design as the Corvette Escort under a license from Ix, the Missile Corvette trades in its two Rail Interceptor Arrays for two additional missile launchers. An inexpensive weapons platform, Missile corvettes add greatly to the firepower of fleets they serve with, and are often equipped with specialist missiles to improve their effectiveness. These corvettes utilize Class-L missile launchers, giving them the extended range to make them effective fleet support ships. They are often considered a primary target on the battlefield, yet like many small ships of the Imperium are very difficult to damage due to their Holtzman shields.

Richese Padishah Fighter

The "Imperial" fighter program of the Richese created the default fighter in most House fleets. Naming the weapon program after the Emperor's position itself was considered an unorthodox move at the time due to the fighter's role as an attrition unit, but considerable

politicking and the claim of the Padishah as a space superiority fighter eventually gave the program the green light. In truth the Richese did create a fighter better than any other in its day, and upgrades over time have made it quite competitive even now.

The Padishah carries two linked light fighter railguns and a holtzman shield. The miniaturization capability of the Richese created a superior light railgun platform. While the shield drains some of the fighter's reactor, draining off a bit of thrust, the extra shield protection is considered worth the trade off. It is both an effective anti-ship fighter, as the fighter's matter guns ignore ship armor, and a respectable dogfighter, as its shields make it very survivable against other fighters.

Richese Shirkhan Assault Fighter

A dedicated anti-ship fighter, its light LasGun and missile combination make it a deadly threat against enemy vessels, including capital ships. It is also a little bit more maneuverable than the Padishah, but not nearly as survivable. Even so, the sight of a flight of Shirkhans readying for a strafing run is a source of considerable apprehension for most House captains.

General Ship Designs

While the majority of the technical work on these ships still originated from Ix, these designs have become so commonplace that many different worlds now manufacture them.

Generic Cutter and Missile Cutter

A small and lethal ship, the cutter is the mainstay of planetary defense forces and is ubiquitous throughout the Imperium. A design small enough to be considered an attrition unit and therefore fields a strong Holtzman shield, the ship packs enough punch to be able to be a concern in a fleet action, especially en masse. The base cutter fields a Medium Blast Cannon and two Vulcan Railguns. The missile variant replaces the Blast Cannon with a Type-S missile rack. In either configuration the Holtzman shield provides the ship with an impressively small profile, and the additional armor the shield adds makes them immune to attack from most fighter flights. A proposed variant including a Rail Interceptor array is being considered to account the larger fighter presence being seen as the new Fleet Carriers are brought into action. So far however the Rail Interceptor Cutter has not finished trials.

Generic Bulk Freighter

The basic freighter of the Imperium, the Bulk Freighter can be found in numbers anywhere trade exists in the Million Worlds. These ships lack any substantial defenses, though the standard armament of three Vulcan Railguns may give pirates pause. The other basic cargo ship, the Cargo Lighter, which is often utilized by the Spice smugglers of Dune, may be seen in an upcoming supplement.

The Stain of Sapho

Another of the results of the banishment of machine culture at the end of the Butlerian Jihad was the creation of the great mental-physical training houses of the Imperium. The foremost of these was the Bene Geserit sisterhood, but others include the Guild's own attempt to sidestep the mathematical limitations of the universe which led to the creation of the Navigators, the Bene Tlexilau genetic masters, and the thriving computer-minded Mentats. While the unique talents of the ideological Bene Geserit and Bene Tlexilau will receive further treatment in part two of this supplement, the integration of the Mentat calculators is so inextricably tied into the Great Houses and the method by which they are forced to bypass technological limitations they will be detailed here.

As the tenets of the Butlerian Jihad forced mankind away from technological answers in a quest to find mastery of the universe through biological means, the Elite character options are an inviolate condition of combat in Dune Wars. Indeed, much of the specific flavor of the series translates only in this manner.

Mentats are a unique component of the Dune universe, their logical discipline that they are endowed allowing them to fill the role that machine minds play in most other universes. Unlike computers, however, mentats are not simply human calculators writ large. Instead, the exceptional cognitive abilities of memory and perception are the foundation for supra-logical hypothesizing. Mentats are able to sift large volumes of data and come up with concise analyses in a process that goes far beyond logical deduction: Mentats cultivate "the naive mind", the mind without preconception or prejudice, that can extract the essential patterns or logic of data and deliver, with varying degrees of certainty, useful

conclusions. They are not limited to formulating syllogisms; they are the supreme counselors of the Dune universe, filling roles as menial as archivists and clerks, or as grand as advisor to the Lords of the Great Houses or even the Emperor himself.

The role of the Mentat in Dune Wars is simulating by the following elite officers. These two officers are available to any faction in the Imperium. Further examples of mentats specific to certain factions such as the Harkonnen 'Twisted' Mentats will be detailed in part 2 of this work.

Fleet Mentat

A councilor to star ship captains, the Fleet Mentat allows for calculation and anticipation of the actions of enemy vessels. The Mentat may choose a single enemy vessel or flight of fighters. After two turns of observation, the Mentat may make a calculation as to the enemy's strategy and intent. On the third turn roll 1d6, and subtract that from that vessels initiative that turn. For every turn after of continued observation, subtract an additional point from that ships initiative. The Fleet Mentat may change the subject of his observations, but this eliminates any penalty to the original target ship and requires the same initial two turns of observation of the new vessel before he has enough data to form a calculation.

Point Cost: 20% of the base cost of the ship
Location: C&C

Mentat Mathematician

These Mentats bring their logic to the task of compensating for the lack of sophistication of the EW suites of the Dune ships. The Mentat Mathematician can help in targeting solutions to help maximize the damage potential of an Imperium warship.

The Mentat Mathematician's expertise adds +1 offensive or close combat EW to the firing vessel. If that bonus EW point is targeted on the same vessel for three turns in a row the mentat has calculated the best way to damage the target, and all weapons fire from his vessel against that ship add +1 to their damage. This cannot exceed the maximum damage of which the weapon is capable, however. This bonus is maintained as long as the bonus offensive EW is applied to that ship, but is negated if the bonus is used against another vessel.

Point Cost: 15% of the base cost of the ship
Location: Sensor array

> *"Arrakis teaches the attitude of the knife- chopping off what's incomplete and saying: "Now it's complete because it's ended here."*
>
> **-From "Collected sayings of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan**

Conclusion

This is the end of Part One of the Dune Wars article. Please see the attached zip file for the ship SCS's. Part two will include a work of fiction completing 'Prequel to Prescience', detailing House Harkonnen's entry into the Bleed, as well as specific faction information for the major players in the Imperium. This includes House Corrino and the Imperial Sardaukar legions, House Atreides with their Ginaz Swordsmasters and Fremen allies, House Harkonnen with their Masters of Intrigue (including rules for implementing traitors on board a ship), in addition to specific rules on the Bene Tlexilau Face Dancers and Bene Geserit Sisters. Several additional ship types will be detailed, including the Atreides Frigate Leader made exclusively for them by their allies in Ix, the Harkonnen prototype No-Ship, and Sardaukar breaching pods. And the full powers of the prescient Kwisatz Haderach shall be revealed!

I hope you enjoy the ships and rules of the Dune universe included in part One, and wish you well in your combats in the Imperium. Simply remember the ultimate axiom of Dune – the Spice Must Flow!

* * *

Robotech Arrives in Babylon 5 Wars

By Paul Prown

Come the Zentraedi

Ritaro hit the burners on his Gnerl Aerospace fighter and accelerated towards his objective, "This is Ritaro to all pilots, the alien ships in orbit are of no consequence. Destroy them utterly."

He didn't need to give any other commands, the Zentraedi tactics were simple. Standardised patterns with overwhelming numbers to destroy any opponent. The small alien ships began launching some craft of their own to intercept, too small to carry even a micronian, Ritaro figured they must be drones. They were targets either way.

Missiles began to impact around him, he rolled and weaved and a moment later unleashed a few missiles of his own. Crosshairs flashed red and he let loose with the forward cannons, one drone destroyed. Several of his wingmen had been destroyed but they were of no consequence, they would be replaced. A second drone destroyed, and then a third.

The alien ships were now within firing range of the Cruiser's beam armament, a barrage of particle fire lashed out towards the unsuspecting ships. The beams rained down upon the ships like a storm, piercing and cutting the ships through from bow to stern. One exploded while a second fell away in a cloud of its own debris.

'Pitiful' he thought, 'our campaign here will be short'. A moment ago, he had been awed as a powerful beam fired from the surface and vaporised a pair of Cruisers, but that was now forgotten. The destruction had been a fluke, a blip on the radar. Like so many others, this small blue world would be of no consequence or challenge. 'Not like the Invid', he thought.

Operations command came over his headset, "All Fighter groups, orbital objective neutralised. Move to planetary target and engage enemy while Regult groups are deployed."

Ritaro confirmed his reception of the order and began his descent into the atmosphere. As the hull of his ship began to warm, he began to feel a glimmer of pride swell within him, though he didn't recognise it. He knew only war, but in the time before his quick return into stasis, he would enjoy his role in the great Zentraedi war machine, and its victory over the insignificant species laid out before him.

Robotech Conversions

I have long been a fan of Robotech and for almost as long a time, I have tried to convert the units into statistics I could use in a tactical game. I tried Battletech and saw a few Jovian Chronicles conversions, but for Babylon 5 Wars it always seemed that the ships were too immense. Some of the ships are kilometres long with hundreds of guns, some with 'I shoot you, you die, period' damage which in a tactical

sense would be unfeasible. So I threw the idea into the back of mind, discarded and forgotten.

Then came Freespace, and the subsequent conversions to Babylon 5 Wars. Converting a Sathanas Juggernaut and the silly amounts of firepower than went with it opened the door for me. No longer must an SCS be limited to one page, and one 'mega' gun or none at all like the Shadows. And then I decided to watch my Robotech VHS tapes again, and through them became inspired to try my hand one more time.

For my conversions I'm using a mixture of Palladium and web-based stats along with some input from Robert's FA conversions and working in the same general way that I did with Freespace. Here are a few ways in that I'm working around the problems:

Structure

Using the Palladium stats and with a general eye towards length, I've developed a formula in the same way as my Freespace formula in order to convert hitpoints to structure. The formula is the same, except I'm using a base of 12 instead of 10 to compare against armour for more flexibility, and also I've used a new constant in order to get the structure that I want. Based on length, I set a general target and work towards it keeping in mind any miscellaneous fluff material.

Numbers of Weapons

As previously stated, many of the craft employ hundreds of guns and if not worse, thousands of fighter craft as standard armament. To put it simply, I am reducing the numbers by assuming that X guns is equal to Y guns in B5Wars. So for the standard lasers on a Zentraedi cruiser, I believe I have 8 guns equal to 1 icon. Some of the guns are on a 1 per 1 basis. The fighters are similarly reduced, though more dramatically. Despite this, many of the ships have above-average compliments, with the carrier-style ships having more than a hundred in many cases as on par with Freespace. They've been reduced for the sake of playability, and for no other real reason.

Weapon Power

Some weapons, namely Reflex cannons as on the Zentraedi Monitor and Robotech master ships like the SDF-1 have uber-guns which can destroy any target in one firing. This is quite simply, unworkable. To move around this, these guns will have reduced, though still incredibly powerful damage capability akin to some of the heavier Freespace weapons. To 'justify' this, many of the Reflex cannons have a firing-wait time of several minutes which in scenario terms would be once per scenario. Instead they will have reduced damage with increased firing times on par with a spinal laser, or some similar weapon. The reflex cannons are supposed to have variable firing times with proportional damage capabilities anyway. These guns may still well have the ability to destroy a ship in one shot, but larger ships like Breetai's command ship will not be destroyed in that fashion.

Units Included Herein

At the time of my initial posting to the Forums I had planned to have the Zentraedi and Meltrani fleets finished to be included in this issue. However due to work and educational commitments, that simply did not happen. What I can provide herein however is the core of the Zentraedi fleet, in both their battlepods and their warships. I hope you will not be disappointed, though all feedback is appreciated.

Thuverl Salan Heavy Cruiser

The mainstay of the Zentraedi Fleet, the Thurvel Salan has been in service under the Robotech masters for more than 400 years. Though not the most powerful Zentraedi ship, it is the most feared. The first to attack in any engagement, it is well suited to any combat situation. Utilising a mix of primary and secondary beam weapons, along with anti-ship and anti-fighter missile banks it can engage a variety of targets. A sturdy hull and a large battlepod compliment round out its awesome potential. As with all Zentraedi ships, its armament is concentrated into the forward arc. Despite its mass, advanced reactor drives enable the Thuverl Salan to keep all but the most nimble opponents in its sites.

Thuverl Dalem Cruiser

The predecessor to the Thuverl Salan, the Dalem class is showing its age. Many of the class are nearing the end of their six century service life and are ready to be retired. The ship has approximately two-thirds the capability of the Thuverl Salan with decreases across the board. With only a single Nabrilla 253 laser cannon on the forward bow, the Dalem must rely on its secondary armament to deal the majority of its damage. The one advantage the cannon has over the newer weapons is increased range. The Dalem's main failing on the modern battlefield is its lack of battlepods, with only one-half the compliment of the Salan it's often seen as inadequate for extended space campaigns and completely inadequate for ground warfare.

Designer's Note: Though no such rule is included on the SCS, it may be desirable to use unreliable ship rules with the Dalem to simulate its age and the lack of maintenance the Zentraedi perform, especially at the end of its life-cycle when protoculture reserves are running low. A variety of problems could be used with appropriate point reductions. This could extend to all Zentraedi vessels but suites the Dalem in particular.

Tou Redir Scout

The Tou Redir is the most numerous of the Zentraedi vessels and also the most inadequate. Not meant for fleet combat, the Tou Redir is the eyes and ears of the Zentraedi war machine. Equipped with advanced sensor capabilities, it can pick up enemy ships long before its other brethren. Its inherent Theatre Scout increases its range and abilities, while a compliment of Gnerl Fightercraft is used for escort. The Tou Redir comprised the majority of Dolza's fleet during his attack on Earth and the planned action against Breetai's forces. As Breetai's infected fleet had most of the Zentraedi warships, Dolza's hoped that superior numbers of Tou Redirs combined with Monitors would be able to overwhelm the ships infected by micronian culture.

Regult BattlePod

The Regult is the standard attack craft of the Zentraedi Infantry. Mounting a pair of beam cannons and a secondary turret, along with light anti-infantry cannons (not included in the conversion) the Regult can handle a variety of opponents. Its main failing is a lack of armor and durability, which is expected given the expendable nature of the craft in the eyes of the Robotech Masters. Each flight or 'squad' of Regults may include one heavy weapons model, or a scout craft.

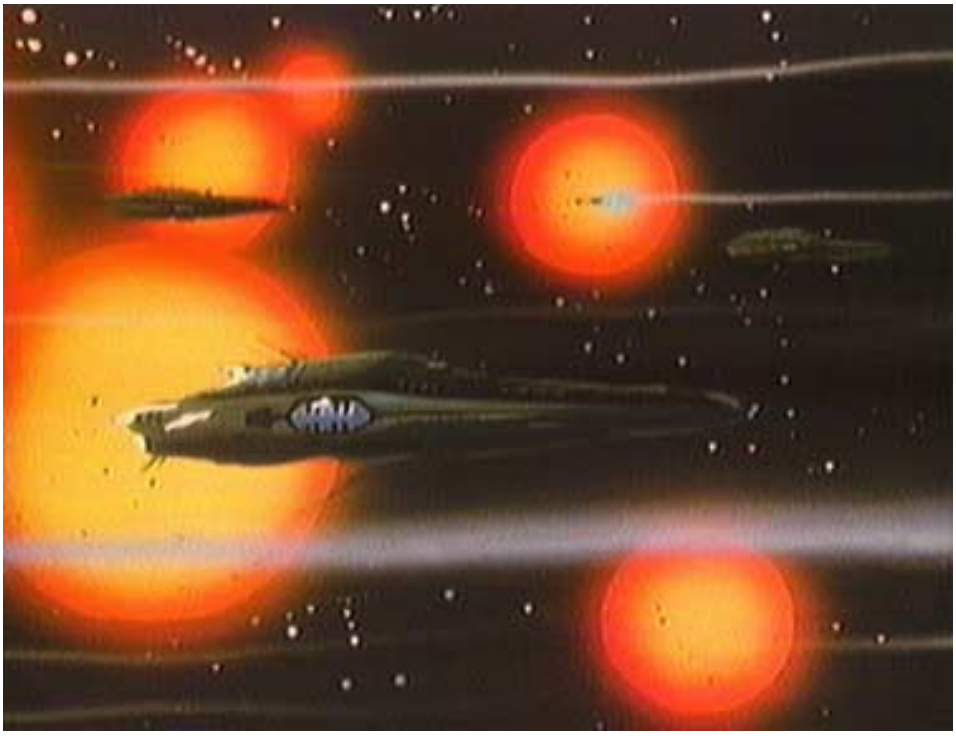
Glaug Officer's Pod

Stronger, faster and deadlier than the Regult, the Glaug is the craft built for the officers of the Zentraedi infantry. Each Pod is equipped with three heavy beam cannons and a small compliment of missiles to deal with a variety of opponents. The blast from the Pod's main cannon, is especially devastating. The Glaug, like the Zentraedi Officer, is a rare sight on the battlefield at a rate of approximately one per twenty-four Regults. A variant of the unit, the *Glaug Eldare* also exists in which the legs of the craft are removed in favour of a rocket booster assembly. This pack enables it to operate within an atmosphere and also comes with a larger quantity of missiles. It is generally reserved for the best Zentraedi officers.

Nousjadeul-Ger Power Armour

The male power armour is a capable, though poorly armoured combat unit. Equipped with a long-ranged plasma cannon on its shoulder, it is most often used in a support role for other craft like the Regult. The suit is moderately armoured and manoeuvrable and also comes equipped with a small cannon which can be held in either of the hand and comes with a relatively inadequate supply of rounds .

Note: the Nousjadeul-Ger, like the following Gnerl can be swapped in for Regult flights on a 1 per 1 basis on any Zentraedi ship which has *(note)* after the Regult entry. The one stipulation is that availability requirements must be followed, and also that no more than *half* of the Regult compliment can be substituted with Nousjadeul-Ger and Gnerl units.



Gnerl Aerospace Fighters

The Gnerl is the standard trans-atmospheric units of the Zentraedi forces. More potent than the common Regult, it is reserved for the cream of the Zentraedi infantry such as lower-ranking officers and ace pilots. Fast, well armoured and equipped with a powerful armament it is a very capable opponent. A bank of missiles completes the package. During the invasion of Earth, the Gnerl was the only Zentraedi ship found to be faster than the RDF's Veritechs.

The Gnerl comes in three models, each flight must be marked as one of the three. The first model has a standard armament. The second and third remove one of the particle guns for a more reliable weapon system. The third model adds hard points for additional missiles though this loadout was found to be unwieldly and often decreased the capabilities of the craft until they were fired. As such, the third is regarded with ill-favour by most pilots.

For Next Month

I hope to have the rest of the Zentraedi finished, along with hopefully the Meltrani. The RDF will likely be released as it's finished as they are not the best opponents for the Zentaedi armada, though are well suited for scenario battles.

* * *

The Lumati

Vonzanealon Light Cruiser

The Lumati identified that one of their primary weaknesses was a lack of a good light cruiser design. In the past they had concentrated primarily on larger destroyer models instead, but regional events sparked the construction of a new light cruiser hull to supplement their existing heavy cruisers.

The Vonzanealon Light Cruiser is small, but still packs a considerable punch. Four Twin Flux Cannons provide complete weapons coverage for the ship, making it an excellent escort for other larger Lumati cruisers.

Lumati Errata: *An important piece of information about the Twin Heavy Flux Cannon was omitted from last month's issue. When firing in a combined mode, the Twin Heavy Flux Cannon must take one cooldown turn before it can fire again.*

Vree Pulsar Weapon Upgrades
By Danny Keith

Background

After the Shadow War the Vree realized a serious flaw in their "military" structure, this being that they didn't have one. As a result, the guilds made the decision to create a unified military force funded by all of the guilds and comparable to the standing forces of their neighbors.

Given the battered state of the Vree fleet due to the League War, Shadow War and the Drakh/Centauri War, now was the time to modernize and standardize fleet operations. As with the other races involved in recent galactic events, this would be a long, drawn out process that would not truly come to fruition until the mid to late 2260's. This process would involve the initiation of standardized training programs and the development of fleet doctrines. These, of course, would take full advantage of ongoing research into new hull and weapon designs. While some of these new technologies and starships had recently been integrated into the fleet -- notably the Xill, Xonn and Antimatter Torpedo -- many more were still under development and testing.

Key to this new fleet doctrine was the need to address the primary weakness of existing Vree ship design: lack of adequate fighter defense and carriage. The first goal was accomplished by the reverse engineering of examples of pulse weapons (quietly acquired by the Salvage Guild from the numerous battlefields scattered throughout local space) and combining it with existing antiproton weapon designs. The resulting weapon designs, while somewhat short-ranged, would provide excellent anti-fighter capability and retain the ability to cause serious damage to enemy ships should the need arise. The second goal was accomplished by designing new fighters and including plans for carrier variants of new and existing hulls.

Taking a cue from the Earth Alliance, the decision was made to produce a minimum number of new hull types and fill the required fleet roles with variants based on those hulls. The first of these new hulls was the Xann War Saucer (essentially a jump-capable, new-generation Xorr), intended as the basis for most of the utility ships in the new navy. Planned variants included scout, carrier, gunship and torpedo variants.

The second new design was an upgrade to the highly successful Xill Battle Saucer. This upgrade replaced the outer Antiproton Guns with Medium Antiproton Pulsars (often referred to simply as Antiproton Pulsars), trading range for the ability to saturate targets with a flurry of powerful blows. This saturation capability provided a vastly improved fighter defense for the Xill. The higher power requirements of the new weapons array required that the reactor be upgraded to compensate, fortunately the slightly more compact nature of the new weapons allowed systems to be shifted to accommodate the larger reactor. Plans were also drawn up for command and carrier variants to be included in future production.

The third new design was an upgrade to the Xonn Dreadnaught. One Antiproton Gun in each outer section was replaced with a Antiproton Pulsar and the lower Antimatter Cannon was replaced with a Heavy Antiproton Pulsar. Unlike the Xill, this altered weapon configuration was within the power capacity of the existing reactor. Future construction plans were made for a carrier variant.

New Ships

Xill Battle Saucer (2268 Pulsar Upgrade)

This upgrade consisted of replacing the AP-Guns with Medium AP-Pulsars and improving reactor output to manage the greater power

drain of the new weapons.

While it was originally intended to upgrade all existing Xill units and switch production of all new hulls to the upgraded design and its variants, the need to replenish the bulk of the fleet with the new Xann designs slowed production until the early 2270's, as a result the upgraded unit was Uncommon until 2272, becoming Common thereafter.

Xonn Dreadnaught (2268 Pulsar Upgrade)

Effectively identical to the Xill upgrade but completed much sooner due to the few existing hulls, this upgrade replaces one AP-Gun in each outer section with a Medium AP-Pulsar with identical firing arcs.

All existing Xonn hulls were upgraded to this design by the end of 2268. The combination of limited numbers of hulls and construction docks so specialized as to being incapable of supporting work on other hulls resulted in an expedited upgrade schedule measured in months rather than years.

* * *

By Paul Brown

Dekkari Fleet Carrier

The Dekkari is the amalgamation of two design philosophies into one. First the design fills the need for a large fleet carrier within the Modrani fleet. Though ill-suited for combat on its own or with little in the way of escorts, in a fleet environment it can deliver large numbers of fighters to the battle with little fear of retaliation due to its lack-lustre anti-ship abilities and its strong tachyon shielding.

Secondly, the Modrani have employed the design as an assault ship. The side hangars are able to accommodate a total of twelve Asalti Dropships to deliver troops to planetary or space-bound facilities. Unlike the assault ships of other races, this design is ideal because the assault shuttles come with their own inherent fighter support. There is no need to assign additional carrier assets to covering the ships as the Dekkari can fill both roles itself.

As a ship, the Dekkari is built with redundancy in mind. Its weaponry is spread across the hull ensuring multiple layers of defensive fire, while at the same time its offensive fighter bays are equally spread out for redundancy and ease of deployment. The ship's structure is relatively strong with the common agility inherent in most Modrani designs. The Dekkari was launched simultaneously with the Zamfir, introducing a new offensive-minded use of fighter craft.

Zamfir Heavy Fighter

The Zamfir is the Modrani's anti-shipping fighter of choice. Equipped with good structure, strong armour and shielding, the ship is able to survive a lot of punishment before being brought down. It can deliver punishment of its own, equipped with a tachyon gatling gun in the nose and a pair of light tachyon pulsers in the wings. Advanced flight plus combat control systems endow it with a good deal of agility enabling it to defend itself in the face of other enemy fighters. Its only shortcoming is the inability to fire both of its weapons at the same time due to inadequate power reserves and independent targeting systems.

* * *

Tactics Discussion:

"Oh Yes They Are!" The Great Vree Debate

Another Perspective on an Old Debate

By Tyrel Lohr

Introduction

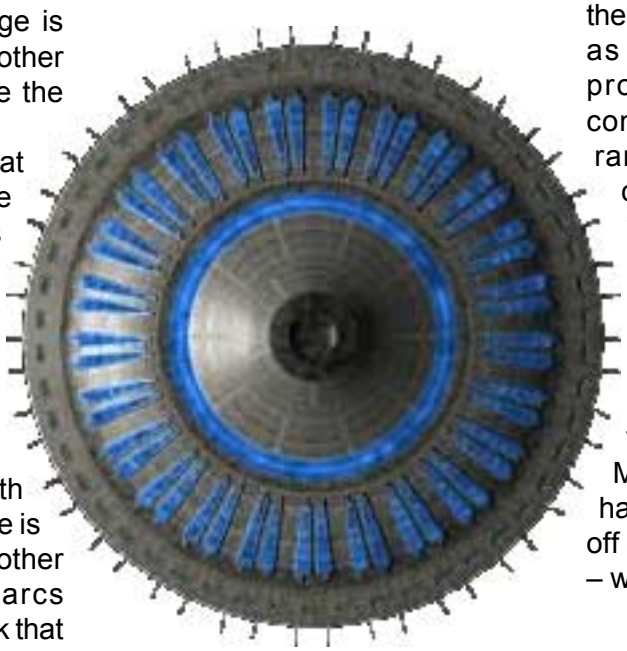
The Vree and their spinning saucers of doom have long been a point of contention amongst fans ever since their debut in Militaries of the League-1 (commonly referred to simply as League-1, or L1). The Vree benefit from a radically different hull arrangement than that used by other races. In many ways you can see why AOG may have decided to go this route. The saucer shape of Vree ships makes it logical to assume that damage could be spread more evenly across the hull. However, it is how this damage is scored – and interaction with other traditional rules – which cause the most controversy.

This article takes a look at both the problems that people see in the Vree, and strategies for fighting with or against our little probe-happy friends.

The Vree Structure Blocks

The biggest problem with the Vree is the way that damage is scored against them. Unlike other ships, Vree ships have arcs assigned to each structure block that show through which arcs they can be hit. Vree capital ships have six structure blocks, whereas the rest of the ships follow the normal structure conventions. These structure arcs overlap at many angles, giving a Vree player the opportunity to literally spread damage over several different areas of their ships.

Herein lies the problem. AOG decided that each structure block's armor should count for purposes of raking weapons. This meant that if raking sub-volleys were scored against multiple structure blocks, each would be effected by the structure's armor rating. This has led to a situation wherein the Vree are nearly immune to raking weapons, especially raking weapon that are incapable of doing more than three full raking sub-volleys.



To add insult to injury, it was also decided that no Vree systems are destroyed with their structure blocks. So it is possible for a Vree ship with a single box of primary structure remaining to be otherwise fully combat capability.

The Vree do have a few quirks which were undoubtedly intended as handicaps during the design process. Internal systems are smaller than normal, making it easier to disable key systems or mission kill Vree systems. The chance of scoring a primary hit is also 5% higher than on normal vessels. Unfortunately, though this does help in battle, it relies too much on luck to be effective, improving the chances of a lucky C&C hit from 1/200 (.5%) to 3/400 (.75%).

The controversy surrounding the Vree stem from these abilities (or, as some would call them, problems). These abilities, combined with the Vree's short-range antimatter arsenal, have created an opponent that requires very little in the way of tactics to use successfully. Some Vree players have even acknowledged that their preference for the Vree is because they "don't have to think very hard" in the course of play. Meanwhile, their opponents often have to fight tooth and nail to pull off a draw – not to mention a victory – when fighting them.

Fixing the Vree Problem

Is there a problem? Many players contend that there isn't and that losses to the Vree are simply a sign of poor play or bad luck on the part of the Vree's opponents. Others counter that the Vree are all but unbeatable unless you use specific races that are more anti-Vree friendly or fleets specifically tailored to defeat the Vree. No matter which side of the debate you are on, you can acknowledge that there is definitely a strong perception that there is something wrong with the Vree. That can't be said for hardly anything else in the game, other than ballistics (which won't be discussed here – one can of worms is more than enough!).

A solution to the "Vree Problem" is needed, if for nothing else to find a happy medium between the "yes they are!" and "no they're not!" camps. There are several easy, equitable solutions that could be adopted to make the Vree weaker while maintaining their racial flavor. You can easily mix and match the following solutions to meet your group's needs.

Solution 1: Structure Armor Fix

Raking sub-volleys only count structure armor once on the first hit to structure. Once this structure armor is overcome, any subsequent raking sub-volleys that hit a structure location take full damage no matter which structure block damage is being applied to.

Solution 2: Structure Arc Fix

Instead of using the current structure arc system, capital ships instead adopt the same six even sided special hull arrangement used by the Mindrider Mind's Eye. This solution means that through any one arc only one structure block will be applicable to take damage. This makes scoring telling damage to large Vree saucers easier to do, while also encouraging the Vree player to be adopt better tactics in order to keep damage structure blocks out of harm's way.

Solution 3: Structure Destruction Fix

When a structure block is destroyed, all systems on that side of the ship are destroyed as would normally happen on conventional Babylon 5 Wars vessels. In the case of the ship's thrusters, main and retro thrusters are destroyed with the forward and aft structure blocks respectively; meanwhile, the port/starboard thrusters are part of both side structure blocks and will only be destroyed if both of those structure blocks are likewise destroyed.

By having weapons and other systems "fall off" with destroyed sections, heavily damage Vree ships will be guaranteed to take a hit to their performance. In the case of the main and aft thrusters, too, it will make maneuvering slightly more meaningful as the ship's commander will want to ensure the survival of those thrusters and the structure blocks of which they are a part.

Solution 4: Point Value Increase

Increase Vree unit point values by 10%. Although this is the "simplest" of the solutions, it is also probably the worst to try and enact as it opens the door for a whole other debate involving the lack of a mathematically-based point calculation system, and how Ship X is under/overpointed for its capabilities.

What if it's Tactics?

What if the problem with the Vree is really a tactics issue and not a game balance issue? There have been numerous discussions on what does or does not work against the Vree. Durable ships with high-output standard mode weapons or pulse cannons tend to do the best against the Vree. Heavy Pulse Cannons, too, are extremely effective against the Vree. Ships that rely on raking weapons tend to do poorly. Because of this races such as the Dilgar or Pak'ma'ra, who benefit from a plethora of standard mode weapons and the arcs to use them, stand a better chance against the Vree than many other opponents. The Narn also tend to do quite well against the Vree because of their thick structure blocks that help to absorb the damage Vree antimatter weapons can score.

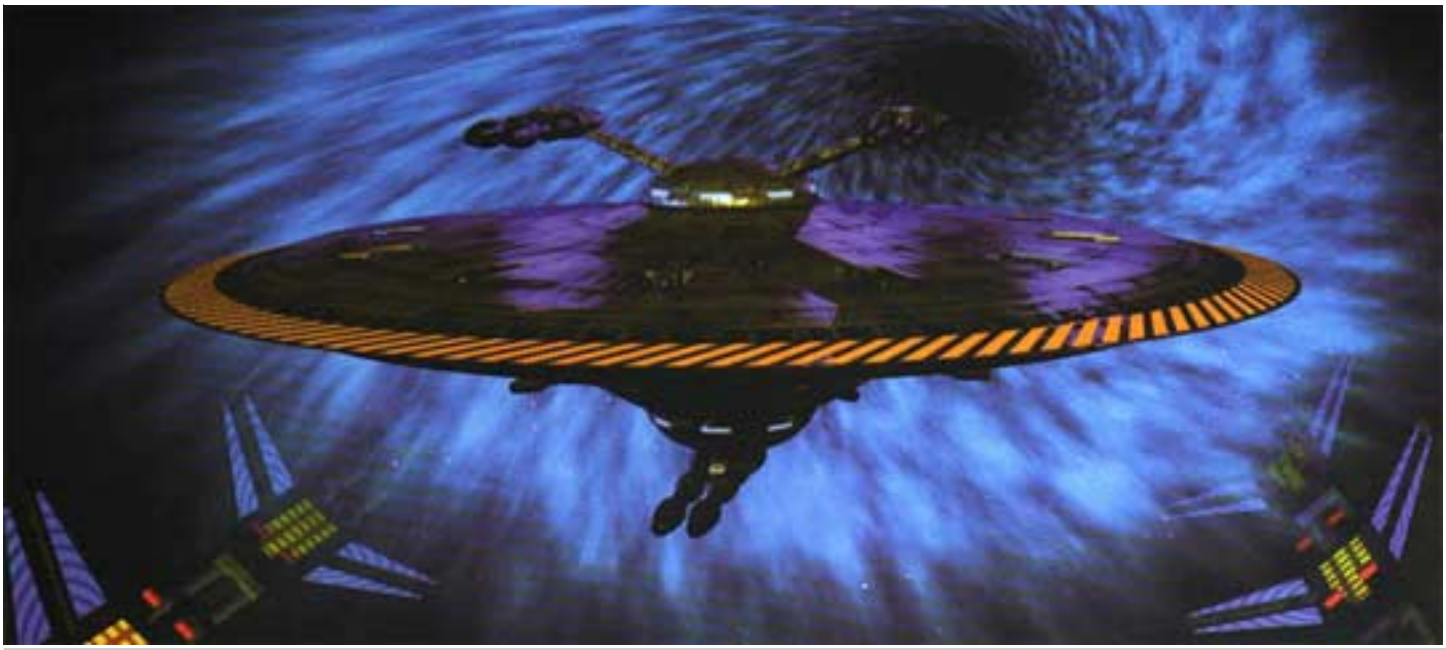
Some players have reported great success using fighters against the Vree, citing them as one of the Vree's primary weaknesses. As will be discussed later, any competent Vree player can counter any possible fighter threat. And, from someone that has personal experience with forty-eight Dilgar Thoruns doing little more than scratching the paint of a Xorr, it has to be pointed out that the Vree can most definitely weather waves of fighters before being taken down.

It is difficult, but certainly not impossible, to build a balanced fleet that has a good chance of taking out a Vree fleet of a similar size. Make sure that you have enough standard mode weapons and pulse cannons and you should be able to hold your own in a fight. Also be sure to include some sort of anti-fighter support, either in the form of your own fighters or an escort ship, to protect yourself from Vree Tzymms.

How can I Lose?

When discussing Vree tactics, I have played against the Vree enough to get a first-hand look at what makes or breaks Vree fleets. As a caveat, your individual play styles might not mesh with the following recommendations, but this is the single most effective use of the Vree that I have witnessed.

The typical Vree fleet should be split almost equally in half. One half of the points go to buying traditional warships, while the other half is used to buy carriers and fighters, primarily Tzymms. This segmentation of the fleet is very important for several reasons. First, it ensures that both forces will make up roughly the same amount of points so neither side is a juicier target for your opponent. Second, it presents a quandary to your opponents: do I attack one part of the fleet or the other (ships or fighters) and destroy that one, only to be unable to defeat the other, or do I attempt to cripple them both and in the end only injure both of them, not destroy them, and still take the same level of losses? When dealing with the Vree ship/carrier force this is the important question. Your opponent will succeed in crippling one arm of your offensive capabilities, but the one that survives will be strong enough to mop up any surviving units. If your opponent selects the dubious path of concentrating on both your ships and fighters simultaneously you will take fewer general losses and be in an even better position to achieve victory. I have seen this happen time and time again. If the Vree fleet gravitates



further one way or another from the equal fleet disposition they become less competitive and easier to defeat because they are "putting all their eggs in one basket."

When assembling the ship portion of your fleet, you want to concentrate on fielding Xorr War Saucers above other units. They are the most cost-effective capital ship the Vree have, and is a bargain at only 550 points. Some Vree players use Xill Battle Saucers more heavily than Xorrs, but the Xill doesn't really offer that much of an upgrade in capabilities for the extra 150 points in cost. I also found that, in most cases, the Antimatter Shredders will simply be fired in cannon mode anyway, so why not buy the cheaper ship that has more Antimatter Cannons to begin with? You lose two extra Antiproton Guns and some other capabilities, but you can buy more of them, and that is important. Now, if you are trying to fulfill the tournament fleet requirements of a capital ship and jump engine, you might be better off taking the Xill Battle Saucer in order to meet both requirements with one ship. In large battles (and even some small ones, depending on your play style) you will be better off investing in a Xonn, which is an extremely hard nut to crack and brings significant weaponry to an engagement. If your fleet is going Xorr happy you can instead fulfill your jump engine requirement with a Vaarl Scout Saucer, netting some valuable ELINT support in the bargain.

Of the Vree's other ships, the Ximm Close Escort is perhaps the most important. Think you are going to be going up against a fighter heavy race? Not sure? Take a Ximm. The Ximm Close Escort is capable of firing six Antiproton Defenders into any one arc. Given the strength of antimatter weapons and the Ximm's good sensors you stand a very good chance of destroying one flight of enemy fighters (even heavy fighters) each turn! I would usually encourage the use of Ximms in almost every Vree fleet if possible, as they are equally good at taking out enemy ships (six 18-point shots each turn is better than some ships of the line can muster). It also has the benefit of tying up enemy ships and fighters, as they have to destroy the Ximm in order for their fighters to attack the rest of the Vree fleet relatively unmolested.

So, given a 3,500-point tourney fleet, the Vree would have 1,750 points to spend on ships. That could either be one Xonn Dreadnought and one Xorr War Saucer (1,750 points exactly); one Xill Battle Saucers and two Xorr War Saucers (a little over at 1,800 points); or one Vaarl, one Xorr War Saucer, and one Ximm Close Escort (a little over at 1,775 points). Either of these three would make good contenders. In all cases, if you carrier fleet comes in a little under you might want to upgrade one Xorr in each fleet to a Ximm Close Escort, if one isn't present already.

Now on to the carrier forces! The fighter portion fleet should be worth roughly the same amount as your ship amount and should be used to buy all carriers and fighters that will make up the "second arm" of your fleet.

The Xeel War Carrier is the major carrier available to the Vree. On its surface the Xeel might look like a lackluster vessel, but it serves its intended purpose. Carrying twelve fighters (more if you use Zorths), the Xeel does make for an adequate "damage sponge" in engagements, harrying enemy ships and fighters that stray too close.

When purchasing fighters, most should be Tzymms. These large heavy fighters carry the devastating Light Antimatter Cannon, which can score anywhere from 10 to 28 points of damage per fighter EVERY OTHER TURN! What the Tzymms lack in speed they make up for in durability. The Tzymm has more structure than almost every other fighter in the game (if not all of them) and has decent armor to boot.

At 85 points a piece Tzymms are pricey fighters, but it is well worth it.

It is the strengths of the Tzymm (extremely powerful guns, high structure) that make it suitable to act as a second, distinct strike element in the fleet. It can be extremely hard to take down a dedicated Vree fighter wave, and those that break through can core even your dreadnoughts with relative ease. Lucky hits by Tzymm flights are even worse, as they can quickly knock out enemy ships by way of solid primary hits. But, as was mentioned before about luck, don't bank on it. Unfortunately, the Vree Tzymm doesn't have to hope for a lucky shot to still have a good shot of taking out enemy ships.

The primary ship targeted by Tzymm flights for destruction will vary from scenario to scenario, but in general they should first take out those ships which pose a serious threat to their survival. Fighter-killers and other escorts should be taken out post haste to ensure the survival of the Tzymms. The Vree's ships can take on other enemy vessels until the Tzymms have dealt with their threat. Afterwards they can begin attacking targets of opportunity, wearing down or destroying enemy ships as convenient.

While not hunting enemy warships (which is what it should be doing if its Light Antimatter Cannon is online), the Tzymm can also provide adequate fighter interdiction services. Just be careful; you don't want to sacrifice your Tzymms just to take down a few enemy fighters. Because of this, it is often wise to have your Tzymms retreat back towards their carriers and/or other Vree ships so that they can provide cover for the Tzymms. This forces any enemy interceptors bent on destroying the Vree fighters to enter and survive a kill zone before they can fire. A favorite tactic is to retreat your Tzymms close to a Ximm Close Escort, forcing enemy fighters to either close and be destroyed or break off their pursuit.

Thus far I have only discussed the Tzymm. The other Vree fighter, the Zorth Light Fighter, is really not worth a mention. It can be useful to take Zorths to fill out points or increase fighter numbers (since two Zorths can be stacked into one fighter box), but they lack the firepower and durability to be anything more than a slight nuisance. Use Zorths to fill out your points or to combat enemy fighter swarms if you know they will be present (Cascor would be a good example).

Now, to assemble our fighter forces. We have about 1,750 point to spend on carriers and fighters. This will usually lead to purchasing two Xeel War Carriers and two flights of Tzymms for 1,700 points. Now, this is the moment of decision. It would cost another 510 points to buy an additional flight of Tzymms, or 210 points for a flight of Zorths. Depending on your ship force, you could either send the remaining points over to them (50 points) or downgrade/eliminate one of your ships in favor of some more Tzymms. This depends largely on whether or not you have enough heavy weapons in your ship fleet. The one Xill, two Xorr combination is usually the best ship fleet to modify if you are looking to field an additional group of Tzymms. By eliminating one Xorr, you can then purchase an additional flight of Tzymms (or two Zorths flights, if you prefer) with enough points left over to purchase a few more Zorths or upgrade existing ships to another variant, such as upgrading the remaining Xorr to a Ximm.

When adjusting points and making fleet decisions, make sure that you still have enough at least two ships in your ship fleet pool and that you have about five Antimatter Cannons/Shredders for offensive duties. This will leave both halves of the Vree fleet equally capable of being a threat to the enemy, and that is what you are trying to accomplish.

Does this strategy work with other races? To a degree yes, but largely no. The amount of structure enjoyed by the Tzymm combined with the awesome power of its heavy weapon makes it well suited for such deployment. The psychological warfare element of the fleet is perhaps the most crippling. You can either destroy the Vree's Antimatter Cannons and the ships that carry them, or you can take out the Tzymms. But which do you choose? The amount of firepower that it takes to destroy a flight of Tzymms can be almost as much as you would use to destroy the Vree's ships.

In the end you will end up with two to three warships, two carriers, and a handful of fighter flights. The carriers are utterly expendable and can be used as dedicated offensive craft in most cases, targeting nearby fighters or ships. Going full OEW/CCEW might attract enemy fire, but that isn't a bad thing. The fire that is poured into the Xeel carriers won't go to one of your valuable warships or fighters, so you really haven't lost anything.

Conclusion

Hopefully this article will help everyone get a better handle on possible solutions to the "Vree Problem". No matter whether your group decides that changes to the ships or tactics are the solution, hopefully they should at least help you to resolve the problem to your liking.

* * *

The Mysterious Secret Weapons of the Tholian Assembly

By Tyrel Lohr & Pat Parkhurst

Introduction

The Tholians are perhaps the most enigmatic race from the Star Trek universe. The Tholians are always mentioned as being in a position of power, at only a slight disadvantage when compared to the major Alpha Quadrant powers. But therein lies the problem. The Tholians are oft mentioned, but never seen. The only time we have ever seen a Tholian was on the viewscreen of the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701 in the Tholian's titular appearance. In some ways it is very sad that one of the most memorable and distinct aliens that Star Trek was able to produce has never made a glorious and triumphant come back over the years. We can just be grateful that the Tholians were not totally forgotten, as is the case with some of the Original Series aliens, such as the Gorn.

Despite not being seen since their first outing, the Tholian Assembly is repeatedly commented on throughout the Star Trek spin-off series. Kyle Riker, Commander Riker's father, was the sole survivor of a Tholian attack on a Federation starbase. Kassidy Yates, Captain Sisko's love interest, often traded with the Tholians, often for the valuable and frictionless Tholian silk.

Tholian political and military power was also commented on several times during these series. During the Klingon Civil War, it was feared that the Tholians might involve themselves in the conflict, attempting to expand their territorial annexes in the region. Of the races to sign non-aggression pacts with the Dominion, the Tholian Assembly was explicitly stated as agreeing to just such a pact.

For all of their importance to the background of the Star Trek universe, the Tholians remain elusive quarry and it is hard to pin down their exact background. There is little in the way of "official" background for the Tholians. Few facts have ever been clearly divulged about them on any of the series, and some have even cast doubt on whether or not the face of the sole Tholian we have ever seen was actually their true face or rather some form of environmental suit, not unlike a Vorlon or Breen encounter suit. Star Fleet Battles further muddied the waters, adding additional information in order to flesh out a race for their ship combat system. In many places Star Fleet Battles' background information for the Tholians directly contradicts the commonly held information about the Tholians, notably the SFB instance on

calling the Tholian government the Holdfast, rather than the Assembly. It is small points of contention like this that make it even harder to glean a good, well-rounded view of who the Tholians may or may not be.

However, anyone that knows Star Trek knows that continuity is a foreign concept in the franchise. So it is not surprising that the information available on the Tholians is a varied mix of contradictory licensed sources and fan-created material.

Tholians and the Conversion

As official sources are lacking, I decided to take the Tholians off on their own tangent. When first designing the original Tholian ship from The Original Series I decided that the Tholians were of a decidedly different mentality, and that this different mindset and relative isolation from the other major power blocs would have led to a much different technology tree and military design structure. Now, I did not feel that the Tholians were extra-dimensional, a major point of contention I have with the Star Fleet Battles background material; but I did feel that they deserved to be unique in comparison to the Federation, Klingon, and Romulan empires.

One early decision was to give the Tholians weaker shields than the other powers, balanced by higher armor values. This leads to a situation where the Tholians rely less on deflector shields for protection than the other major powers because of their more durable hulls.

I also decided that the signature Tholian weapon would be the Phase Concentrator. Concentrating phasers seemed like a shoe-in for the Tholians because of their mastery of tractor beam technology. I did not want them to be as full-featured as the Gaim Particle Concentrator, so I limited combining of phaser fire to concentrators from a single ship. Phase Concentrators exchange one type of versatility for another. Whereas the Medium Phaser is more versatile because it can fire every turn, the Phase Concentrator is more versatile because it can score higher damage and achieve longer ranges through combining with other concentrators.

This initial outlook of the Tholians has carried through into the cadre of ships that I converted with the help of the folks on the Planetside mailing list, in particular Chris Nasipak and Kevin Nault. Kevin is also to thank (or blame!) for the Tholian web spinner rules, which he graciously converted from the Star Fleet Battles source material.

Where the Tholians are Going

In February, Pat Parkhurst contacted me inquiring about the Tholians and direction that I planned on taking him. A self-admitted old time Star Fleet Battle junkie and fan of the Tholians, he was very interested in what new types of ships and technologies the Tholians would be receiving within the Star Trek conversion.

After some discussion, Pat sent me an ever-growing list of new units and technologies that he felt would make for good additions to the Tholian fleet. After reviewing his first few submissions I liked what I saw and decided that it would make a great topic for an issue of The Great Machine! The fact that the Tholians have lacked a decent fleet selection

Tholian Timeline

In **2151**, Tholians made their first contact with Humans. As players in the Temporal Cold War, they opposed the Suliban in pursuit of an artifact from the future, disabling a powerful Vulcan ship in the process.

In **2268**, a Tholian Commander named Loskene attacked the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701 for violating Tholian territory while on a rescue mission to investigate the disappearance of the U.S.S. Defiant.

In **2353**, Tholians attacked a Federation starbase and killed its entire complement, except for a civilian named Kyle Riker, father of William Riker.

In **2355**, simulated Tholian battles were part of Starfleet Academy training.

In **2367**, there was concern that the Tholians might get involved in the Klingon Civil War.

In **2371**, a Tholian ambassador visited Deep Space 9.

In **2372**, a Tholian observer was present at a conference in Antwerp, Earth, when a bomb destroyed the conference hall. Shortly after, the Tholians signed a non-aggression treaty with the Dominion.

In **2379**, the Romulans had diplomatic relations with the Tholians.

Timeline courtesy of WikiPedia
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tholian)

has bugged me for awhile, and I really appreciated the help.

Now, without further ado, onto the new Tholian ships and technologies!

New Tholian Technologies

Web Casters

Web casters are a special Tholian device capable of manipulating gravity at extreme distances. The web caster is used as an offensive weapon, in contrast to the primarily defensive nature of web spinners.

Web casters can fire in one of two modes: direct fire and cast web.

Direct fire mode allows the firing unit to fire directly at a target unit. In its lowest firing state, the web caster does very little damage. Extra power can be applied to increase the damage of the web caster, adding +6 damage per power applied (max 4).

Cast web mode allows the firing unit to actually create up to eight freestanding web hexes at ranges up to 50 hexes away. As with direct fire mode, extra power can be applied to the web caster for increased effect. When firing in cast web mode, the firing unit must target a specific starting and ending hex for the attack.

The number of hexes of web hex that are laid is governed by the amount of extra power applied to the web caster at the time of firing. The amount of extra power applied to the web caster is added to the base power requirement of the web caster (one power) to calculate the charge level of the web caster.

Refer to the chart below to determine the strength of the resulting web hex or hexes:

	Number of Web Hexes Created							
Charge	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0
3	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0
4	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	0
5	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1

Example: A Tholian starship targets a hex with a web caster. Three points of extra power have been applied to the web caster and the player wishes to create five web hexes between the target hex and another target ending hex. Since the web caster has a charge of four power (three extra power plus one power from the caster itself) and is laying five web hexes, the chart above says that this combination will give us five hexes of strength one web.

If the web casting player had instead opted to lay only four web hexes at the four power level, each web hex would have been of strength two web instead of just strength one.

All freestanding web laid with a web caster must adhere to normal rules for laying web.

No matter the strength of the web, all web laid by the web caster will dissipate after two turns.

Web caster rules converted by Patrick L. Parkhurst.

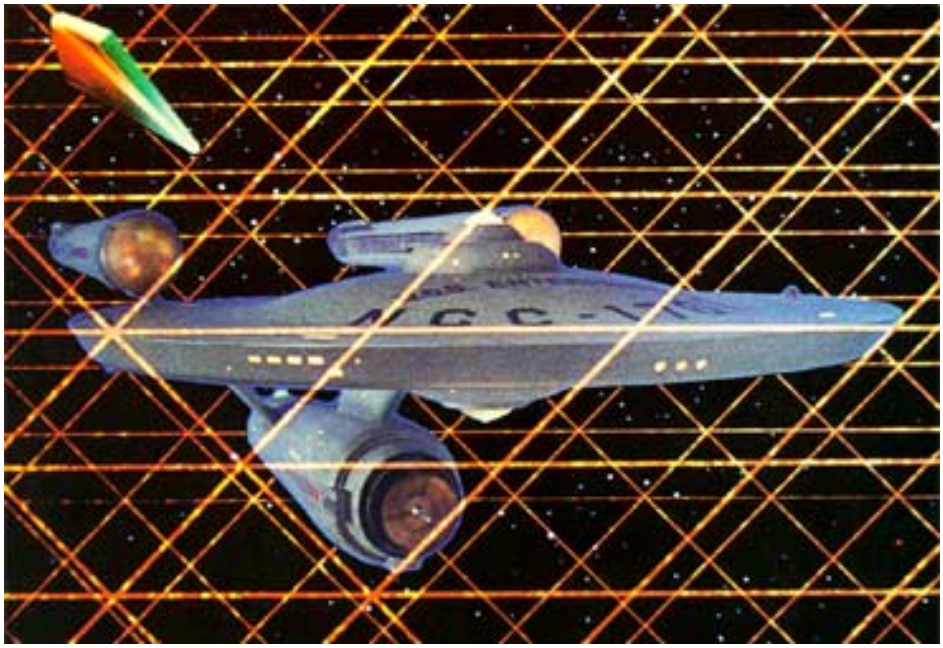
New Tholian Ships and Fighters

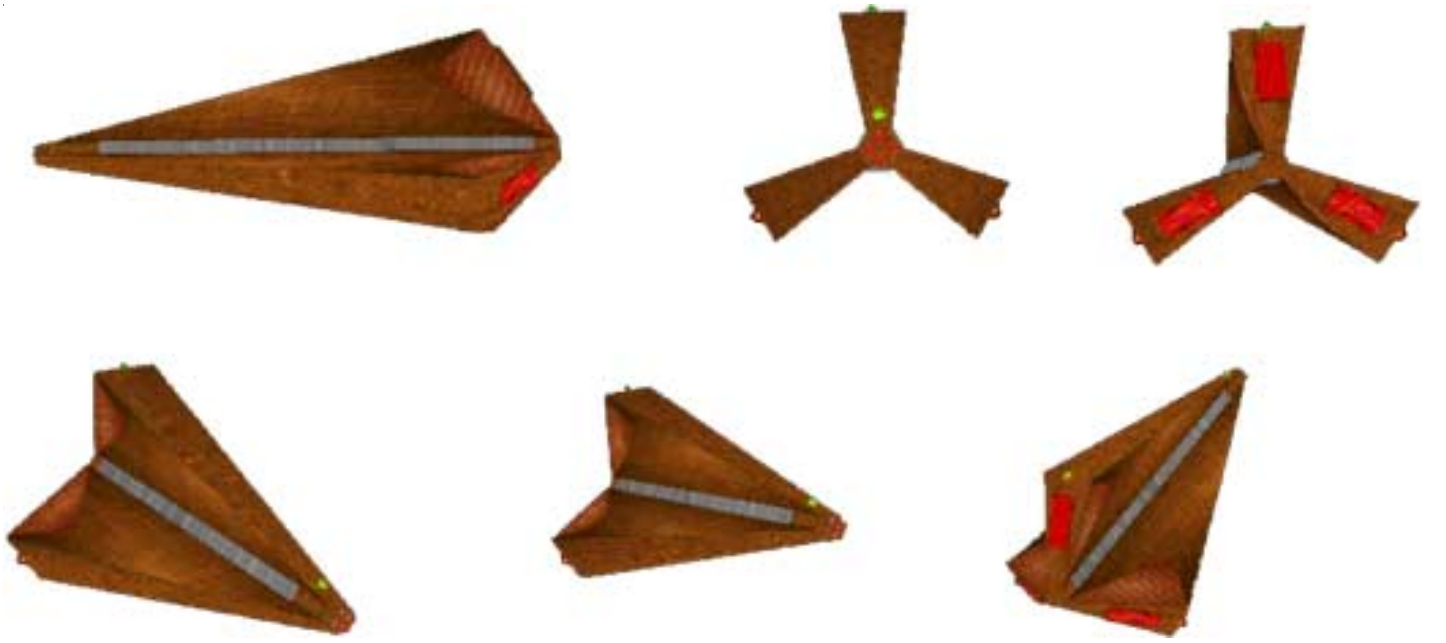
Bastion Medium Carrier

Akkrev Variant (Common)

This common Tholian carrier was a common site in Tholian border fleets during the 23rd Century. Based on the Akkrev Heavy Cruiser hull, the Bastion Medium Carrier exchanged offensive firepower for an enhanced close-in defense grid and eight sets of fighter rails, each carrying three light fighters.

The Tholians originally intended their carriers as a purely defensive implement of war, the fighter protecting the fleet from





incoming ballistic weaponry and any ships that strayed too close to the fleet. Later, as fighters moved into a more offensive role, the Bastion and other early carriers found themselves ill suited for the strike role. In the case of the Bastion, the Tholian Assembly used the aging carriers as fleet defense units, screening against enemy fighters and combat shuttles.

Ferrite Web Dreadnought

Granite Variant (Uncommon)

The development of the web caster led to the refit of several existing Granite Dreadnoughts to the Ferrite class. Ferrite Web Dreadnoughts traded phaser firepower for web casters, giving them the same range enjoyed by their Federation and Klingon opponents. The cost of these upgrades was great, however, limiting the number of dreadnoughts to be converted to this more potent model.

Guardian Battle Cruiser

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Guardian Battle Cruiser represents a massive departure in Tholian design philosophy. Envisioned as a next-generation warship comparable to the Federation Excelsior Heavy Cruiser, the Guardian Battle Cruiser was equipped with as much firepower as a dreadnought. Six phase concentrators and two web casters make up the primary offensive arsenal of the Guardian. As a result, many historians refer to the Guardian as a “pocket battleship” rather than a battle cruiser. The Guardian also benefited from an advanced deflector shield package, allowing for faster shield regeneration time.

Guardian Battle Cruisers served in the Tholian fleet for sixty years until finally being retired in favor of newer, more powerful cruisers. Even in their advanced age the Guardians were formidable opponents, but their lack of shielding hampered their performance in comparison to newer enemy craft.

Lattice Destroyer

Matrix Variant (Rare 2250-2254/ Uncommon)

The development of web caster technology was met with suspicion among Tholian ship designers. An untested technology, few on the appropriations committees believed that Tholian webbing could be effectively deployed outside of the web spinner’s traditional applications.

In order to test the effectiveness and viability of the web caster, a special variant of the Matrix Destroyer was adopted. The ship received generous improvements, including a large structural refit that set it visually apart from normal Matrix Destroyers (the two can never be mistaken for one another). This new destroyer, designated the Lattice class, incorporated a single web caster and enough surplus power to use it.

The Lattice Destroyer proved successful in subsequent combat trials. The range of the web caster was seen as a major advance over traditional ballistic weapons in

service at the time. Additional requests for web caster equipped starships were released to Tholian contractors to increase the number of web casters in the fleet. Unfortunately, the Lattice Destroyer's own refits were seen as too expensive to make the class wholly viable, limiting them to Uncommon status.

Obstruction Web Patrol Cruiser

Barricade Variant (Uncommon)

The Obstruction Web Patrol Cruiser is a more offensive-minded variant of the Barricade. Armed with medium phasers or phase concentrators rather than light phasers, the Obstruction is capable of combating small enemy scout or border patrol craft on solitary sorties in the territorial annexes of the Assembly. The Obstruction's reactor generates additional power, which is more often than not channeled into the ship's web spinner, allowing it to function without shutting down other ship systems.

Prism Scout

Matrix Variant (Uncommon)

This variant of the Lattice Destroyer replaces the web caster with a forward sensor palette identical to that found on the Refraction Scout. The Prism Scout was rarely used in combat situations. Instead it was used to patrol new regions of space, slowly expanding and monitoring the Tholian sphere of influence. The Tholians hoped that the heavier armament of the Prism Scout would allow it to survive combat encounters that would have overwhelmed the older Refraction Scout.

Reflection Heavy Scout

Akkrev Variant (Uncommon)

Another variant of the modular Akkrev hull, the Reflection Heavy Scout was a larger scout ship built for fleet combat actions. Using its three sensor arrays, the Reflection Heavy Scout was far more capable than most alien scouts of the time were.

Few Reflection scouts were built due to their cost, but the class was considered an invaluable part of the Tholian Assembly's border patrol forces.

Shard Fast Patrol Craft

Sliver Variant (Common)

This final upgrade to the Sliver frigate was an attempt to update the vessel's with newer technologically, particularly phasers in place of older particle weapons. The Shard Fast Patrol Craft underwent several refits of its own before being retired. The most important of these upgrades was the move to phase concentrator technologies. Tholian engineers were capable of slaving the firing mechanisms of Shard flotillas together, allowing the phase concentrators from Shard frigates in the same hex to be combined as if they were mounted on the same unit. Few ships since have ever been able to duplicate this unique advantage, mostly due to their size and complexity.

Spider-I Light Fighter

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

These small Tholian fighters are often seen in large numbers within Tholian fleets. The Spider-I Light Fighter was originally intended as a purely defensive fighter. Equipped with a single point defense phaser, the Spider-I can intercept for friendly units so long as they are in the same hex. Eventually, though, the Tholians discovered the offensive capabilities of fighters and began using them to harry enemy ships, stripping them of shields so that Tholian phaser fire could break through their defensive screens.

Unlike the fighters and combat shuttles fielded by other powers, the Spider-I Light Fighter is poorly armored and shielded, using this valuable internal volume to improve the fighter's speed. The Spider-I is faster than most other alien fighters, making it a more effective dogfighter.

Weave Escort Destroyer

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Weave Escort Destroyer served as a replacement for the Matrix Destroyer. Designed for use in a dedicated escort role, the Weave destroyer escorted larger Tholian cruisers, protecting them from short-range enemy attacks. The Weave Escort Destroyer is structurally weaker than the Matrix but makes up for this with wider firing weapon arcs and greater speed.

In the end result, the Weave did not quite live up to Tholian expectations. The larger Matrix was still a superior ship for multipurpose applications. The Weave did excel at escort operations, but its utility against enemy starships was less than stellar. Because of this the Matrix Destroyers were kept in service with Weave Escort Destroyers supplementing their firepower.

* * *

An Explosive First Look at one of Babylon 5's Untapped Sectors

By Charles Haught

Introduction

Not too long ago I contacted Renaud Gagne about a project I and others were working on. While working to bring this project to the agreement of all involved, he and I began discussing finishing the Koulani and Ch'Lonas. We had both worked as part of the group that was developing the original supplement for AoG. When the license was lost the project died with it. I have long wanted to finish this project, especially the Koulani, having been enthralled by the little snippet of information published by Chameleon Eclectic for the long defunct RPG, The Babylon Project.

As things progressed on these two races we also saw an opportunity to provide ships for the Thrakallan and Tokati as well. While there were times I wondered if we were biting off more than we could chew, with each of us having at least a couple of other races to complete for the first project we were collaborating on, as well as personal projects outside our areas of mutual interest, I am quite pleased to say that the Tokati, Ch'Lonas and Koulani are largely done. There will be a couple of additional surprises but I don't want to let all the cats out of the bag. With a little luck, some CGI and a bit of discipline (I have to make myself write!), the supplement should be done by the end of April or beginning of May. Now for a peek into the important part!

Tokati Hoplocracy

After centuries of occupation by the Centauri, the Tokati integrated the worst traits of the Republic into their society. The Tokati have a solemn belief in Manifest Destiny, a policy of taking what they want by military force, and a penchant for slaves. The Tokati have also adopted a twisted version of the Centauri belief that females are a treasure to be protected into misogyny. Despite their influence, however, the Centauri themselves find the Tokati repulsive and brutish.

As a result of this amalgamation of antagonistic qualities the Tokati are the most hostile race in the region. Fortunately for the Koulani, Ch'Lonas, Deneth and other races in the area, the Centauri destroyed most of their technology before leaving Tokat. To make matters worse for the Tokati their near complete lack of diplomatic skills has left them to develop these technologies on their own. As a result they have created a host of weapons that are unique to their military. While many are inferior to weapons fielded by their neighbors they are effective and deadly in their own right.

The Tokati ship designations provided are class names given by Earth Alliance Intelligence. In most cases these are matched to the closest mythological creature the Tokati ship are actually named for.

Zombie Destroyer

These heavy combat units are the most common ship class in the Hoplocracy. While lacking in range, these ships include a deadly arsenal of heavy firepower, good speed and heavy structure. Only their lack of anti-fighter defenses and inability to carry fighters limit these vessels. Zombies are almost always encountered in packs of two to four, often in the company of a Hell Hound Battle Carrier that provides fighter support for the fighter-less Zombies.

Wraith Gunship

The premier small attack units of the Tokati fleet for many years, Wraiths are well armed for their size. They are considered expendable combat ships with little value to a Tokati fleet commander other than the damage they can do before being destroyed. Like most ships the Tokati build they are weak on fighter defenses, making them

easy prey for enemy fighters unless screened by their own fighters or providing mutual protection in close knit fleet formations. Despite their reputation as deathtraps there is no shortage of crew volunteers for these ships. If a commander can stay alive long enough he is assured a better command and a more powerful ship. This illusion of increased power within the Hoplocracy lures many young Tokati men to their death.

Imp Light Fighter

This class of fighter has been in service with the Tokati Navy in one form or another for more than one hundred years. They serve a singular purpose: keeping enemy fighters away from Tokati fleet assets. In this role Imps are mediocre at best. Only the plasma weapons on the newer version provide the hitting power needed to accomplish their task. Against ship-based weapons Imps die in swarms. As a result, Imp Light Fightares are typically kept within close range of their fleet so that they can be supported by anti-fighter fire from Tokati ships.

Ch'Lonas Unity

Ch'Lon was a world just entering its Iron Age when warships of the Centauri Republic arrived in orbit and began subjugating its people. Ch'Lonas tenacity, drive and distance from Centauri Prime combined with the internal strife within the Republic allowed the Ch'Lonas to throw off the fetters of slavery in ten years. Their revolt happened with such speed and violence that the Centauri governor and occupation forces barely had time to escape with their lives. Suddenly this primitive world was flung into the position of being a minor space power.

The Ch'Lonas reverse engineered much of the Centauri technology left behind by the hasty withdrawal, though they did create offshoot technologies early on as they struggled to understand the advanced principles of the systems they had been gifted with. With these new abilities the Ch'Lonas took a cautious look at the universe around them. The Ch'Lonas loathe and hate the unknown. It did not take them long to encounter the aggressively isolationist Koulani, an encounter that has led to over a century of brushfire conflicts, raids and warfare between the two species.

While the Ch'Lonas thirsted for revenge against the Centauri, the Earth Alliance was the first large power they encountered. The EA discovery of a mineral rich system near Ch'Lon brought the fledgling Ch'Lonas military to bear. Unfortunately, the year before had seen the defeat of an EA force and destruction of a spacestation at the hands of the Ch'Lonas' hated enemy the Koulani. As a result the Alliance had stepped up its military construction program and introduced the Aries class of Starfury. What should have been a simple victory for the Ch'Lonas Navy turned into a rout for their forces. With such a humiliating outcome the Ch'Lonas turned back to fighting with old adversaries in an attempt to secure the resources they desperately lacked.

Es'Kashi Destroyer

These destroyer-sized ships could more accurately be described as gunships. The Es'Kashi is the first Ch'Lonas vessel that will come to mind when EarthForce personnel hear the word Ch'Lonas. Successful battle platforms, the Es'Kashi has been in service for an extended period of time. While not active during the first battle for the Ross system, they were an important part of the Ch'Lonas fleet at the Battle of the Three Suns during the Earth-Minbari War and earned the grudging respect of the humans that were forced to fight them. Due to their overall lack of resources the Ch'Lonas face, these ships have been refitted a number of times and will remain frontline Ch'Lonas combat units until technological advancement renders them completely obsolete.

Lo'Fahra Attack Frigate

Small, fast and deadly, these ships are used to harass enemy flanks and provide support to Es'Kashi and other Ch'Lonas attack units. A highly successful design, the Lo'Fahra is commonly seen throughout the Ch'Lon system, either in the company of their larger brethren or as leaders of anti-piracy forces. The only real weaknesses these little killers posses are a lack of anti-fighter and intercept ability. However, in a fleet environment or when supported by fighters from a nearby planetary base or battlestation, the Lo'Fahras are swift and fatal.

Sa'Traven Light Fighter

This class of light fighter replaced the older Ler'Tar in Ch'Lonas service when its predecessor could no longer keep pace with the fighters of those races the Ch'Lonas fought with. While a capable interceptor, the Sa'Traven is too fragile for use against ships. This fact combined with the damage the Ch'Lonas suffered during the Dilgar Slash Attack at the hands of Thorun class heavy fighters prompted them to build a heavy fighter for anti-ship work. Still the Sa'Traven's small size and overall capabilities will continue to serve their Ch'Lonas creators well for a long time to come.

Koulani Directorate

The Koulani are a suspicious and isolationist people. These traits were learned during the genocidal Dominance Wars the Koulani fought with the two other sentient species that once inhabited Koula Prime, though the Koulani themselves still refuse to acknowledge either were intelligent races. The lessons learned during these wars were what saved the Koulani from become slaves of the Centauri when they entered the Koula system in 2100. The invaders were met with outright hostility and, while the Centauri were certainly more powerful, they could not afford another bleeding wound to drain their valuable military resources. Instead, the Centauri set up what trade relations the Koulani would accept and went about their business.

For their part, the Koulani went about using this new technology to strengthen their defenses, learn about the galaxy around them and better exploit the resources at their disposal. While they saw many interesting things during their early travels, they were unable to understand why they would want to live away from their precious Koula Prime. They made trade arrangements with those races they saw as being of no threat to the Directorate and proceeded with life much as they had before the appearance of the Centauri.

The fierceness of the Koulani's isolation has lead to a disproportionately large military. The Koulani have used this to their advantage many times over the years. They are also given to punitive and preemptive attacks on their often hostile neighbors. While it is highly uncommon to find Koulani ships outside of their sphere of influence, if one does it is almost always on its way to or from an attack of retribution against an upstart nation that has chosen to violate the Koulani's desire for seclusion.

Sunclipper Cruiser

These cruisers are constant reminders of Koulani military power. It is nearly impossible to enter Koulani space without encountering one or more of these ships. Well armed, armored and defended, the Sunclipper is capable of solo operations. Still, they are more often seen in small squadrons of three or more vessels. While not the most powerful ship in the Directorate arsenal they are certainly the most common with many variants. The number of modifications to the Sunclipper hull are staggering, giving the Koulani a certain degree of advantage in any confrontation as their opponent can never be completely sure what they are facing until the Sunclippers open fire, which often can be too late.

Pulsarfort Capital Base

As with the Sunclipper, it is almost impossible to enter any area of Koulani controlled space without one of these defense positions near by. Designed to discourage unwanted guests, Pulsarforts are the core of Koulani defensive lines. Combined with their fighters, rings of mines and OSATs and ship escorts, attacking these stations is a daunting prospect at best. In an effort to save resources and standardize construction all of these stations are built with ELINT cabilities

and are used for intelligence gathering along Koulani borders in addition to assisting their mobile elements during battle.

Airskimmer Medium Fighter

Built to face a new series of threat fighters, the Airskimmer is designed primarily for intercept work with a secondary anti-ship role. While it is weaker and less heavily armored than a dedicated anti-ship fighter, its plasma bombs and light plasma bolts are capable of damaging even a heavily armored target. The survivability rate of such mission is low, but it does give the Koulani a level of flexibility that most of their traditional enemies lack. Conflict with the Dilgar and increased advancement of Earth Alliance fighters combined with the near destruction of the Alliance during the Earth-Minbari War caused the Koulani to design and construct a heavy bomber. Despite this, the Airskimmer will remain the most common fighter in Koulani service for the foreseeable future.

New Rules

Plasma Bombs

These weapons can be used against any ship that occupies the same hex as the fighter. While this increases the fighter's risk of damage or destruction, the bomb cannot be intercepted. Bombs can only be dropped on ships if the fighter ends movement in the same hex. It cannot be used against a ship whose hex the fighter simply passes through during movement.

Example: A flight of Airskimmers is moving toward a Hyperion. While moving the fighters cross through the same hex as an Omega. The fighters cannot bomb this target. However, once movement is completed, the Airskimmer flight has maneuvered to stop in the same hex as the targeted Hyperion. Any fighters that survives to the fighter versus ship phase of combat may drop the allowed number of bombs per turn on the target.

* * *

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Sneak Peek:

The Medushaans

The First Sighting of the Nashani's Allies

By Erik Parzych, Brendan Henry, & Charles Haught

Introduction

Warleader Xarl Tsorg felt his destroyer shudder as the ship's heavy torpedoes spat towards the Centauri cruiser. She didn't spare a moment of celebration as they found their mark, and her ship continued to rumble as fresh rounds were cycled into the launch tubes. Many times smaller than her normal flagship, the destroyer was one of the largest vessels among the forces that had remained in the Essakyre System to spring their trap on the Centauri, and she wouldn't have traded ther experience for the largest battleship. The ship shook again as another salvo was hurled at yet another target. All around her, the cramped bridge crewmembers bustled about their consoles responding as best they could to the chaos of two fleets intermeshed in the deadly dance of combat. Speed had become their greatest weapon and Xarla refused to slow her force as it slashed through the Centauri ranks. She could not allow the enemy fleet the breathing room to coordinate their fire and gain advantage over their attackers.

Within the maelstrom, Xarla's focus was centered on the battleship that was surely the Centauri fleet's flagship. She purred a mirthless chuckle as she thought of the fraility of her own vessel in marked contrast to the mighty ship before her. Without hesitation, she ordered the tattered remnants of her squadron to attack the Centauri vessel. Ignoring the command ship's smaller consorts, the destroyers threw themselves at the leviathan, and paid dearly. Of the ships that began the attack only Xarla's destroyer and one other survived to to torpedo range. Just as the Medushaan warleader's ship fired off its ordnance it was battered by fire from a Centauri gunship, sending it spinning out of control. Warleader Tsorg had the satisfaction of seeing one of the powerful torpedoes strike

the flank of the big ship before the world went black. Barely conscious, she loosed a victory cry as crimson beams lanced out from the battleship and through her small ship.

Medushaan Physiology

The Medushaan are a race of powerful mammal analogues originating from a harsh world covered in active volcanoes and sulphurous seas. The average adult female Medushaan stands roughly 7-8 feet tall and is powerfully muscled. Males of the species are slightly smaller, topping out at about 6 feet and are far less bulky, though they are still much heavier than the average human.. The skulls of females are extremely heavy. As they age, their skulls often come to feature projections above the skin, while the skulls of males tend to be thinner and smoother. The skin of both sexes is mottled gray and extremely thick, though these characteristics are more pronounced in the females of the species. Females also have vestigal, red-colored patterns across their chest and back, likely once used to attract the attention of a mate. Medushaan eyes are covered by a protective membrane that gives them an unsettling, luminescent blue coloration.

Because of the difficulty of surviving the environment of their homeworld, Medushaan evolution has taken some interesting steps to ensure the continuation of the species. First of all, the birth rate for females is much higher than that of males, on the order of ten to one. Females also have greater physical strength and protection than males, helping more of them to survive to sexual maturity. Pregnancies are relatively short, after which the female lays one or two leathery eggs. The final weeks of development for the embryonic Medushaan takes place within the egg. This evolutionary trait frees the female to continue on with her duties, whatever they may be, from conception to birth with little or no imapct physically, making her far less vulnerable as part of the pregnancy.

For their part, the males of the species also feature several interesting characteristics. Male Medushaans reach sexual maturity at a younger age than females, and are able to impregnate an almost limitless number of females during their breeding years. Male Medushaans of sexual maturity are driven by the single minded pursuit of copulation, giving rise to the common Medushaan phrase which, loosely translated states, “males are only good for breeding and eating.” Males remain sexually active for roughly 20 Terran years, after which they undergo a dramatic change. Freed from the genetic imperitive to breed, these “neuter males” develop a sharp mind, and a deep curiosity. Early Medushaans would often force these “useless” males out of the tribe as they were a drain on resources, and could cause all sorts of trouble. In the wilderness, these males would be forced to survive by their wits, and many died shortly after being turned out.

Medushaan Homeworld

Medusha is an Earth-sized moon in orbit around a gas giant in the Tsiph System. The gas giant provides its warmth and light to the

The Free Worlds Confederation Returns

The Free Worlds Confederation returns to this month’s Great Machine with a sneak peek at the Medushaan Gynocracy. Brendan “Jal” Henry, Charles “Danesti” Haught and Erik Parzych have been working for the last few months to make the Medushaan an involved, interesting and, above all else, a fun race to play in the B5Wars universe. With the principle work on the two Free Worlds Confederation races completed, we will now focus on putting out a supplement that covers the Free Worlds in greater detail.

If you enjoy what you have seen so far, stay tuned for more additions to the Free World Confederation‘s corner of the universe. We’ll have in-depth Nashani and Medushaan histories, more detailed information on the races themselves, information on the worlds of the Confederation, stations and OSATS, and many more ships to round out the their fleets!

nearby moon which would otherwise likely be too distant from the system's primary to develop life. Medusha is tidally locked with the gas giant, meaning that the moon has a hot side facing the gas giant and a cold side facing away. In between there is a narrow twillight band which is less extreme than either of the opposing faces. The world is both extremely tectonically and volcanically active, the geothermal energy released by deep vents in the moon's surface adding to the warmth of the world. Earthquakes and active volcanoes are fairly common on Medusha. The atmosphere of Medusha is thick with particulate matter caused by volcanic ash and has a definate sulfur smell, but is breathable by humans so long as they provide some form of filter to avoid breathing the choking dust. Plant life on Medusha is largely dependent on geothermal energy rather than light, and grows low to the ground over wide areas.

Today, Medushaans live across the entire face of their homeworld, relying on artificial means to protect them from the extreme environments. The hot side is covered with power stations, old mines and industrial plants, while the cold side is scattered with "fisheries", geothermal power plants, and plants which treat and ship water throughout the moon to support the needs of its inhabitants.

Medushaan Government

The Medushaan government is a loose Republic composed of many semi-autonomous states which are subordinate to the central government. Each of these states is ruled by a *Regnar*, or "Queen," and her daughters, known as "Princesses" by outsiders. The Queens rule in a fairly autocratic manner with control over military and civilian affairs within their domains. The position of Queen is heriditary with the reigning Queen choosing her heir from amongst her daughters. The head of the central government is an individual best discribed of as the "Empress". Called the *Regnar Sulam*, which means "Great Mother", the position of Empress is not hereditary like the Queens, but is chosen from among the ranks of the rulers by majority vote following the death or removal of the old Empress. While she is the head of state for the Medushaan, the Empress must abdicate the thrown of her realm to her heir, and may not, by custom and law, retain any territory besides that of her current position.

Within the court of each Queen and the Empress, there are many "neuter males" known as *Duro*, which literally translated means "wise" or "wiley". These Duro form a kind of eunuch class within the courts that serve the rulers as councilors and aides. Duro are all extremely knowledgable on a wide variety of subjects and provide their matrons with the information they need to make informed judgements on matters of state. Since the Duro owe their position to a particular ruler, they are typically unquestionably loyal and are generally considered among the most trusted members of the royal court. Duro are very often disliked by the majority of the Medushaan around them as they are seen to have achieved high status without the risks associated with the lifestyles of female Medushaan, but they are tolerated because they serve a role which no female would willingly accept.

Medushaan Military

Each Queen maintains a personal paramilitary force composed primarily of ground troops. These royal guards act not only as the Queen's personal bodyguard, but as secret police and reserve forces for the military of the central government. Few Queens maintain a sizable force of warships, primarily for reasons of cost. Generally, each Queen does possess a small number of ships for patrol/police/customs duty. The quantity and quality of a guards' equipment varies from ruler to ruler, but they universally maintain an extremely high level of training and troop quality. Regular competitions between royal guard units are held with a great deal of pride and

bragging rights at stake.

The military forces of the central government are under the direct control of the Empress and are commanded by a professional and dedicated officer corps. The bulk of the forces are conscripts serving a 5 year minimum term of service, though a great many Medushaan take pride in military service, making it as a life-long career. The majority of Medushaan serve in the ground forces, comprised of several legions stationed throughout the Free Worlds territories. In addition, the Medushaan navy is a capable force, which while not as large as the ground military, has distinguished itself many times. Medushaan naval doctrine has always favored fighters and attack oriented medium ships, and these forces comprise the bulk of the navy. Backing up these lighter elements are a smaller number of very aggressive heavy combat vessel and capital ship types that are quite formidable, and are often found at the core of Medushaan fleets.

Medushaan Religion

The Medushaan have a very ancient religious system centered around the belief that their homeworld is a living being, the mother of all Medushaan life. This goddess is known as the Fiery Mother. The Medushaan are a supersticious lot and they believe that their soul will be re-born so long as it is returned to the Fiery Mother. In ordinary circumstances this means an elaborate funeral that culminates with the body of the deceased being lowered ino a river of lava or some form of volcanic fissure. In the early days of spaceflight, Medushaan leaving the homeworld would ritualistically remove a body part, such as a finger, which was in turn preserved so that if the rest of the body was lost off-world, the remaining piece could be given a proper funeral so that the soul could return home. This actually developed from an ancient tradition in which warriors leaving their homes to do battle in a distant land would conduct similar rituals, fearing that if they died in enemy lands, their bodies would not be returned.

The Medushaans have a great many rituals and ceremonies that often include ritual combat, feasting, and the recounting of ancient myths. In fact, the closest thing in Medushaan society has to clergy are the males known as Marras, or Lore-Tellers. The Marras have committed to memory a vast number of stories and myths and during every ceremony a Marra will recount a tale relavent to the occasion. The Marra is perhaps the most respected male member of Medushaan society.

Medushaan Technology

Though they have been a starfaring race for many hundreds of years, the technology of the Medushaan can be considered average among the younger races. There are several reason for this. The most important reason is that the Medushaans do not carry out research for the sake of research, believing that if a system works you shouldn't mess with it. This is not to say that the Medushaans are stupid or lazy, quite the contrary in fact. Advances are typically brought on in response to a particular problem which crops up, such as a weakness an enemy exploits, or a weakness identified which can be exploited in an enemy. In this framework, the Medushaans are extremely capable of developing a solution to a problem, but they will rarely if ever go beyond the practical application to advance a system's capabilities.

In a few rare circumstances the Medushaans have received technology from other races which they have found useful, and this is particularly true in their relationship with the Nashani. In fact, many Medushaan are very happy to let their allies spend their time, effort and financial resources developing new technologies which they can then decide upon pursuing or not. The Medushaans have also received a great deal of technology over the years from the Centauri in the form of salvage. This has led to many Medushaan advances, particularly in weapons technology. It is in this area where the Medushaans are quite advanced.

Medushaan Ships

Parga Attack Ship

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Parga represents the latest generation of Medushaan fast attack ships. Like its predecessors, the Parga is fast, nimble and lightly armored. What sets the Parga apart from previous Medushaan attack ships is its superior firepower, sensor capabilities, and survivability. Despite being a fairly recent addition to the fleet, the mass production of the Parga has made it one of the most common ships in Medushaan service.

Scind Attack Ship

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

This older medium ship was once the mainstay of the Medushaan fleet. Now replaced in this role by the Parga, the Scind is still in widespread use and will likely remain so for many years to come. Built to be an inexpensive attrition unit, the Scind packs a respectable punch but has several shortcomings, including limited sensors and a thin skin. It is likely that the Scinds that remain in service will be converted to either the Vasta or Gula types as more Pargas enter service.

Vasta Torpedo Boat

Scind Variant (Uncommon)

The Vasta is a variant of the Scind which mounts a single kinetic torpedo launcher as its primary armament. Though incapable of stand-off bombardment, the raw damage potential of the kinetic torpedo makes the Vasta a welcome addition to any attack formation. Some have proposed converting all remaining Scind Attack Ships to the Vasta class, though this seems unlikely.

Rixa Heavy Warship

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Rixa is designed to get in close and kill enemy warships. As such, it trades defensive systems for offensive firepower. The Rixa is a common sight among Medushaan forces and provides heavy fire support for their attack ships. To fulfill its intended role, the Rixa is one of the faster vessels of its size. The Achilles' Heel of the Rixa is its poor anti-fighter/interception capability, though this is mitigated somewhat by Medushaan deployment doctrine.

Larco Destroyer

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

An older but still useful hull, the Larco is a multi-mission destroyer with decent weapons and the ability to carry a flight of medium fighters. Originally a purely offensive warship, the Larco is now best suited to escort and patrol missions where its armament and fighters can counter a wide variety of threats.

Vena Light Carrier

Larco Variant (Common)

Based on the Larco Hull, the Vena features an enlarged hanger which can embark twelve medium fighters. The Vena is still one of the most common carrier hulls in Medushaan service, serving in a wide variety of roles from escort, strike, and planetary assault support.

Occar Jamming Destroyer

Larco Variant (Rare)

The Occar trades the hanger space of the Larco hull for a limited ELINT system. This system is capable of using only defensive ELINT abilities. The ship's designers hoping that the Occar Jamming Destroyer could provide a low-cost way to better protect assault echelons against foes with long ranged-weaponry. The Occar is not intended for scouting duties and is never seen outside of larger forces to whom it is providing its specialized support.

Larco Destroyer

Grumm Battlecruiser

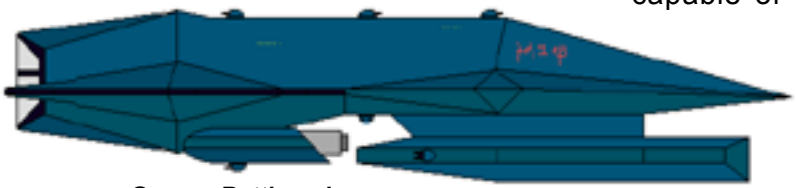
Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Grumm is a fast battlecruiser designed to flank enemy forces and provide heavy support to Medushaan attack vessels. The Grumm has a potent anti-ship armament and carries a squadron of medium fighters for area defense and strike missions. The greatest shortcoming of the Grumm is its poor armor protection as designers traded protection for speed and maneuverability. Despite this, the Grumm is a popular choice of Medushaan commanders who favor the design's aggressive attributes.

Konar Jumpcruiser

Base Hull (Limited Availability 33%)

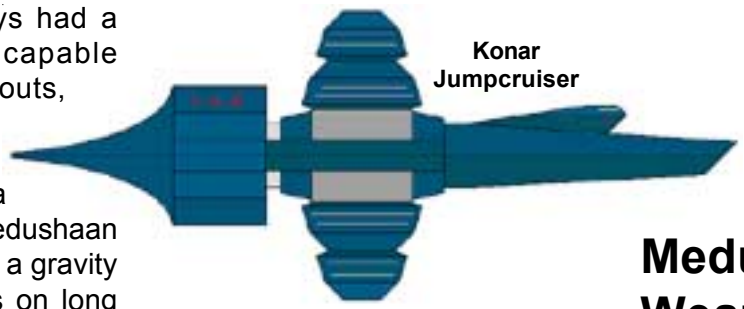
Because the Medushaan do not have large Q-40 reserves, they have long preferred to build non-combat jump-ships to support the strategic movement of their fleets.



Grumm Battlecruiser

Rixa Heavy Warship

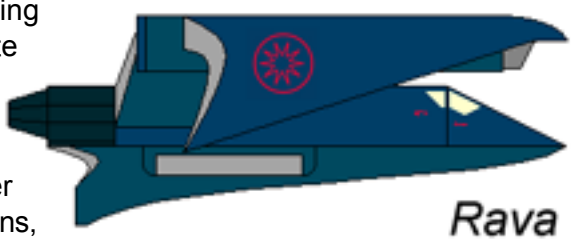
Though they have always had a small number of jump capable warships, particularly scouts, the Konar has been a true workhorse since its introduction. The Konar is a Spartan design even by Medushaan standards, though there is a gravity positive section for crews on long duration missions. The Konar conducts the vast majority of jump missions required by the Medushaan navy, though it is never risked in assault type missions.



Rava Heavy Fighter-Bomber

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The Rava is the newest fighter deployed by the Medushaan and is a sturdy, non-atmospheric design which specializes in killing enemy ships. The Rava is quite impressive in its intended role, though its limited dogfighting capabilities means that it is generally well-escorted by other fighters. In addition to fixed weapons, the Rava features a weapon's bay which can carry a variety of weapons tailored to the intended mission with which the fighter is tasked. At present, the Rava is deployed in far fewer numbers than the older class medium fighter, and those pilots that are selected to serve in Rava squadrons can be considered the best strikefighter pilots that the Medushaan have to offer.



Rava
Heavy Fighter-Bomber

Tulas Medium Fighter

Base Hull (Unlimited Deployment)

The standard Medushaan fighter for many years, the Tulas remains an important part of the Medushaan military machine. Though it has been replaced by the Rava as the primary assault fighter, the Tulas continues to serve the fleet in the escort and interceptor roles. In addition, it is an atmospheric design which is used extensively to support Medushaan ground forces as needed. The Medushaan navy hopes to deploy a new interceptor design within the next few years, at which point the Tulas will begin to be phased out of front-line service.

Xad
Medium Interceptor

Tulas
Medium Multi-Role Fighter

Medushaan Weapons

Plasma Bolt Gun

The main anti-fighter weapon system used by the Medushaan fleet from 2189 until its replacement by the Twin Ultra-Light Plasma Cannon in 2236. Still used by some older designs, and in a new fighter mounted version, the plasma bolt gun is accurate and fast firing but suffers for an inability to intercept enemy fire as well as a relativley limited damage potential.

Twin Ultra Light Plasma Cannon

The Medushaan have always been impressed by the Centauri Twin Array, but have never been able to effectively replicate the system. In order to provide their forces with a similar system, the Medushaan developed a twin mounting for a scaled-down version of the Light Plasma Cannon. Though the resulting weapon cannot match the performance of the Twin Array, it is a great improvement over older light weapons and is now found on nearly every Medushaan warship design.

Plasma Accelerator

This weapon is simply a copy of the Centauri system and has been in widespread service with the Medushaan since the 2220s.

Plasma Decimator

An immensely powerful weapon designed with some assistance from the Nashani, who provided key focsing systems. The Plasma Decimator is a huge weapon designed as a maximum damage alpha strike weapon and is found only on the largest Medushaan warships.

Plasma Repeater

The Plasma Repeater is a newer weapon that is quickly becoming popular with the Medushaan. The Plasma Repeater can "store" several shots, releasing them in rapid sucession. This suits the Medushaan particularly well as they allow the Repeater to build a charge as their ships close to short range with an enemy, releasing a hail of plasma fire that is very difficult to defend against. When fired, each stored shot rolls to hit independently.

Light Dual Plasma Cannon

A refinement of the basic Light Plasma Cannon, which has a pair of weapons in a single mounting. The system can be fired in a synchronized fashion in order to do greater damage in one shot, or each emitter may fire as a single Light Plasma Cannon. This weapon replaced the Light Plasma Cannon in Medushaan service in the 2230s.

Dual Plasma Cannon

This larger version of the Light Dual Plasma Cannon is comprised of two Medium Plasma Cannon-equivalent weapons in a single mounting. The Dual Plasma Cannon replaced the Medium Plasma Cannon and Plasma Bolt Cannon in Medushaan service by the 2240s.

Heavy Dual Plasma Cannon

Similar to the Dual Plasma Cannon, this weapon mounts two Heavy Plasma Cannons in a single housing. It also was demonstrated during the 2240s and subsequently adopted by the Medushaans.

Gauss Accelerator

The Gauss Accelerator is a refinement of the Orieni Gauss Cannon which the Medushaan have had for many years. Through a series of modifications to the base technology, the Medushaans have been able to combine the best qualities of the Gauss Cannon with weapons like the Blast Cannon. In effect, the Gauss Accelerator can be fired with a "full charge" that has similar characteristics to the standard Gauss Cannon. In addition, the weapon features a "rapid-fire" mode in which the cannon splits its charge to fire several rounds in succession. These rounds are fired at a lower velocity than a full charge shot and therefore do less damage and do not gain the benefits of matter weapons, but gain the ability to strike a target several times. This allows the weapon to more effectively deal with fighters, and intercept ballistic weapons. The Gauss Accelerator is therefore a very useful weapon system, but is more costly and maintenance intensive than the Gauss Cannon. There is also a delay when switching modes, making the system somewhat tricky to employ at times.

Kinetic Torpedo

The Medushaan answer to the ballistic weapons used by other races, replacing their rocket/missile weapons in the late 2100s. The weapon is simply a powerful plasma drive that rapidly accelerates an armored shell. The torpedo carries no warhead as the heavy, fast moving projectile does ample damage when it strikes a target. The resulting weapon is simple, inexpensive and has no explosive that can be "cooked-off" in its launcher. On the down side, the Kinetic Torpedo has little ability to make course corrections to track a target and is very bulky, limiting the number of rounds that can be carried by a warship.

Light Kinetic Torpedo

A smaller version of the Kinetic Torpedo that is employed as a fighter carried weapon.

Starfire Bomb

Like its precursor, the Blaze Bomb, the Starfire Bomb is used by the Medushaan primarily as a deterent against enemy fighters and as a distraction that can occupy the defenses of an enemy force. The Starfire Bomb is a cheap but potent plasma flash weapon that can force an enemy to evade it, intercept it, or else run the risk of losing valuable fighters or taking damage to their ships. Though the Medushaan have attempted to produce both light combat vessels and medium ships dediacted to carrying these bombs, they have found that their fighters remain the best deployment option, being both evasive and individually inexpensive. Starfire Bombs are considered "Slow Ballistics".

* * *

The Free Worlds Navy

Combined Fleet Operations of the Nashani & Medushaan

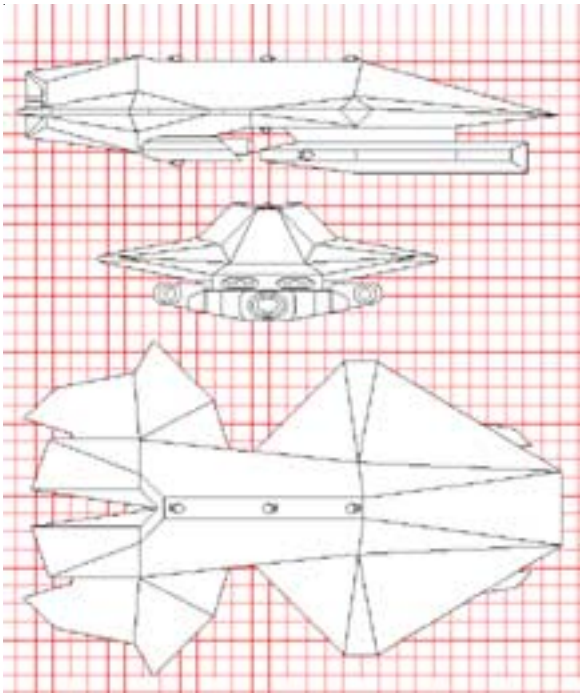
Using the Nashani and Medushaan Within Free Worlds Fleets

Fighters bobbed and darted as beams of light stabbed at their formation. Though a few shots came near enough to scorch paint, none connected as the swarm came on unhindered by the display. If Commander Shi-Col Ban Nasi was the least bit concerned by the onrushing vessels, he did well to hide it. A sensor operator ticked off the time until the enemy would be in range to use their weapons, a very rapidly shrinking figure. Commander Ban Nasi touched a softly glowing icon on the display before him. Instantly a dark, shimmering visage stared back with startling blue orbs.

"Don't you think that you are cutting this just a bit close, Troxan?"

The Medushaan commander gurgled what passed for a laugh among her race, "We were waiting to see if your gunners got any of them! My second wagered that they could not. I, of course, defended you. You cost me a fine bottle Nasi!" More of the Medushaan's laughter chased the image as it faded from the display, replaced by the ship's external pickups. As the enemy fighters came to their firing range, a similar horde burst around the flanks of the lumbering Nashani cruisers. The Medushaan force of fighters and MCVs had used the Nashani force to screen their approach, and the attacking fighter force had no chance to react to their arrival. The Medushaan slashed through the formation just seconds short of their weapons envelope. It was good that the Medushaan could be relied on for more than ill-timed humor.

"All Blue Elements" , communications opened a channel to the Nashani component of the Task force. Commander Shi-Col Ban Nasi continued with an exasperated sigh, "Target enemy carrier vessels and engage with main battery fire." No sense in letting empty carriers escape to refill their bays.



For well over a century, the Nashani and Medushaan have been the closest allies, with their unique relationship leading eventually to a cooperative government as well. For many years the two nation's militaries have closely coordinated their strategies and tactics, and have conducted many joint operations successfully. Though there are no permanent, standing combined fleets under the banner of the Free Worlds, this is merely a formality. Nashani and Medushaan Task Groups continuously train together to better develop the tactics and the trust necessary for successful combined operations, and are well prepared should the need arise. Strategic coordination and structure is provided by the Free Worlds Combined Command, a long-standing organization composed of members of both races. Combined Command not only oversees

the deployment of joint task groups, but also insures the command structure of the mixed forces. As a rule of thumb, the fleet's commander will be of one race, while his or her second will be of the other. During their long partnership the nature of their forces have shifted slightly to accentuate the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of their forces when acting in concert. Individually the Nashani and Medushaan fleets have several weaknesses that can be exploited by an enemy. Together, they are a formidable force indeed. This is particularly true in larger groups of ships such as a full task force or fleet, where the full weight of the advantages of each race can come into play. In fact, it is uncommon, though not unheard of, for the Free Worlds to deploy combined forces smaller than a task group.

When using the Nashani and Medushaan in B5Wars it is possible to have mixed fleets of both races vessels with no penalties as their systems are well integrated.

All of the ships deployed by the Free Worlds player may benefit from special abilities such as ELINT, and command bonuses available as if the ships were all from one race. The Player using the Free Worlds must then designate one of the races as the "Primary Race" and the other as the "Secondary Race". The Primary Race may purchase ships as normal, while there are some restrictions on the ships that the Secondary Race may purchase. Base Hulls remain unaffected, and may be taken for their normal point cost. All other hulls have their availabilities raised by one level such that common variants become Limited Availability 33%, Limited becomes 10% Restricted Deployment, and Restricted becomes unavailable to choose. In Fleet Action, the controlling player may not create mixed squadrons of Nashani and Medushaan ships.

It has been theorized that in the future the members of the Free Worlds may begin to construct jointly designed vessels specifically for combined operations. While it seems that this is an inevitable outgrowth of the present between the races, there are just as many reasons why this is unlikely, and impractical. In the foreseeable future, each race will continue to shape their forces to maximize the unique advantage their partnership provides. The Nashani and Medushaan will also certainly continue grow along their own distinct technological pathways.

* * *

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Coming Next Issue...

The themelessness continues with a cryptically named issue: "Twilight's Dawn". Here are just a few of the items that you can look forward to next issue:

The Early Ingalli

The Ingalli are unique in that the first of their species to take to the stars were a race long separated from their homeworld, who travelled through a shrouded gateway to distant worlds. You will learn more about the early ships of the Ingalli, the race whose empire would prove the might of the Courata Imperium!

More Dune

Christian Meador lets the Spice flow with the second Dune Wars article, covering the ships and technologies of the noble houses.

The Gorn Confederacy

It isn't easy being green, and the Gorn know this only too well! Graham Short.

Submission Deadline: April 28, 2004